

# SOCIAL SERVICES

Asylum seekers and Refugees are required to provide for their own social and economic needs. Due to financial constraints, the S.A government, UNHCR and NGOs can only provide assistance in exceptional cases.



It has occurred in the past that asylum seekers who arrive in SA assume that the UNHCR will provide for their needs, as they usually do in camp-based situations in other countries. However, the role and mandate of the UNHCR in an urban, non-camp situation, such as in SA, is quite different and much more limited. This is because, unlike the situation in many other countries where the UNHCR is active, the responsibility for meeting the needs of asylum seekers and refugees rests with the SA government.

The UNHCR's limited assistance is usually executed through a number of implementing partners, most of them NGOs. This emergency assistance is time-limited and intended for the most vulnerable amongst newly arrived asylum seekers. It is targeted mainly at vulnerable persons, such as mothers and children who have been in the country for less than two months, people with very serious illnesses and disabilities, and newly arrived single men with special needs. This assistance may include food and basic accommodation for a period of up to three months.

**In terms of health and education, asylum seekers and refugees are allowed to access public services provided by the SA government.**

## SOCIAL ASSISTANCE GRANTS



Refugees and asylum seekers in South Africa are expected to provide for their own material needs. However, the government will provide social assistance under certain circumstances. There are three kinds of social assistance grants available to refugees and asylum seekers. **They are:**

### DISABILITY GRANT



- Recognised refugees who are not able to work because of a mental or physical disability may be eligible for a disability grant that is paid monthly. These grants are either temporary or permanent, depending on the nature of your disability.
- Recognised refugees who are the parents or foster parents of a child (under the age of 18) who requires permanent care because of a disability or special needs may apply for a care dependency grant

### FOSTER CARE GRANT

- Recognised refugees who are found to be suitable foster parents and confirmed as such by a court order can apply to the Department of Social Development to access a foster child grant to take care of the child/children placed with them.
- These grants are generally given for a two-year period.

### SOCIAL RELIEF OR DISTRESS GRANT

Although technically limited to South African citizens, the government has on several occasions given this grant, often in the form of food vouchers, to non-citizens who require emergency assistance.