

# Central Africa and the Great Lakes

## Major developments

As in previous years, the political situation in many countries of the Great Lakes Region remained volatile and complex. In 2003 it transpired that the signature and ratification of several peace accords had perhaps raised premature hopes of a resolution to longstanding problems. Many of UNHCR's activities had to be carried out in circumstances of great uncertainty, necessitating constant adjustment or sometimes even complete revision of plans. Nevertheless, there were strong signs of hope, especially in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), that allowed UNHCR to revive repatriation plans. Many Rwandan refugees who had sought asylum in the United Republic of Tanzania (Tanzania) and the DRC continued to return. Unfortunately, the political situation in other countries, such as the Central African Republic, remained uncertain, and Chad began to receive tens of thousands of refugees from the Darfur region in western Sudan.

In Burundi, 2003 saw the commencement of the second half of the transition period foreseen under the

Burundi  
Central African Republic  
Democratic Republic of the Congo  
Gabon  
Republic of Chad  
Republic of the Congo  
Rwanda  
United Republic of Tanzania



In the Central African Republic (CAR) a *coup d'état* in March 2003 plunged the country in a state of uncertainty and insecurity for several months. President Pétasse was ousted and General Bozizé took power as the head of the newly formed Transitional Government, which is to remain in power until the beginning of 2005. While the Government initiated a national dialogue of reconciliation, it encountered enormous difficulties in finding a lasting solution to the problem of armed militia who continue to threaten the security of the country.

In 2003, fewer DRC Congolese sought asylum in neighbouring countries than in the previous year. In April, a power-sharing agreement for the DRC was signed in Pretoria, allowing former rebel leaders to join the Government of National Unity. Many of the leaders were appointed to an expanded Government and allocated key positions. The immediate task of this new Government was to restore national institutions devastated by years of misrule and war. This task was more tractable in some parts of the country than in others. Despite peace overtures from the Central Government, and the presence of an international peace keeping force, the provinces of North and South Kivu and the Ituri District in Oriental

Province continued to experience sporadic fighting, resulting in numerous deaths and civilian displacement. With these events, many DRC Congolese refugees chose to stay in countries of asylum.

Arusha Accords. The Transitional Government was able to resolve many of the outstanding issues with the main rebel group, the *Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Forces de la défense démocratique* (CNDD-FDD) paving the way for its inclusion in the Transitional Government in late 2003. The political landscape was transformed as soon as the rebel leaders took up positions in Government under a power-sharing arrangement. As a result, spontaneous returns increased, mainly from Tanzania, and UNHCR started planning for the systematic return and reintegration of Burundian refugees. Unfortunately, one of the lesser known rebel groups, the *Front national pour la libération* (FNL) remained outside the new Transitional Government and continued to attack government forces, especially in rural areas in Bujumbura.

Rwanda continued to move towards more inclusive and democratic governance by strengthening the governing institutions and introducing more transparent economic management (e.g. professionalizing the armed forces). A new constitution was adopted at the beginning of 2003 allowing for multi party elections, both local and presidential, to be held in August and September 2003 respectively. This concluded the transitional period that began in 1994. Despite concerns expressed in some quarters of the international community with regard to the process leading up to the elections, many observers



For over 10 years, Rwanda has been home to some 15,000 Congolese refugees. Here, the Kiziba refugee camp near Kibuye is shown.  
*UNHCR/J. Meer*

acknowledged that Rwandan society had transformed itself since the traumatic experiences of 1994. In this context, UNHCR decided that it was safe for the majority of Rwandan refugees to return to their country of origin and it consolidated its plans to actively promote the repatriation of Rwandan refugees.

The United Republic of Tanzania continued to host the largest number of refugees in Africa. Consequently, the Tanzanian authorities continued to exert pressure on UNHCR to repatriate some of the refugees, especially Burundians and Rwandans. The authorities linked their presence to increasing insecurity in urban areas and refugee hosting communities. As a result of these concerns, the Tanzanian Government responded by imposing limits on the movements of the camp-based refugees.

The conflict in the Darfur region of western Sudan drove as many as 110,000 people to seek asylum in eastern Chad. Due to the many physical challenges posed by the Chadian landscape, this emergency became a major preoccupation of UNHCR in 2003. Despite pledges by the Sudanese authorities to respect its ceasefire agreements, the war continued, resulting in many deaths and thousands being displaced. For Chad, the Sudanese refugees were an addition to the 33,900 Central African (CAR) refugees already hosted in the southern part of the country.

In the Republic of the Congo (RoC), the authorities remained in a state of neither war nor peace, despite the signature of a peace accord with the rebels in March 2003. Fighting in the capital Brazzaville led the national police to announce a three-month

crackdown on “troublemakers” in December 2003. This prevented the return of many refugees from the neighbouring countries.

## Challenges and concerns

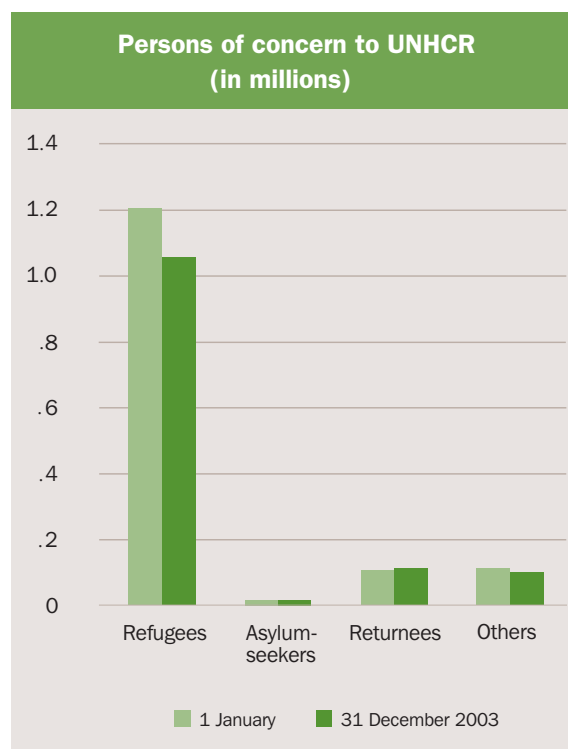
The emergency in Chad posed one of the major challenges in the region, not least due to the sheer length and inaccessibility of the strip of borderland to which the refugees fled. The desert environment and lack of roads forced UNHCR to airlift assistance material, at great cost. Meeting the needs under key sectors, such as water, food and health also posed major challenges to the operation. UNHCR started planning for the relocation of the Sudanese refugees away from the volatile border areas in order to provide them with more systematic protection and assistance. Providing protection and material assistance to this refugee population tested UNHCR’s emergency responsiveness: having withdrawn from Chad in 2001, UNHCR had to step in without any pre-existing organizational infrastructure. In 2003 UNHCR’s presence in southern Chad was finally brought up to full strength, allowing for the proper provision of assistance to the 41,000 Central African refugees in addition to the new arrivals from Sudan.

In Burundi, despite positive developments in the peace process, the humanitarian situation in 2003 remained almost unchanged, with hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) living alongside those refugees who chose not to move back to their country of origin, as well as Burundian returnees. United Nations workers were constrained by UN security phase IV. As a result, many UN agencies and NGOs lacked a presence outside Bujumbura. Security in many of the Burundian provinces did not improve sufficiently to allow UNHCR to start promoting returns. The programme of return and reintegration thus remained one of facilitation rather than promotion, and it was conducted in an atmosphere of uncertainty. As in previous years, access to the southern provinces remained limited, and monitoring of returnees was extremely intermittent. Notwithstanding these limitations, refugees continued to return from Tanzania. In Burundi, the Office continued to assist and protect over 40,000 refugees from the DRC as well as other nationalities. But access (and assistance) to the Congolese refugees in Cibitoke and Muyinga provinces was at the mercy of the security situation.

In Tanzania, the Office continued to provide protection and assistance to camp-based refugees and remained in constant dialogue with refugees based in settlements. Concerns over environmental degradation tended to aggravate the increasingly negative image of refugees (principally the long standing perception that refugees were causing insecurity). The decision to restrict refugees’ movements and to confine them within camp limits, especially in the Kigoma region, further reduced the refugees’ ability to cope and deepened their sense of abandonment.

## Progress towards solutions

In the course of 2003, more than 83,300 Burundian refugees returned to their country; 37,288 of them received assistance from UNHCR and a further 45,018 returned spontaneously. Following the recommendations of the Tripartite Commission, a new entry point opened in Gahumo (Conkuzo province) while transit centres were erected at Giharo and Mugina in (southern provinces) for the reception and assistance of spontaneous returnees. In Burundi, UNHCR continued to provide protection and material assistance to 40,905 Congolese and other nationals. Over 27,000 Rwandans returned from neighbouring countries, especially the DRC and Tanzania, and they were provided with assistance and transport to their communes of origin. A



series of tripartite agreements signed by UNHCR, the Government of Rwanda and the Governments of Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Zimbabwe, the Republic of the Congo and Uganda, provided the legal framework for the return of Rwandan refugees in these countries.

The local settlement site for Somali refugees in Chogo, in eastern Tanzania, was finally completed, allowing for the transfer of 3,330 Somali refugees. UNHCR continued to lobby the Government of Tanzania to grant citizenship to this group.

A few refugees who found themselves unable to settle in countries of asylum in the Great Lakes region were resettled in third countries, such as Canada, the United States and Nordic countries.

## Operations

More details of UNHCR operations in **Burundi**, **Chad**, **DRC**, **RoC**, **Rwanda** and **Tanzania** are provided in the respective country chapters.

Following the March *coup d'état* and the setting up of a new Transitional Government in the **Central African Republic (CAR)**, the absence of effective state structures and continued instability caused some 33,900 persons from CAR to flee into neighbouring Chad. Insecurity continues to prevail in the whole of the country, particularly in the north, preventing the return of refugees in the near future.

Against this background, UNHCR continued to provide international protection and humanitarian assistance to 36,000 Sudanese refugees in Mboki, 3,000 Congolese refugees in Molangué camp and 10,000 urban refugees in Bangui. Following the improvement in the political situation in DRC, 298 Congolese refugees were assisted to repatriate in 2003. Furthermore, some 700 Chadian refugees, who had been locally integrated, asked to be repatriated in 2004 because of the deterioration in the security situation in CAR. During the same period, UNHCR also facilitated the return and reintegration of some 4,000 refugees from DRC, RoC and other countries.

In **Gabon**, UNHCR's activities in 2003 focussed on finding durable solutions for the refugees, the majority of whom originate from the Republic of the Congo. All refugees residing in Gabon had access to basic humanitarian assistance. Refugee women and vulnerable refugees achieved greater involvement in refugee committees as well as their communities. There were also signs that the standard of living of refugee families increased through improved access to services, and that their earnings were higher as a result of income-generating activities and micro-credit schemes.

Some 1,028 refugees were repatriated to their home countries in 2003. 24 families comprising 68 persons were also resettled, mainly to Denmark and Canada. In addition, the Office assisted the Government's *Commission nationale pour les réfugiés* in enhancing its capacity and resources, and held training sessions on the refugee status determination procedure, refugee and human rights law. Protection issues continued to concentrate on the pending cases of RSD for 5,118 asylum-seekers and the issuance of refugee identification cards.

## Funding

With the exception of operations in Burundi, the timing of the availability and release of financial resources affected the speed of programme implementation, particularly at the end of the year.

UNHCR participated in the consolidated appeal process and presented its requirements in CAPs covering Burundi, DRC, RoC and the region as a whole.

Supplementary appeal budgets were established during the year to cover activities in CAR, Chad, DRC and RoC

## Voluntary Contributions - Restricted / Earmarked (USD)

Earmarking <sup>1</sup>	Donor	Annual programme budget		Supplementary programme budget	
		Income	Contribution	Income	Contribution
<b>Burundi</b>					
	European Commission	7,941,897	8,834,018	0	0
	United States of America	900,000	900,000	0	0
<b>Chad</b>					
	Canada	0	0	381,679	381,679
	<i>España con ACNUR (SPA)</i>	0	0	8,907	8,907
	European Commission	0	0	519,596	890,736
	France	0	0	237,530	237,530
	Germany	0	0	500,999	500,999
	Italy	0	0	342,857	342,857
	Norway	0	0	436,681	436,681
	Sweden	0	0	658,762	658,762
	Switzerland	0	0	384,615	384,615
	United Kingdom	0	0	1,703,578	1,703,578
	United States of America	0	0	2,737,972	2,737,972
	USA for UNHCR (USA)	20,615	20,615	0	0
<b>Central African Republic</b>					
	United States of America	400,000	400,000	300,000	300,000
<b>Central Africa and the Great Lakes</b>					
	Belgium	1,344,325	1,344,325	0	0
	Canada	469,799	469,799	0	0
	Denmark	4,062,078	4,062,078	0	0
	European Commission	6,539	0	0	0
	Finland	1,369,853	1,369,853	0	0
	France	471,143	471,143	0	0
	Japan	3,000,000	3,000,000	0	0
	Luxembourg	668,571	668,571	0	0
	Netherlands	378,000	378,000	0	0
	Norway	1,449,275	1,449,275	0	0
	Private donors Italy	167,623	107,623	0	0
	South Africa	40,927	40,927	0	0
	Sweden	5,245,154	5,245,154	0	0
	Private donors Switzerland	1,000	1,000	0	0
<b>Democratic Republic of the Congo</b>					
	Belgium	712,589	712,589	0	0
	European Commission	1,181,360	1,181,525	346,086	346,086
	Japan	3,000,000	3,000,000	0	0
	Netherlands	472,500	472,500	0	0

Earmarking <sup>1</sup>	Donor	Annual programme budget		Supplementary programme budget	
		Income	Contribution	Income	Contribution
	Norway	2,449,275	2,449,275	0	0
	Private donors Netherlands	114	114	0	0
	<i>Stichting Vluchteling</i> (NET)	257,143	257,143	0	0
	United Kingdom	1,052,563	1,052,563	0	0
	United States of America	3,750,000	3,750,000		
<b>Republic of the Congo</b>					
	<i>Association Française de Soutien à l'UNHCR</i> (FRA)	20,571	20,571	0	0
	Belgium	593,824	593,824	0	0
	<i>Deutsche Stiftung</i> (GFR)	241,733	241,733	0	0
	Germany	271,150	271,150	0	0
	<i>Shin-Nyo-En</i> Foundation (JPN)	42,017	42,017	0	0
	United States of America	1,000,000	1,000,000	185,000	185,000
<b>Gabon</b>					
	United States of America	500,000	500,000	0	0
<b>Rwanda</b>					
	Japan	1,000,000	1,000,000	0	0
	Norway	407,569	407,569	0	0
	United States of America	1,125,000	1,125,000	0	0
<b>Tanzania</b>					
	Belgium	950,119	950,119	0	0
	Canada	457,516	457,516	0	0
	European Commission	11,782,350	11,625,404	0	0
	Germany	576,037	576,037	0	0
	Italy	1,509,092	1,509,092	0	0
	Japan	3,000,000	3,000,000	0	0
	Norway	428,000	428,000	0	0
	Switzerland	1,548,588	1,548,588	0	0
	United States of America	4,368,000	4,368,000	0	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>70,633,909</b>	<b>71,302,710</b>	<b>8,744,262</b>	<b>9,115,402</b>

<sup>1</sup> For more information on the various earmarkings, please refer to the donor profiles.

## Budget and expenditure (USD)

Country	Revised budget			Expenditure		
	Annual programme budget	Supplementary programme budget	Total	Annual programme budget	Supplementary programme budget	Total
Burundi	9,873,027	0	9,873,027	9,694,809	0	9,694,809
Central African Republic	2,951,128	817,692	3,768,820	2,915,344	513,509	3,428,853
Chad	0	12,993,163	12,993,163	0	9,848,269	9,848,269
Democratic Republic of the Congo	23,015,477	4,792,939	27,808,416	21,219,678	4,204,468	25,424,146
Gabon	3,907,603	0	3,907,603	3,717,932	0	3,717,932
Republic of the Congo	7,401,785	626,445	8,028,230	6,580,250	306,267	6,886,517
Rwanda	7,211,454	0	7,211,454	6,704,078	0	6,704,078
United Republic of Tanzania	28,782,971	0	28,782,971	27,367,477	0	27,367,477
Regional projects <sup>1</sup>	8,212,870	0	8,212,870	8,179,994	0	8,179,994
<b>Total</b>	<b>91,356,315</b>	<b>19,230,239</b>	<b>110,586,554</b>	<b>86,379,562</b>	<b>14,872,513</b>	<b>101,252,075</b>

<sup>1</sup> Includes assistance to various refugees in Central Africa and the Great Lakes region, such as resettlement, care and maintenance, as well as support costs for UNVs and consultants, light aircraft charter costs and scholarships for refugee students.

Note: The Supplementary programme budgets do not include a 7 per cent charge (support costs) that is recovered from contributions to meet indirect costs for UNHCR.