

South Africa

AT A GLANCE

Main Objectives and Activities

Promote lasting solutions for refugees and asylum-seekers with an urban socio-economic background through local integration, repatriation and resettlement; develop additional legal and institutional capacity within the Government and civil society through the implementation of national legislation, support for institution-building and training; advance the local integration of refugees by helping them achieve economic independence through various projects geared towards self-sufficiency; counter increasing intolerance towards refugees and asylum-seekers by creating greater public awareness through media campaigns.

Impact

- Some 19,000 refugees and asylum-seekers were assisted at four major locations (Pretoria, Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban).
- UNHCR's implementing partners provided one-off emergency assistance (food, shelter and domestic items) for over 4,500 persons, of whom more than 65 per cent were women and children.
- A total of 1,500 refugees received UNHCR's assistance to attend educational courses, from pre-primary to university level.
- UNHCR's network of refugee legal counsellors in five cities (Pretoria, Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban and Port Elizabeth) continued to provide legal assistance and representation to over 2,000 individual



Main Refugee Origin/Type of Population	Persons of Concern			
	Total in Country	Of whom UNHCR assisted	Per cent Female	Per cent under 18
Somalia (Refugees)	4,800	830	39	18
DRC (Refugees)	4,500	4,300	35	20
Angola (Refugees)	3,900	1,100	34	20
India (Asylum-seekers)	1,500	-	-	-
Ethiopia (Asylum-seekers)	1,400	-	27	13
Pakistan (Asylum-seekers)	1,400	-	-	-
Burundi (Asylum-seekers)	1,200	-	-	-
Nigeria (Asylum-seekers)	1,000	-	-	-
DRC (Asylum-seekers)	760	-	-	-
Republic of the Congo (Asylum-seekers)	660	-	-	-
Senegal (Asylum-seekers)	660	-	-	-
Somalia (Asylum-seekers)	630	-	-	-
Burundi (Refugees)	630	520	45	20
Republic of the Congo (Refugees)	590	160	35	20
United Rep. of Tanzania (Asylum-seekers)	550	-	-	-

Income and Expenditure (USD)				
Annual Programme Budget and Trust Funds				
Revised Budget ³	Income from Contributions ¹	Other Funds Available ²	Total Funds Available	Total Expenditure ³
3,714,200	974,500	4,076,094	5,050,594	5,199,336

¹ Includes income from contributions earmarked at the country level.

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

³ Includes budget/expenditure related to the Regional Director's Office (for details, please refer to the Regional Overview).

The above figures do not include costs at Headquarters.

refugees on issues such as asylum appeals, release from unlawful detention, labour disputes and renewal of asylum permits.

- The project to clear the backlog of asylum applications produced initial decisions in approximately 14,000 cases, some of which had been pending since 1994.
- The “Roll Back Xenophobia” campaign led to more balanced, better informed media coverage of refugee issues.
- Over 200 young refugees (including 120 young women) participated in 12 workshops on such topics as physical and emotional development, family planning and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS.
- A baseline survey on reproductive health knowledge, attitudes and practices was carried out in the eight main refugee communities in Gauteng Province. This will allow an accurate assessment of the impact of future health projects.

WORKING ENVIRONMENT

The Context

In South Africa, the ever-increasing protection and assistance needs of refugee arrivals constituted an unrelenting challenge. The Government of South Africa does not provide any material assistance to refugees or asylum-seekers in the country and they must compete with needy locals for the limited food and shelter offered by charities. Although refugees and asylum-seekers enjoy most of the same basic rights as South African citizens, exercising these rights is not always easy in light of the limited services available and the attitudes on the part of service providers towards refugees. An unemployment rate of up to 40 per cent in some urban areas seriously hampered refugees’ efforts to find employment, and many of them had to approach the Office and implementing partners for basic assistance.

The promotion of local integration for refugees depends on a degree of understanding of their plight on the part of local communities and, at the very least, an acceptance of their presence. That acceptance is still rare in South Africa, despite efforts such as the “Roll Back Xenophobia” campaign, which was launched in 1998 to combat the country’s prevailing atmosphere of hostility towards foreigners.

In April, new regulations were finally issued to implement the 1998 Refugee Act, and a revamped eligibility procedure came into force. This was a major achieve-

ment in the setting up of a legal system for refugees in South Africa. However, it caused a substantial increase in demand for basic assistance, as asylum-seekers arriving after 1 April 2000 were prohibited from seeking employment or pursuing education.

Constraints

Plans to integrate refugees into local assistance programmes were held back by the limited capacity of local NGOs to address refugee needs. These NGOs already had their hands full trying to make good the wide gaps in service provision for South African nationals, a continuing legacy of the *apartheid* system. It was very difficult for UNHCR’s limited staff to regularly monitor protection and assistance activities because the refugee population was scattered throughout the country. There was a lack of resources and, occasionally, commitment, on the part of the various authorities responsible for reducing the backlog of asylum applications, addressing refugee-related issues and tackling the question of undocumented economic migrants. There were continuing delays in the issuance of identity cards to recognised refugees and a lack of accurate statistics of crucial importance to UNHCR’s work. Refugees continued to be victims of the increasing public hostility towards foreigners in general, collectively blamed for competing with the local population for scarce jobs, services and educational opportunities.

Funding

As a result of funding shortfalls, UNHCR’s assistance was limited to the most vulnerable and needy, leaving the overwhelming majority of refugees, including new arrivals, to fend for themselves. This caused resentment and frustration, which sometimes resulted in threats and violence against UNHCR and implementing partner staff. The prioritisation exercise and budget cuts undertaken in 2000 resulted in a reduction in support for the implementation of the new Refugee Act, including a cut in funds intended for the production of refugee identity cards, and for salaries for official interpreters.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

Protection and Solutions

UNHCR provided technical assistance and legal expertise to the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) in drafting the Refugee Regulations and the new refugee status determination procedure provided for in the 1998 Refugee Act. The regulations and the new procedure came into effect in April 2000, following which a milestone project was launched in September

to clear the backlog of some 23,000 asylum applications. By the year's end, a total of 14,000 cases had been reviewed.

Because of the prevailing atmosphere of intolerance towards foreigners in the country, which in some cases resulted in discrimination and violence against refugees, the "Roll Back Xenophobia" campaign continued to be essential in order to highlight the rights of refugees. Unfortunately, attacks on refugees continued to occur throughout the year. One positive outcome of work with the local media was that refugee issues gained more news coverage, and reporting was noticeably more balanced in its portrayal of refugee life in South Africa.

In addition to local integration, the Office promoted voluntary repatriation and resettlement in other countries as durable solutions for refugees. However, voluntary repatriation was often precluded by political instability and armed conflict in the refugees' countries of origin, and resettlement was reduced to a trickle by slow processing of the relevant paperwork. In 2000, 42 persons repatriated voluntarily and 113 persons were resettled, while a further 250 resettlement files were prepared for processing.

Activities and Assistance

Community Services: All refugees and asylum-seekers who approached implementing partners received advice or information on basic needs (food and accommodation), health, education, employment and income generation. Funeral costs were covered for families in need. Workshops were held for refugee women to identify further training needs and to provide income-generating skills. Through this programme, 25 refugee women were trained and subsequently helped to apply for loans

to start small businesses. Additionally, therapeutic group and individual counselling was provided to traumatised refugee women. The specific needs of disabled refugees were identified and addressed by implementing partners. Once their more immediate needs had been met, disabled refugees were encouraged to develop appropriate income generation projects in order to facilitate their local integration. Special activities organised for the benefit of refugee children included after-school care and English language tuition, as well as bridging programmes for children who were between grades or who arrived after the commencement of the school year.

Domestic Needs/Household Support: Blankets, cooking utensils and mattresses were provided to 1,500 destitute new arrivals in the major refugee-receiving areas. In order to make up the shortfall in provision of basic household items for other new arrivals, implementing partners were encouraged to obtain funding or donations from other sources.

Education: UNHCR developed and maintained relationships with various educational institutions in South Africa in order to ensure equal access and, in some cases, reduced fees for refugee children. Of 1,030 refugee children under 18 years of age, 871 received funding from UNHCR to attend nursery, primary or secondary school. On average, 51 per cent were girls. Under a vocational skills-training project, 249 refugees benefited from training targeted towards the current South African job market (62 per cent were enrolled in engineering or business administration courses). A total of 156 students completed their studies in 2000 and 93 will continue in 2001. English classes were provided for 261 refugees, to assist with local integration and job-

hunting. Fourteen refugee students (five of them women) were sponsored under the DAFI scholarship programme in South Africa. UNHCR and implementing partner staff provided counselling and support for the students who attended South African universities. Of the 14 students, ten successfully passed on to the next level and one graduated. In all, 40 students were supported under the regional programme administered by UNHCR (which includes South Africa, Namibia, Mozambique and Swaziland).

Food: Food was provided only in emergencies and only to vulnerable individuals, such as single women,



female heads of household, expectant or nursing mothers and those suffering from serious illnesses or disabilities. Approximately 4,500 people received food assistance during the year. One implementing partner managed to provide 400 needy individuals each month with food by soliciting donations from supermarkets and other food suppliers. In addition, some refugees were able to obtain food parcels from religious or community-based food distribution programmes.

Health/Nutrition: Under the Refugee Act refugees are entitled to the same medical services as citizens. Unfortunately, for lack of information, the majority of refugees seeking help in government hospitals were either denied treatment or charged according to a scale of fees for foreigners. In some cases, refugees were even unable to pay the nominal hospital administration fees (also required from South Africans), let alone the additional costs of medicine. In such cases, UNHCR's implementing partners assisted some 540 refugees with direct payments to the hospital, drawing on funding provided by UNHCR. In Johannesburg, UNHCR supported a part-time clinic, which provided primary health care services for 1,842 asylum-seekers and refugees during the year. In Cape Town, a refugee educator was employed to conduct pilot workshops for young refugee men and women. In all, 12 workshops were conducted with a total of 202 participants (including 120 women). An educational play entitled, "You're not Alone" was performed at some 50 primary and secondary schools in Gauteng Province. The play, which was seen by approximately 20,000 refugee and South African children, was designed to combat the prevailing atmosphere of intolerance towards foreigners in South Africa, dispel the myth that refugees are responsible for the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the country and provide accurate information on HIV/AIDS. Information gathered through subsequent questionnaires and focus group discussions indicated that the anti-intolerance message was well received and that the children understood that HIV/AIDS is not linked to a particular group. Culturally appropriate informational materials on reproductive health were translated into French, Portuguese, KiSwahili and Somali and were distributed in the refugee communities. Initial feedback from the communities indicated a greater need for this type of material, especially on HIV/AIDS.

Income Generation: Small business loans were made available in the major refugee centres. In 2000, 515 people (45 per cent of them women) received loans under this project, with an average 80 per cent success rate. In view of high unemployment in South Africa, the small business loans were an important part of UNHCR's

efforts to promote local integration. Although implementing partners reported high default rates, the loans appeared to provide refugees with the means to generate sufficient income to support themselves and their families, and beneficiaries did not seek further basic assistance. One of the programme's weaknesses, however, was that training on small business management was not provided, although it was often requested. Appropriate training will be incorporated into all such programmes in 2001.

Legal Assistance: Salaries and training were provided to five legal counsellors who assisted about 2,000 people during the year. Training workshops were provided for various relevant NGOs, academic institutions and refugee organisations, as well as government, law enforcement and military officials. Moreover, UNHCR attended a series of conferences, workshops and media broadcasts at which input on refugee-related issues was required. A specific project was launched in September for a period of six months to provide support to the DHA in the clearance of a backlog of some 23,000 asylum claims. Forty lawyers and ten clerks were trained and employed under the project. In the last quarter of 2000, this team processed 14,000 applications. In addition to staffing, 30 computers and three printers were procured for use by the DHA in support of the project to clear the backlog.

Operational Support (to Agencies): Certain critical administrative costs incurred by implementing partners were defrayed by UNHCR in order to ensure timely and efficient delivery of services. UNHCR's contribution to the "Roll Back Xenophobia" campaign made up 17 per cent of the budgetary total under this sector. As part of the campaign, workshops and information sessions were conducted with local and refugee communities, as well as health and education institutions, and a ten-part radio programme was produced in which some of South Africa's most prominent former refugees told their stories of life in exile. Supporting materials (books and CDs) were also produced.

Shelter/Other Infrastructure: As with food assistance, only vulnerable persons received short-term assistance with accommodation. In total, some 2,500 refugees and asylum-seekers benefited from this type of assistance. As a rule, emergency accommodation within local communities was provided to vulnerable new arrivals for a maximum period of three months.

Transport/Logistics: A total of 37 asylum-seekers and five refugees were repatriated under the voluntary repatriation programme, which included a repatriation grant, transit accommodation and flights. IOM facilitated

logistics arrangements and was reimbursed for flight expenses. Under the resettlement project, 98 asylum-seekers and 15 refugees were resettled in various countries. Implementing partners received contributions towards fuel and the maintenance of vehicles. Vehicles were used for the transport of new arrivals to emergency shelters, the relocation of individuals in need of security protection and, in the absence of ambulances, for emergency transport to hospital. The vehicles were also used to collect donations of material assistance and for transport to meetings with communities for lobbying and public information events.

ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Management

The UNHCR office in South Africa is situated in Pretoria. At the field level, implementing partners are responsible for the implementation of UNHCR's programmes, which are monitored by UNHCR staff through regular field missions. In 2000, UNHCR staff in South Africa numbered 32 (seven international and 24 national staff, as well as one JPO). Staff safety continued to be a serious concern because of the high level of crime.

Working with Others

In 2000, UNHCR worked with one government agency, eight NGOs and five other implementing partners in South Africa. UNHCR supported and partly funded the activities of the National Consortium for Refugee Affairs, a discussion forum aimed at ensuring consistency in refugee assistance programmes and developing strategies and recommendations in the areas of policy, service provision and public awareness. UNHCR also continued to participate in the Inter-Agency Theme Group on HIV/AIDS.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

In 2000, UNHCR's principal objective was the local integration of refugees, for lack of alternative long-term solutions for the majority of refugees in the country. Local integration was problematic due to a series of internal and external challenges. Internal challenges included limited knowledge about the urban-based population of concern, and a lack of appropriate data, which would assist the Office in undertaking meaningful planning. However, this situation may improve with the planned issuance of refugee identity documents. Internal challenges also included the limited resources that UNHCR could muster for its programmes, with

the resulting difficulty of providing any meaningful assistance for a substantial number of beneficiaries. Fortunately, those who made it to South Africa from far-flung countries showed an extraordinary resilience and determination, attributes evidenced by the number of refugees who were able to survive and integrate in South Africa without UNHCR's assistance. Among the external challenges, the most formidable was the deteriorating attitude towards refugees on the part of UNHCR's government counterparts. In addition, there was no single central government body mandated to deal with refugee issues, which required UNHCR to multiply its lobbying efforts for the inclusion of refugees in government programmes. NGO partners did not yet develop the capacity to raise funds on their own. As a result, refugee assistance programmes are not sustainable. Against this background, UNHCR is striving to nurture the commitment and autonomy of all implementing partners, in the hope that some may become sustainable in the longer term.

Offices

Pretoria

Partners

Government Agencies

Department of Home Affairs

NGOs

Cape Town Refugee Forum

Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation

Durban Refugee Forum

Jesuit Refugee Services

Lawyers for Human Rights

Margaret Sanger Centre International

National Consortium for Refugee Affairs

Planned Parenthood Association of South Africa

Other

South African Human Rights Commission

University of Cape Town

University of Witwatersrand

United Nations Development Programme

International Organisation for Migration

Financial Report (USD)			
Expenditure Breakdown	Current Year's Projects		Prior Years' Projects
	AB/TF	notes	notes
Protection, Monitoring and Co-ordination	313,675		39,034
Community Services	32,457		0
Domestic Needs / Household Support	48,422		0
Education	254,784		0
Food	11,264		0
Health / Nutrition	45,624		416
Income Generation	31,735		0
Legal Assistance	81,317		0
Operational Support (to Agencies)	156,008		4,418
Shelter / Other Infrastructure	33,839		0
Transport / Logistics	77,754		2,650
Instalments with Implementing Partners	1,055,572		(3,853)
Sub-total Operational	2,142,451		42,665
Programme Support	2,670,840		34,946
Sub-total Disbursements / Deliveries	4,813,291	(3)	77,611
Unliquidated Obligations	235,939	(3)	0
Total	5,049,230	(1) (3)	77,611
Instalments with Implementing Partners			
Payments Made	1,670,467		10,670
Reporting Received	614,895		14,523
Balance	1,055,572		(3,853)
Outstanding 1 January	0		1,396,010
Refunded to UNHCR	0		0
Currency Adjustment	0		0
Outstanding 31 December	1,055,572		1,392,157
Unliquidated Obligations			
Outstanding 1 January	0		191,341 (6)
New Obligations	5,049,230	(1)	0
Disbursements	4,813,291	(3)	77,611 (6)
Cancellations	0		113,730 (6)
Outstanding 31 December	235,939	(3)	0 (6)

Figures which cross reference to Accounts:

(1) Annex to Statement 1

(3) Schedule 3

(6) Schedule 6