



Southern Africa

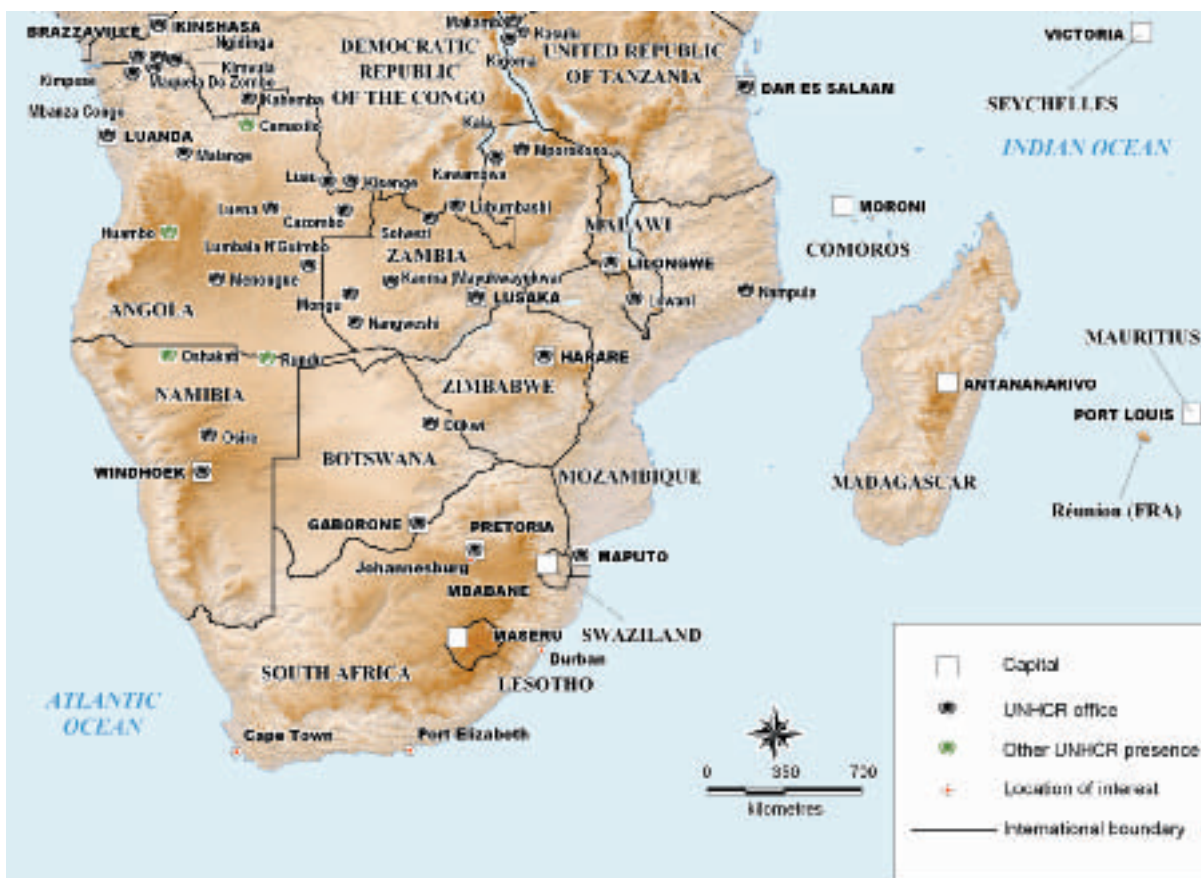
Recent developments

In May 2004, UNHCR resumed the organized repatriation of Angolan refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Namibia and Zambia to accessible destinations. Many more remaining Angolan refugees still harbour a powerful desire to return home. In August 2004, airlift operations were introduced to accelerate the repatriation. Since 2002, more than 256,400 Angolan refugees have repatriated, both spontaneously and in an organized manner, leaving an estimated 200,000 in neighbouring countries.

In 2003, the formation of the transitional Government in the DRC raised hopes that the Congolese refugees in southern Africa would soon be repatriated. However, the fragile security situation in DRC (except for Kinshasa) has impeded progress toward repatriation. Meanwhile, a trickle of refugees from eastern DRC continued to flee into Zambia.

In order to facilitate the orderly voluntary repatriation of Rwandan refugees, tripartite agreements were signed between UNHCR, the Government of Rwanda, and Governments hosting Rwandan refugees in southern Africa. As provided for in these

Angola
Botswana
Comoros
Lesotho
Madagascar
Malawi
Mauritius
Mozambique
Namibia
Seychelles
South Africa
Swaziland
Zambia
Zimbabwe



agreements, UNHCR conducted intensive information campaigns on the greatly changed conditions in Rwanda and sponsored formal visits to the country by refugees, who subsequently shared their findings with their fellows. Despite these efforts, very few Rwandans have expressed a desire to repatriate.

A successful pilot project “ProGres” has been launched for the registration and issuance of identity cards (IDs) to refugees and asylum-seekers. This project aims to establish a more credible database, which will not only serve as a tool for the control of irregular movements in the whole region, but will also enhance the quality of UNHCR’s protection and assistance operations.

Economic and social empowerment strategies, in particular the Zambia Initiative (ZI), have yielded encouraging results. In the 2003/2004 planting season, refugees and Zambians who benefitted from the ZI produced sufficient food to meet a year’s household needs, with a surplus for sale.

The slow processing of asylum applications in Southern Africa has created a complex situation

whereby asylum-seekers far outnumber refugees (in all countries except Zambia). In some countries, where the granting of refugee status confers access to national services, the interests of refugees have been compromised. In order to strengthen local capacity and accelerate refugee status determination (RSD), UNHCR has supported local law enforcement agencies and other relevant host government authorities.

According to the UNAIDS 2004 report on the global AIDS epidemic, Southern Africa remains the region worst affected by the pandemic, with Botswana and Swaziland exhibiting the highest HIV prevalence rates. At the same time, UNAIDS reports that funding for HIV/AIDS programmes in the region remains “minuscule”, leaving millions of people living with HIV/AIDS without access to care, support or life-saving treatment. In this constrained environment, refugees are often overlooked in national strategic plans to combat HIV/AIDS, and as a result do not benefit from new initiatives. To promote refugee access to such programmes, UNHCR and its partners will continue to strengthen partnerships with governments and key UN agencies in southern Africa

such as UNAIDS, UNICEF and UNFPA. UNHCR will also provide critical, albeit limited, funding for HIV/AIDS programmes at the camp level. Efforts to foster such relationships and mobilize additional funding will continue in 2005, as many host countries in the region begin to roll out comprehensive HIV/AIDS care and support programmes, to which refugees should have access.

The top priority for the Southern Africa region in 2005 will be to promote durable solutions, through repatriation, resettlement, and social and economic empowerment initiatives that should lead to the eventual local integration of refugees and asylum-seekers.

Strategic objectives

In 2005, UNHCR will work to capitalize on the successes to date of the Angolan repatriation operation, the economic and social empowerment of refugees with no prospects of repatriation, and resettlement of a limited number of eligible refugees. In Angola, the programme will be reoriented to balance sustainable reintegration of returnees with repatriation. Innovative strategies will be adopted to encourage more Rwandans to repatriate voluntarily.

The Office will intensify ongoing dialogue with host governments to persuade them to enact refugee legislation conducive to better protection of refugees and asylum-seekers. UNHCR will also focus on creating a legal environment conducive to sustainable local integration of refugees who may choose to remain indefinitely in their countries of asylum. The Office will work closely with governments to ensure that asylum applications are dealt with efficiently and effectively.



The start of the journey home - repatriation of Angolans. *UNHCR / S. Hopper*

The "ProGres" documentation and registration project launched in 2004 will be expanded throughout Southern Africa to improve freedom of movement for refugees and asylum-seekers, and their access to services. The regional database developed under this project will guide the planning of policies and strategies in 2006 and beyond.

Successful experiences from the ZI will be shared and built upon in other provinces of Zambia, and there will be intensified attempts to replicate the initiative elsewhere in Southern Africa.

The regional programmes for refugee women, gender equality, and refugee children will be driven by UNHCR's global priority to advance gender equality and respect for women's and child rights. The 2005 programme will focus on systematically applying a gender- and age-mainstreaming approach to all operations in the region. This will include establishing and strengthening multi-sectoral teams at the regional and national levels, undertaking situation analysis, and developing work plans which integrate gender and age considerations into all activities. Complementary activities will include developing strategic partnerships with NGOs, UN agencies and relevant organizations, as well as developing and applying practical tools to facilitate the work of gender- and age-mainstreaming teams. The programme will also draw on best practices and lessons learned to further support national and regional capacities to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence.

In the coming year, the Office will be reviewing and updating contingency plans to enhance its regional emergency response capacity.

In order to serve refugees and returnees better despite limited resources, UNHCR will work to further rationalising resource management. New measures will be introduced to upgrade and strengthen the resource management capacity of both UNHCR offices and implementing partners.

Operations

Operations in the region encompass 14 countries including the **Indian Ocean Islands**. In addition to the country programmes in **Angola, South Africa** and **Zambia** presented in separate chapters, UNHCR has operations in **Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland** and **Zimbabwe**.

During 2005, UNHCR and partners will expect to assist approximately 33,000 refugees to return

overland and by air to **Angola**. An additional 30,000 refugees are expected to return spontaneously, including an estimated 15,000 who will be assisted by UNHCR upon arrival in the country.

In **Botswana**, in 2005, UNHCR will continue providing humanitarian assistance and international protection in Dukwi camp for approximately 4,500 refugees and asylum-seekers originating from Somalia, Namibia and Angola. Camp conditions have deteriorated somewhat following heavy storm damage in 2004. UNHCR will work with the Government and other partners to ensure that minimum standards of shelter, water and sanitation are met. UNHCR will also work to improve access to education and health services for refugees with a focus on HIV/AIDS prevention, care and support programmes. Several new activities focusing on developing refugees' capacity for self-sufficiency will be introduced during the course of the year.

UNHCR will continue to support the Government's plan to introduce revised refugee legislation, at the same time lobbying the Government to lift recently introduced regulations on the detention of asylum-seekers. Moreover, UNHCR will work to strengthen governmental capacity to conduct RSD procedures, which currently can take up to three years. Voluntary repatriation will also be facilitated, particularly in the case of Angolans under the terms of the Botswana-Angola-UNHCR Tripartite Agreement.

In **Malawi**, UNHCR will continue to assist an estimated 12,700 refugees and asylum-seekers originating mainly from the Great Lakes region. In 2004, UNHCR conducted a project for the registration and issuance of IDs to refugees and asylum-seekers residing in Dzaleka and Luwani refugee camps, as well as for refugees who had spontaneously settled in urban areas. This project will improve the quality of protection and assistance delivered to persons of concern to UNHCR in 2005.

The Office will complete the installation of health, water and educational infrastructure to improve living conditions for refugees and asylum-seekers in Luwani refugee camp. In addition, an irrigation

scheme will be designed, not only to support the economic and social empowerment of refugees and asylum-seekers, but also to improve conditions for Malawians in the Luwani area.

The current Malawian Refugee Act remains in force despite UNHCR's persistent view that the Government should consider replacing it with legislation that allows refugees and asylum-seekers freedom of movement, as well as employment and educational opportunities. The slow RSD process has resulted in a huge backlog of asylum applications. Dialogue with the Government will continue, with the aim of lifting the restrictions attached to the 1951 Refugee Convention and paving the way for realistic prospects of local integration for refugees.

In 2005, UNHCR will actively promote repatriation amongst Rwandans. In addition, ongoing initiatives to empower refugees will be pursued more vigorously. The Office will facilitate programmes to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS within the refugee community and to link up with the increasing number of national HIV/AIDS initiatives. In order to coordinate these initiatives with national development activities, UNHCR will continue to establish linkages with development partners, the Government and the United Nations Development Group (UNDG).

In **Mozambique**, the population of concern continued to grow in 2004, reaching nearly 10,000 by the end of the year, with the largest numbers from DRC, Burundi and Rwanda. UNHCR assisted more than 4,000 in Marratane camp in the far north of the country. With continuing instability in parts of the Great Lakes region, the refugee population is likely to grow during 2005 to approximately 12,000.

UNHCR will expand the capacity of Marratane camp to accommodate 5,000 persons and bring water, shelter and sanitation up to minimum standards. A basic level of material assistance to returnees will be provided, in addition to joint efforts with partners to enhance opportunities for refugees and asylum-seekers to achieve self-sufficiency. This will include vocational training and a micro-credit initiative, as well as persuading the Government to lift its restriction on the

movement of refugees outside Marratane camp. UNHCR will help its implementing partners to expand their HIV/AIDS prevention, care and support services, with a view to building partnerships with local programmes.

UNHCR will work with the Government to streamline the RSD process and reduce the backlog of some 9,000 asylum cases, as well as to implement an improved registration and identity document system for both camp and non-camp populations. UNHCR will continue to facilitate voluntary repatriation on a case-by-case basis, ever mindful that many of the persons of concern originate from areas in conflict. Resettlement will also be pursued in certain cases when other durable solutions are not feasible.

In 2004, **Namibia** hosted nearly 21,800 refugees, mainly from Angola, but also the DRC, Rwanda and Burundi. Nearly 3,100 Angolans repatriated in an organized manner. The repatriation of the majority of Angolan refugees will be completed by the end of 2004. Information on HIV/AIDS prevention has been successfully integrated into pre-departure activities in Osire and Rundu, complementing the ongoing awareness programmes at the camp level. These initiatives will continue in 2005, as the pre-departure period presents a unique opportunity to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS in both Namibia and Angola.

In 2005, UNHCR will reorient its operations in Namibia to focus on long-term solutions – including local integration and resettlement – for those refugees from the Great Lakes region who are unable to return due to unfavourable conditions in their home countries. To achieve this aim, UNHCR will intensify dialogue with the Namibian Government to have the restrictive reservations to the 1951 Refugee Convention lifted.

In 2005, UNHCR will implement activities intended to ensure that the society of **South Africa** continues to assume increasing responsibility for the protection of and assistance to asylum-seekers and refugees. A further reduction in xenophobia is expected through awareness-raising and lobbying activities, somewhat decreasing the challenges facing refugees settling

in South Africa. In 2005, UNHCR will support the Government's new "Backlog Project", launched to clear the backlog of pending asylum applications by providing protection training to the increased number of newly recruited refugee and immigration officials.

In 2004, in **Swaziland** UNHCR assisted approximately 1,000 refugees and asylum-seekers. In 2005, UNHCR will work with the Government and other partners to reorient the programme, in view of the changing circumstances in the country, particularly the decreasing camp population, the self reliance of much of the caseload and the small numbers of new arrivals.

In 2005, UNHCR plans to assist a population of more than 149,600 refugees in **Zambia**. Humanitarian assistance will be provided to enhance coping mechanisms and to empower refugees, especially vulnerable groups.

In 2004, **Zimbabwe** hosted an estimated 13,000 refugees who originate mainly from the DRC, Rwanda and Burundi. The political stalemate persisted in 2004 with no clear prospects of a resolution to the crisis. Deteriorating economic conditions have forced increasing numbers of spontaneously settled, previously self-supporting refugees, to relocate to Tongogara refugee camp. In 2004, UNHCR provided protection and assistance to refugees and asylum-seekers in Tongogara refugee camp but the influx stretched available resources. The Office established a permanent presence in Zimbabwe in January 2004, a measure that has enhanced the protection of refugees and improved monitoring of assistance operations. Capacity-building workshops have been conducted for partners and law enforcement agencies. A police post has been constructed in Tongogara camp and the Government has deployed three police officers, including a female constable.

Since the signing of the Tripartite Agreement in December 2003 between the Governments of Zimbabwe, Rwanda and UNHCR for the repatriation of Rwandans, a number of repatriation activities have been undertaken to encourage voluntary repatriation. So far the response from the refugees has been negative.

In 2005, the Government of Zimbabwe is expected to maintain a positive asylum policy, and its cordial working relationship with UNHCR. Poverty is the Government's foremost preoccupation therefore the Office will continue to lobby partners to provide food and non food assistance to Tongogara camp, the refugee-affected areas surrounding the camp, and to schools hosting refugee students. This intervention will go a long way towards reducing mounting xenophobia.

UNHCR will support the development and/or maintenance of shelter, water, food, health care, education, environmental protection, legal and psychological counselling, and other community services. Women will be encouraged to play a more active role in camp management and other activities. The refugee population will be involved in campaigns to combat HIV/AIDS.

UNHCR will continue to promote voluntary repatriation for Angolan and Rwandan refugees. Whilst actively promoting local integration where feasible, and continuing to lobby the Government for the development of a fair asylum policy, the Office will endeavour to enhance identification of resettlement cases. Local capacity to improve RSD, security and protection in the camps will also be strengthened.

Budget (USD)	
Country	Annual Programme
Angola	21,321,614
Botswana	2,291,042
Malawi	2,122,251
Mozambique	1,951,643
Namibia	3,226,677
South Africa	4,038,695
Zambia	13,198,251
Zimbabwe	2,221,481
Regional activities ¹	3,360,362
Total	53,732,015

¹ Includes external relations and public awareness activities, local integration and resettlement of refugees, registration of persons of concern in Southern Africa, scholarships for refugee students and strengthening emergency response capacity in Southern African countries.