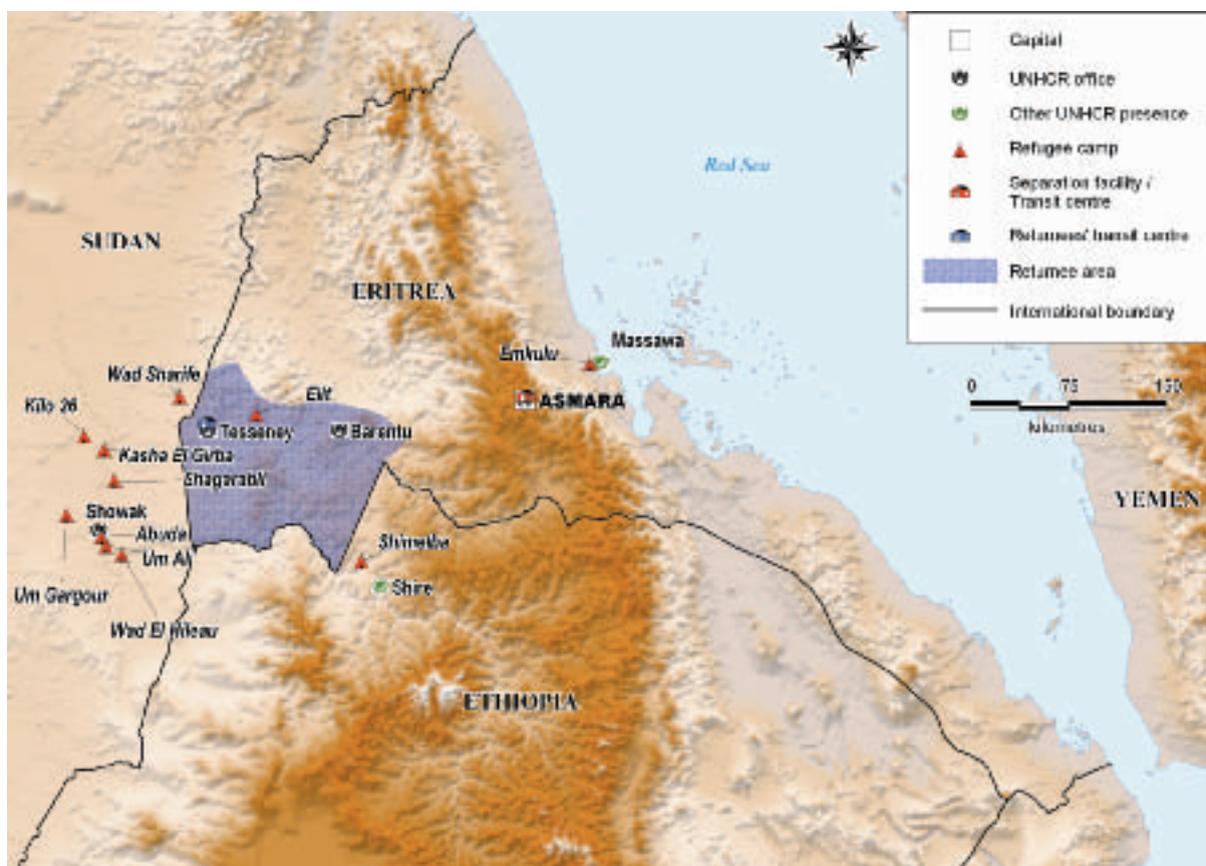


# Eritrea



## Main objectives

- Enhance international protection, provide care and maintenance assistance and seek durable solutions for some 3,650 mainly Somali and Sudanese refugees, as well as some smaller refugee groups and urban asylum-seekers.
- Facilitate the voluntary repatriation of 5,000 Eritrean refugees from Sudan.
- Consolidate the response to the immediate needs of returnees and returnee-receiving areas.
- Mobilize the support of development agencies in addressing the longer-term needs of returnee areas.

## Planning figures

Population	Jan 2005	Dec 2005
Returnees	35,000	5,000
Somalia (refugees)	3,000	2,400
Other refugees	650	250
Asylum-seekers	270	170
<b>Total</b>	<b>38,920</b>	<b>7,820</b>

**Total requirements: USD 12,783,757**

## Working environment

### Recent developments

During 2005, UNHCR will focus on maintaining a response capacity for the eventual return of 5,000 returnees from Sudan. This will be the continuation

of efforts to address one of the world's most protracted refugee situations (dating back to the 1960s). Since 2000, some 230,000 refugees have repatriated, of whom 120,000 have received assistance since 2001, from UNHCR. In the last quarter of 2004, a further 27,000 returns are expected. The majority are returning to the Gash Barka region in Western Eritrea, an area with great agricultural potential despite the recent devastation wrought by war and drought.

Considerable work is required in returnee areas to ensure the sustainability of repatriation. UNHCR is stepping up its "4Rs" initiatives (Repatriation, Reintegration, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation), advocating 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. There will be a considerable need for alternative sources of income generation if sustainable livelihoods are to be created. A strategic partnership with ILO will be continued in 2005.

The Office will continue to monitor conditions of return for past and recent returnees in Eritrea. It will concentrate on freedom from discrimination, especially in having access to services. 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 complete transfer of management responsibilities to local authorities.

In order to protect potentially stateless individuals, UNHCR will continue to maintain its monitoring role. The Office will maintain internal Refugee Status Determination (RSD) procedures for all asylum-seekers not based in camps. It will also offer technical assistance to the Government of Eritrea in the development of standards and procedures pertinent to refugees.

## Constraints

The difficulties caused by prolonged drought in returnee areas have been compounded by the significant risk of mines, unexploded ordnances, and the increased security concerns caused by the failure of Eritrea and Ethiopia to resolve border issues. All these factors will require careful monitoring to ensure that appropriate levels of security can be maintained to implement the country operation.

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.

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 the remaining displaced people.

In the absence of effective relevant legislation, UNHCR retains sole responsibility for the care and protection of refugees. Opportunities to achieve durable solutions will be actively pursued, including voluntary repatriation for those from Somalia and Sudan. However, this will only be successful upon allocation of additional resources and within a context of accession to international legal instruments.

## Strategy

### Protection and solutions

There are three interlinked components to UNHCR's strategy for repatriation and sustainable reintegration: initial reinsertion assistance to households, initial reintegration assistance to communities to ensure basic infrastructure and social services, and encourage development agencies to address longer-term reintegration needs.



Eritrea

A returnee girl from Sudan having just received a blanket given out by UNHCR as part of the distribution of non food items.  
*UNHCR / E. Parsons*

As UNHCR begins to phase out, the bulk of its implementation work will be taken over by two government agencies: Eritrean Relief and Refugee Commission (ERREC) and Gash Barka Zoba Administration (GBZA). However, UNHCR will provide support by way of training, planning and management of reintegration projects. This will be part of the strategy to strengthen the capacity of national institutions.

For efforts to bring about durable solutions for Somali refugees, UNHCR has identified over 1,000 persons, almost a third of the population that wish to return home. Resettlement will also be explored, albeit through strictly defined categories. In addition, a small number of Sudanese refugees are expected to voluntarily repatriate. The RSD backlog will be reduced through improved procedures and resources.

Eritrea is not a party to the 1951 Refugee 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 the international instruments. In addition, the Office will extend international protection, plus care and maintenance assistance to approximately 4,000 Somali and Sudanese refugees in camps, as well as to some 400 urban asylum-seekers and refugee groups from other countries. The focus will be on a search for durable solutions to avoid a protracted refugee situation.

UNHCR's protection priorities include monitoring of returnees, provision of advice and training on national legislation, ensuring that minimum standards are met in both material and legal assistance and direct involvement in the protection of individual cases. UNHCR will continue to train local authorities on establishing a legal framework for RSD procedures and on international protection and refugee rights.

### 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 small-scale reintegration activities in education, health, water, sanitation, agriculture and community services. Efforts to protect the environment will be enhanced through the provision of metal-frame shelter structures, provision of kerosene and kerosene stoves and small-scale community tree projects. All reintegration activities will endeavour to give attention to women's and children's needs through providing access to income generation, skills training and education.

UNHCR will supply refugees in two camps with food and other items, and offer community services. Training sessions will be provided on HIV/AIDS, female genital mutilation and sexual and gender-based violence. Assistance to refugee women and children will involve supplementary feeding for malnourished children, pregnant and lactating women and other vulnerable groups. 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 MOU with the Ministry of Education.

### Desired impact

2005 will be a critical year for UNHCR, as it marks a transition from repatriation to long-term development. UNHCR will ensure the safe and dignified return of Eritreans to their areas of choice, supported by reintegration assistance, whereupon immediate needs will be met. 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 of Eritrea and international development actors.

Refugees and asylum-seekers in Eritrea will continue to benefit from protection and care and maintenance assistance, much of it geared towards long-term development (e.g. education assistance and community service projects). Protection of urban asylum-seekers will be guaranteed through effective RSD procedures.

UNHCR's efforts to improve the general protection environment in Eritrea by promoting adherence to international protection standards will be linked to its advocacy of accession 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 staffed by 81 national and 19 international staff (including one JPO and seven UNVs). All three offices will be required for the duration of the repatriation and reintegration operation, which is scheduled to continue until 2006 when an exit strategy will be activated.

### Coordination

Refugee and statelessness issues are dealt with in coordination with the Office of Refugee Affairs (ORA) of the Department of Immigration and Nationality (DIN). The Eritrean Relief and Refugee Commission (ERREC), and the Gash Barka Zoba Administration (GBZA) remain UNHCR's main governmental counterparts for implementing repatriation and reintegration assistance activities. 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 also has strong working relationships with NGOs, 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 UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), and Millennium Development Goals (MDG) initiatives. For the second half of 2004, UNHCR took on new roles within the UN Agency Working Group on the Senior Programme Coordination and the Human Rights-Based Approach taskforce.

Offices
Asmara
Barentu
Massawa
Tesseney

Partners
<b>Government agencies</b>
Eritrean Relief and Refugee Commission
Gash Barka Zoba Administration
Ministry of Education
Ministry of Health
Office of Refugee Affairs
<b>NGOs</b>
<i>Cooperazione e Sviluppo</i>
Coordinating Committee for Voluntary Service Organizations
International Medical Corps

Budget (USD)	
Activities and services	Annual Programme
Protection, monitoring and coordination	1,837,869
Community services	826,948
Crop production	1,257,189
Domestic needs	395,419
Education	939,426
Food	282,753
Forestry	83,865
Health	1,064,684
Income generation	840,030
Legal assistance	299,465
Livestock	158,595
Operational support (to agencies)	597,169
Sanitation	458,989
Shelter/other infrastructure	218,454
Transport/logistics	733,396
Water (non-agricultural)	1,329,118
<b>Total operations</b>	<b>11,323,369</b>
Programme support	1,460,388
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,783,757</b>