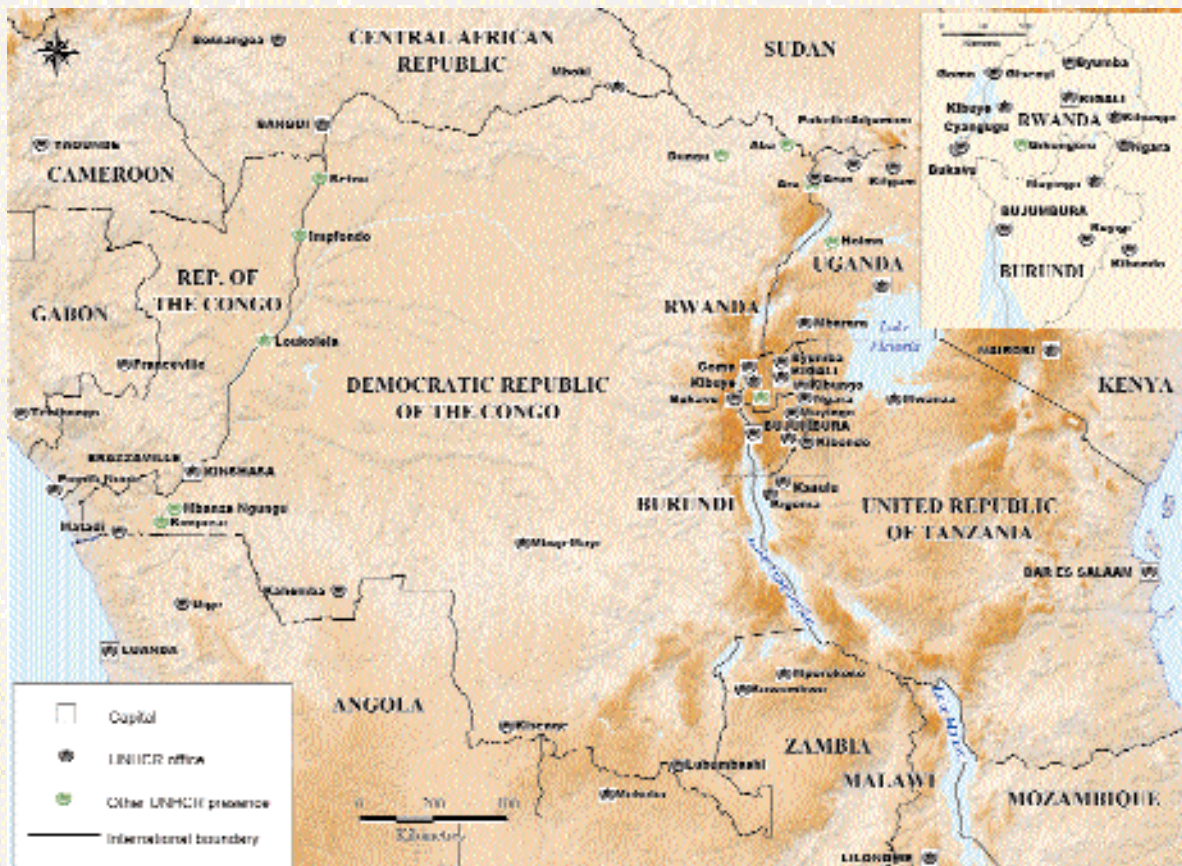


# GREAT LAKES

## Regional Overview

Burundi • Democratic Republic of the Congo • Republic of the Congo • Rwanda • United Republic of Tanzania



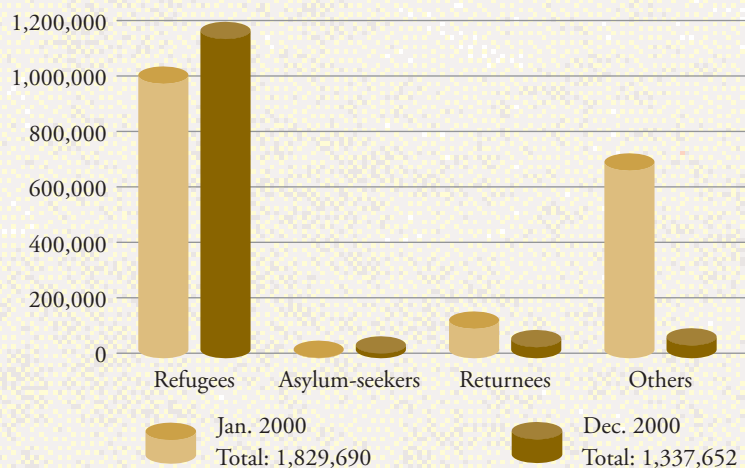
## MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

Despite the optimism surrounding the two major peace processes currently underway in the Great Lakes region of Africa - for Burundi and for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) - fighting in the region continued unabated, resulting in further displacement of people within countries as well as across borders.

At the beginning of the year, relative stability returned to some parts of Burundi, enabling the UN to partially lift country-wide security restrictions in April and allowing humanitarian agencies renewed access to the north and north-east of the country. Reintegration activities were resumed for some returning refugees and displaced persons. In August, the peace talks for Burundi, facilitated by former South African President, Nelson Mandela, gained momentum. While the two main issues regarding arrangements for a cease-fire

and a transitional government remained unresolved, a peace agreement was signed on 28 August in Arusha. Fighting, however, did not end. On the contrary, violence escalated in many parts of Burundi, forcing some 80,000 to seek refuge in Tanzania, while others fled to neighbouring countries, including the DRC, Malawi and Zambia. Many were displaced internally and remained trapped in the fighting between rebel and gov-

Persons of Concern to UNHCR



ernment forces. Owing to prevailing insecurity, the dismantling of the “regroupment” camps (created by the Government to contain the civilian population and remove alleged support for the rebels) did not progress as assured by the Government to the international community. As months of negotiations for peace elapsed without tangible progress, Burundi’s economy, already weakened by regional sanctions imposed from 1996 to 1999, slid into further impoverishment.

In the DRC, the cease-fire agreement, signed in 1999 in Lusaka, remained unimplemented. Periods of intensified confrontation occurred in June and July between rebel and government forces in Equateur Province; in July between Rwandan and Ugandan forces in Kisangani (Province Orientale); and in December between the Lendu and Hema tribes in the Ituri district (Province Orientale). As a result of continued fighting, some 85,000 Congolese fled to the Republic of the Congo, and others to neighbouring countries, including the Central African Republic, Tanzania and Zambia. In addition, an estimated 1.8 million people were displaced internally. The conflict in the DRC threatened to engulf the entire region, undermining prospects for peace and stability and weakening already fragile countries. By the end of the year, it became evident that the implementation of the Lusaka cease-fire agreement was not feasible: the path to conflict resolution and peace was to be a long one.

In Rwanda, the security situation had improved considerably following the mass return of refugees to Rwanda in late 1996 and early 1997, but the country experienced political upheaval in the early months of the year in the wake of high-level resignations from the Government. The presence of Rwandan forces in the DRC continued to draw criticism from the international community and from Rwanda’s financial backers. Despite these setbacks, Rwanda made progress in consolidating peace at home. As a result, Rwandan refugees in the DRC and elsewhere in the region continued to return home. Some 26,000 Rwandans returned in 2000, mostly from the Kivus in eastern DRC, but also from Tanzania and Uganda. Conversely, some 14,000 Rwandans sought refuge in neighbouring countries, as a result of a fresh wave of violence in southeastern Rwanda during the second half of the year.

The conflicts in countries of the Great Lakes region continued to cause refugees to flee into Tanzania. By the end of 2000, Tanzania was hosting some 680,860 refugees. The conflicts in Angola, Sudan and Uganda also caused refugee outflows affecting countries in the

Great Lakes region, particularly the DRC. In 2000, the new arrivals registered in the DRC included 22,000 Angolan, 3,500 Sudanese and 10,300 Ugandan refugees. By the end of the year, the DRC was hosting some 332,465 refugees.

The humanitarian situation improved markedly in the Republic of the Congo since the peace agreements were signed at the end of 1999. Many of the Congolese refugees in neighbouring countries returned home. A tripartite agreement between UNHCR and the Governments of the Republic of the Congo and the DRC, signed in April 1999, permitted the return of some 44,700 Congolese refugees between 1999 and 2000.

## CHALLENGES AND CONCERNS

Developments in 2000 swiftly illustrated the unpredictability of the region. Some of the assumptions upon which plans were based at the beginning of the year proved to be over-optimistic, such as the premise that progress in the Burundi peace process would be followed by voluntary repatriation. This called for a considerable degree of flexibility on the part of UNHCR, which had to shift the focus of its programme from voluntary repatriation to basic assistance.

Access to refugees in large areas of Burundi and the DRC remained difficult owing to security constraints and logistical difficulties. Some UNHCR offices in these countries continued to be run by a limited number of staff.

Although the Republic of the Congo witnessed a dramatic improvement in its humanitarian situation since the signing of the peace agreements, the influx of some 85,000 Congolese refugees from the DRC into the northern region of the country created an emergency.

In Tanzania, the massive influx of Burundi refugees, coupled with the small-scale voluntary repatriation of Congolese, Rwandan and Somali refugees to their countries of origin, caused overcrowding in existing camps. UNHCR had to identify new sites to accommodate the new arrivals. The long-term presence of such large numbers of refugees in Tanzania tended to erode the local tradition of hospitality. International support was regrettably not commensurate with the increased burden placed on the Tanzanian Government. Proximity to the border exposed refugee camps to armed conflicts raging in neighbouring countries; at the same time, refugees continued to face threats to their physical safety inside the camps from criminal elements within the refugee communities. Refugee women and children



were at times victims of sexual violence, both within their own communities and whilst venturing into remote areas in search of firewood. Allegations about the use of refugee camps as bases for armed cross-border activity continued to be levelled against Tanzania by Burundi, leading to tension between these two countries. Both UNHCR and WFP suffered severe financial constraints, leading to reduced food rations and the cancellation of numerous assistance activities.

## PROGRESS TOWARDS SOLUTIONS

Overall, the lack of progress in the Arusha peace process for Burundi and in the implementation of the Lusaka cease-fire agreement in the DRC meant that large-scale repatriation from countries of asylum could not take place. Some progress was nevertheless made towards durable solutions. In Burundi, a draft tripartite agreement for the voluntary repatriation of Burundi refugees in Tanzania was discussed and finalised at a meeting held in December in Bujumbura between UNHCR and the two Governments. It is expected that the agreement will

be signed in 2001. In the DRC, UNHCR capitalised on relative stability in the Republic of the Congo to successfully repatriate 5,520 Congolese refugees. In the Republic of the Congo, UNHCR opened an office in Betou in the north and was able to reach and assist 30,000 Congolese refugees from the DRC stranded along the Ubangui river. In Rwanda, UNHCR continued to assist and monitor the voluntary repatriation and reintegration of Rwandan refugees, mainly from the DRC. Over 26,000 Rwandan refugees returned during the year. UNHCR assisted them by providing a basic returnee kit, as well as transport to their communities of origin, enabling them to reintegrate into their former homes. In Tanzania, UNHCR provided protection and assistance to a total of 510,860 refugees during 2000. By supporting the authorities in their task of providing security in the refugee camps, the civilian and humanitarian character of the camps was, for the most part, preserved.

## OPERATIONS

While UNHCR's operations in **Burundi**, **the DRC**, **Rwanda** and **Tanzania** are presented in separate country



chapters, UNHCR's programme in the Republic of the Congo is described below.

In the **Republic of the Congo**, prospects for lasting peace have been encouraging since the consolidation and implementation of the peace agreement signed in November 1999. The cease-fire accord, signed in December 1999, foresees several measures to achieve lasting peace, including amnesty for combatants, demilitarisation of militia and disarmament. The successful implementation of the cease-fire during the year enabled the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs), access to the interior and some economic recovery. Stability also returned to the southern areas. National political dialogue, however, has yet to occur. Overall, the internal political balance remains fragile, infrastructure shattered and poverty rife. Among the many challenges faced by the Government is the humanitarian crisis evolving in the northern region.

Equateur Province in neighbouring DRC is bordered by the Ubangui river, which constitutes the official border between the DRC and the Republic of the Congo. Congolese refugees have been arriving in the

northern Republic of the Congo since July 1999 from villages opposite Impfondo, to escape fighting in Equateur Province in the DRC. Since June 2000, the intensification of the conflict in Equateur Province caused an influx of more than 85,000 new Congolese refugees in the northern Republic of the Congo. This area was already hosting over 20,000 Congolese refugees. Heavy fighting along and on the river forced UNHCR to temporarily evacuate its staff, making it difficult to reach all the Congolese refugees who sought shelter along an 800-km stretch of the river. The insecurity caused by nearby fighting in the DRC rendered access to refugees extremely difficult. Refugees were obliged to reach distribution centres where food and non-food items were delivered. This was highly dangerous, as they had to travel by river, where they were exposed to the fighting on the other side. To facilitate the provision of assistance, UNHCR opened an office in Betou. The

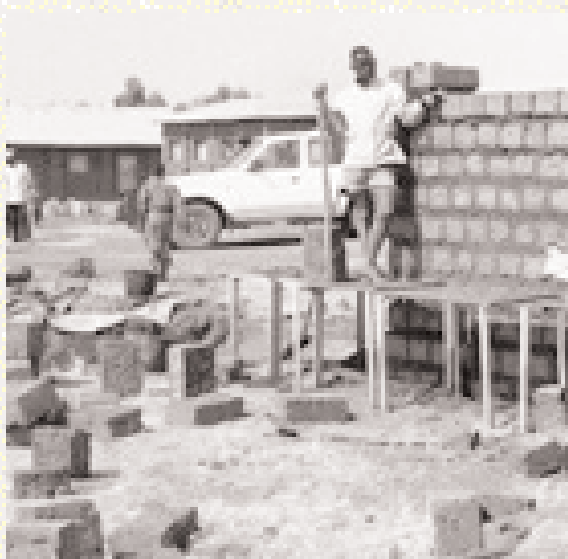
northern Republic of the Congo is a vast marshland and the regular closing of navigation on the river for security reasons sometimes forced UNHCR to airlift relief items. More than 500 metric tons of non-food items and fuel were airlifted from Brazzaville to Impfondo, Loukolela and Betou.

The fact that refugees do not have documents (only those refugees to whom UNHCR has access carry a ration card) left them doubly exposed to human rights violations, such as harassment, extortion, arbitrary arrest and gender-based violence. A team comprised of Government and UNHCR representatives was created in December to study the modalities of a registration exercise to take place in 2001 for the Congolese refugees in the northern Republic of the Congo. In addition, following an Emergency Management Training Programme for military and civilian authorities, as well as UNHCR and partner staff, the authorities conducted training of soldiers and set up a mechanism to pursue and punish those committing human rights violations vis-à-vis the refugees.

Of the 18,500 Angolan refugees (originating from the enclave of Cabinda) in the Republic of the Congo,

UNHCR assisted some 3,600 in the three sites of Kondi-Mbaka, Mavoadi and Komi. The rest tended to integrate fairly easily into local villages; their assistance needs thus decreased significantly over the year. In 2000, roads and bridges were rehabilitated to facilitate access to the sites. Shelters were rehabilitated (plus other infrastructure). A medical centre was built in Kondi-Mbaka. To increase self-sufficiency, UNHCR provided seeds, tools and loans for micro-projects. In addition, UNHCR provided education assistance for 270 girls and 445 boys. The Office facilitated the repatriation of some 1,260 refugees to Angola.

UNHCR continued to promote the local integration of Burundi and Rwandan refugees. In 2000, all the 2,580 Rwandan refugees were successfully integrated in local villages in Loukolela. For the 260 Rwandan refugees in Impfondo, local integration is in progress. Assistance for the remaining Rwandan refugees in Kintele was phased out in June 2000, but local integration has not yet been achieved.



UNHCR continued to provide assistance on a case-by-case basis to some 550 urban refugees (300 in Brazzaville and 250 in Pointe-Noire). Assistance included food and housing subsistence allowances. To increase self-sufficiency, UNHCR funded 30 income-generating projects.

In 2000, UNHCR continued to pursue the reactivation of the National Eligibility Commission, which has been suspended since 1987. In the absence of the Commission, refugee status determination was mainly conducted by UNHCR. Owing to the lack of protection staff, as well as the increasing number of asylum-seekers from the DRC, UNHCR had some 878 pend-

ing cases by December. Resettlement has increasingly become the only durable solution for those refugees who are in a life-threatening situation. In 2000, some 45 refugees were accepted for resettlement in third countries.

## FUNDING

Financial constraints forced UNHCR to considerably reduce many of its planned activities in the Great Lakes region. Budget cuts strained UNHCR's relations with host authorities and implementing partners and tarnished the Office's credibility. In the DRC, UNHCR was unable to move Angolan refugees away from the border and establish camps to protect and assist them. Moreover, UNHCR could not rehabilitate roads and bridges to facilitate access to the refugees. WFP reduced food rations to 1,100 kcal per person per day and experienced chronic food supply line problems. To make matters worse, UNHCR was unable to procure supplementary food. This had serious effects on the nutritional status of the refugees. In Rwanda, nearly 85 per cent of the returnees had to make their own travel arrangements to their *communes* of origin, with the result that repatriation was neither safe nor dignified. Furthermore, the enhanced repatriation kits could not be distributed as planned. In many instances, UNHCR had to reduce the quantity of non-food items distributed to the refugees. In some of the camps in Tanzania, refugees did not receive soap for the last four months of the year. Often, refugees sought alternative sources of food and income, leading to increased competition between refugees and the local population over resources. Moreover, assistance to the refugee-hosting areas in Tanzania was curtailed.

The 2000 Global Appeal included a box describing the situation of refugees originating from the Great Lakes region, which indicated total financial requirements for the year in an amount of USD 76,152,037. The box was intended to summarise UNHCR's strategy and to highlight the complexity and cross-border nature of the refugee situation in the region, and to facilitate the transition from the former Special Programme for the Great Lakes Operation (excluding Rwanda) to the unified budget structure, which was launched on 1 January 2000. Earmarked contributions received for the refugee situation in the region are reflected in the table at the end of this Regional Overview. Total expenditure for the situation in 2000 amounted to USD 59,673,919. A description of the corresponding activities may be found in the Operations section of this Overview and in the country chapters following it.

Voluntary Contributions - Restricted (USD)			
Donor	Earmarking <sup>1</sup>	Annual Programme Budget	
		Income	Contribution
Belgium	Great Lakes	1,393,743	1,393,743
	Tanzania	536,055	536,055
Canada	Tanzania	344,828	344,828
	Democratic Republic of the Congo	137,931	137,931
Denmark	Great Lakes	4,170,875	4,170,875
Finland	Democratic Republic of the Congo	290,957	290,957
	Great Lakes	756,851	756,851
	Tanzania	155,298	155,298
France	Great Lakes	580,205	580,205
Germany	Republic of the Congo	110,564	110,564
	Rwanda	245,106	245,106
	Regional Projects/ Refugees from the Great Lakes	240,928	240,928
Italy	Tanzania	120,893	120,893
Japan	Burundi	2,000,000	2,000,000
	Republic of the Congo	310,000	310,000
	Democratic Republic of the Congo	3,200,000	3,200,000
	Great Lakes	1,310,000	1,310,000
	Rwanda	1,830,000	1,830,000
	Tanzania	4,660,000	4,660,000
Norway	Republic of the Congo	532,481	532,481
	Great Lakes	2,818,489	2,818,489
	Tanzania	536,481	536,481
South Africa	Democratic Republic of the Congo	71,839	71,839
	Great Lakes	143,678	143,678
Sweden	Great Lakes	5,405,405	5,405,405
Switzerland	Burundi	400,000	400,000
	Tanzania	1,184,795	1,184,795
United Kingdom	Tanzania	1,814,224	1,814,224
United States of America	Republic of the Congo	1,215,000	1,215,000
	Democratic Republic of the Congo	3,400,000	3,400,000
	Great Lakes	815,000	815,000
	Tanzania	5,342,000	5,342,000
European Commission	Republic of the Congo	864,977	864,977
	Rwanda	6,581	0
	Tanzania	10,886,011	11,405,827
<i>Action Réfugiés (FRA)</i>	Democratic Republic of the Congo	10,680	10,680
<i>Argentina con ACNUR (ARG)</i>	Regional Projects/ Refugees from the Great Lakes	15,030	15,030
<i>Deutsche Stiftung (GFR)</i>	Tanzania	110,651	110,651
	Regional Projects/ Refugees from the Great Lakes	143,621	143,621
<i>España con ACNUR (SPA)</i>	Burundi	43,398	0
<i>Stichting Vluchteling (NET)</i>	Tanzania	110,157	110,157
UK for UNHCR (GBR)	Tanzania	189	189
<i>Soka Gakkai (JPN)</i>	Tanzania	300,000	300,000
Ms Yoshi Sato (JPN)	Republic of the Congo	228,990	228,990
Private Donors Italy	Great Lakes	2,646	2,646
	Regional Projects/ Refugees from the Great Lakes	545,613	545,613
Private Donors Japan	Great Lakes	1,546	1,546
	Rwanda	1,086	1,086
Private Donors United States of America	Rwanda	375	375
<b>Total<sup>2</sup></b>		<b>59,345,177</b>	<b>59,815,014</b>

N.B. The earmarking "Regional Projects/Refugees from the Great Lakes" corresponds to "Countries in Central Africa" in UNHCR's Annual Accounts for 2000.

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

<sup>2</sup>Total funds available for obligation in the region also included unearmarked voluntary contributions, broadly earmarked contributions, opening balances and adjustments.

<b>Budget and Expenditure (USD)</b>		
<b>Country</b>	<b>Revised Budget</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>
	<b>Annual Programme Budget and Trust Funds</b>	
Burundi	4,929,525	4,333,328
Republic of the Congo	5,683,790	5,175,264
Democratic Republic of the Congo	23,487,499	20,453,762
Rwanda	12,219,683	10,074,950
Tanzania	33,526,223	29,707,286
Regional Projects <sup>1</sup>	8,227,645	7,329,260
Liaison Unit at Headquarters <sup>2</sup>	1,753,743	1,714,039
<b>Total</b>	<b>89,828,108</b>	<b>78,787,889</b>

<sup>1</sup> Covers activities in Burundi, Republic of the Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Tanzania, including scholarships for refugee students and costs for light aircraft charter.

<sup>2</sup> Includes commitments at Headquarters in the amount of USD 1,259.