

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE IN GABON

Congolese refugees entered Gabon in two waves during the past two years following armed conflict between the Government of the Republic of the Congo and various militia groups. The first group, comprising senior Government officials, arrived in 1997. In June 1999, thousands of Congolese crossed into the provinces of Haut Ogooue, Nyanga, Ngounie and Ogooue Lolo. Ethnic and family ties between refugees and their hosts enabled them to mingle naturally with the local population, which extended its support in various ways, primarily by providing temporary shelter. Shelter materials were also bought by UNHCR and distributed to the refugees. The sudden arrival of such a large group of refugees was clearly a massive burden for the Government (prior to the influx, the country hosted a mixed group of about 1,500 refugees). After a few incidents during which the borders were temporarily closed, UNHCR (at the time operating under the umbrella of UNDP) was requested to help. An emergency team comprising nine staff was deployed over a period of six months. It drew on human and material resources within the region and from Headquarters. Field Offices were opened in Tchibanga and Franceville, and the office in Libreville was strengthened.

Working closely with donor governments, UNHCR took the lead on food distribution, and started procur-

ing food locally, with the result that a total of 60 metric tonnes of rice, 6 tonnes of oil, 2.5 tonnes of sugar, 5.5 tonnes of fish and 2 tonnes of salt were distributed. Essential household items such as blankets, 5,000 sets of cooking utensils, 3,600 jerry cans and 1,000 plastic sheets, were transferred and distributed from UNHCR stocks in West Africa. Warehouses were rented and trucks hired for distribution. For drinking water, six new wells were built, and three existing wells renovated. Some 140 latrines were constructed in Nyanga. Many refugees were in poor health upon arrival, so medical services were made available through local structures. Refugees in Nyanga were given a small quantity of agricultural tools and seeds.

Registration of urban refugees took place in November. The number of Congolese refugees in the country was estimated at more than 12,000. Initially only one international implementing partner was identified. A seminar on refugee law, organised in November, helped to equip national counterparts and local NGOs with the skills to deal with complex refugee matters. Although, capacity-building is a gradual process, it was highly encouraging that the Government speedily agreed to transfer refugees to 17 sites where assistance could be more focused until repatriation becomes feasible.

Financial Report (USD)

Expenditure Breakdown	Current Year's Projects		Instalments with Implementing Partners	Current Year's Projects	
		notes			notes
Protection, Monitoring and Coordination*	185,542		Payments Made	286,905	
Community Services	727		Reporting Received	0	
Crop Production	9,650		Balance	286,905	
Domestic Needs / Household Support	83,781		Outstanding 1 January	0	
Food	13,495		Refunded to UNHCR	0	
Health / Nutrition	12,120		Currency Adjustment	0	
Income Generation	0		Outstanding 31 December	286,905	
Legal Assistance	13,036		Unliquidated Obligations		
Operational Support (to Agencies)	37,803		Outstanding 1 January	0	
Sanitation	11,514		New Obligations	1,349,939	(3)
Shelter / Other Infrastructure	0		Disbursements	773,739	(3)
Transport / Logistics	119,167		Cancellations	0	
Instalments with Implementing Partners	286,905		Outstanding 31 December	576,200	(3)
Combined Projects	0				
Sub - total Operational	773,739				
Sub - total Disbursements/Deliveries	773,739	(3)			
Unliquidated Obligations	576,200	(3)			
TOTAL**	1,349,939	(3)			

* Includes costs at Headquarters.

** Allocated from the Emergency Fund.

Figures which cross reference to accounts (3) Schedule 3