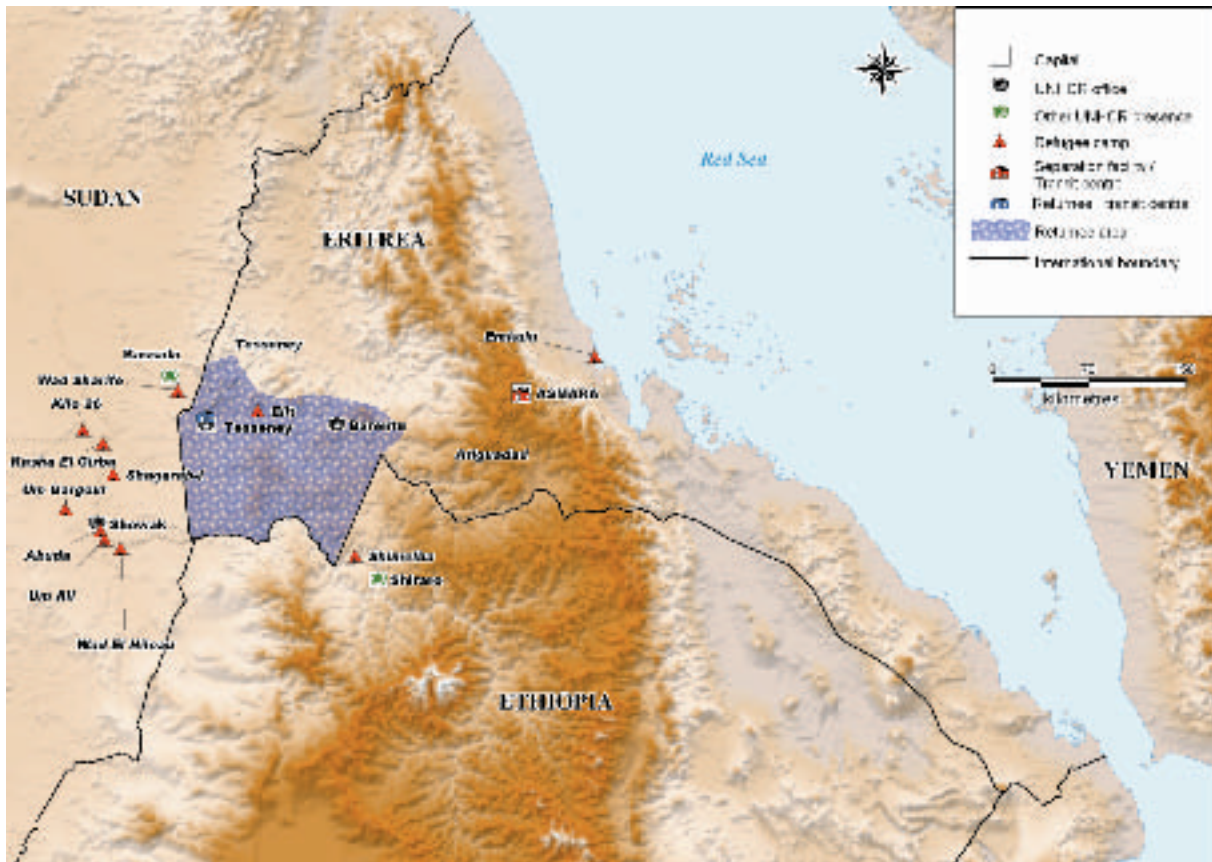


# Eritrea



## Main objectives

- Ensure international protection, provide care and maintenance assistance and seek durable solutions for some 4,000 refugees, as well as some 580 asylum-seekers.
- Facilitate the voluntary repatriation of 3,000 Eritrean refugees from Sudan.
- Consolidate the response to the immediate needs of returnees and returnee-receiving areas.
- Mobilize the support of other UN and development agencies in addressing the longer-term needs of returnee areas.

Planning figures		
Population	Jan 2006	Dec 2006
Returnees	17,000	20,000
Somalia (refugees)	3,500	2,000
Asylum-seekers	580	565
Other refugees	560	260
<b>Total</b>	<b>21,640</b>	<b>22,825</b>

**Total requirements: USD 9,212,440**

## Working environment

### Recent developments

In September 2005, the UN Security Council extended the mandate of the UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) until 15 March 2006. The Security Council also expressed concern about the high concentration of troops from both countries near the border over which they had fought a two-year war. These military movements gave rise to fears of renewed conflict, and Ethiopia was urged to accept as final the decision of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission on the demarcation of the border and to enable the Commission to demarcate the border without delay.

Some 2.3 million people in Eritrea, almost two-thirds of the population, depend on varying levels of food aid. In July 2005, Eritrea asked the US Agency for International Development (USAID) – its largest donor of food aid – to stop operations, saying it was “uncomfortable” with the agency's work. In its September resolution, the UN Security Council expressed concern about the food security situation and its potential to create greater instability in both Eritrea and Ethiopia, and called on Eritrea to lift restrictions imposed on the operations of aid organizations. At the time of writing, humanitarian officials in Eritrea were assessing how the departure of USAID would affect food security. In 2004, the country produced 85,000 metric tons of cereals: just 15 per cent of its yearly food requirements and less than half of the average annual harvest over the previous twelve years. Although the food crisis is largely attributable to long-term drought, the failure to grow sufficient food since 1998 is also commonly linked to Eritrea's conflict with Ethiopia and its strengthening of defences along the border.

### Constraints

The difficulties caused by prolonged drought in returnee areas have been compounded by the significant risk of mines and unexploded ordnance and the increased security concerns caused by the failure of Eritrea and Ethiopia to resolve the border issue. All these factors will require careful

monitoring to ensure that appropriate levels of security can be maintained to implement the country operation. The limited involvement of NGOs in the country limits the development of eventual partnerships.

Although the Governments of Eritrea and Sudan maintain a humanitarian corridor for voluntary repatriation, the border point into Sudan remains closed. Trade and local economies have suffered as a result, reducing the prospects of successful reintegration of returnees. Construction projects have been delayed by the lack of skilled labour and a chronic shortage of building materials. The high rate of inflation has further complicated the reintegration of returnees. The border with Ethiopia also remains closed.

UNHCR's exit strategy is being compromised by the lack of an integrated United Nations and Government strategy to address the longer-term needs of returnees and displaced people in the country.

In the absence of national refugee-related legislation and procedures, UNHCR retains the primary responsibility for the protection of refugees. This involves ensuring access to asylum, fair procedures and refugee status determination (RSD). UNHCR will actively pursue durable solutions, mainly through resettlement and voluntary repatriation for refugees from Somalia and Sudan. However, the success of these efforts will be contingent not only upon conditions in those countries, but also upon the allocation of additional resources to UNHCR.

## Strategy

### Protection and solutions

The Office will continue to monitor conditions of return for past and new returnees in Eritrea. It will monitor the enjoyment of rights by returnees, especially their access to basic services. In 2006, UNHCR will maintain a response capacity for the return of 3,000 returnees from Sudan and continue with the provision of reintegration assistance for an estimated 17,000 persons in the main



Village in the Gash Barka region of Eritrea, where many returnees have set up home. UNHCR / E. Parsons

returnee areas. This will be the continuation of efforts to address one of the world's oldest protracted refugee situations (dating back to the 1960s). The majority of the 3,000 refugees are expected to return to the Gash Barka region in western Eritrea, an area with great agricultural potential despite the recent devastation wrought by war and drought. Since 2000, some 230,000 refugees have repatriated, of whom UNHCR has assisted over 120,000.

Considerable inputs are still required in returnee areas to ensure the sustainability of repatriation. UNHCR is continuing with its "4Rs" initiatives (Repatriation, Reintegration, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction), advocating for joint efforts to address identified gaps and foster synergy between UN agencies and other development actors in the recovery process. Initially UNHCR interventions focused on addressing basic infrastructural needs. The focus will now shift towards protecting these investments in the community through local government capacity building. In addition, if livelihoods are to be

sustainable, there will have to be a greater diversity of sources of income generation available to returnees.

UNHCR is committed to the successful completion of voluntary repatriation and reintegration programmes, allowing Eritreans to rebuild their lives in a sustainable manner. The building of government capacity will eventually allow for a complete transfer of management responsibilities to central and local authorities. UNHCR, in cooperation with its sister UN agencies, is providing vital expertise and longer-term support to strengthen the capacity of national institutions. In 2006, they will provide training on project planning and management in view of the handover of reintegration projects. As UNHCR begins to phase out of reintegration, the bulk of its implementation work will be taken over by two government agencies: the Eritrean Relief and Refugee Commission (ERREC) and the Gash Barka Zoba Administration (GBZA).

As part of its search for durable solutions for Somali refugees, UNHCR made arrangements to repatriate 376 persons in 2005. UNHCR will also continue with this activity in 2006. In addition, a small number of Sudanese refugees are expected to repatriate voluntarily. Resettlement will also be explored, albeit for strictly defined categories.

Eritrea is not a party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees or to the 1969 OAU Convention on the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, but the country continues to accept asylum-seekers on its territory and adheres to the principle of *non-refoulement*. UNHCR will continue to press for accession to these international instruments. In addition, the Office will extend international protection, as well as basic humanitarian assistance to the Somali and Sudanese refugees in camps, as well as to some urban asylum-seekers and refugee groups from other countries. The focus will be on the search for durable solutions to avoid a protracted refugee situation. The Office will conduct refugee status determination for all asylum-seekers. It will continue to provide full material support and also offer technical assistance to the Government of Eritrea in the development of standards and procedures pertinent to refugees. In order to protect potentially stateless individuals, UNHCR will continue to maintain its monitoring role.

### Assistance

UNHCR and ERREC will manage the protection and logistics component of voluntary repatriation, ensuring that returnees travel in safety and dignity. Immediate needs will be addressed in areas of return through major upgrading of water supplies, and more modest projects in health, sanitation, education, agriculture and community services. Efforts to protect the environment will be enhanced through small-scale community tree planting projects and the provision of metal-frame shelter structures, kerosene stoves, and kerosene (reducing the demand for wood for construction and fuel). Women will have access to a range of income generation and vocational training projects, and children will benefit from educational inputs. The education of primary school age children, especially girls, will be promoted and traditional early marriage practices

will be discouraged. Continuing education for adolescents and access to secondary schools will be promoted through an agreement with the Ministry of Education.

UNHCR will supply refugees with food and other items in the two camps. Assistance to refugee women and children will involve supplementary feeding for malnourished children, pregnant and lactating women and other groups with special needs. UNHCR will also provide financial assistance to urban refugees with special needs. Through community services, training sessions will be provided on how to combat HIV/AIDS, female genital mutilation and sexual and gender-based violence.

### Desired impact

UNHCR will ensure the safe and dignified return of Eritreans to their areas of choice, whereupon immediate needs will be met, followed by reintegration assistance. The Office will at the same time make further progress in its efforts to ensure that the long-term development of returnee communities is supported by the Government and international development actors. 2006 will be an important year in the transition from reintegration to longer-term assistance, as UNHCR endeavours to lay a foundation for sustainable development by drawing in agencies to carry out development activities.

Refugees and asylum-seekers in Eritrea will continue to benefit from protection and basic assistance (which will encompass some education, community service and training projects). Protection of urban asylum-seekers will be guaranteed through effective RSD procedures and protection interventions, and the RSD backlog will be reduced through improved procedures and resources.

UNHCR's efforts to promote adherence to international protection standards will be linked explicitly to its call for Eritrea to accede to all relevant international legal instruments.

## Organization and implementation

### Management structure

The main office is situated in Asmara, with two field offices in western Eritrea. The three offices are run by a total of 82 national and 17 international staff (including one JPO, five UNVs and one international UNOPS staff). All three offices will be required for the duration of the repatriation and reintegration operation in 2006.

### Coordination

Refugee and statelessness issues are dealt with in coordination with the Office of Refugee Affairs and the Department of Immigration and Nationality. Eritrean Relief and Refugee Commission, and the Gash Barka Zoba Administration remain UNHCR's main governmental counterparts with regard to repatriation and reintegration. Continued collaboration is enjoyed with the Regional Directorates of the Ministries of Education, Health, Agriculture and Labour and Welfare in the Gash Barka Region under the overall authority of the Governor. UNHCR has recently joined the UN Development Group and will further develop "4Rs" actions through joint programmes in returnee situations. UNHCR also works with the UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator as well as other UN Agencies. UNHCR actively participates in inter-agency working groups including the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP), the Common Country Assessment/UN Development Assistance Framework (CCA/UNDAF), and Millennium Development Goals (MDG) initiatives. UNHCR will continue to take an active role in the UN Agencies Working Group on Programme Coordination, the Human Rights-Based Approach Task Force and the UN Task Force on Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse.

#### Offices

**Asmara**  
Barentu  
Tesseney

#### Partners

##### Government agencies

Eritrean Relief and Refugee Commission (ERREC)  
Gash Barka Zoba Administration (GBZA)  
Ministry of Education  
Ministry of Health  
Office of Refugee Affairs

##### NGOs

*Cooperazione e Sviluppo*  
Coordinating Committee for Voluntary Service Organizations  
International Medical Corps

#### Budget (USD)

Activities and services	Annual Programme Budget
Protection, monitoring and coordination	1,784,864
Community services	516,665
Crop production	333,833
Domestic needs	158,000
Education	237,900
Food	973,333
Forestry	109,583
Health	396,236
Income generation	599,042
Legal assistance	184,962
Livestock	60,000
Operational support (to agencies)	586,898
Sanitation	34,297
Shelter/other infrastructure	116,900
Transport/logistics	586,914
Water	1,215,435
<b>Total operations</b>	<b>7,894,864</b>
Programme support	1,317,576
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,212,440</b>