Southern Africa Operational Update

January-March 2025

Highlights

Critical protection activities were provided for displaced communities in eastern DRC, including protection monitoring, referral and case management.

Efforts to promote the inclusion and economic integration of refugees were advanced in the Republic of the Congo, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Displaced people in Angola, the DRC and Mozambique were supported to access **vocational and entrepreneurship training opportunities**.

An internally displaced woman showcases crafts for sale at the 2025 International Women's Day celebration in Cabo Delgado Province, Mozambique. © UNHCR/Isadora Zoni

During January-March, across Southern Africa:

7,603 people were registered and **27,150** people received documentation.

213 people were supported to voluntarily return to their home countries.

2,537 people received livelihoods training and support.

414 refugees were submitted for resettlement and **706** people departed on resettlement and complementary pathways.

62,295 people received cash assistance to support their basic needs.

3,699 people benefited from trainings on prevention of and response to sexual violence and child protection.

24,023 people were reached with core relief items (CRIs) and shelter initiatives.

193,852 people benefitted from health and WASH initiatives.

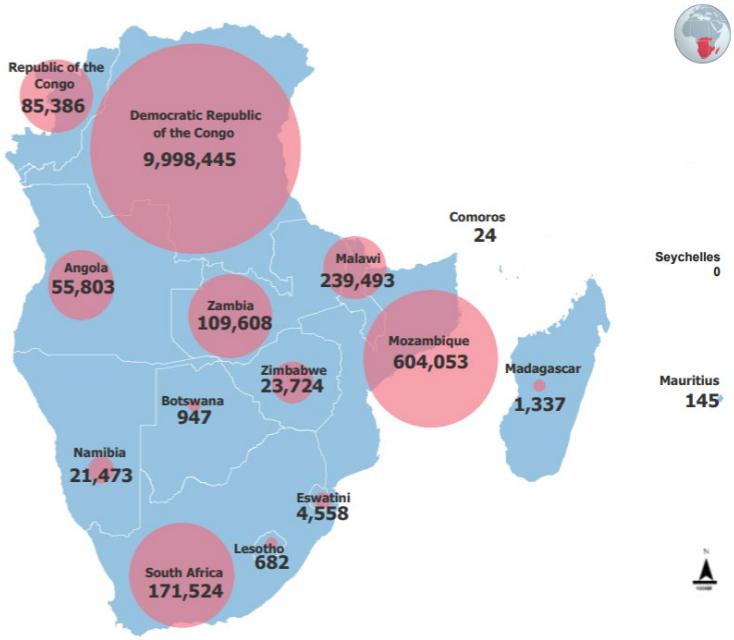
Population Figures in Southern Africa

817,823 refugees
211,353 asylum-seekers

7,546,815 IDPs

2,691,544 IDP returnees

49,667 from other groups



(as of 31 March 2025)

The figures and the map only include conflict-related IDPs and IDP returnees. In addition to this number, as of 31 March 2025, there were some 1,419,910* ***people displaced internally by natural disasters and extreme weather events* *in the region. The displacement occurred in the following countries: DRC (869,894), Malawi (410,683) and Mozambique (139,333).*

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations

Regional Context: Key Developments

- **Impact of funding cuts:** Without adequate resources, hundreds of thousands of displaced people in the region could be left without life-saving health interventions in 2025. In the DRC, UNHCR's health budget has been cut by 87% compared to 2024, putting over 520,000 refugees at heightened risk of infectious diseases and death. Last year, a UNHCR-supported health care centre in Maratane refugee settlement in Mozambique provided over 80,000 consultations to refugees and host community members. However, this support has been severely impacted by a 50% assistance cut.

- **Insecurity in the DRC:** The security situation across eastern DRC remained highly volatile, with human rights violations, including reprisal killings and abductions, continuing to be reported, with more than 108,000 people fleeing from the DRC to neighbouring countries since January, the majority to Burundi (70,000) and Uganda (34,000). To support refugees arriving from the DRC, the Burundi Inter-Agency Refugee Response Plan (March-September 2025) for the DRC Emergency Situation was launched, requesting US$ 76.5 million to support the delivery of multi-sector activities.

- **Cholera outbreaks:** Angola's cholera outbreak, which has rapidly escalated since January, has resulted in over 7,500 cases reported and 285 deaths. Although no cases have been reported to date amongst the refugee population, the outbreak is especially critical in refugee-hosting areas such as Viana Municipality in Luanda Province. In Mozambique, following the declaration of a cholera outbreak by Nampula Provincial Health Services in February, cholera outbreaks, intensified by cyclone-related disruptions to water infrastructure, have surged, with 2,134 confirmed cases, including 37 deaths, reported in the province.

Operational Highlights

Angola

- **Cholera and measles prevention:** Amidst a worsening cholera outbreak, UNHCR and partners shared cholera prevention messages with refugees and host communities and engaged with the Provincial Health Directorate to improve local health awareness. A total of 1,296 children in Lovua Refugee Settlement received measles vaccinations following six suspected cases and one death.

Refugees and host community members participate in a cholera awareness session in Viana, Angola. © UNHCR/Yuko Maeno

- **Skills development:** Lovua Resilience Centre was inaugurated with 12 production rooms and 10 shops benefiting 500 people (400 refugees, 100 host community members) through carpentry, tailoring, and food processing activities. UNHCR and partners continue to expand agricultural programmes, including solar-powered irrigation and a UNDP-supported livelihoods and energy project, with over 200 trainees completing business and value chain training.
- **Route-based approach:** In response to increasing numbers of cross-border movements and deportations, UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) launched a Route-Based Approach Project focusing on mixed migration routes, including data collection, referral pathways and screening improvements.

Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

- **Response in eastern DRC:** In North Kivu, UNHCR continued to support displaced communities in locations such as Lubero and Oicha, while in South Kivu, over 42,000 refugees received life-saving assistance. Where access is constrained, efforts were reoriented towards safer return areas, such as Nyiragongo and Rutshuru, which recently welcomed 51,000 and 200,000 returning IDPs, respectively, focusing on protection monitoring, housing, land and property support, shelter, CRIs and cash assistance.
- **Voluntary returns:** UNHCR began preparations for the fourth voluntary repatriation convoy of 2025 from Goma to Rwanda. To date, 78 people were received at the centre and registered while biometric checks are ongoing. UNHCR assessed conditions at the transit centre and identified the need for several upgrades.
- **Entrepreneurship support:** In North and South Ubangi, 100 youth and 40 micro-enterprises, including 20 agricultural cooperatives and five market gardeners' associations were identified to benefit from market-oriented vocational training, support and supervision. A total of 35 village savings and credit associations (VSCAs) were identified to receive training, while the Mam Tombwama microfinance institution completed a series of financial education training courses for 240 leaders of VSCAs and micro-businesses.

Malawi

- **Protection training:** UNHCR's partner organized a refresher training for members of the refugee community to support them to effectively prevent and respond to protection concerns, specifically cases of sexual violence and child protection cases, ensuring timely and appropriate support for affected individuals.
- **Community engagement:** A total of 668 people in Dzaleka Camp accessed UNHCR feedback and response mechanisms and received feedback though protection and resettlement consultations, reception days and protection needs assessments. In addition, an elderly committee group was established in the camp, with the objective of recognizing and addressing the specific needs of elderly refugees.

Mozambique

- **Cyclone response:** In Cabo Delgado, over 4,800 people received CRI kits as part of the response to Cyclone Chido, while 50 rolls of plastic sheeting were provided to 20 schools in Metuge District affected by the cyclone, facilitating the continued education of approximately 2,500 students. In Nampula Province, 2,460 individuals in Erati District benefited from CRI distributions conducted in coordination with the Government, while 1,520 people in Mossuril District affected by Cyclone Dikeledi received essential items such as blankets, sleeping mats, mosquito nets and kitchen sets.
- **Digital learning:** On 14 March, an expansion of Instant Network Schools (INS) - a joint initiative between the Vodafone Foundation and UNHCR - was launched in Pemba, Cabo Delgado Province. Through the INS, traditional classrooms will be transformed into connected learning hubs, bridging the digital divide and equipping students and teachers with essential digital skills, enabling thousands of displaced and host community children in Cabo Delgado to benefit from enhanced digital learning opportunities.

Children from Alto Gingone Primary School and UNHCR's Representative in Mozambique attend the Instant Network Schools launch ceremony in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique. © UNHCR/ Isadora Zoni

- **Livelihoods and economic inclusion:** A total of 196 IDPs and host community members in Cabo Delgado Province received vocational training through Instituto de Formacao Profissional (IFPELAC) in areas of work such as catering, carpentry, plumbing, and electrical, while 113 young people, including 64 IDPs, received entrepreneurship training to enhance their economic inclusion. In Chiúre District, 450 people participated in climate-resilient agriculture, while in Nampula Province, refugee and host community women showcased agricultural and artisanal products, participated in financial and entrepreneurship trainings, exchanged business ideas and created market linkages with potential buyers at "Expo Mulheres".

Republic of the Congo

- **Response for new arrivals from the DRC:** Following a surge in ethnic violence in Bolobo, Western DRC, which triggered an influx of some 5,800 people into the Republic of the Congo, UNHCR collaborated with partners to facilitate the pre-registration of new arrivals by local authorities. In addition, UNHCR's partner provided critical emergency healthcare, addressing widespread cases of malaria, respiratory infections, parasitic diseases, and malnutrition, particularly among pregnant women and children.
- **Refugee inclusion:** UNHCR supported the Ministry of Social Affairs and Humanitarian Action and World Bank to conduct a survey of 2,000 vulnerable individuals for inclusion in the Social Protection and Youth Productive Inclusion Project (PSIPJ), a World Bank-funded initiative worth CFA 83.7 billion ($1.28 billion). UNHCR mobilized the community to ensure their participation in the survey and assisted with beneficiary targeting, resulting in the inclusion of 292 refugees in the project alongside the local population.

South Africa Multi-Country Office (SAMCO)

Botswana, Comoros, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mauritius, Namibia, Seychelles, and South Africa

- **Cash assistance in Namibia and Botswana:** UNHCR launched cash assistance at Osire Settlement in Namibia, replacing in-kind assistance with mobile money and enhancing financial inclusion for more than 3,900 people. In Botswana, UNHCR has been continuing to distribute cash assistance since late-2024, reaching more than 850 people during January-March.

Cash assistance is distributed at Osire Settlement in Namibia. © UNHCR

- **Social inclusion in South Africa:** UNHCR partnered with FIFA, the global football governing body, to launch the Tshwaragano-Bambanani project, which means "togetherness" and will empower around 1,000 young refugees and South Africans through sports activities, fostering social inclusion and cohesion.
- **Support for refugees in Eswatini:** A total of 245 refugees and asylum-seekers at Malindza Refugee Reception Centre in Eswatini received non-food items, while 79 women were provided with sanitary pads and 166 received CRIs. Medical services reached 131 people, and 578 individuals benefited from screening and health day activities in collaboration with the Ministry of Health. The centre is operating at 60% over capacity and continues to face challenges including inadequate latrines, unreliable water supply and poor hygiene facilities.
- **Health assistance for refugees in Madagascar:** A total of 241 refugees and asylum-seekers in Madagascar were provided with health assistance, encompassing primary, secondary and tertiary care. This included X-rays, ultrasounds, hospital admissions, ongoing treatment for chronic conditions such as diabetes and hypertension, as well as surgical procedures.

Zambia

- **Support for new arrivals:** In response to unrest in neighbouring countries, UNHCR and the Office of the Commissioner for Refugees (COR) began contingency planning in early 2025, starting with Mozambique and expanding to eastern DRC. The plan includes boosting reception capacity, protection, health and multisectoral responses in high-risk border areas. UNHCR also developed a new arrivals profiling tool using Kobo to support pre-registration which collects essential data on causes of displacement, routes, arrival dates, and immediate needs.

Newly arrived asylum-seekers received core relief items at Meheba Transit Centre in Zambia. © UNHCR/Mio Shindo-Braaaten

- **Refugee inclusion:** The Government of Zambia made notable progress on its Global Refugee Forum (GRF) pledge to include refugee farmers in the Farmer Input Support Programme (FISP), with 695 refugees and former refugees in Meheba and Mayukwayuka settlements receiving agricultural inputs. This represents a significant step towards national development alignment and fostering the long-term self-reliance of refugees.

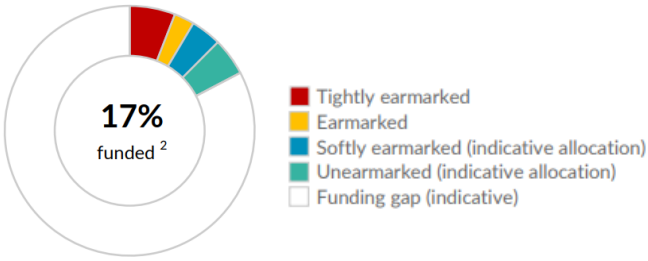
- **Healthcare services:** Government primary healthcare facilities supported by UNHCR provided 20,612 health consultations and 6,320 mental health and psychosocial consultations. UNHCR also facilitated 238 referrals to secondary or tertiary care. However, funding challenges severely impacted support for refugees with chronic medical conditions. In Mantapala Settlement, the health centre exhausted its supply of medication for several patients with severe mental illnesses, increasing their exposure to protection risks.

Zimbabwe

- **Economic integration:** The Government of Zimbabwe, through the Agriculture Marketing Authority (AMA), signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with UNHCR to improve market access for refugees and asylum-seekers. AMA, a parastatal providing agricultural marketing regulatory services, is playing a crucial role in this initiative which aims to foster the economic empowerment and integration of forcibly displaced people.

- **Bank accounts for students:** 17 students benefitting from the DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative) scholarship programme were assisted to open bank accounts to enable them to access their allowances, previously provided as cash-in-hand, and promote their financial inclusion.

Financial Information



UNHCR's financial requirements for the Southern Africa region in 2025 total **US$ 451.3 million**. As of the end of March, **17 per cent** of needs had been funded. UNHCR is grateful to donors who have supported operations in Southern Africa in 2025, including[1]:

Germany 10.8M | United States of America 9.3M | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland 3.6M | European Union 2.7M | Japan 2.3M | Central Emergency Response Fund 2M | Sweden 1.8M | Private donors in the United Arab Emirates 1.7M | United Nations Stabilization Mission in the DRC | Canada | African Development Fund | España con ACNUR | South Africa | USA for UNHCR | UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs | China | Netherlands | Belgium | Other private donors

Flexible financial support greatly facilitates UNHCR's ability to kick-start an emergency response, bolster forgotten or under-resourced crises, and enable the fullest possible implementation of programmes. They enable UNHCR to plan and manage its resources efficiently and effectively, contributing to the collective success in every life that is transformed and saved. UNHCR is grateful to the donors that have provided unearmarked and softly earmarked contributions in 2025, including:

Other softly earmarked contributions (US$)[2]: Norway 2.8M

Unearmarked contributions (US$)[3]: Sweden 74.1M | Norway 56.9M | Denmark 37.8M | Netherland 36.3M | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland 28.5M | Switzerland 20.4M | España con ACNUR 19.2M | Republic of Korea 16.8M | Australia 14.3M | Ireland 13.6M | Germany 10.8M | Belgium 10.7M Algeria | Armenia | Bulgaria | Canada | Costa Rica | Estonia | Finland | Iceland | Kuwait | Liechtenstein | Lithuania | Luxembourg | Malta | Monaco | Montenegro | Philippines | Saudi Arabia | Serbia | Singapore | Thailand | United Arab Emirates | Private donors

Notes: 1. Where a donor has contributed US$ 1,000,000 or more, the total amount is shown. 2. Due to their earmarking, other softly earmarked contributions listed are those which can potentially be used in Southern Africa. Where a donor has contributed US$ 2M or more, the total amount is shown. 3. Donors contributing US$ 10M or more are listed.

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