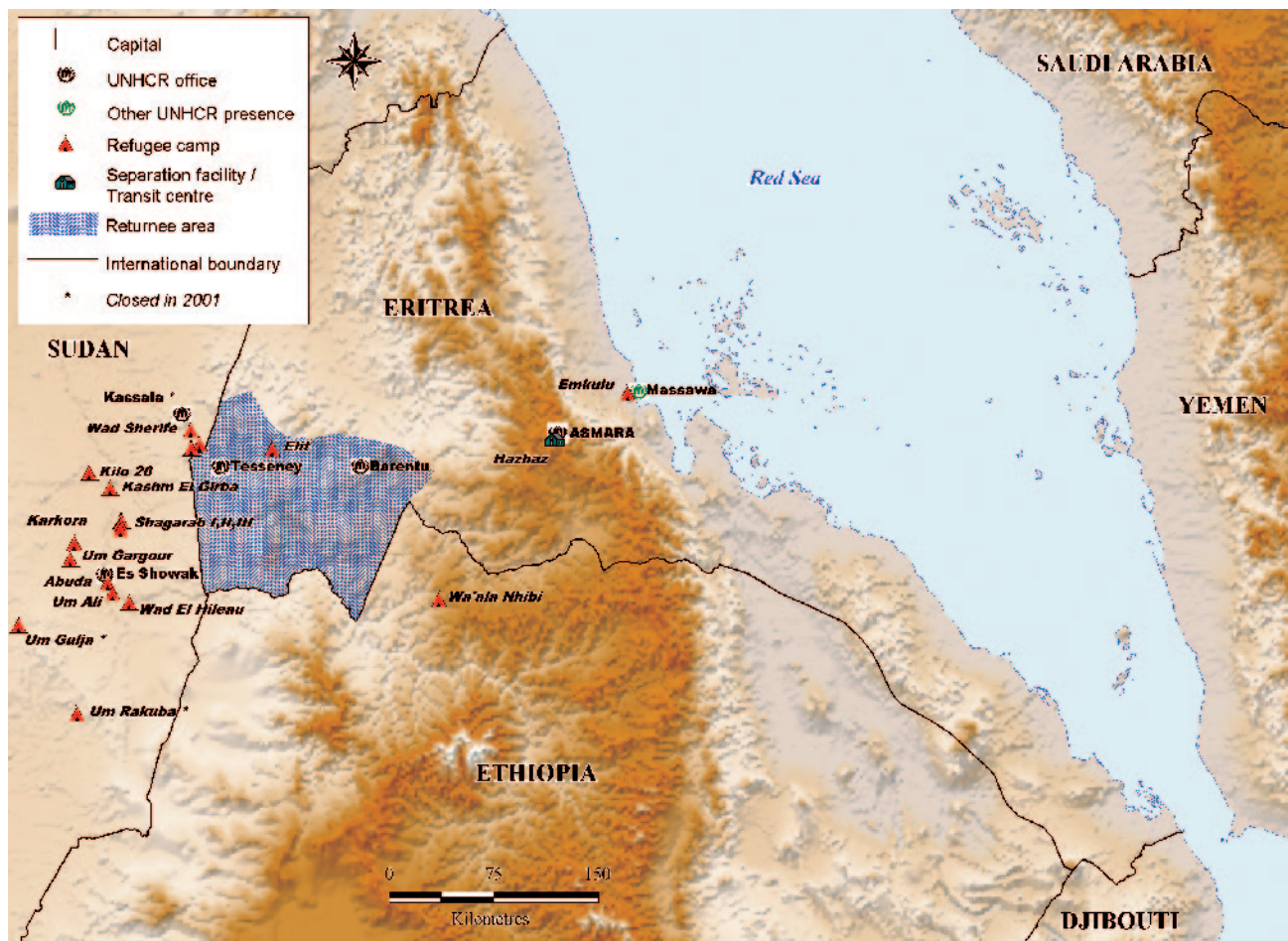


Eritrea



Main Objectives

Provide protection, material assistance and seek durable solutions for 2,000 Sudanese and Somali refugees; resettle eligible Sudanese and Somali refugees; provide essential relief items to 100,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) in the Gash Barka zone; facilitate and promote the voluntary repatriation of some 62,000 Eritrean refugees from Sudan and a small number from Djibouti and Yemen; create a conducive environment for IDPs and returnees for sustainable re-integration in their societies.

Impact

- Refugees were provided with basic necessities

including shelter, food, health care and non-food items.

- 60 Somali refugees were voluntarily repatriated.
- 140 Sudanese and one Somali refugee were resettled.
- 50,000 IDP families received blankets and soap and 17,855 women received sanitary materials.
- 32,650 refugees of a planned 62,000 were repatriated from Sudan.
- All returnees received reinsertion assistance upon arrival.
- No organised voluntary repatriation from Djibouti or Yemen took place since all efforts were focused on Sudan.
- Water, education, agriculture and health projects were implemented to ensure the successful reintegration of returnees.

Working Environment

The Context

Following the 'Cessation of Hostilities Agreement' between Eritrea and Ethiopia in June 2000, and the subsequent signing of the Algiers Peace Accord in December 2000, UNHCR and the Governments of Sudan and Eritrea began the repatriation of Eritrean refugees from Sudan on 12 May 2001. Regular convoys continued until early July, when seasonal heavy rains rendered the roads impassable. Some 22,000 refugees, both recent and long-staying, were assisted to return home in this first phase.

A programme of reintegration assistance into the Gash Barka Region was initiated and partnerships were forged with key agencies to address the reintegration needs. In early September, after the rains, the voluntary repatriation operation continued. From 20 October to 31 December, a further 10,000 refugees were assisted to return. It was agreed that refugees from the 2000 conflict, who were no longer in need of international protection, would be encouraged to return, as assistance for them in Sudan would cease at the end of the year. Some 12,126 of these refugees and a further 20,560 from the longstanding refugee situation in eastern Sudan returned (over 90 per cent chose to return to the Gash Barka Region). New Somali and Sudanese

refugees approached UNHCR to file their claims for asylum on an individual basis.

Eritrea is host to refugees from Sudan (530) and Somalia (1,740) in three camps, Haz Haz, Emkulu and Elit. UNHCR is responsible for their international protection and providing essential assistance. In the last quarter of the year, there was a rise in the population of Somalis owing to continued insecurity in their homeland. UNHCR offered technical assistance to the Eritrean Government for developing legislation to deal with nationality and statelessness issues. In 2001, consistent with the guidelines set out in Action 1, UNHCR phased out its assistance to the internally displaced in Eritrea. By mid-May 2001, the population of IDPs in the country had significantly decreased from 300,000 to 45,000 as many returned to their homes.

Constraints

Security in the UN-established Temporary Security Zone (TSZ) improved significantly but the existence of landmines and the lack of basic infrastructure discouraged individuals wanting to return to areas known to be near minefields. To date, only a handful of returnees have been cleared to return into the TSZ. The socio-economic reintegration needs of the returning population go well beyond UNHCR's mandate, resources and operational capabilities. Although the Office put much effort into engaging other partners in the reintegration process, at the end of the year, it remained unclear whether these partners were willing or able to have a positive impact on the situation. The designation of the Eritrean voluntary repatriation programme as one to be implemented only with earmarked contributions meant that obligation levels could only be increased upon receipt of such funds. This disrupted forward planning, prevented timely implementation of activities and led to ad hoc staffing arrangements. Eritrea is not signatory to any of the international refugee

Persons of Concern

Main Origin/ Type of Population	Total in Country	Of whom UNHCR assisted	Per cent Female	Per cent under 18
Expellees from Ethiopia ¹	1,400	-	47	-
Returnees (from Sudan)	32,700	32,700	53	51
Somalia (Refugees)	1,700	1,700	45	61
Sudan (Refugees)	530	530	36	44

¹ Government of Eritrea estimate

Income and Expenditure (USD) Annual Programme Budget, Trust Funds and Supplementary Programme Budget

	Revised Budget	Income from Contributions ¹	Other Funds Available ²	Total Funds Available	Total Expenditure
AB & TF	3,152,923	300,000	2,667,787	2,967,787	2,967,787
SB	19,497,877	11,154,403	4,378,643	15,533,046	15,533,046
TOTAL	22,650,800	11,454,403	7,046,430	18,500,833	18,500,833

¹ Includes income from contributions restricted at the country level.

² Includes allocations by UNHCR from unearmarked or broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments.

The above figures do not include costs at Headquarters.

or statelessness treaties; moreover, there is no domestic legislation governing refugee, nationality or statelessness issues.

Funding

Many donors, wary of the many difficulties of the past, waited until repatriation of Eritrean refugees was fully underway and proving successful before allocating funds to support the operation. The operation had to be funded with a “loan” from the Operational Reserve of over USD 6 million. Nevertheless, with the solid results obtained in the first phase of returns from April–June 2001, donor support rose, and by mid-summer, the funds needed to support the movements were forthcoming.

Achievements and Impact

Somali and Sudanese Refugees Protection and Solutions

A total of 140 Sudanese refugees were resettled in new countries but none were assisted by UNHCR to repatriate in 2001, since voluntary repatriation to Sudan did not appear, at that time, to be a viable option. In mid 2001, UNHCR facilitated the repatriation of 60 Somalis from Eritrea to Mogadishu. On the whole, the Somali refugees were well-received by the Eritrean authorities and local communities, though there is no possibility of local integration for these refugees. Only one Somali was resettled for protection reasons. Over 500 new Somali refugees fled into Eritrea in search of asylum in 2001.

Activities and Assistance

Community Services: UNHCR, in collaboration with a local women’s NGO, proposed skills training that would allow women, especially single female heads of families, to be more self-reliant and regain their self-respect and psycho-social counselling for victims of alcoholism. Somali and Sudanese refugees in Emkulu and Elit camps respectively, benefited from the supply of recreational and sport facilities. They also received one-time grants to celebrate new-born babies and bury their dead in culturally acceptable ways.

Domestic Needs/Household Support: Jerry cans, blankets, and mattresses were provided to 2,270 Somali and Sudanese refugees along with three bars of soap per month per refugee. Since all camps are located in malaria-prone areas, households received impregnated mosquito nets. All refugee women received underwear and those aged 15-45 received a supply of sanitary napkins monthly. This helped boost their self-respect and eased their interaction within their communities. An international NGO donated 108 bales of used clothes. The provision of kerosene stoves and kerosene not only helped women to prepare meals for their families without having to spend hours searching for firewood, but also helped to protect the already serious environmental degradation in Eritrea.

Education: In both refugee camps, 650 students, (255 girls) attended primary school. UNHCR provided classrooms, furniture, school supplies and also paid stipends for 11 refugee teachers. Nineteen refugee men and 26 women attended an adult education programme organised in the Sudanese refugee camp. The two-classroom school was not enough to accommodate 150 refugee students, and some of the classes were held in tents. To help alleviate this, eight more classrooms were constructed.

Food: Food rations, in line with WFP guidelines, were distributed to 2,270 refugees. The food provision included wheat flour, lentils, oil, sugar, salt and fresh vegetables. Providing wheat flour reduced the workload on women as grinding the grain was not needed. Consequently, they had more time to care for their family and participate in community activities. Refugee committees in the camps helped the implementing partner to distribute food items. The participation of refugee women in these committees (40 per cent women) created a channel for the representation of women in the decision making process.

Health/Nutrition: In the refugee camps, senior nurses ran primary health care clinics. Ambulances were on duty 24 hours a day. A new clinic was built in the Sudanese refugee camp in 2001 to replace the makeshift clinic. The refugee camps had supplementary feeding centres for malnourished children, expectant and nursing women and sick refugees. There were no reports of any epidemic or malnu-

trition in either of the camps. HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns were also carried out in both camps to sensitise refugees and bring about a change in behaviour to combat the spread of diseases.

Legal Assistance: In seeking a durable solution for both Sudanese and Somali refugees, UNHCR was able to resettle one Somali and 140 Sudanese refugees. Another 60 Somali refugees were assisted to voluntarily repatriate and a further 60 Somalis were registered for voluntary repatriation.

Operational Support (to Agencies): UNHCR provided operational support to its implementing partner in the form of salaries, training, vehicles, office supplies, allowances for project staff, rent and utility expenses to ensure effective management of the refugee programme.

Sanitation: In both refugee camps, camp sanitation committees organised regular cleaning campaigns while UNHCR assisted in providing garbage collection barrels, cleaning agents and stipends for sanitation workers. As a result, sanitation-related diseases were rare.

Shelter/Other Infrastructure: Some 495 metal-frame structures and 295 tents meant that there were no refugee households in either camp without shelter. In addition, for convenience and security reasons, both camps had electric power that provided added security at night.

Transport/Logistics: Food and non-food items were transported efficiently and regularly from Asmara to the refugee camps. A warehouse was built in Elit camp.

Water: In order to ensure that refugees had access to adequate quantities of drinking water (at least 20 litres of water per person, per day), UNHCR maintained the water system in Elit camp and covered the cost of water distribution in the Emkulu camp and Haz Haz transit centre. The Office also made sure that water distribution points were within reasonable distance from the residential areas in the camps.

Returnees from Sudan Protection and Solutions

Peace between Eritrea and Ethiopia set the stage for the voluntary repatriation of Eritrean refugees from the Sudan. This began in May 2001 and by end of the year, 32,648 people had been assisted to return. No significant protection difficulties were faced by the returnees, many of whom had Eritrean identity documents. Nominal charges for health care were temporarily waved and the Government informally agreed to delay conscription into the military until returnees would successfully reintegrate in their communities.

Activities and Assistance

Agriculture: Agriculture is a major income generating activity for the returnees. In addition to the distribution of agricultural tools, some agricultural projects were implemented. Training of tractor operators, distribution of goats to vulnerable groups, water and soil conservation in the two villages of Grasha and Dresä were also undertaken.

Community Services: Through international and national NGOs, UNHCR provided mine awareness training in the transit centre for two months until other agencies were able to take over. In addition, some 30 community-based facilitators were trained in peace education, training returnees and the local populations.

Crop Production: Each returnee family received the right to use two hectares of land from the Government for crop production—the major source of income generation for refugees. Most of the land had been unused for years and needed extensive ploughing. Five tractors and ploughs were bought for this process in Gash Barka.

Domestic Needs/Household Support: The distribution of non-food items and household support was part of the reinsertion package given to returnees. Blankets, kerosene stoves, plastic water container, hand tools, bars of soap, mosquito nets, square meters of cloth, plastic sheets, cups, cooking pots and sanitary materials were distributed to returnees. Further, to facilitate the immediate economic reinsertion, returning refugees from Sudan

were given cash grants of 500 Nakfa per family or 300 Nakfa per individual.

Education: 162 newly-trained teachers were made available to meet the teaching needs arising from the additional number of school-aged returnee children. Allowances were given to 600 secondary school students in Tesseney Town and four new classrooms were added to the primary school. 77 makeshift classrooms were also constructed in



One of the continent's largest and oldest refugee communities began going home. Repatriation convoy from Sudan to Tesseney, Eritrea. UNHCR/A. Warsame

Gash Barka. In addition, 128 Arabic teachers were recruited from the refugee communities in Sudan and given the necessary orientation in the Eritrean education policy, school curriculum and teaching methodology.

Food: Some 32,648 returnees received cooked meals during their stay at the transit camp in Tesseney.

Forestry: Support was provided to prepare land for tree plantation and environment awareness campaigns were undertaken in returnee areas.

Health/Nutrition: Returnees were screened by staff of the Ministry of Health and UNHCR purchased drugs and medical supplies, which were distributed to the health stations in areas of return. 'Reproductive Health in Communities in Crisis' (HIV/AIDS) targeted the returnee population in the transit centre and in the sites of final destination. This project consisted of two orientation seminars), peer education counsellors' training (59 peers trained), female reproductive health training (30 women trained),

30 first aid training and 20 music/drama shows. Information, education and communication materials were produced in three local languages and used in the sensitisation programme.

Legal Assistance/Protection: Returning Eritreans were documented upon their arrival in Tesseney Reception Centre. Birth and death certificates were issued. An Eligibility/Registration officer was employed to monitor the situation of returnees in their final destinations and ensure proper documentation.

Operational Support to Agencies: Support was provided to implementing partners to enable them to undertake the activities in a more structured way. Salaries, training and rental subsidies were part of the support which was provided.

Sanitation: The activities consisted of the construction of 220 latrines in the returnee site of Gerset, implemented by an international NGO.

Shelter/Other Infrastructure: A total of 4,720 shelter structures, 2,120 plastic sheets and 126,790 woven mats were distributed to the Eritrean returnees to enable them to construct their shelter. Thirty skilled people were hired to help with construction work. Returnees preferring to live in towns were given the equivalent in cash of the cost of shelter and agricultural tools. A total of 3,400 returnee families received cash grants. UNHCR monitored the distribution of the cash grants to ensure adherence to the agreed norms and grids. The reception centres in Tesseney, Ghirmaika and Emkulu and the transit centres in Barentu and Hagaz were renovated.

Transport/Logistics: Some 59 UNHCR trucks and 19 trailers provided transport for returnees. A garage for vehicle maintenance was set up in Tesseney.

Water: Potable water was made available to returnees. In addition, 19 boreholes were drilled in the Gash Barka Region. Similarly, hand pumps, reservoirs and tap stands were provided in some of the returnee areas and existing water storage and distribution system were extended.

Organisation and Implementation

Management

The three UNHCR offices in Eritrea (Asmara, Barentu and Tesseney) reported the general security situation within Eritrea as relatively stable in 2001. There was, however, a notable increase in mine incidents since May 2001. Budgetary constraints led to late filling of posts, necessitating the use of temporary staff. As a result, there was a significant turnover of staff in Eritrea which negatively affected morale. At the end of 2001, there were 91 staff: 13 internationals (including six UNVs) and 72 nationals. The Inspector General visited Tesseney, Barentu, refugee camps and returnee sites, as well as the Office in Asmara from 19 to 28 June 2001 to inspect the Eritrea operation. Most of the recommendations had been implemented by the end of the year.

Working with Others

In 2001, UNHCR's assistance programme in the country was executed by a total of 11 implementing partners, six of which were government entities, and five NGOs, both national and international. Concurrently, UNHCR deployed extensive efforts to engage a range of development agencies to address the medium-to-long-term needs of returnee-receiving areas. These needs lie beyond UNHCR's mandate, operational capabilities and resources but are nevertheless critical for the sustainability of the repatriation from the Sudan. The agencies included UN development agencies, the World Bank, the African Development Bank, as well as bilateral aid agencies. Whereas arrangements with implementing partners, by and large, worked well, efforts to engage the development agencies were not as successful. By the end of the year, few of the latter had taken tangible steps to adjust or expand their programmes to address the considerable needs of returnee receiving areas, and a wide gap remained between UNHCR's short-term relief and the longer-term plans of these agencies.

Overall Assessment

Support of Somali and Sudanese refugees was effective, overall, with the exception of adequate education to the Somali refugee children. UNHCR's activities in connection with the repatriation of Eritrean refugees from Sudan, were very successful. However, more attention needs to be given to the special needs of women and girls.

UNHCR's activities on behalf of the Somali and Sudanese refugees made a critical difference: without support, the population could not have met basic subsistence needs nor would their rights have been protected. Likewise, activities to assist and monitor the protection situation of returnees from the Sudan had an immediate and tangible impact on the lives and well-being of this population. It is highly unlikely that any repatriation from the Sudan would have taken place without UNHCR's co-ordinating and supporting role. The ratio of administrative/staffing costs versus operational costs was kept low throughout the year. It was clear, however, that UNHCR paid a heavy price for not fielding adequate staff in a stable and timely manner. The effects were felt in relation to key counterparts and in UNHCR's inability to conduct technical liaison, co-ordination and dialogue needed to engage development agencies in addressing reintegration needs.

In its efforts to get reintegration assistance projects implemented in returnee areas as quickly as possible, UNHCR led the way in decentralising assistance from central to regional authorities. Other agencies are now adopting the same strategy. There is no prospect for comprehensive durable solutions for Somali and Sudanese refugees and they are likely to need UNHCR's material assistance for the foreseeable future. Repatriation from Sudan is progressing slower than expected and is predicted to carry on into 2003. UNHCR's strategy for exiting Eritrea is entirely contingent upon the effective engagement of development agencies and it is now clear that this in turn depends on far more intensive technical input and effort by UNHCR.

Offices

Asmara
Barentu
Tesseney

Partners

Government Agencies

Eritrean Relief and Refugee Commission
Ministry of Education
Ministry of Health
Ministry of Local Government
Office of Refugee Affairs
The Gash Barka Zoba Administration

NGOs

International Catholic Migration Commission
International Medical Corps
MOVIMONDO
National Union of Eritrean Women
National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students
The Lutheran World Federation

Others

UNDP
UNICEF