

Republic of the Congo

Main Objectives

Provide international protection and humanitarian assistance, aiming at self-reliance and local settlement, to urban refugees and refugees from Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the Central African Republic (CAR); continue to facilitate voluntary repatriation of Angolan refugees originating from Cabinda, and Rwandan refugees; facilitate the identification and family reunification of unaccompanied Rwandan minors; facilitate the voluntary repatriation of Congolese (Brazzaville) refugees from Gabon and the DRC; support the Government in the implementation of the National Refugee Law and the restoration of the National Eligibility Commission.

Impact

- Provision of humanitarian assistance to some 104,500 refugees out of a total refugee population of 121,100 (92,800 from DRC).
- Resettlement of 19 persons to Canada and USA.
- 7,588 vulnerable refugees benefited from special assistance geared towards their specific needs.
- 1,255 refugee women from DRC were helped to achieve self-sufficiency through income-generating activities and micro-credits.
- UNHCR initiated and funded an environmental consultant mission which resulted in increased awareness among refugees, local authorities, NGOs and other partners of environmental matters and contributed towards the national development plan. Two training seminars were

organised in collaboration with other UN agencies in Brazzaville.

- 184 Rwandan unaccompanied minors were identified and 18 were reunited with their families in Rwanda.
- 25 Rwandan and 770 Angolan (Cabinda) refugees were repatriated.
- 626 Congolese (Brazzaville) returned during the year with 315 from DRC, 249 from Gabon and 62 from elsewhere.
- In December, the National Committee for Assistance to Refugees (NCAR) became operational and an Eligibility Commission and an Appeals Commission came into being.



- 263 refugees from the CAR, most of them students, were assisted with community kitchens, medical care, water supply, sanitation and NFIs.
- UNHCR supported 13 micro-projects for urban refugees, including eight for women.

Working Environment

The Context

The country has suffered three outbreaks of civil war within the last five years. With the cease-fire and peace agreements signed at the end of 1999, the country started taking steps towards peace and democracy. The electoral calendar established in 2001 for the first half of 2002, is a concrete step for the Congolese people towards democracy. The first presidential elections since 1992 are scheduled to take place in 2002, preceded by a constitutional referendum. The civil wars have resulted in massive destruction of economic and social infrastructure and it is an impoverished society that is setting out on a road of post-conflict recovery towards the restoration of democratic rule. Peace and socio-political stability remain fragile in this critical transitional period.

Neighbouring DRC is still in the throes of civil strife, causing insecurity along the borders, although this was reduced in 2001 due to positive political developments in DRC. A failed *coup d'état* at the

end of May in the Central African Republic triggered the sudden flight of some 1,500 Central African refugees into the northern Republic of the Congo and Brazzaville, prompting emergency assistance from UNHCR and its partners.

Constraints

The current widespread socio-economic state of poverty, makes the reception of refugees difficult and puts added pressure on scarce resources. Most of the refugees from the DRC are living in the forests and swamps along the bank of the Ubangui river. These areas are rarely served by roads, and the majority of the refugees can only be reached by river. However, the insecurity that prevailed on the river during a large part of the year restricted the mobility of refugees and access to them. The sudden arrival in mid-2001 of Central African refugees resulted in new challenges. Betou received 875 refugees but there was no shelter available and the site designated by the local authorities was too close to a military camp, while the proposed rent for a private compound was prohibitive. The refugees remained without a site. The reception of the CAR refugees was compounded by other constraints such as bad roads, heavy rains, insecurity, staff shortages (especially trained staff). In Betou, food and non-food commodities could not be delivered in adequate quantities to the targeted beneficiaries owing to torrential rains. However, even during periods of low river levels, food distribution was difficult. While

food was distributed to refugees in Impfondo and Loukolela, no distribution was undertaken to refugees in Betou due to the low level of water on the Ubangui River that precluded river transport.

Due to the prevailing fragile post-conflict situation, Congolese refugees abroad were reluctant to return home; UNHCR repatriated fewer refugees from Gabon than expected. Many refugees decided to await the outcome of the elections before opting for voluntary repatriation. Due to insecurity and difficulty of

| Persons of Concern | | | | |
|--|---------------------|------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| Main Origin/ Type of Population | Total in Country | Of whom UNHCR assisted | Per cent Female | Per cent under 18 |
| DRC (Refugees) | 92,800 | 92,700 | 50 | 61 |
| Angola (Refugees) | 17,700 | 5,700 | 48 | 52 |
| Rwanda (Refugees) | 6,700 | 4,500 | 34 | - |
| Central African Republic (Refugees) | 1,600 | 1,600 | - | - |
| DRC (Asylum-seekers) | 2,300 | - | - | - |

| Income and Expenditure (USD) Annual Programme Budget | | | | |
|---|---|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| Revised Budget | Income from Contributions ¹ | Other Funds Available ² | Total Funds Available | Total Expenditure |
| 7,200,936 | 3,047,113 | 3,489,634 | 6,536,747 | 6,536,747 |

¹ Includes income from contributions restricted at the country level.

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

The above figures do not include costs at Headquarters.

access, no refugee registration was undertaken and hence the refugees did not obtain identity cards. This limited their freedom of movement and rendered UNHCR's protection task more difficult. Protection of urban DRC refugees was particularly difficult due to the proximity of Brazzaville to Kinshasa and the insecurity this entailed for refugees.

Due to rough conditions of life in the remote and isolated operational locations, UNHCR had difficulty in attracting adequate numbers of long-term personnel, resulting in a constant turnover of staff and the disruption of operations. The protection unit in particular was under-staffed throughout the year. This hampered the processing of refugee status determination cases. The backlog of individual refugee status determination cases stood at some 2,500 cases at the end of the year.

Funding

The operational constraints experienced during the year did not allow the implementation of all activities planned. The activities that were carried out were fully funded.

Achievements and Impact

Protection and Solutions

UNHCR provided international protection and assistance to some 90,000 individuals, out of a total refugee population of 110,724 individuals. As in previous years and owing to the constraints described it was not possible to fully assist all targeted refugees.

While the Republic of the Congo does not have a refugee law, it has a national commission for assistance to refugees, *Comité national d'assistance aux réfugiés*, CNAR. UNHCR addressed and resolved several anomalies, such as the sale of refugee ID cards by CNAR to any asylum-seeker, the issuance of Convention Travel Documents (CTD) against payment and refugee status determination without UNHCR consultation. CNAR and the National Eligibility Commission were reorganized by decree, and collaboration between CNAR and UNHCR is improving. In addition to a Headquarters mission, regular participation by UNHCR in the Commis-

sion's meetings contributed substantially to positive developments. Registration of refugees was agreed upon and formalised in a Letter of Intent signed in July 2001. The registration exercise will be undertaken in the first half of 2002 and refugee identity cards will be issued concurrently, thereby facilitating the refugees' freedom of movement. UNHCR and the authorities have agreed to exempt refugees from payment of local immigration taxes.

In view of difficulties encountered in providing international protection to certain categories of the refugee population, UNHCR has accelerated its efforts with resettlement to third countries, and during the year, 19 persons were resettled. A Tripartite Agreement was signed by the Governments of RoC, DRC and Gabon and followed by a voluntary repatriation by air of Congolese refugees from Gabon to Pointe-Noire, Dolisie and Brazzaville. By December 2001, 249 RoC refugees were repatriated from Gabon. Likewise 315 were repatriated from DRC. 770 persons were voluntarily repatriated to Cabinda. 184 Rwandan unaccompanied minors were identified, 18 of whom were reunited with their families. A workshop on Action for the Rights of Children (ARC) was organised in Brazzaville for 25 participants, mainly implementing partners.

Activities and Assistance

Community Services: UNHCR supported 7,588 vulnerable refugees with assistance specially geared to their needs. Ten refugee women's committees were formed, three in Betou and seven in Impfondo. Through the establishment of income-generating schemes, 1,255 vulnerable Congolese refugee women achieved self-sufficiency. Urban refugees who benefited from micro-project schemes were unable to reimburse the funds or to carry out their income-generating activities due to the high costs of raw material in towns. UNHCR organised training on micro-project management, whereby refugees would work in groups where new loans depend on repayment rates of group members to underwrite a commitment to gradual repayment in 2002. Some 1,280 refugees deemed to be the most destitute benefited from a distribution of second-hand clothes.

Crop Production: The refugee representatives and local authorities in northern Congo signed an agreement under which cultivable land will be allocated to refugees. In collaboration with FAO, 31 land rental contracts were obtained for an area of 771.5 ha from local landowners benefiting 2,332 DRC refugees. As the refugees are traditionally accustomed to fishing, rather than farming, refugee committees were created in order to help put across the message that self-sufficiency can be achieved through agricultural production.

Domestic Needs/Household Support: UNHCR and its implementing partners distributed 48,797 bars of soap and 2,153 matchboxes to 72,500 Congolese refugees from DRC in addition to 45,107 blankets, 29,707 jerrycans, 16,074 kitchen sets and 18,000 pieces of plastic sheeting received from ECHO. This distribution took place in Loukolela, Impfondo and Betou. Non-food items were also provided for the Central African refugees. A packet of 50 grams of vegetable seeds and agricultural tool kits consisting of one hoe, one machete and one axe were distributed to 8,954 refugees and 1,025 beneficiaries among the hosting population in northern Congo.

Education: UNHCR provided educational assistance to 5,783 girls and 6,726 boys in 49 informal schools in northern Congo. Due to the incompatibility between DRC and RoC school curricula, DRC children could not be integrated into local schools. Negotiations are underway with the authorities in DRC to officially recognize the primary schools for refugee children in order to facilitate their reintegration when they repatriate in due course. 450 Angolan refugee children were assisted on the three sites at primary school level and 86 at secondary school and in vocational training. 22 students in the latter category were young girls. UNHCR helped 307 refugee students from CAR to enrol in the Congolese University colleges.

Fisheries: Most of the Congolese refugees from DRC subsist through fishing activities on the Oubangui river using material for fishing nets distributed in 2000. The catch is used for their own consumption as well as for sale. Insecurity on the river, however, led to frequent interruptions of this activity.

Food: UNHCR and its implementing partners distributed 327,123 kg of rice as well as 91,119 kg of peas, donated by WFP, to 32,083 beneficiaries in Impfondo and Loukolela. A community kitchen was organized by a local implementing partner from September to December 2001 in favor of 263 CAR refugees in Brazzaville at the *Centre international d'études de santé publique en Afrique centrale* (CIESPAC). It was supplied with 8t of rice, 6.4t of beans, 1.2t of palm oil, 0.3t of salt and 1.3t of salted and fresh fish.

Health/Nutrition: Four new health posts were opened in Betou for Congolese refugees in addition to a mobile team operating on the axis between Betou and the CAR border. The health posts offered pre-natal consultations, maternity services, nursery care, vaccination, health education (HIV/STDs) and essential drugs. The mobile medical team assisted both refugees and the local population. More complicated health cases were referred to the hospitals in Impfondo or the *Centre Hospitalier Universitaire* (CHU) in Brazzaville for intensive care (130 patients, including 32 surgical patients, were referred from the Impfondo Hospital to CHU). 76 cases of malnutrition were identified and treated in Betou, but no severe cases of malnutrition were reported in 2001. In Betou there were 3,695 consultations, 598 of them for members of the local population. In Impfondo, UNHCR rehabilitated the water supply system, the hospital and an incinerator.

Income Generation: In Brazzaville, micro-projects were identified for 13 urban refugees (eight of them women). In northern Congo, women refugees from DRC were assisted to generate income through various activities, including soap production, retail trade, sewing, hair styling, baking, crop production and poultry raising. UNHCR helped more than 1,200 women to become self-sufficient through these income-generating activities.

Legal Assistance: No legal documents were issued to refugees in northern Congo (i.e. no birth, death, or marriage certificates). Urban refugees, however, were able to obtain the necessary documents from the local authorities. Local security forces were hired to ensure security at the camps and at UNHCR's and its partners' premises. Military escorts were provided for movement between locations of operations.

Operational Support (to Agencies): UNHCR made office equipment and stationery available in sufficient quantities for all its implementing partners. In view of insecurity and logistical difficulties, selected parts of the programme management were decentralised to the field through the establishment of co-ordination units in locations of operation.

Sanitation: The implementing partners constructed 76 pit-latrines and four new incinerators in Betou while improving the existing five. Twelve pit-latrines were erected and equipped with ventilation facilities, using durable construction material, at the Impfondo hospital and the health centre in Dongou, benefiting both the refugee community and the indigenous population. During the year, six blocks of eight pit-latrines were established in the CIESPAC settlement accommodating urban refugees from CAR.

and Loukolela, one of UNHCR's local partners organized the distribution of rice and peas at 35 distribution sessions. At the same time, the local partner also distributed some 5,000 agricultural kits (seeds and tools) donated by FAO, to 2,332 refugees and 1,025 local inhabitants of Impfondo. One aeroplane was chartered throughout the year to support the operations in isolated areas, supply non-food items and equipment and to ensure the security and safe transport of staff. River boats were rented for the transport of non-food items from Brazzaville to the areas of operation and smaller boats were rented for the transport of the NFIs to the refugee sites along the river for distribution.

Water: Six refugee management committees, two in Impfondo and four in Betou, were formed to monitor the maintenance of boreholes and to guarantee

security for the water points in the various settlements in northern Congo. Of 260 CAR refugees residing in Brazzaville, 150 were sheltered in the CIESPAC settlement. They receive potable water supplies from implementing partners at a rate of 6,000 liters every two days.

Organisation and Implementation

Management

The programme in RoC has funding for 10 international posts, of which seven were vacant for most of the year, and 43 national posts, of which 31 were vacant. The high vacancy rate is partly due to the fact that seven additional international and 31 additional national posts were approved only in September 2001. As far as possible this gap was reduced through missions and staff on temporary assistance. The UNHCR offices are located in Brazzaville, Betou, Impfondo, Loukolela and Pointe Noire. The Liaison Office, which is answerable to the Regional Office in Kinshasa, manages the offices in Betou, Impfondo and



After many years in exile, Rwandan refugees prepare to go home. UNHCR / B. Neelemann

Shelter/Other Infrastructure: The Loukolela camp was maintained and repaired in order to bring living conditions up to acceptable standards. Work at the proposed site for CAR refugees in Betou was held in abeyance pending a resolution of protracted negotiations on permission by the local authorities.

Transport/Logistics: In order to complement the WFP-sourced food stocks distributed in Impfondo

Loukolela. The sub-office in Pointe-Noire is managed directly by the Regional Office in Kinshasa.

Working with Others

UNHCR worked with six partners in total during the year: one Government institution, one local NGO, two international NGOs and an international agency, which has taken over logistical operations country-wide and camp management in Pointe-Noire.

Working relations between UNHCR and other UN agencies, NGOs and the Government of the Congo are harmonious. The Government has expressed its preference for local integration of refugees while awaiting an opportune time for voluntary repatriation. The involvement of the Government of the Congo, through its National Committee of Assistance to Refugees (CNAR) has for some years now facilitated the integration of Rwandan refugees into local villages in northern Congo. Collaboration with other UN agencies is especially close on administrative and security-related matters. There is also close co-operation and co-ordination between UNHCR and its implementing partners. UNHCR took the lead in organising an inter-agency workshop in June in order to coordinate assistance to northern Congo for refugees and hosting communities. This resulted in an Inter-Agency Action Plan.

Overall Assessment

The UNHCR operations were adversely affected by logistical and security-related constraints. Due to external factors, for much of the year the distribution of food items and non-food commodities to the targeted beneficiaries did not occur as regularly as planned, nor in the quantities envisaged. UNHCR maintained good working relations with Government counterparts at central and local level throughout the year, which led to major improvements in international protection for refugees, especially after reinforcement of UNHCR's presence in the refugee areas. However, minor harassment of refugees did occur outside of refugee sites.

A key activity, registration of refugees, could not be carried out due to a lack of trained local staff, logistics and security.

Offices

Brazzaville

Betou

Impfondo

Loukolela

Pointe-Noire

Partners

Government Agency

Comité national d'assistance aux réfugiés

NGOs

Atlas Logistique

Conférence épiscopale pour les migrants et les réfugiés (CEMIR)

International Rescue Committee

Others

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit

IFRC

Financial Report (USD)

| Expenditure Breakdown | Annual Programme Budget | | Annual Programme Budget | |
|---|-------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|------------|
| | Current Year's Projects | notes | Prior Years' Projects | notes |
| Protection, Monitoring and Co-ordination | 744,570 | | 928 | |
| Community Services | 160,689 | | 173,127 | |
| Crop Production | 8,173 | | 278,671 | |
| Domestic Needs / Household Support | 44,367 | | 79,473 | |
| Education | 104,016 | | 73,670 | |
| Fisheries | 0 | | 66 | |
| Food | 789 | | 178 | |
| Forestry | 0 | | 19 | |
| Health / Nutrition | 230,334 | | 382,420 | |
| Income Generation | 11,404 | | 19,718 | |
| Legal Assistance | 59,112 | | 26,066 | |
| Livestock | 0 | | 3,444 | |
| Operational Support (to Agencies) | 637,235 | | 524,579 | |
| Sanitation | 36,199 | | 88,740 | |
| Shelter / Other Infrastructure | 12,530 | | 38,469 | |
| Transport / Logistics | 1,155,788 | | 893,607 | |
| Water | 20,854 | | 23,649 | |
| Instalments with Implementing Partners | 1,064,987 | | (1,668,265) | |
| Sub-total Operational | 4,291,047 | | 938,559 | |
| Programme Support | 1,640,171 | | 0 | |
| Sub-total Disbursements / Deliveries | 5,931,218 | (3) | 938,559 | (5) |
| Unliquidated Obligations | 605,529 | (3) | 0 | |
| TOTAL | 6,536,747 | (1) (3) | 938,559 | |

Instalments with Implementing Partners

| | | | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------|--|--------------------|--|
| Payments Made | 2,619,395 | | 588,727 | |
| Reporting Received | 1,554,408 | | 2,256,992 | |
| Balance | 1,064,987 | | (1,668,265) | |
| Outstanding 1st January | 0 | | 1,826,220 | |
| Refunded to UNHCR | 0 | | 13,990 | |
| Currency Adjustment | 0 | | 5,144 | |
| Outstanding 31 December | 1,064,987 | | 149,109 | |

Unliquidated Obligations

| | | | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------|------------|-----------|-----|
| Outstanding 1st January | 0 | | 1,085,199 | (5) |
| New Obligations | 6,536,747 | (1) | 0 | |
| Disbursements | 5,931,218 | (3) | 938,559 | (5) |
| Cancellations | 0 | | 146,640 | (5) |
| Outstanding 31 December | 605,529 | (3) | 0 | |

Figures which cross reference to Accounts:

- (1) Annex to Statement 1
- (3) Schedule 3
- (5) Schedule 5