

SOUTH AFRICA

IN SHORT



Main Objectives

- Strengthen the legal and institutional capacity of the Government through implementation of national refugee legislation, institution-building and training.
- Promote the economic independence of refugees through income-generating activities.
- Conduct public information and awareness campaigns to counter increasing signs of intolerance towards foreigners.

Planning Figures		
Population	Jan. 2000	Dec. 2000
Refugees/ Asylum-Seekers	66,000*	78,000
Total	66,000	78,000

** Of this figure, several thousand refugees are assisted directly by UNHCR.*

Total Requirements
USD 5,315,322



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WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Recent Developments

Most refugees and asylum-seekers who reside in South Africa come from Africa's most troubled regions: the Great Lakes region, Angola and Somalia. None of these countries share a border with South Africa. Nevertheless, Africans from urban areas who feel compelled to flee their own country often decide to seek asylum in South Africa. This is partly due to the country's comparatively robust economy. In a context of economic and social hardship experienced nevertheless by millions of South African citizens, the influx appears to be fuelling resentment and xenophobia, which has become a worrying tendency.

However, the basic conditions for the provision of protection and assistance exist in South Africa: asylum-seekers and refugees enjoy full freedom of movement and settlement and have the right to undertake any kind of work and receive primary, secondary and tertiary education.

In recent years, the Government of South Africa has become a regular contributor to UNHCR's operations outside the country's own boundaries.

Constraints

In South Africa, the major challenges are the backlog of asylum-seekers, new refugee legislation yet to be implemented, weak or non-existent structures and procedures for refugee status determination, abuse of asylum, corruption, undocumented immigrants, and growing xenophobia. Long delays and strict administrative requirements within existing eligibility procedures cause continuing insecurity for refugees and asylum-seekers. Attempts by undocumented economic migrants and immigrants to abuse the status determination procedure and, in certain cases, the lack of accountability of immigration and police officials, further illustrate the urgent need to put in place a credible and streamlined eligibility procedure. Public hostility (compounded by high unemployment among nationals) and the backlog of status determination decisions make it increasingly difficult to pursue their local integration.

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STRATEGY

Protection and Solutions

The 'Roll Back Xenophobia 1999-2000' campaign kicked off in Pretoria in August 1999. It involves a vast educational scheme, to be intensified in 2000, which aims to reduce intolerance at all levels of society. UNHCR works closely with local refugee forums and associations to make it successful.

The 1998 Refugee Act should be implemented on a priority basis. The streamlined and revamped procedure it introduces is expected to reduce the waiting time for asylum-seekers and, at the same time, discourage abuse of the system by economic migrants. In this connection, UNHCR will continue to provide training to relevant Government officials and implementing partners in refugee law and protection, interviewing techniques and working with interpreters.

Assistance

In South Africa, UNHCR will focus on the promotion of durable solutions through advocacy of refugee rights, raising public awareness, capacity-building initiatives, training and support for government, NGOs, the media and other institutions in their efforts to deal with the causes and consequences of the problem of refugees. Continuing projects undertaken in close cooperation with NGO partners will aim to create an environment conducive to the local integration of refugees. This will include support for primary and secondary education, provision of skills and language training, income-generating projects, job placement and addressing the special needs of women and children.

UNHCR works to offer a broader range of activities to a greater number of refugee participants. The prevailing 40 per cent unemployment rate among nationals means that interventions to promote the self-reliance of refugees call for considerable creativity in their design. Activities focus on combating intolerance, the creation of opportunities to compete for employment, as well as self-employed income-generating opportunities; all of which assist local integration.

Counselling and assistance will continue to be provided for refugees who opt for voluntary repa-



triation. The identification and processing of refugees who meet the criteria for resettlement (whether as an instrument for protection or a durable solution) will also continue to be provided on a limited scale.

Desired Impact

By the end of 2000, NGOs collaborating with UNHCR on refugee issues should be operating independently, under the umbrella of their national or regional organisation. These NGOs are expected to become strong partners, supporting UNHCR's efforts to secure refugees' internationally recognised rights (to seek and enjoy asylum, to work etc.).

The emphasis on capacity-building for governmental and other partners, and the public information campaign, should result in a better environment for refugees, and for UNHCR, both for local integration and in the pursuit of other durable solutions.

ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Management Structure

The UNHCR Representative in Pretoria, besides being responsible for operations in South Africa, also covers Comoros, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mauritius and the Seychelles, where UNHCR works through the local UNDP offices. Moreover, he also supervises the activities of UNHCR's offices in Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia and Swaziland. In 2000, the Office in South Africa will have 28 staff (seven international and 21 national) as well as one Junior Professional Officer (JPO). The Office of the Regional Director is also located in Pretoria (see Regional Overview), and functions with nine international and 15 national staff, as well as one JPO.

Coordination

The Office in Pretoria coordinates a range of public awareness and advocacy activities for refugees and asylum-seekers in South Africa and neighbouring countries covered by the Regional Office. Training for staff and partners is usually undertaken on a regional basis.

Offices

Pretoria

Partners

Government Agencies

Department of Education
Department of Foreign Affairs
Department of Health
Department of Home Affairs
Department of Justice

NGOs

Cape Town Refugee Forum
Japanese Voluntary Agency
Jesuit Refugee Service
Lawyers for Human Rights
National Consortium for Refugee Affairs
University of Cape Town Refugee Clinic
Wits University Law Clinic

Budget (USD)

Activities and Services	Annual Programme
Protection, Monitoring and Coordination	242,387
Community Services	133,727
Domestic Needs/ Household Support	38,985
Education	403,000
Food	32,014
Health/Nutrition	52,546
Income Generation	81,268
Legal Assistance	141,690
Operational Support (to Agencies)	601,050
Shelter/Other Infrastructure	62,370
Transport/Logistics	187,150
Total Operations*	1,976,187
Programme Support**	3,339,135
Total	5,315,322

* Includes operational and administrative costs in Comoros, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles.

** Includes administrative costs for the Regional Director's Office of USD 1,827,837.

