

Republic of the Congo

Operational highlights

- UNHCR assisted more than 42,000 refugees in the Republic of the Congo (RoC).
- UNHCR also helped almost 10,000 refugees return to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).
- Organized repatriation to Angola was completed when 520 Angolan refugees returned home with UNHCR's help.
- Refugees were given identity cards, and a new type of identity card was created and given to asylum-seekers.
- Standard operating procedures were put in place to deal with sexual and gender-based violence, while survivors of such violence were given medical, psychological and legal support.
- UNHCR advised the Government on asylum and child protection legislation.



Achievements and impact

Main objectives

In 2006, UNHCR's main objectives were to assist RoC refugees in Gabon and the DRC to return home and reintegrate into their communities of origin; facilitate the voluntary repatriation of refugees in the RoC to their countries of origin, especially the DRC and Angola, as conditions permitted; and protect and assist refugees in the RoC. The Office aimed to promote self-reliance and durable solutions for those who would not or could not repatriate; strengthen the national capacity to deal with refugees and asylum-seekers; and improve the response to sexual and gender-based violence against refugees.

Working environment

In 2006, security in the RoC improved – with the exception of the Pool Region, where some areas were not under government control. However, political and ethnic rivalries, irregular payment of soldiers' and policemen's salaries and widespread poverty continued to threaten stability and peace. In February, the Government began a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme funded by the World Bank, targeting some 15,000 ex-combatants in the Pool Region.

The economy continued to fare badly in 2006. High unemployment and low education and health standards kept 70 per cent of the population below the poverty line.

Protection and solutions

In addition to handing over responsibility for refugee issues to the *Comité National d'Assistance aux Réfugiés (CNAR)* and the establishment of refugee status determination procedures, UNHCR helped the Government print and distribute more than 2,200 identity cards to refugees. While the quality of refugee status decisions by government bodies improved, only about 300 cases were cleared. More than 4,000 asylum cases were pending at the end of the year.

After UNHCR's standard operating procedures on resettlement were revised in August, more than 200 refugees, most of them from the DRC, submitted resettlement requests.

Elections in the DRC led to an uncertain political climate and disrupted river navigation for four months, slowing repatriation movements and making most DRC refugees living around Loukolela and Impfondo in the north-east of the RoC reluctant to return home. Nonetheless, UNHCR helped about 7,300 refugees from Betou and some 2,700 refugees from other sites return to the DRC. The Office also completed the organized repatriation to Angola with the return of more than 500 refugees to Mbanza Congo, Uíge, Luanda and Cabinda.

Activities and assistance

Community services: To respond to sexual and gender-based violence, UNHCR set up drop-in centres at 90 per cent of refugee sites. A total of 15,100

refugees were sensitized about sexual and gender-based violence, and over 6,100 vulnerable cases were identified in Loukolela and Impfondo. More than a hundred women survivors of sexual and gender-based violence received counseling, medical assistance and legal help.

Committees representing different ethnic groups took part in planning, implementing and evaluating projects at all refugee sites. On average, in rural areas women made up 26 per cent of committee members; in urban areas the figure rose to 35 per cent.

Crop production: Eighty per cent of refugees in the RoC lived off agriculture and fishing. UNHCR trained and gave material help to 85 groups of refugee fishermen and farmers. This enabled the later group to cultivate a total of 8,000 hectares of land.

Domestic needs and household support: UNHCR provided rent guarantees to 124 refugee families in Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire, and gave six-month subsistence allowances to 66 families with special needs.

Education: Fifty-six per cent of school-age refugee children in rural areas attended school. They were given textbooks and other school supplies. Scholarships helped refugee children with special needs, particularly girls, to go school.

Health and nutrition: Refugees had access to health care through 20 health posts and mobile clinics. About 65 per cent of refugee infants and pregnant women

Persons of concern					
Type of population	Origin	Total	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
Refugees	DRC	46,300	41,200	51	58
	Rwanda	6,600	100	41	35
	Angola	2,700	1,000	48	46
Asylum-seekers	DRC	3,400	-	-	-
	Various	400	-	-	-
	Côte d'Ivoire	300	-	-	-
	Central African Republic	100	-	-	-
	Republic of Chad	100	-	-	-
Returnees (refugees)	From DRC	4,400	-	45	47
IDPs		3,500	2,300	-	-
Returnees (IDPs)		1,000	-	-	-
Total		68,800	44,600		



UNHCR / J. Heiseman

Refugees from the DRC live in the Republic of the Congo, including these children across the river from the DRC's Equateur province.

were vaccinated. However, the vaccination campaign was interrupted when vaccine stocks ran out due to a funding shortfall. Nonetheless, the under-five mortality rates were below standard rates. In line with the Bamako Initiative, those seeking treatment contributed to the cost. This helped generate funds for medicines, but limited some refugees' access to treatment.

UNHCR trained educators in urban areas on HIV and AIDS and established HIV and AIDS committees in rural areas. In line with the inter-agency partnership, UNFPA provided UNHCR with 403,500 condoms, including 3,500 female condoms.

Income generation: Sixty-one refugee groups received a total of USD 21,000 in financial support for microprojects. About 84 per cent of the loans were repaid. Refugee women were given priority when forming income-generating groups, most of whom engaged in sewing, soap-making, running bakeries and cassava processing.

Legal assistance: Almost all refugees were registered in the *proGres* database and received identity cards. Local authorities joined the network of UNHCR teams and local human rights NGOs, to which refugees with legal problems were referred. UNHCR helped the *CNAR*, the national body dealing with refugee issues, to draft a

national refugee law, which is currently being submitted to the Constitutional Court and Parliament.

Livestock: More than 50 returnee families received financial support to help them raise livestock and thereby develop their self-reliance.

Operational support (to agencies): UNHCR provided staff training and financial help to its implementing partners to support their refugee assistance programmes.

Shelter and infrastructures: Four transit facilities for refugees from the DRC were set up in Impfondo, Dongou, Betou and Liranga. Each centre could host 250 people.

Transport and logistics: UNHCR maintained a fleet of 22 boats to assist with the repatriation to the DRC. These were moored in Betou, Loukolela and Impfondo. Field offices were supplied with fuel and other supplies from two rented warehouses.

Water and sanitation: More than 2,600 families had access to treated water when staying at UNHCR transit centres on their way back to the DRC. Water supply facilities were kept in good repair. All refugees had access to latrines and safe drinking water throughout the year.

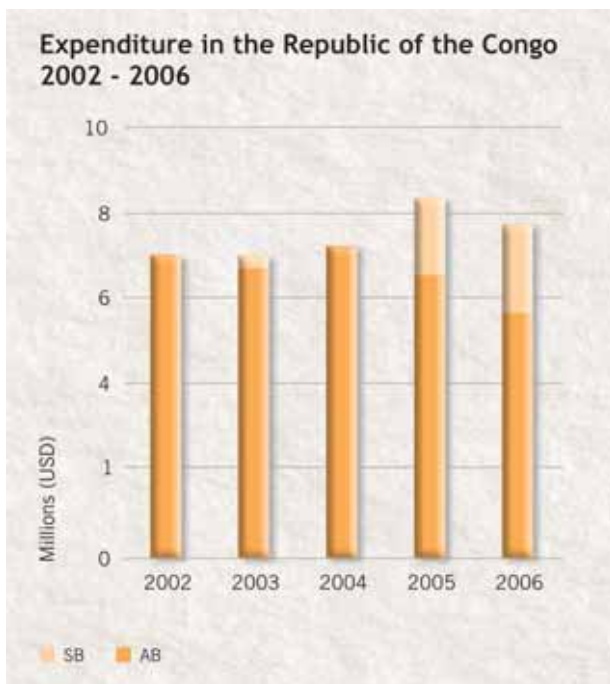
Constraints

Moving goods and people in the RoC was a difficult task, especially so in the northern part of the country, which is only accessible by air or river routes. In the south, it was unsafe to take the train between Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire, forcing UNHCR to use expensive air transport. Moreover, continued insecurity and lack of infrastructure in the DRC's Equateur Province limited the number of refugees returning there from the north of the RoC.

Financial information

Budget reductions dragged down the level of essential assistance to refugees. Particularly hard hit were health care and support for urban refugee students and refugees with special needs.

UNHCR's annual programme in the RoC has been decreasing since 2003, as the level of assistance for refugees has been gradually reduced. A small supplementary programme was established in 2003 for the reintegration of 2,000 RoC returnees from Gabon and the repatriation of Angolan refugees. From 2005, the Office also facilitated the repatriation of DRC refugees under the DRC return and reintegration supplementary programme.



Organization and implementation

Management

In addition to its Representation in Brazzaville, UNHCR had field offices in Impfondo, Betou and Loukolela. Its activities were managed by 11 international and 43 national staff, as well as eight United Nations Volunteers.

Working with others

UNHCR worked with three national implementing partners as well as the National Refugees' Commission, *CNAR*.

Overall assessment

UNHCR continued to support government bodies working to stem the high incidence of arbitrary arrest, gender-based violence and socio-economic or cultural discrimination in the RoC. Sexual and gender-based violence remains a serious problem, especially in the north-east, despite UNHCR's establishment of standard operating procedures for the fight against it. This is due to inadequate legal structures and the perception that sexual violence is a private matter. In this context, UNHCR must work to strengthen the physical protection of women and girls.

Besides assisting the voluntary repatriation of DRC, Angolan and Rwandan refugees, UNHCR supported local integration in its search for durable solutions. Although the Office's assistance to refugees in income-generation activities, health care and education is critical, given their limited prospects for self-reliance, access to land and the lack of a legal framework specifying their eligibility for citizenship, such assistance remained underfunded.

Partners

Implementing partners

Government agencies: *Comité National d'Assistance aux Réfugiés (CNAR)*.

NGOs: *Agence pour l'Assistance aux Rapatriés et Réfugiés au Congo, Commission d'entraide pour les migrants et les réfugiés, Médecins d'Afrique.*

Operational partners

Others: UNFPA.

Budget, income and expenditure (USD)

	Final budget	Income from contributions ¹	Other funds available ²	Total funds available	Total expenditure
AB	8,198,854	1,993,611	3,587,467	5,581,078	5,581,078
SB ³	2,760,132	346,460	1,689,026	2,035,487	2,035,487
Total	10,958,986	2,340,071	5,276,494	7,616,565	7,616,565

¹ Includes income from contributions earmarked at the country level.

² Includes allocations by UNHCR from unearmarked or broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments.

³ The SB figures apply to the Repatriation and Reintegration of Congolese Refugees in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The budget does not include a 7 per cent support cost that is recovered from contributions to meet indirect costs for UNHCR.

Financial Report (USD)

Expenditure breakdown	Current year's projects			Previous years' projects
	AB	SB	Total	AB and SB
Protection, monitoring and coordination	1,870,998	441,843	2,312,840	0
Community services	98,463	27,671	126,135	78,434
Crop production	11,526	0	11,526	2,842
Domestic needs and household support	33,799	24,848	58,647	9,650
Education	196,242	0	196,242	93,047
Health and nutrition	155,472	16,216	171,688	96,688
Income generation	24,006	0	24,006	6,413
Legal assistance	102,401	3,882	106,283	24,964
Livestock	9,050	0	9,050	2,835
Operational support (to agencies)	244,373	136,362	380,735	181,335
Sanitation	6,982	1,234	8,216	3,398
Shelter and infrastructure	0	27,221	27,221	50,915
Transport and logistics	399,676	573,434	973,110	250,890
Water	11,341	8,649	19,990	24,712
Instalments with implementing partners	1,139,508	367,595	1,507,103	(826,123)
Sub-total operational activities	4,303,838	1,628,955	5,932,793	0
Programme support	1,277,240	406,531	1,683,772	0
Total expenditure	5,581,078	2,035,487	7,616,565	0
Cancellation on previous years' expenditure				0
Instalments with implementing partners				
Payments made	2,019,061	707,155	2,726,216	
Reporting received	(879,553)	(339,560)	(1,219,113)	
Balance	1,139,508	367,595	1,507,103	
Previous years' report				
Instalments with implementing partners				
Outstanding 1st January				1,065,044
Reporting received				(826,123)
Refunded to UNHCR				(71,806)
Adjustments				0
Balance				167,115