



Central Africa and the Great Lakes

Recent developments

In this region, the year 2004 was marked by ongoing repatriation movements. Tripartite agreements were signed in mid-2004 for the return of Congolese refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) living in the Central African Republic (CAR) and in the Republic of the Congo (RoC). The first organized movements are expected to take place from CAR before the end of October 2004. Funds amounting to USD 3 million have been made available from the operational reserve to start preparations in the areas of return - to open offices and to cover the costs of the first movements of returnees from CAR.

Since the beginning of 2004, more than 80,000 Burundian refugees have returned home with UNHCR's assistance from camps in the United Republic of Tanzania (Tanzania). Although the repatriation movements slowed down in September (mainly because of the start of the academic school year and the planting season), they may speed up again when refugees' apprehensions about the election process are allayed. The deployment of the UN peacekeeping forces in Burundi (ONUB) and the steadfast support of the international community should help to resolve the remaining political problems and bring the transition process to an end.

Burundi
Central African Republic
Democratic Republic of the Congo
Gabon
Republic of Chad (see under
Chad/Sudan Operation)
Republic of the Congo
Rwanda
United Republic of Tanzania



The Kivus remain one of the most volatile regions in DRC and UNHCR continues to face emergency situations, either outflows of refugees or spontaneous mass returns, in this area.

Strategic objectives

Although UNHCR continues to focus on repatriation as a durable solution for most of the refugees, some may not opt for that solution and will be resettled. The repatriation to DRC is expected to extend in 2005, to the Katanga region and eventually also to the Kivus, if the political situation there improves sufficiently.

In 2005, UNHCR will continue to facilitate the repatriation of Burundian refugees and, if conditions permit, will start to promote voluntary repatriation. Facilitation means assisting any refugees who spontaneously express the wish to return before UNHCR

has determined that full conditions of return in safety and dignity can be assured. The promotion of voluntary repatriation implies actively encouraging and supporting return, once conditions are deemed satisfactory to permit large-scale voluntary repatriation in safety and dignity.

The repatriation is mainly geared to large groups of refugees from Tanzania to Burundi. UNHCR hopes that some 150,000 may opt to return during 2005. In this context, the main activities will be to help create conditions conducive to repatriation and reintegration by rehabilitating social infrastructure and strengthening national institutions involved in the return of refugees. The

Office will continue to collect information on areas of return for dissemination in refugee camps in Tanzania and organize go-and-see visits for refugees so that they can take an informed decision on repatriation. Meanwhile, UNHCR will continue to ensure basic standards of assistance and protection for refugees remaining in Tanzania. The Office will also pursue the local integration of Somali refugees in Chogo settlement, where 300 requests for naturalization are being processed by the Government. Assistance for this group should be phased out by the end of 2005. However, for some specific cases, UNHCR will pursue resettlement as a durable solution.

UNHCR will also follow up developments in eastern DRC and continue to provide assistance to DRC Congolese refugees pending a durable solution. Regarding the new refugee law, which will probably be passed by the DRC Parliament before the end of 2004, the Office will urge the swift creation of all necessary by-laws and procedures.

The promotion of repatriation of Rwandan refugees will go on throughout 2005. UNHCR will review the question of whether to apply the cessation clause for Rwandan refugees by mid-2006. Refugees from RoC, mainly in Gabon, will continue to benefit in 2005 from return and/or local integration processes.

The implementation of the subregional Great Lakes Initiative on HIV/AIDS (GLIA) will start in Burundi, DRC, Rwanda and Tanzania. Furthermore, the World Bank funded Multi-Country HIV/AIDS Programme for Africa (MAP) will commence in DRC. The HIV/AIDS advocacy campaigns will continue, alongside the development of targeted HIV/AIDS awareness packages for Burundian returnees in Tanzania. The regional HIV/AIDS technical officer will offer technical support to country offices and partners for the establishment and mainstreaming of HIV/AIDS programmes.

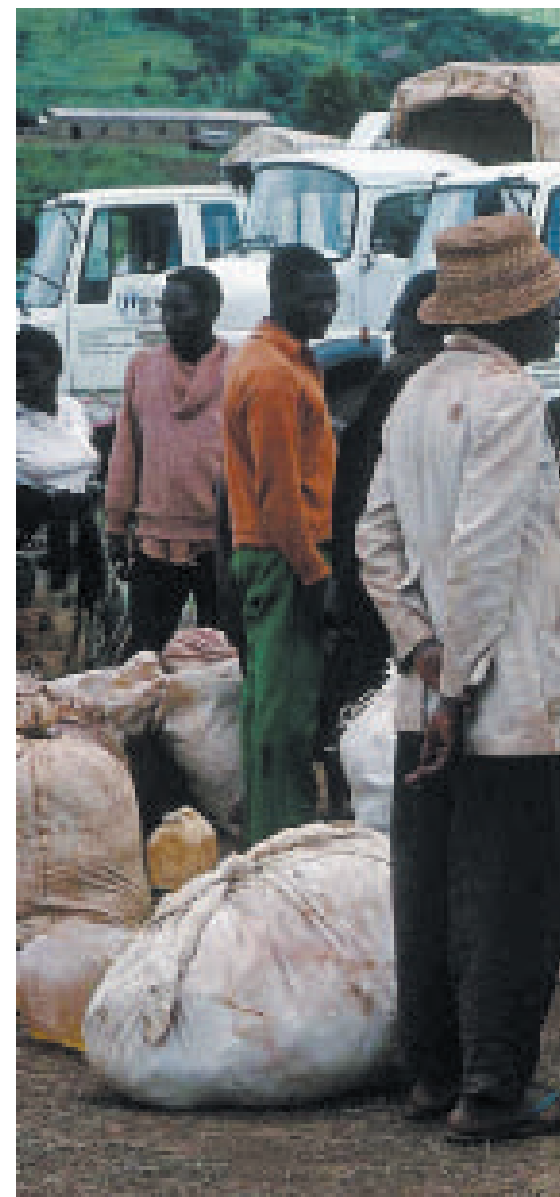
Operations

Operations in **Burundi, DRC, RoC, Rwanda** and the **United Republic of Tanzania** will be covered in individual country chapters. Operations in **Chad** will be described in the chapters under the Chad/Sudan subregion.

The **Central African Republic (CAR)** continued to experience political instability in 2004. Insecurity in the northern part of the country had a detrimental effect on a number of hitherto well-integrated Chadian refugees and on the non-return of Central African refugees in Chad. It is hoped that in 2005 the security situation in the north will improve and that UNHCR will be in a position to facilitate the return to Chad and to CAR respectively. With the signature of a tripartite agreement by UNHCR, CAR and the DRC, the Office expects to repatriate most of the 3,000 DRC Congolese refugees from Molangue camp to Equateur Province by the end of 2004. UNHCR will also facilitate the repatriation of the Congolese refugees (also originating from Equateur) who constitute the majority of the urban refugees. In preparation for the return of Sudanese refugees, the Office conducted a registration exercise in 2004 and expects to facilitate the return of the

majority of the 20,000 Sudanese refugees living in the south-eastern part of the country, who will need to be repatriated by air to Sudan. UNHCR's activities in CAR are, together with those of other humanitarian agencies, reflected in the inter-agency Consolidated Appeal.

The refugee population in **Gabon** is estimated at almost 14,000 refugees and 5,000 asylum-seekers. The majority of the refugees are Congolese who fled from RoC to Gabon between 1993 and 2000 and who were mostly recognized on a *prima facie* basis. Besides the Congolese, there are refugees from 22 other countries. More than three-quarters of the refugee population reside in urban and semi-urban areas, with the remainder dispersed in 26 rural locations. This distribution creates special challenges and UNHCR will continue to advocate the admission of asylum-seekers, expedite refugee status determination and urge the issuance of country-wide refugee identity cards. The Office will pursue the search for durable solutions for all refugees in the country, emphasizing the promotion of voluntary repatriation, development assistance for refugees (DAR) to enhance their socio-economic integration, and resettlement. UNHCR will maintain multi-sectoral basic humanitarian assistance to refugees, including cooperative efforts with national partners in the fight against HIV/AIDS and the implementation of a community-based strategy for assistance to refugee women and children. UNHCR will help to enhance the capacity of the *Commission nationale pour les réfugiés* (CNR), local authorities and national NGOs in providing international protection and basic humanitarian assistance.





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Burundi: Returnees from Tanzania receiving UNHCR assistance on arrival at a reception facility near Ruyigi. UNHCR / R. Wilkinson

Budget (USD)			
Country	Annual Programme	Supplementary Programme	Total
Burundi	2,669,985	47,346,183	50,016,168
Central African Republic	1,942,105	0	1,942,105
Chad ¹	4,748,061	N/A	4,748,061
Democratic Republic of the Congo	17,054,107	1,796,412	18,850,519
Gabon	3,564,610	0	3,564,610
Republic of the Congo	6,930,184	0	6,930,184
United Republic of Tanzania	18,731,064	8,867,088	27,598,152
Regional activities ²	10,158,400	0	10,158,400
Sub-total	65,798,516	58,009,683	123,808,199
Rwanda	5,526,342	0	5,526,342
Total	71,324,858	58,009,683	129,334,541
Assistance to Sudanese Refugees in Eastern Chad ³		55,957,566	55,957,566

¹ The AB figure covers activities for refugees from CAR.

² Includes assistance to 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 charters and scholarships for refugee students. It also includes activities under Project Profile for UNHCR's programmes in Africa. Relevant regional activities are described in the inter-agency Consolidated Appeal for the Great Lakes.

³ The total requirements figure covers Assistance to Sudanese Refugees in Eastern Chad – currently under review for final approval by the Operational Review Board at Headquarters.

Note: The Supplementary Programme Budget does not include a 7 per cent support cost that is recovered from each contribution to meet indirect costs in UNHCR (field and headquarters) as follows: USD 3,793,024 for the Return and Reintegration of Burundian refugees and USD 3,542,434 for Assistance to Sudanese refugees in Eastern Chad.