

Republic of the Congo

Main objectives

- Support the National Commission for Refugee Assistance to complete the registration of refugees and ensure the issuance of individual documentation to all refugees.
- Promote voluntary repatriation of refugees to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) made possible by the improvement of political conditions.
- Provide basic protection and humanitarian assistance to the remaining DRC refugees.
- Improve the response to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) against refugees especially women and girls.
- Consolidate the local integration and self-reliance activities undertaken for Angolan refugees in Kondi-Mbaka and Komi sites and phase out of these activities by the end of 2004.
- Assist Congolese returnees from Gabon and DRC to reintegrate into their communities.



Working environment

Recent developments

The security and political situation in the Republic of the Congo (Congo) have been stable since the signature of a peace agreement between the Government and rebels in March 2003, accompanied by an exchange of prisoners of war as a gage of mutual willingness to end the conflict. Furthermore, some of the rebels who surrendered have been integrated in the national Congolese army FAC. The UN system and some NGOs are providing basic humanitarian assistance to displaced persons in the Pool area.

Further positive developments, since the peace agreements are in stark contrast with the situation prevailing in 2002, when efforts to bring about socio-political and economic stability proved abortive. The wind of change that is blowing over neighbouring Central African Republic and the DRC, where a transitional government of unity has been recently installed, gives

Planning figures

Population	Jan. 2004	Dec. 2004
DRC (refugees)	78,100	77,900
Asylum-seekers	2,800	2,100
Angola (refugees)	1,700	1,200
CAR (refugees)	1,700	920
Returnee refugees	610	3,500
Other refugees	300	180
Total	85,210	85,800

Total requirements: USD 6,422,141

rise to hopes for continued positive developments that will allow the Congolese people to begin to reconstruct their lives after more than a decade of civil war.

Constraints

The achievement of UNHCR's objective of repatriating refugees from the DRC is contingent upon the successful implementation of the political and peace processes in that country. Ninety per cent of refugees living in the Congo originate from Equateur province. It follows that, in the event of impediments to the transitional arrangements, the repatriation operation will be negatively affected.

The proximity of refugee sites to the border with DRC is a potential source of concern for the physical security and protection of refugees. Not only could they be exposed to attacks from rebel groups from their country of origin, but the host community could also accuse them of bringing insecurity to the zone.

The dense forests and rivers that cover 60 per cent of the territory pose major natural constraints to the implementation and monitoring of services and activities that benefit the refugees. Much of the territory lacks basic infrastructure and communal facilities.

With regard to the Angolan refugees, continued hostilities between the Angolan Government and *le Front de Libération pour l'Enclave du Cabinda* (FLEC) rebel forces in Cabinda hindered repatriation in 2003. There are very few indications, that this situation will change in 2004. Many Angolan refugees in the Congo are likely therefore, to continue to need protection from UNHCR and the international community.

Strategy

In 2004, UNHCR will support the Government in strengthening the activities of the National Eligibility Commission and the National Commission for Refugee Assistance, to address individual protection cases. UNHCR will ensure that eligible refugees are given appropriate assistance (integration, reunification, and resettlement). The census of the refugee group who are settled in the Congo will be completed by June 2004. This will help with the issuance of refugee documentation to all adult refugees. Special training will be provided on the rights of women and children as well as seminars for the refugees and authorities (police, gendarmerie and military) on UNHCR's mandate, human rights and refugees' rights. With the assistance of UNHCR, relevant ministerial departments will prepare specific legislation for the protection of refugees and

asylum-seekers. By promoting training and legislation as well as a culture of respect for human rights and the rule of law, UNHCR will improve the protection of refugees and help the Government to strengthen peace and reconciliation and prevent further conflicts.

UNHCR will focus on the protection of refugee women and refugee children by implementing a plan of action both to prevent and to respond to needs of victims of sexual and gender-based violence. NGOs and UN agencies will be involved in providing advice as well as socio-economic, medical, psychological and legal assistance. The SGBV programme that exists in the area of Betou (Likouala) will be replicated in other parts of the Congo. Reporting and investigation mechanisms will be established after consultations with all interested partners.

Angolan refugees

UNHCR will continue to search for appropriate solutions for the Angolan refugees who originate from Cabinda until the security situation in this area has been stabilised. All sectoral achievements will be consolidated during 2004 for Angolan refugees in Kondi-Mbaka and Komi. As this refugee population has achieved self-reliance in crop production, efforts will be oriented towards other income-generating activities to help strengthen their economic status. In addition, refugees will be encouraged to construct or complete the construction of their homes using durable materials. The capacity of the existing 41 Co-operative Associations will ensure that refugees gain some income through crop production, poultry and breeding livestock. These Co-operative Associations will establish agreements with commercial truckers to transport their produce from the sites to Pointe-Noire.

Together with local authorities and other UN agencies operating in this area, UNHCR and its implementing partners plan to integrate all sectoral activities into the existing local structures. A joint oversight committee will be established to monitor the progress up to the end of 2004.

Refugees from DRC

UNHCR will pursue its training activities for all stakeholders on its' mandate, international protection, and human rights to ensure the respect of refugee rights. It will also continue to take action aimed at reducing conflicts related to the use of agricultural land. Moreover, UNHCR will continue to encourage refugee women to participate fully in the management and distribution of non-food items. It will also engage in the protection of refugee children by enhancing their participation in different committees. The Office will train refugee women, men and social workers on the issue of protection against sexual violence.



Many of the Angolan refugees who were housed at reception centres such as this one in Mbanza are part of the regional repatriation operation which started in early 2003. UNHCR / C. Mirtenbaum

With the installation of the Government of Unity in DRC, UNHCR will facilitate and promote the voluntary repatriation of DRC Congolese refugees to DRC. As the majority of the refugee population in the north of the Congo come from the Equateur Province, this region will be the initial focus of the operation. Cross-border movements will be organised and the basic needs of all returnees will be met prior to departure. UNHCR will work closely with authorities from both countries to implement the repatriation programme successfully. Refugees who opt not to repatriate will be assisted if they are judged to have valid reasons to be in need of international protection. In this case, opportunities for local integration will be explored through negotiations with the Congolese authorities.

Urban refugees

UNHCR will ensure that asylum-seekers have access to fair refugee status determination, and will support the Eligibility Commission in dealing with applications expeditiously. For this purpose, the Office will provide the Commission with additional human resources and train its members. Unaccompanied minors in the urban setting will be monitored regularly to ensure that they do not become victims of exploitation or abuse. UNHCR will carry out home visits to verify the situation of the children. It will also work closely with the NGOs that are involved in the protection and assistance of the children. UNHCR will facilitate the delivery of identity cards to urban refu-

gees who do not yet have them. The Office will ensure regular meetings with refugee women to give them the opportunity to participate in the existing assistance programme.

Congolese returnees

UNHCR will continue to monitor Congolese returnees in the main areas of return and will co-operate with local human rights organisations to protect the rights of the returnees. The repatriation of Congolese from Gabon will be maintained throughout 2004, for those wishing to return to their homes.

Rwandan refugees

Following the signature of a tripartite agreement in June 2003, UNHCR will promote the voluntary repatriation of Rwandan refugees through an information campaign to be implemented by a local NGO. The returnees will be assisted with transportation.

Desired impact

The activities planned in 2004 are intended to improve the physical protection of refugees, in particular that of refugee girls and women. Furthermore, UNHCR hopes to repatriate refugees in safety and dignity to their countries of origin.

Once the registration exercise is completed, refugees will be issued with relevant identification documents that should procure them better protection and less exposure to harassment. Refugees can then enjoy freedom of movement and other human rights.

Organisation and implementation

Management structure

The office in Brazzaville will supervise the operations in the Republic of the Congo. There will be 11 international, 41 national staff and two UNVs. The office in Brazzaville will be supported by three field offices in Loukolela, Betou and Impfondo.

Co-ordination

UNHCR will work with four partners (three non-governmental organisations and one governmental organisation). The Representative will participate in sub-regional meetings and UN co-ordination meetings to strengthen close co-operation with UN agencies. UNHCR will facilitate joint missions with donors in its operational zones and will be part of the UN thematic group on HIV/AIDS. It will also maintain close working contacts with authorities in various parts of the country.

Offices
Brazzaville
Loukolela
Betou
Impfondo

Partners
Government agencies
<i>Comité national d'assistance aux réfugiés</i>
NGOs
International Rescue Committee
<i>Conférence épiscopale pour les migrants et les réfugiés</i>
Others
<i>Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit</i>

Budget (USD)	
Activities and services	Annual Programme
Protection, monitoring and co-ordination	1,923,296
Community services	252,939
Crop production	79,040
Domestic needs	246,404
Education	391,398
Forestry	31,717
Health	324,854
Income generation	87,481
Legal assistance	115,976
Operational support (to agencies)	567,145
Sanitation	27,104
Shelter / other infrastructure	25,223
Transport / logistics	989,866
Water	22,353
Total Operations	5,084,796
Programme support	1,337,345
Total	6,422,141