

**DESKTOP STUDY IN SUPPORT OF THE MILLENNIUM  
DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

**A research report for the UNHCR**

**Integrated Rural and Regional Development  
Human Sciences Research Council  
Pretoria**

**May 2005**

## CONTENTS

<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Objective of the study	1
1.2 Objective of this specific study	1
<b>2. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY</b>	<b>1</b>
2.1 Limitations of the study	2
<b>3. REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS IN SOUTH AFRICA</b>	<b>2</b>
3.1 Background	2
3.2 Legislative framework	2
3.3 Xenophobia	3
3.4 Barriers in obtaining documentation	4
<b>4. MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS</b>	<b>5</b>
4.1 Income	6
4.1.1 <i>The proportion of population below 1 USD per day/the national or any other applicable poverty line (MDG indicator 1, 1A, 2)</i>	6
4.2 Literacy	7
4.2.1 <i>Literacy rate (15-24 years old) (MDG indicator 8 and 10)</i>	7
4.3 Unemployment rate	8
4.3.1 <i>The rate of unemployment of people aged 15-24 years (MDG indicator 45)</i>	8
<b>5. UNHCR STANDARDS AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>9</b>
5.1 Demographic data	9
5.1.1 Age	9
5.2 Access to rights	10
5.2.1 <i>Gainful employment (Standard/Indicator 10)</i>	10
5.2.2 <i>Housing (Standard/Indicator 11)</i>	11
5.3 Self-reliance, assistance and community services	12
5.3.1 <i>Average household/family income (Standard/Indicator 39)</i>	12
5.4 Targeted Community Assistance and Health	13
5.4.1 <i>Primary health care use (Standard/Indicator 14 &amp; 42)</i>	13
5.5 Education	14
5.5.1 <i>Primary and Secondary school enrollment (Indicators 12, 14 &amp; 46)</i>	14
<b>6. REFUGEES IN SOUTH AFRICA AND THE MDG's: DATA LIMITATIONS AND OTHER CONSTRAINING FACTORS</b>	<b>15</b>
6.1 Dispersal of the refugee/asylum population	15
6.2 Lack of official and other data	16
<b>7. SUMMARY</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>19</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1:	A comparison of the ‘no income’ category of South Africans and refugees/asylum seekers in selected suburbs of major cities	6
Table 2:	Per capita monthly income of refugees/asylum seeker respondents by country of origin	7
Table 3:	Highest level of education attained (refugees/asylum seekers)	8
Table 4:	Current occupation of refugees/asylum seekers according to level of skill	9
Table 5:	Average age of refugee/asylum seeker respondents by country of origin	9
Table 6:	Refugees/Asylum seekers’ main source of income	10
Table 7:	Living arrangements of refugee/asylum seekers	11
Table 8:	Monthly household income of refugee/asylum seeker respondents	12
Table 9:	Monthly household income of South Africans in selected suburbs of major cities	13
Table 10:	Primary Health Care facilities used by refugees/asylum seekers	13
Table 11:	Number of contacts of all patients at Primary Health Care facilities by province for 1998 –1999	14

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

There is a general lack of detailed information on the well-being of asylum seekers, refugees and others of concern to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). In particular, the welfare of those who are not living in camps or who are not otherwise assisted is not always well documented. However, detailed socio-economic base-line data on non-camp refugees and other persons of concern to the UNHCR is increasingly needed for needs-based planning, operations monitoring as well as for advocacy and external information purposes.

The scarcity of planning information on non-camp refugees/persons of concern to the UNHCR has become particularly evident in the UNHCR's preparing for the 2004 edition of the "Standards and Indicator Report": most data required for non-camp refugees will need to be collected through surveys.

In addition, the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Summit in September 2005 will require the UNHCR to provide evidence on the situation of refugees in the context of the Secretary General's Millennium Campaign. In preparation of this event, the High Commissioner's Forum in May 2005 will discuss the progress made towards achieving the MDGs. Again, surveys are expected to provide the data necessary to assess how asylum seekers, refugees and other persons of concern fare in relation to the attainment of the MDGs.

### **1.1 Objective of the UNHCR study**

The Division of Operational Support (DOS) has commissioned five detailed studies and/or surveys on the well-being of refugees/persons of concern to UNHCR. The results of these surveys and case studies will be used in the context of the MDGs and UNHCR's Standards and Indicators Report. The planned four studies should have a comparable content. Two studies will require field data collection through surveys, whereas two surveys will be "desk studies" based on available survey information.

### **1.2 Objective of this specific study**

This desktop study on refugees and urban asylum-seekers in South Africa will compare the well-being of such persons with comparable groups in South Africa based on the UNHCR Standards and Indicators Report and the UN Millennium Development Indicators.

## **2. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

The study is based on survey data from the 2003 *National Refugee Baseline Survey* by the Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE). Data from the 2001 *South African Census* (Community data) supplemented by statistics from the *UN Development Report* (2004), the Statistics South Africa *Labour Force Survey* (March 2004), the Statistics South Africa *September 2004 Unemployment Statistics*, the Statistics South Africa *Income and Expenditure Survey* (2000) and the Department of Health, *Primary Health Care Progress Report* (2000) were also used.

CASE was commissioned by the UNHCR in December 2001 to undertake a baseline survey of asylum seekers and refugees in South Africa. This study focused on asylum seekers and refugees from Africa, as they constitute the majority of the refugee population. The following countries were included in the study: Angola, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Burundi, Congo-Brazzaville, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Uganda, Cameroon, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Sudan.

Both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection were used. Between August 2002 and August 2003 a survey of 1500 asylum-seekers and refugees was administered in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Cape Town and Durban. Focus groups were conducted with asylum

seekers and refugees in each area to clarify issues raised in the survey. In-depth interviews were also conducted with the Heads of the Refugee Reception Offices and service providers in each of the areas of study to complement the findings from the survey (CASE, 2003: 1.2).

## **2.1 Limitations of the study**

This desk study mainly focused on the National Refugee Baseline Survey by CASE which was conducted between 2002 and 2003. Comparison with specific local populations was in practice difficult due to a lack of information on the specific residential location in the cities where refugees predominantly reside (this information was not recorded by the CASE study). One can nevertheless accept that inner city areas such as Hillbrow and Yeoville (Johannesburg), Sunnyside (Pretoria), Albert Park and the Point Area (Durban) and Langa, Khayelitsha and Muizenberg (Cape Town) among others, and squatter areas house the bulk of refugees in South Africa (excluding former Mozambican refugees in the rural areas of Mpumalanga). Specific data or information on comparable local South African populations was not always available. In those case comparisons were made with available provincial or national figures.

## **3. REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

### **3.1 Background**

By the end of 2004 the UNHCR estimated that there were more than 17 million asylum seekers, refugees and others of concern to the UNHCR worldwide including almost 4,3 million in Africa (UNHCR: *Basic Facts*). South Africa hosted a total of 143 000 asylum-seekers and refugees by the end of 2004. This total comprises of 115 400 asylum-seekers and 27 600 refugees (UNHCR, 2005).

The profile of the refugee population in South Africa is not similar to the typical African pattern, but rather resembles refugee situations in some European and other industrial countries. South Africa has no refugee camps, but an entirely urban-based refugee population concentrated in the cities of Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban, Cape Town and Port Elizabeth.

In most African countries refugees are mainly located in refugee camps and tend to arrive in massive influx movements from neighbouring countries. The refugee population is of predominantly rural background with 75% women and children. South Africa, however, does not border on conflict-stricken countries with mass refugee outflows (except Mozambique and Angola in the pre-1994 period) (Groot, 2004: 38).

Asylum seekers in South Africa come from crisis regions further north and have transited several states where they had or could have found protection. Groot (2004:38, 40) noted that they chose South Africa because they prefer the urban situation and its opportunities for individual development, employment and independence from refugee camps. The perception exists that they are the most adaptable, educated and resourceful among Africa's refugees. The CASE study found that a large proportion of the asylum applicants who came to South Africa were fairly well educated. Two thirds of the interviewees in the study had completed Matric (i.e. completed secondary schooling) or a higher level of education, and of these almost one third had completed at least some tertiary education (CASE, 2003). More than 86% of the overall refugee population in South Africa is males (UNHCR, 2005).

### **3.2 Legislative framework**

Although South Africa received several thousands of refugees in the pre-1994 period (e.g. from Angola and Mozambique), the country only began to abide formally to international refugee law after signing the Basic Agreement with the UNHCR in 1993. In 1996 the South

African government signed the United Nations 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1969 Organisation for African Unity (OAU) Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. By signing these international conventions South Africa agreed to formally recognise and provide protection to people classified as refugees (Wentzel & Thlabela).

In 1998 South Africa endorsed the principles of the UN and OAU conventions by passing the Refugees Act (Act no 130 of 1998). This law became effective in 2000 and continues to be South Africa's primary piece of legislation related to the position of asylum seekers and refugees in the country.

The Refugees Act confirmed the definitions of a refugee as captured in the UN and OAU conventions. According to the Act South Africa has to protect any person who has fled another country because of "well-founded fears of persecution due to race, ethnic origin, political and religious creed and membership of any particular social groups". The country also has to grant asylum (i.e. refugee status) to anyone compelled to leave their home country because of "external aggression, occupation, foreign domination, or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or whole of his country of origin" (Gotz, & Landau, 2004: 16).

Apart from defining a refugee the Act also sets clear guidelines under what conditions asylum seekers may not be refused entry into the country or be expelled. It spells out when an applicant will not qualify, and when a person's status can be revoked. The Refugees Act also sets a clear procedure for asylum seekers to follow once in South Africa (RSA, 1998).

The Refugees Act distinguishes between those people whose case has been considered and are formally recognised as refugees and those who have applied for asylum but have yet to have their status determined i.e. either being recognised or being rejected.

Initially a regulation in the Refugees Act prohibited asylum seekers to work or study during the first six months after submitting their applications for refugee status. This regulation was suspended in 2003 and asylum seekers are allowed to work and study immediately after an asylum application is filed (CASE, 2003; UNHCR, 2005).

In 2004 South Africa received 32 500 new asylum applications (UNHCR, 2004). According to the UNHCR (2005:4,5) the South African asylum authorities are not able to deal with this amount of cases resulting in a backlog of pending applications in 2004 to 115 400 cases, an increase of 28% from 2003. The UNHCR (2005:5) estimated that of the 115 400 undecided applications, as much as 80 % originated from countries in which there are no conflicts. These people are economic migrants using the system as a way to legitimise their stay in the country.

The CASE study found that the waiting period for the determination of refugee status could be several years. It would, however, seem that since the introduction of the Refugees Act of 1998, the waiting period for asylum seekers to have their status determined have increased. More than two thirds of the respondents who applied under the Refugees Act of 1998, and who were still waiting at the time of the study, have been waiting for a period of up to three years (CASE, 2003).

### **3.3 Xenophobia**

Claims that South Africans were becoming increasingly antagonistic towards foreign citizens began to surface in the mid-1990s. Studies conducted during 1997-2000 by the Southern African Migration Project of South African attitudes to non-nationals have indeed found that

South Africans are not tolerant towards foreigners. This feelings cut across indicators of age, education, gender, economic status and race. (SAMP, 2001)

It is important to note that xenophobia is not just about attitudes and that it could be a source of exclusion for migrants. Negative attitudes to non-nationals could prompt service providers to exclude all categories of migrants from services they are entitled to and also need (Peberdy, et al, 2004).

An important problem is that many South Africans fail to make any distinction between the different categories of migrants in the country. Many people classified all foreigners the same, be they refugees, illegals, economic migrants or unauthorised migrants. All the different categories of migrants, however, have their own set of rights and entitlements. The obligations of government vary according to each category. Officials dealing with migrants are not always able to differentiate between the various categories of migrants with the result that asylum seekers or refugees at times cannot access the services to which they are entitled.

Since South Africa does not have refugee camps, forced migrants are expected to integrate into the South African society. This integration is essential for their social and economic survival but is hampered by many obstacles of which xenophobia is one of the single biggest obstructions. Foreigners may thus experience discrimination from governmental departments, institutions, the police and individuals in the community (Segale, 2004).

### **3.4 Barriers in obtaining documentation**

As indicated earlier the high number of economic migrants accessing the refugee status determination procedure and the inability of the Department of Home Affairs to cope with the number of asylum applications resulted in a huge backlog. Furthermore, the Department of Home Affairs made less than 1 600 decisions on asylum seekers during 2004 (UNHCR, 2005). Genuine asylum seekers thus have to wait for long periods before their applications are being processed.

The delays in processing the new asylum applications have caused great uncertainty about many people's legal status and their rights to services (Gotz and Landau, 2004).

Respondents in the CASE study indicated that an important barrier linked to the submission of applications for refugee status were the inability to access the Refugee Reception Offices, on account of quotas per country per day and being required to pay a bribe. The same barriers were experienced in renewing the asylum permits (CASE, 2003). The inability to access the Refugee Reception Offices has serious consequences for the asylum seekers and refugees since they have no documentary proof that they attempted to apply for asylum or extend their permits. Asylum seekers and refugees without proper documentation will certainly face detention or arrest (Groot, 2004).

Some of the respondents in the CASE study also reported that payment was requested during the different stages of the asylum procedure. It was often interpreters, brokers/agents and officials from the Department of Home Affairs to a lesser extent, who requested these payments (CASE, 2003). Services at the Refugee Reception Offices should normally be free.

Cases of corruption were also regularly reported to the Black Sash, an organisation assisting refugees. Apart from the already mentioned forms of corruption they also became aware of security guards claiming bribes before allowing asylum seekers access to the buildings of the Department of Home Affairs (Segale, 2004).

Almost all applicants in the CASE study indicated that the lack of proper documentation has negatively impacted on their lives in South Africa. In particular, the lack of proper identity

documents made it difficult for applicants to access employment, basic social services such as education, health care, housing and financial services, e.g. bank accounts and loans (CASE, 2003). However, with the assistance of the UNHCR in South Africa there has been a dramatic improvement in the number of refugee identity documents that were issued by the Department of Home Affairs in 2004 (UNHCR, 2005). The lack of proper identification documents is reported to be no longer a problem.

Contrary to commonly held beliefs, the overwhelming majority of respondents in the CASE study indicated that their documents were never destroyed or removed by government authorities (CASE, 2003).

#### **4. MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

Of the fifteen Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that were identified by the UNHCR's terms of reference, available statistics only allows for the analysis of three goals at most. This include MDGs that relate to income, literacy rate and rate of unemployment. The MDGs that could not be assessed due a lack of data on refugees and asylum seekers include:

- Prevalence of underweight children (children under 5 years of age) (MDG indicator 4)
- Ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education (MDG indicator 9)
- Under five and infant mortality rate (MDG indicator 13 and 14)
- Proportion of 1 year old children immunized against measles (MDG indicator 15)
- Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel (MDG indicator 17)
- Condom use rate of the contraceptive prevalence rate (MDG indicator 19)
- Contraceptive prevalence rate (MDG indicator 19C)
- Prevalence and death rates associated with malaria (MDG indicator 21)
- Proportion of population in malaria-risk areas using effective malaria prevention and treatment measures (MDG indicator 22)
- Proportion of population with sustainable access to improved water source (MDG indicator 30)
- Proportion of population with access to improved sanitation
- Proportion of households with access to secure tenure (MDG indicator 32)

As mentioned above, only three MDGs have information related to refugees. This information was collected during a survey conducted among refugees by CASE in 2003. Information obtained during the 2001 South African census are used as a reference. It should however be pointed out that the differences in dates of information will have inevitable implications that cannot easily be compensated for. This is unfortunately due to limitations on the existence and format of information available.

## 4.1 Income

### 4.1.1 *The proportion of population below 1 USD per day/the national or any other applicable poverty line (MDG indicator 1, 1A, 2)*

This particular MDG overlaps with the UNHCR standard/indicator No 39 and should therefore be read together with the section on *Average household/family income*. The information collected by CASE (2003) reveals that most of the refugees lived above the one dollar a day criteria. With the information available a rough estimate would be that less than 7% of the CASE survey respondents (N=1422) are likely to live below the 1 dollar (R6 at current exchange rate levels) a day or R180 per month level of income per capita. Comparatively, 7.1% of the total South African population lived below the 1 dollar a day benchmark in 1995 (World Development Indicators, 2004).

**Table 1: A comparison of the ‘no income’ category of South Africans and refugees/asylum seekers in selected suburbs of major cities**

	<b>Cape Town</b>	<b>Durban</b>	<b>Johannesburg</b>	<b>Pretoria</b>
Refugees: % No Income	3%	5%	2%	7%
South Africans: % No income	30%	15%	7%	12%

A comparison of ‘no income’ categories (that imply less than a dollar income per day) of data provided by CASE and the South African census 2001 reveals that refugees and asylum seekers seem to be generally better off than the average South African household in selected suburbs in major cities<sup>1</sup>. However this picture might be deceptive because of the fact that income of South Africans such as government grants and that earned from informal sector activities might not have been accurately recorded during the 2001 South African census. Calculations of an approximate per capita income were done by CASE on the basis of reported household size and income. A word of caution on the interpretation of the figures was given based on the fact that respondents in the first phase of the study specified their household income within particular ranges while respondents during the second phase specified an exact number. It was found that the average per capita income for the sample was R849 whereas the median value for monthly per capita income was R650 (CASE, 2003:60). It was also pointed out that the household income of a number of cases were quite high which led to the belief that the median value provide a more accurate picture of the actual income per household member. Table 2 provides an overview of the per capita income of respondents by country of origin.

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<sup>1</sup> 2001 Census data are based on household income for selected suburbs in Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban and Pretoria where refugees are known to live (Refer to section on methodology for the suburb names).

**Table 2: Per capita monthly income of refugee/asylum seeker respondents by country of origin**

Country	Mean	Median
Other countries	R 1,407	R 1200
Congo-Brazzaville	R 1,244	R 917
Uganda	R 1,094	R 750
Somalia	R 1,074	R 650
Angola	R794	R 637
Ethiopia	R756	R 750
Rwanda	R733	R 583
Burundi	R728	R 500
DRC	R618	R 500
<b>Total</b>	<b>R849</b>	<b>R650</b>

(Source: CASE 2003:60)

A comparison of the median per capita (monthly) income of refugees and asylum seekers as determined by the CASE (2003) study at R650 with the per capita (monthly) income of South Africans as determined by Statistics South Africa (2000) reveals that refugees and asylum seekers are well below the R980 per month (R11755 per annum) level earned by the average South African in 2000. This figure increased to R1430 per month in 2002, which is more than double the income earned by refugees and asylum seekers in the CASE (2003) study. This difference is likely to be due to the high number of refugees and asylum seekers that are employed in the informal sector. It is also known that informal sector workers earn between 2 and 2.5 times less than their counterparts in the formal sector, which partially explains the income gap observed between refugees and asylum seekers and their South African counterparts.

## 4.2 Literacy

### 4.2.1 Literacy rate (15-24 years old) (MDG indicator 8 and 10)

The information yielded by the CASE survey on literacy rate was unfortunately not categorised according to age. One can however estimate what such a figure could look like since it is known that only 17% of the total number of sampled refugees fell in the age category 16-24. A worst case scenario in terms of the literacy rate for this age category would be 18%, if all respondents with no formal schooling (3% of the total sample) falls within this particular age category. Because of the statistical improbability of such a scenario it can be safely assumed that far less than 18% of respondents in the age category 16-24 have received no formal schooling. The literacy rate for South African youth (15-24) for 1985 was an estimated 86.8% (Youth Development Network, 2005). This dated indicator does show high literacy rates among young South Africans that would have been significantly higher in 2003 due to the implementation of a compulsory education system for South African children between the ages of 7 and 15 years in 1996.

The information presented by CASE (2003) on all respondents reveals that a large proportion of refugees and asylum seekers who came to South Africa were fairly well educated. Approximately two thirds of the respondents had completed Matric or a higher level of education, and of these almost one third had completed at least some tertiary education (refer to Table 3). A comparison of these figures with 2001 Census for comparable groups of South Africans aged 20 and over nationally shows that refugees generally tend to have higher levels of education. Approximately 22% of a comparable group of South Africans, for example, did

not have any schooling compared to the only 3% of refugees and asylum seekers. These figures indicate a higher literacy rate among refugees when compared to South Africans.

**Table 3: Highest level of education attained (refugees/asylum seekers)**

<b>Level of education</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
No formal schooling	39	3
Primary education	97	7
Secondary education	369	25
Matric (Secondary/High school certificate)	510	34
Tertiary education	287	19
Post graduate degree (masters, doctorate)	53	4
Post graduate diploma	33	2
Some tertiary education	114	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>1502</b>	<b>100</b>

(Source: CASE: 2003: 45)

### **4.3 Unemployment rate**

#### *4.3.1 The rate of unemployment of people aged 15-24 years (MDG indicator 45)*

The information provided by the CASE study on employed/unemployed refugees and asylum seekers was unfortunately not categorised according to age. Despite this shortcoming, information on employment was provided for all the respondents combined. Although not the ideal, this information provides an approximate indication of unemployment among refugees and asylum seekers in South Africa.

Results of the survey showed that a large proportion of the surveyed refugees and asylum seekers were engaged in occupations that require low skill levels, such as vendors, car-guards, or are employed as security guards (see Table 4). Semi-skilled and skilled occupation comprised 20% of all respondents. The result also showed that 24% of respondents were unemployed at the time of the survey. This rate of unemployment is relatively high considering that the refugees' level of education is generally high (see to the previous section on literacy). When compared to the average unemployment level in South Africa of 26,2% (Statistics South Africa, 2004) it would seem as if the unemployment level of refugees and asylum seekers (24%) are marginally lower than that for the total South African population and may therefore appear to compare favourably. However, since the majority (83%) of respondents of the CASE (2003) study were male it should be taken into account that the general rate of unemployment among men in South Africa is lower than for women. The definition of unemployment by Statistics South Africa also impacts on what is considered 'unemployment'. The official definition of unemployment is that a person must have engaged in job seeking in the four weeks prior to the interview (Statistics South Africa, 1994). The fact that CASE did not adhere to this definition questioned the comparability of unemployment statistics from the CASE survey with official South African statistics. Therefore despite the favorable appearance of the unemployment statistics it should be noted that more refugees are likely to be unemployed when compared to sections of the South Africa population living in the same areas.

**Table 4: Current occupation of refugees/asylum seekers according to level of skill**

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Unskilled occupations	773	52
Not employed	356	24
Semi-skilled occupations	257	17
Student	51	3
Skilled occupations	49	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>1485</b>	<b>100</b>

(Source: CASE 2003: 52)

## 5. UNHCR STANDARDS AND INDICATORS

In view of the absence of research questions based on the 2004 UNHCR Standards and Indicators Report a number of indicators and standards relevant to the objective of the study will be selected for inclusion in the desk study. It should be noted that the selection of indicators/standards are based on the availability of information or statistics as contained by the National Refugee Baseline Survey conducted by CASE.

### 5.1 Demographic data

#### 5.1.1 Age

A general overview of the average age is available for respondents in the CASE study. Table 5 highlights the average age of respondents in the CASE study by their country of origin. Minimum and maximum ages recorded are also shown. The average age of respondents from different countries did not vary much with Ethiopia representing the lowest average age at 28 and Rwanda the highest at 33 years. The average age of the total sample was 31 years with 16 the lowest and 77 the highest recorded age.

**Table 5: Average age of refugee/asylum seeker respondents by country of origin**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Min.</b>	<b>Max</b>
Rwanda	33	16	77
DRC	32	17	63
Somalia	32	19	65
Congo-Brazzaville	31	19	54
Uganda	30	20	49
Angola	29	17	48
Burundi	29	18	47
Ethiopia	28	17	43
Other countries	31	19	48
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>77</b>

Source (CASE: 2003: 42)

A comparison of the average age of the sample of respondents in the CASE study with the general population living in inner city areas where refugees are believed to live, reveals that the average age of refugees and asylum seekers (31 years) is equal to that of local South Africans at 31.15 years. Census 2001 data of selected inner city<sup>2</sup> and other areas were used to

<sup>2</sup> 2001 Census data are based on household income for selected suburbs in Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban and Pretoria where refugees are known to live (Refer to section on methodology for detail on suburb names)

calculate the South African average for people 16 years and older. It should be noted that only respondents aged 16 and higher were recorded in the CASE (2003) study. This implicitly excludes minors that are likely to significantly lower the average age of 31.

## 5.2 Access to rights

### 5.2.1 Gainful employment (Standard/Indicator 10)

On the question “What is this family unit’s main source of income?” (CASE, 2003: 61) the CASE study recorded information on the number of respondents that received some type of income. The results of the study are reflected in Table 6 and shows that 67% of respondents either earn wages from employment or selling goods. A further 9% of respondents performed piece jobs that cannot realistically be considered as ‘gainful’ employment. A further breakdown of statistics by the locality where the interviews were conducted showed that Durban (87%) and Cape Town (86%) had the highest rate of employed refugees. Other cities such as Johannesburg and Pretoria followed with 71% and 56% respectively. It should be noted the majority of refugees in the CASE (2003) study were ‘employed’ in the informal sector. Refugees and asylum seekers are in many instances employed by South African informal sector entrepreneurs where they earn less than South Africans due to their insecurity and status as foreigners.

Comparing South African provincial employment statistics (Statistics South Africa, 2004b) with data obtained by CASE shows that KwaZulu-Natal had an employment rate of 67.8%, Gauteng stood at 71.8% and the Western Cape at 83.1%. Refugees staying in KwaZulu-Natal (Durban, 87%) and the Western Cape (Cape Town, 86%) generally had a higher rate of employment than the provincial averages. Refugees and asylum seekers in Gauteng (Johannesburg, 71%) were below the average provincial rate of employment with refugees in Pretoria being worse off at 56%. However, caution need to be applied with the direct comparisons of these different sets of statistics. Different definitions of ‘employment’ by different issuers of statistics could potentially categorise a larger section of refugees and asylum seekers as ‘unemployed’ when judged according to definitions used by Statistics South Africa. It should also be noted that most refugees are ‘employed’ in the informal sector whereas a significant percentage of South Africans are employed in the better paying formal sector. Highly qualified refugees are often unable to secure ‘formal sector’ employment due to a lack of recognition of their qualifications.

**Table 6: Refugees/Asylum seekers’ main source of income**

Main source of income	N	%
Wages from employment	820	55
Selling goods	174	12
Wages of another member of the household	158	11
Gifts/money/remittances	135	9
Piece jobs	134	9
No source of income	44	3
Assistance from NGOs/Churches/mosques	28	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>1493</b>	<b>100</b>

(Source: CASE: 2003: 61)

### 5.2.2 Housing (Standard/Indicator 11)

Respondents in the CASE study were asked where they were staying at the time of the interview. The breakdown in Table 4 reveals that most (39%) respondents rented a room(s) in a house or a flat. A significant proportion of respondents (35%) shared a room(s) in a house or a flat. Only 16% of the respondents had the resources to rent a house or a flat themselves. The remainder of people did not pay any rent (4%) or obtained alternative means (6%) of accommodation that include staying at shelters, with friends or on the street (Refer to Table 7).

**Table 7: Living arrangements of refugee/asylum seekers**

Housing type	N	%
Rent a room(s) in a house or flat	586	39
Share a room in a house or flat	528	35
Rent a house or a flat	237	16
No rent	66	4
Other	85	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>1501</b>	<b>100</b>

(Source: CASE: 2003: 135)

Sadie & Borger (2004: 85) mentioned that one of the primary housing issues facing refugees and asylum seekers was the higher rent that they pay when compared with South Africans. A Wits University survey conducted in 2003 reveals that 37% of South Africans pay more than R800 per month while 59% of non-South Africans<sup>3</sup> paid more than R800 per month. This shows that refugees and asylum seekers are likely to pay more rent than South Africans that are staying in comparable areas. This is reportedly the result of having to move frequently, not having an identity book, and the exploitation of the vulnerability of foreigners by landlords.

The majority of refugees and asylum seekers are likely to stay in high-density inner city areas in major cities that include Johannesburg, Pretoria and Durban. The bulk of accommodation in these areas can be classified as flats that generally vary between one and three bedrooms in size. However, Cape Town is the major exception with most refugees and asylum seekers living in township and squatter areas. Accommodation in these areas may vary more and can include among others, outer rooms, houses and squatter shacks. Rent paid in inner city areas such as Hillbrow, Yeoville (Johannesburg), Sunnyside (Pretoria), Albert Park and the Point Area (Durban) are also likely to be significantly higher when compared with that paid by refugees and asylum seekers in township and squatter settlements.

The frequent practice of partitioning rooms, flats and houses seem to be a common strategy to accommodate more occupants at reduced rental charges. This reportedly has negative health implications, creates security problems and severely restricts home - based economic activities (Pursell, 2004). The Wits University study revealed that newly arrived refugees experienced difficulties in finding suitable short-term accommodation. It is further reported that the majority of new refugees and asylum seekers stayed with family or friends with only 6% staying in hotels, shelters, hostels or guesthouses. Those that did acquire rental accommodation often experienced difficulty to access public services such as water and electricity due to an absence of national identity documents.

Comparing statistics of the South African 2001 census with that of the CASE study for refugees and asylum seekers shows that a much higher proportion of refugees (74%) are

<sup>3</sup> The non-South African category comprised 73% refugees and asylum seekers with the remainder of people being foreigners that could not be classified as either refugees or asylum seekers.

renting accommodation than South Africans (31%) in selected suburbs of major cities<sup>4</sup>. This is understandable given the fact that a significant proportion of South Africans own the properties that they live in. Refugees are therefore likely to be significantly worse off than South Africans in comparative areas because of higher accommodation costs. High costs linked to the comparatively low income earned by refugees and asylum seekers leave them with no other option than to share accommodation with other people which leads to over crowding and unhealthy living conditions.

### 5.3 Self-reliance, assistance and community services

#### 5.3.1 Average household/family income (Standard/Indicator 39)

The household income of refugees ranged from no income to R10 000 per month with an average monthly income of R1 993 per month. CASE found a positive relationship between the size of the household and the total monthly income (CASE, 2003: 59). Households consisting of one person were more likely to earn up to R1 100 per month, whereas households of three people were likely to have incomes of between R1 100 and R2 500 per month. Table 8 provides a breakdown of household size by household monthly income.

**Table 8: Monthly household income of refugee/asylum seeker respondents**

<b>Income category</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>No income</b>	3%
<b>&lt;R800</b>	12%
<b>R801-R1500</b>	28%
<b>R1601-R3500</b>	38%
<b>R3201+</b>	19%
<b>Total</b>	100%
<b>N</b>	1422

(Source: Adapted from CASE 2003: 59)

A comparison of household income recorded by the 2001 South African census figure for selected suburbs of major cities<sup>5</sup> with refugees and asylum seeker respondents in the CASE survey proves to be particularly troublesome due to the two years time gap that separate the data sets. (Refer to Table 8 & 9). The general growth in household income between 2001 and 2003 are likely to put South Africans ahead of refugees and asylum seekers. It should also be noted that a significant percentage of South Africa households earned in excess of R10 000 per month whereas the maximum refugee/asylum seeker household income was limited to R10 000 per month in the CASE (2003) survey.

<sup>4</sup> 2001 Census data are based on household income for selected suburbs in Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban and Pretoria where refugees are known to live (refer to section on methodology for detail on suburb names).

<sup>5</sup> 2001 Census data are based on household income for selected suburbs in Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban and Pretoria where refugees are known to live (Refer to the section on methodology for detail on the suburb names).

**Table 9: Monthly household income of South Africans in selected suburbs of major cities**

Income categories	Total %
No income	26%
<R800	19%
R801-R1600	22%
R1601-R3200	16%
R3201+	17%
<b>Total</b>	100%
<b>N</b>	166 422

(Source: Census 2001 – Community database)

## 5.4 Targeted Community Assistance and Health

### 5.4.1 Primary health care use (Standard/Indicator 14 & 42)

Section 27(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa states that everyone has the right to health care services, including reproductive health care. This obligation is also reflected by section 27(g) of the Refugees Act 130 of 1998 which state that refugees are, “entitled to the same basic health services and basic primary education which the inhabitants of the Republic receive from time to time”. Where as this Act entrench the rights of recognized refugees it does not cater for the needs of asylum seekers that are awaiting the outcome of their application for refugee status. Both the CASE and the University of the Witwatersrand studies, respectively, revealed that a small percentage of people that were granted refugee status received official refugee documents (Pursell, 2004: 95). Refugees without these official documents often found it difficult to access the medical services that they were entitled to. The CASE survey for example, reported that 17% of respondents were denied emergency medical treatment when needed. It was also reported by Pursell (2004:95) that the inability of many foreign migrants to communicate with hospital staff limited their ability to exercise their rights to health care. Refugees were also not always well informed of their rights to services such as health care.

Despite the problems faced by refugees and asylum seekers to obtain health services, CASE reported that the majority of surveyed refugees and asylum seekers (83%) have used primary health care facilities during their stay in South Africa. Of this percentage 91% of respondents indicated that they have never been refused non-emergency health care at some point in time during their stay in South Africa. The institutions most often visited when in need of primary health care included public hospitals (44%) and local public clinics (32%) (Refer to Table 10).

**Table 10: Primary Health Care facilities used by refugees/asylum seekers**

Health facility	N	%
Public hospital	540	44
Local public clinic	401	32
Pharmacy	189	15
Local private clinic	59	5
Private hospital	34	3
General Practitioner (GP)/Surgery	4	0
Traditional healer	2	0
Other places	11	1
<b>Total</b>	1240	100

(Source: CASE, 2003:147)

Information on general utilisation rates of health facilities in South Africa has been lacking and most of the available data is on Primary Health Care. Provincial information is provided on Primary Health Care (PHC) visits<sup>6</sup> between 1994 and 1999 by type of service used. However, data from provinces is in headcount format (All individual patients seen during the period (usually per month). Each patient is counted once for each day they appeared at the facility, regardless of the number of services provided on the day(s) they were seen (National Department of Health, 2000).

Comparing the total number of South Africans that utilized primary health care services with the total number of people per province shows usage ratios in excess of the total number of people per province (Refer to Table 7). The relatively high rates of usage in the three selected provinces indicate multiple visits by some users. Both refugee and asylum seekers and local populations seem to have relatively good access to public primary health care services but not to emergency health care. It should also be noted that the standard of health care received by South Africans are likely to be higher than refugees and asylum seekers due to higher income earnings of South Africans with access to medical aid and private health care facilities.

Refugees and asylum seekers in South Africa are increasingly being affect by the HIV/AIDS pandemic (UNHCR, 2004). Recent advocacy and lobbying efforts by the UNHCR saw the South African government commit to proving recognized refugees with access to HIV/AIDS anti-retroviral treatment programs.

**Table 11: Number of Contacts of all patients at Primary Health Care facilities by province for 1998 –1999**

Province	1998	1999	Provincial population (2001 census)
Gauteng	11 792 952	12 215 025	8 800 000
Kwazulu-Natal	12 859 158	19 476 079	9 400 000
Western Cape	10 864 360	9 734 037	4 500 000

(Adapted from: National Department of Health, 2000)

## 5.5 Education

### 5.5.1 Primary and Secondary school enrollment (Indicators 12, 14 & 46)

Access to education as set out by the South African Constitution, guarantees the right to free, compulsory and all encompassing education (Winterstein & Stone, 2004:78). This provides a framework for the legally mandated compulsory education for children between the ages of seven and fifteen or to grade nine. Article 27 (g) of the Refugees Act (130 of 1998) contains a provision that refugees are entitled to the rights provided in the Bill of Rights of the Constitution and thus states that refugees as well as refugee children are entitled to the same basic health services and basic primary education which the inhabitants of the republic receive from time to time (Winterstein & Stone, 2004:78).

Winterstein & Stone, (2004) also reports that schools are often the only point of entry for refugee children to integrate into the South African society. Based on the available evidence, it would seem as if not all refugees send their children to school. The results of the CASE study showed that a significant proportion of children or refugee dependents did not attend school. The enrolment rate of migrant children at primary school going age was reported to be

<sup>6</sup> A Primary Health Care visit was defined as constituting a visit to a mobile or fixed clinic, community health centre or a day hospital

as low as 74%. This stands in contrast with the gross South African primary school enrolment ratio of 98% percent in 2002 (World Development Report, 2005).

The statistics recorded by CASE for refugee and asylum seeker children of secondary school going age indicated a 61% school enrolment rate that is lower than the gross South African secondary school enrolment ratio of 65.5% in 2002 (World Development Report, 2005).

According to the CASE study (2003), the majority of refugee parents cited high school fees as the main reason for not sending their children to school. This is despite the fact that the South African Schools Act (SASA) 84 of 1996 explicitly state that all schools must have an exemption policy in place that accommodate parents unable to afford school fees. Access cost has also been identified by Winterstein & Stone as problematic. These costs are incurred by refugee parents when sending their children to school and include costs such as transport to and from school, acquiring school uniforms, books and learning material.

Other specific issues of concern pointed out by Winterstein & Stone (2004) is that Section 34 of SASA stipulates that children who live within a designated 'feeder zone' of a school are given first priority to enrol. This reportedly impacts directly on refugee children when accessing schools due to the availability of space and the prioritisation of schools in enrolling learners. The general over population and high residential densities of city centres where most refugees reside mean that schools are often overcrowded and are forced to apply strict enrolment policies. This result in schools that are often unable to cope with enrolling all children in their feeder areas due to limited space. Refugee children are often the casualties of this problem due to prioritisation of schools in accepting children.

Age requirements of the Department of Education as captured in Section 3 of the Schedule to the Admission Policy for Ordinary Public Schools can also be problematic to refugee children (Winterstein & Stone, 2004). These requirements for admission (Section 27) stipulates that if a student has been admitted to a public school at an age above the norm for a grade, such a student must be placed with his or her peer group, unless it is not in the educational interests of the student. Those children that did not attend school for a prolonged period of time may therefore be faced with problems of having to attend fast track programs that will enable them to catch up with their peer group.

## **6. REFUGEES IN SOUTH AFRICA AND THE MDG's: DATA LIMITATIONS AND OTHER CONSTRAINING FACTORS**

### **6.1 Dispersal of the refugee/asylum population**

In many countries with a large refugee population, a significant proportion of the refugees are living in camps. They are therefore a "captive" population, easy to identify and easy to locate. The task of collecting information from such a population is relatively uncomplicated. However, in South Africa the refugee/asylum population is living among the local population, albeit concentrated in specific areas (but not everyone). To conduct a representative sample among refugee/asylum households is a complex and expensive venture. The first difficult or near impossible task will be the compilation of a complete address list.

Should it be necessary to collect information by way of a survey, another option would be to target specific spatial localities with high refugees densities. Resident status can then be used as a variable to differentiate between refugees/asylum seekers, other immigrants and citizens. However, experience of the HSRC during national surveys was that foreigners do not easily participate in surveys, or tend to disguise their origin or status.

## 6.2 Lack of official and other data

What is astounding is that no exact information is available regarding the age distribution of refugees/asylum seekers. Thus it is near impossible to fathom how many of the refugees are children. Children are an important cornerstone of the MDG's<sup>7</sup>. Neither the CASE study nor any other study included detailed information on children and dependents that are needed to compare refugee/asylum seekers with the South African population. Children are regarded as one of the most vulnerable groups in society and are recognized as such by the MDGs. This seems thus to be one of the major shortcomings of the CASE study as well as other comparable studies for example, the study done by the University of the Witwatersrand.

A lack of information on the exact geographical location such as suburb level is not provided in the CASE study. This complicates any analysis with comparable South African data. Detailed information on the type of housing that refugees and asylum seekers occupied is also not provided. It is thus difficult to establish the access of refugee/asylum seekers to services such as improved water sources and sanitation. Different types of dwellings have significant implications for refugees/asylum seekers with regard to their access to these services as well as security of tenure.

Many MDG indicators are collected by means of surveys. Of particular importance is the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS)<sup>8</sup>. But even such a detailed survey can only provide estimates at a provincial level. For a DHS to collect data to enable estimates at district or even smaller level would call for a massive sample at a huge cost. Therefore it was not possible to provide estimates of indicators for the South African population living in specific localities of certain cities.

## 7. SUMMARY

The Refugees Act passed in 1998 and effective since 2000, is South Africa's primary legislation related to the position of asylum seekers and refugees in the country.

The UNHCR (2005: 4) noted in a report *that the phenomenon of mixed flows of migrants and refugees continued to pose a major challenge to the protection of refugees. In the absence of an immigration regime which allows economic migrants to easily enter and remain in the country legally, prospective immigrants abuse the existing asylum procedure to legalise their stay, thus clogging the asylum procedure.* The South African Department of Home Affairs is not able to deal with the high number of asylum applications resulting in a backlog of 115 400 cases at the end of 2004. The resulting delays in processing the asylum applications caused great uncertainty about genuine refugees' legal status and their rights to services.

An important barrier linked to the submission or renewal of applications for refugee status were the inability to access the Refugee Reception Offices as a result of quotas per country per day and being required to pay a bribe. This has serious consequences for asylum seekers and refugees since they have no documentary proof that they attempted to apply for asylum or extend their permits thus placing them at risk of detention or arrest.

Relatively high levels of xenophobia are present amongst the South African population. This has hampered the integration of refugees and asylum seekers into the South African society.

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<sup>7</sup> This situation may change during the next year. The Department of Home Affairs has recently commissioned a new computer system to document refugees and asylum seekers. One by-product of this computerised system will be that age and other information of the refugee and asylum seeking population will become available.

<sup>8</sup> South Africa conducted a DHS in 2003/2004. However the results of this survey are not yet available.

Foreigners may thus experience discrimination from various service providers and civil society.

Since service providers dealing with migrants are not always able to differentiate between the various categories of migrants and the accompanying sets of rights and entitlements, asylum seekers and refugees could often not access the services to which they are entitled.

This report should be read in the context of a general lack of detailed information on the well-being of refugees in South Africa in general.

Due to a lack of data only three millennium development goals (MDGs) were reviewed for the purposes of this report. A summary of the MDGs is as follows:

- The first goal selected was that of income related to the proportion of population below the 1 US dollar per day (MDG Indicator 1, 1A, 2). It was found that the average income of refugees was significantly lower than the average for the general South African population. An estimated 7% of refugees and asylum seekers were living below the one dollar a day poverty line compared to 7.1% for the general South African population. The per capita income of refugees and asylum seekers did not compare well with the income earned by the average South African. Estimates are that refugees and asylum seeker households earn on average only about half that of a typical South African household
- The second MDG reviewed was that of literacy rate (MDG Indicator 8 and 10). Literacy rates for refugees in the age category 16-24 could not be reliably determined but are estimated to be in excess of 82%. This figure is lower than the South African figure that is in excess of 86%. Current figures for South Africa may be higher on account of legislation passed in 1996, making education compulsory for children aged 7 to 15.
- Statistics for the last MDG indicator, rate of unemployment of people aged 15-24 years, (MDG indicator 45) could not reliably be determined. Nevertheless, it is accepted that the general level of unemployment among refugees and asylum seekers is in excess of that for a comparable section of the South African population. South African citizens also have access to unemployment benefits that unemployed refugees and asylum seekers have to go without.

A summary of the results of the six UNHCR standards and indicators that were reviewed is as follows:

- The first indicator (Age) revealed that the age of refugees and asylum seekers (31 years) are equal to the age of inner city South Africans (excluding children younger than the aged 16). The inclusion of children would substantially lower this figure.
- Most of the refugees in the CASE (2003) study were involved in low paid jobs in the informal sector. The level of unemployment of refugees and asylum seekers in cities such as Pretoria were found to be extremely high and a source for concern.
- The majority of refugees and asylum seekers paid much higher rental charges than South Africans in inner city areas. Strategies to cope with this high costs leads to overcrowding and unhealthy living conditions. Xenophobic attitudes of South Africans and feelings of insecurity compel refugees and asylum seekers to seek housing in more expensive cosmopolitan inner city areas where they are less noticeable.

- Refugees and asylum seeker' household income earnings are limited by a lack of formal sector employment opportunities. The maximum recorded income of a refugee and asylum seeker household was R10 000 whereas a significant number of comparable South African households earned in excess of this figure.
- Primary health care use (Standard/Indicator 14 & 42) proved to be a particularly difficult indicator to deal with due to different types and formats of data. It could nevertheless be established that a significant percentage (83%) of refugees and asylum seekers made use of primary health care facilities in South Africa. Reports of a high rate of medical emergency refusals to refugees and asylum seekers by private clinics and hospitals were highlighted by the CASE (2003) study as an issue of concern. Comparative emergency health care access data for South African citizens is not available. Recognised refugees reportedly have access to government sponsored HIV/AIDS anti-retroviral programmes.
- Primary and secondary school enrolments (Standard/Indicator 12, 14 & 46) showed lower enrolment rates for refugee children when compared to South African children. It is particularly primary school enrolment rates of 74% of refugee children that compare poorly with South African enrolment rates of 98%. Secondary enrolments were 61% for refugee children and 65.5% for South African children.

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