

Regional Update for Southern Africa
NGO Collective Statement – Oral Statement

Dear Chair, distinguished delegates,

This statement is delivered on behalf of a wide range of NGOs.

The failure to address root causes and find peaceful solutions is pushing humanitarian responses to their limits. Conflicts continue to pose the most significant threat to peace and development, forcing millions to flee. This is particularly evident in the Southern Africa region, where violence, conflicts, human rights violations, and natural disasters have led to severe humanitarian challenges. These cannot be fully resolved without a lasting peace.

Southern Africa continues to host a significant number of forcibly displaced people, approximately 9.1 million. In addition, natural disasters, including those worsened by climate change, have displaced hundreds of thousands in recent years. Yet, this region is often the most chronically underfunded and receives the least amount of attention globally.

The Southern Africa region is impacted by ongoing violence and instability across the entire continent, with refugees from the DRC, Somalia, and Burundi, among others, continuing to seek refuge in Southern Africa. Refugee hosting countries such as South Africa, Malawi, and Mozambique are under significant pressure to provide protection and solutions to those fleeing conflict.

Despite the efforts of UNHCR, regional organizations and various NGOs, regional frameworks for protection and assistance remain weak, leaving vulnerable populations without the necessary support for survival and recovery. [Xenophobia](#), slow [asylum processes](#) due to large backlogs, and restrictions on the freedom of movement of refugees in hosting countries, continue to be barriers to safety, rights and resilience building.

The lack of viable and conducive policy environment for economic inclusion for the vast majority of refugees has a profound impact, not only on the pragmatic level but also on their sense of self. Refugees, deprived of the possibility for economic self-reliance and to build sustainable futures often face a growing sense of [hopelessness and diminished agency](#). This situation perpetuates cycles of vulnerability and mental distress, compounding the already significant psychosocial challenges faced by displaced populations.

A lack of sufficient and sustained humanitarian funding from the international donor community is of growing concern and is having a direct impact on the effectiveness of humanitarian operations and protection efforts in the region. This shortfall in resources not only hinders the ability to address immediate needs but also prevents the implementation of long-term solutions that could restore dignity and stability to displaced populations. Humanitarian partners are forced to scale back operations, leaving refugees and IDPs without essential services and support. The recent changes by the U.S. to aid policy only serves to exacerbate the situation, making it even more urgent for the international community to commit to consistent and adequate financial contributions.

We believe that it is not possible to achieve effective protection if inequalities in accessing services based on age, gender and diversity are not addressed in the region. Often, the most

marginalized populations bear the burden of responses that are not tailored to include them, and which are not adequately funded. Therefore, NGOs urge all states to ensure financial support and holistic policies for protecting displaced people, so they are adapted to address the specific needs of children, women and girls, older people with disabilities and LGBTQI+ individuals.

Furthermore, it is critical for Southern African governments to enhance policy reforms, strengthen regional cooperation, and improve economic integration and inclusion into national educational and healthcare services, to safeguard the rights and livelihoods of displaced people.

While we recognize the global nature of crises, including those in the Middle East and East Africa, we urge the you to not overlook the ongoing and growing humanitarian crisis in Southern Africa.

Further details are available on icvanetwork.org.

Thank you.