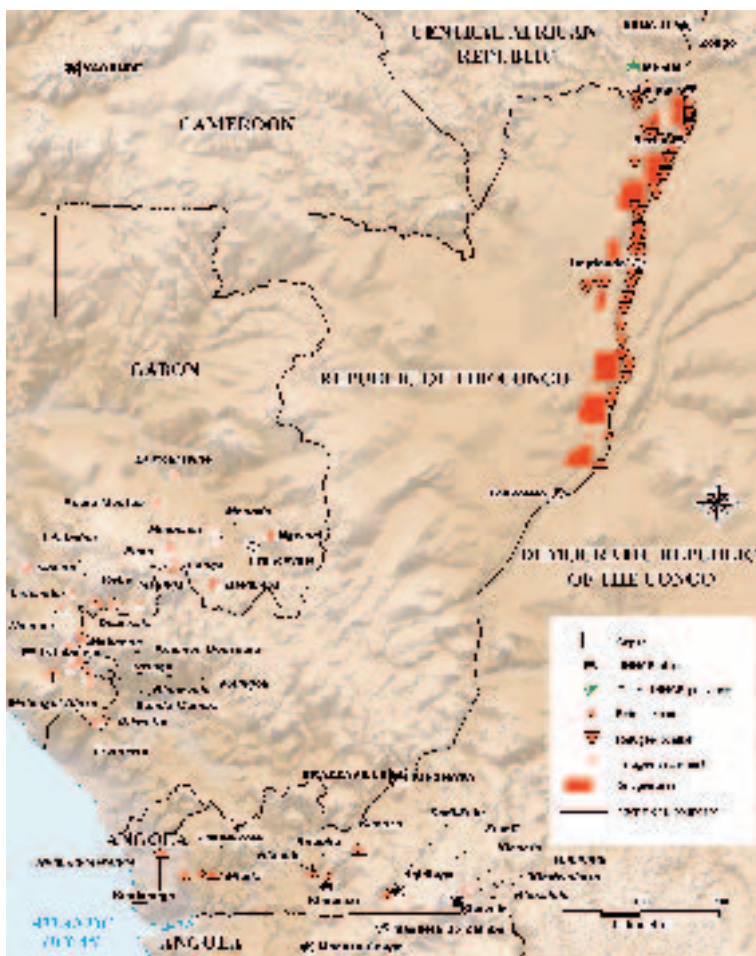


Republic of the Congo

Main objectives

Support the *Comité national d'assistance aux réfugiés* (CNAR) to complete the registration of refugees and ensure the issuance of individual documentation to all refugees; facilitate the voluntary repatriation of refugees to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) made possible by improved political conditions; provide basic protection and humanitarian assistance to the remaining refugees; improve the response to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) against refugees; consolidate the local integration and self-reliance activities undertaken for Angolan refugees in Kondi-Mbaka and Komi sites and phase out these activities by the end of 2004; assist Congolese returnees from Gabon and DRC to reintegrate into their communities.



Impact

- At the end of 2004, almost 69,000 refugees in various sites as well as in urban areas in Brazzaville and Pointe Noire, were provided with basic humanitarian assistance and international protection.
- Over 16,000 school children benefited from UNHCR's assistance.
- Since February 2004, the Government of the Republic of the Congo (RoC) has taken full responsibility for the processing of asylum requests.
- During 2004, some 60,000 refugees in RoC were electronically registered.
- Women's committees were established in most refugee sites to work towards combating SGBV.
- By the end of the year, Angolan refugees in Kondi-Mbaka and Komi had attained self-sufficiency, requiring only limited assistance for health and education.
- A tripartite agreement was signed between UNHCR, the Government of RoC and the Government of DRC to initiate repatriation to Equateur province in DRC.
- Some 660 refugees from Rwanda, Central African Republic (CAR), Burundi, Angola and DRC were repatriated to their countries of origin.
- Nearly 1,000 Congolese returned home to RoC from various countries of asylum but some 12,000 Congolese still remain in Gabon. Funds were insufficient to pursue all planned reintegration activities for potential returnees.

Working environment

The context

During 2004, the security situation in RoC steadily improved, but occasional skirmishes were a reminder of underlying instability. The 2003 agreement between the Congolese Government and the National Revolutionary Council, headed by Pasteur Ntumi, was not fully implemented, and the disarmament of forces opposing the Government was delayed. Insecurity was still of great concern in the Pool region. In addition, a large majority of the population, especially in urban areas, lived in poverty with no significant governmental action to improve general standards in the country. Returnees from Gabon faced similar socio-economic challenges to the rest of the population, while urban refugees continued to struggle for survival. In certain areas, mounting tension was observed between the local population and the refugees, mainly caused by competition over natural resources.

UNHCR, DRC and RoC signed a tripartite agreement in September 2004 for the repatriation of Congolese refugees to safe provinces in DRC.

Constraints

In 2004, the movement of persons and goods to northern RoC was easier than in 2003, but remained a challenge, with northern RoC only accessible by air or river and the southern regions by air or railway. Railways were insecure due to occasional looting of trains during 2004. Instability in Angola and DRC resulted in the postponement of the repatriation of both Angolans and DRC refugees. The erratic judicial system in the north-east posed difficulties for the protection of the refugees, especially women and girls. As a response, UNHCR organized SGBV training for community leaders and international refugee law training for local authorities.

The difficult economic situation in RoC hindered the local integration of refugees, especially in the urban areas. Long waiting periods for refugee status determination (RSD) left many urban asylum-seekers in limbo with a diminished capacity for self-reliance and increasing frustration.

Persons of concern

Main origin/Type of population	Total	Of whom UNHCR assisted	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
DRC (refugees)	58,800	57,200	51	58
Rwanda (refugees)	5,900	-	39	45
Angola (refugees)	3,600	1,800	43	52
DRC (asylum-seekers)	2,800	-	-	-
Gabon (returnees)	600	600	-	-

Income and expenditure (USD) Annual and supplementary programme budgets

	Revised budget	Income from contributions ¹	Other funds available ²	Total funds available	Total expenditure
AB	7,112,900	1,218,057	5,880,814	7,098,871	7,074,332
SB	0	0	5,110	5,110	0
Total	7,112,900	1,218,057	5,885,924	7,103,981	7,074,332

¹ Includes income from contributions earmarked 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.



Republic of the Congo: Bétou - refugees and the local population live in similar shelters side by side - in 2004, primary education was provided to over 16,000 children of primary school age. *UNHCR/T. Vargas*



Funding

During the latter part of the year, a 40 per cent reduction in the last instalment of funds for RoC affected many activities, notably the provision of basic facilities needed to attract potential returns from Gabon. In urban areas, micro-projects designed to assist local settlement were interrupted. Funds allocated for the purchase of medicines were insufficient to cover the needs of refugees in camps and in urban areas.

Achievements and impact

Protection and solutions

UNHCR responded to numerous cases of SGBV, in collaboration with NGO partners, providing counselling, medical assistance to survivors and support to access the few judicial remedies available. The Office oversaw a sensitization campaign in targeted areas to raise awareness about these types of crimes and the community's responsibility to prevent and respond to them. A registration campaign was organized to verify the country's refugee population, the results of which were used to issue refugees with temporary documentation (pending receipt of permanent identity cards) to minimize the risk of exploitation and fraud. UNHCR intervened on behalf of numerous refugees who had been unlawfully detained in several municipalities. The Office organized workshops on international protection throughout the year for local authorities and refugees – in order to reduce police harassment and educate all stakeholders of their rights and responsibilities.

Full responsibility for RSD was handed over to CNAR staff who were provided with training, coaching, financial and technical support. By year's end, CNAR had established RSD structures which were operating more efficiently and meeting international standards more consistently.

In promoting durable solutions, UNHCR organized and monitored the voluntary return and reintegration of over 900 Congolese refugees, mostly from Gabon and DRC. Some 600 refugees living in RoC returned in safety and dignity to Angola and CAR. DRC and Rwandan refugees were kept informed about the conditions in their home countries to enable them

to make informed decisions about returning home. In September 2004, a tripartite agreement was signed by UNHCR, RoC and DRC to govern the return of refugees to DRC.

Activities and assistance

Community services: Some 450 hospitalized vulnerable individuals were provided with food support. Assistance was extended to over 1,000 vulnerable people through income generation groups, medical treatment, and assistance for accommodation and subsistence. Female participation in community leadership was promoted and over 2,600 women received literacy, household management and vocational training.

Both prevention and treatment activities related to SGBV were carried out with more than 20,000 people being sensitized, and nearly 60 community workers and over 200 community leaders trained on support to victims and judicial procedures. Activities on SGBV need to be strengthened for urban refugees and refugees in southern RoC.

Awareness of HIV/AIDS issues was reinforced with the distribution of 30,000 condoms. Almost 150 HIV/AIDS facilitators recruited from among community leaders, community workers and health workers were trained to conduct sessions to affect behavioural change.

Crop production: To boost refugee and returnee family incomes, some 100 families and 24 agricultural groups were given agricultural tools and seeds. Refugees planted corn, cassava, banana trees, rice and soya on over 7,000 hectares of land, producing food equivalent to 200 kilocalories per person per day.

Domestic needs/Household support: One hundred needy families in Brazzaville received household goods and 103 families received kitchen utensils. Rent guarantees for three months were provided to 70 families. Almost 100 families received rental subsidies and subsistence allowances. Although sanitary materials were distributed, they were insufficient to meet all needs.

Education: UNHCR enabled some 16,000 refugee children to attend school; over 900 students were supported with grants and school uniforms. Over

1,000 table-benches were provided with stationery and books. Some 200 refugee teachers were trained, parents' associations were supported, trained on self-management and self-financing of schools and encouraged to send children to school irrespective of their sex. Assistance was provided for income-generating projects to support the schools (for school fees, teachers' salaries, and other related costs). To this end, seeds were distributed for school gardens and micro-projects were started.

Fisheries: Fishing equipment was distributed to 26 groups and 55 individual fishermen.

Health/Nutrition: All refugees had access to health care through more than 20 health posts, mobile clinics, and the training of 15 health committees and 20 nurses on the management of health posts serving both refugees and the local population in remote rural areas. The under-five mortality rate and the crude mortality rate (dominated by malaria, followed by respiratory, parasitic and dermatological infections, STIs and diarrhoea) were below the indicated standard rates. The Bamako Initiative for beneficiary participation in costs successfully generated some funds for medicine and equipment for refugee health committees. UNHCR supplied generic medicines for refugees but there were still shortfalls due to insufficient funds. An international NGO in Betou ran an integrated health centre, including medical care for victims of sexual violence, to which refugee patients were referred.

Income generation: Refugees were assisted to increase their self-sufficiency through micro-credit projects. To promote material well-being and achieve financial independence, 81 individual projects and 29 women's group projects to a total value of almost USD 14,500 were financed with funds recovered from loans to refugees at 26 sites in Impfondo. Women were accorded priority in forming income generation groups. In Brazzaville, 17 micro-projects were started – to a value of almost USD 11,400. Nearly 90 refugees were given vocational training, two production units were created and four vocational training centres were rehabilitated.

Legal assistance: Legal assistance was provided to almost 69,000 refugees and returnees. Two victims of sexual violence received counselling. A census of refugees was carried out and verified. The results were used to issue refugees temporary documentation pending receipt of permanent identity cards.

Thirteen families were resettled to the United States, Sweden, Canada, the Netherlands and Norway.

Operational support (to agencies): Implementing partners received financial assistance to carry out activities/programmes for urban refugees and refugees in settlements and camps.

Sanitation: More than 150 rooms for latrines were built at the camps in northern RoC. However, the number of persons per communal latrine still remained too high (30 to 40 per latrine). Four pits were dug at the camps in Loukolela area. To reduce the risk of disease transmission at schools frequented by returnees, 35 aerated latrines were built at six schools.

Shelter/Other infrastructure: Kondi-Mbaka and Komi each received a fully equipped health unit with a reception hall, a consulting room, a separate ward for men and women, a maternity ward and a laboratory. For easier circulation of persons and vehicles, two kilometres of roads were built to connect the two camps. At Komi, the planned construction of 30 houses for refugees using their own bricks had to be abandoned for lack of funds. More than 31 schools were rehabilitated; five classrooms and two administrative buildings were built.

Transport/Logistics: Basic household items were distributed to refugees living at 80 remote settlements along the Oubangui River. Two hundred and eighty-eight tons of goods were transported to Loukolela and 208 tons to Impfondo, including fuel and stationary supplies. More than 120 tons of construction material for health centres, living quarters for medical staff and classrooms were transported to Kondi-Mbaka and Komi.

Water: Almost 5,000 cubic metres of treated river water was distributed to some 2,300 refugees in the camp at Loukolela, at a rate of nine litres per person per day. The water points are situated in the middle of the camp and water is supplied in the morning. This precludes the risk of sexual attacks on women who are obliged to fetch water after dark from more isolated locations. Two 15,000 litres reservoirs were being built to increase the supply to 15 litres per day. In Mbinda in the south, three wells provided more than 15 litres per day. In Kondi-Mbaka and Komi, 50 litres of drinking water was made available to each refugee household.

Organization and implementation

Management

In 2004, UNHCR's office in RoC became effectively a branch office covering southern RoC and three field offices (Bétou, Loukoléla and Impfondo) in northern RoC. Fourteen internationals, including seven UNVs, and 39 nationals were employed in 2004 but three international posts remained vacant leading to an unwelcome interruption of the implementation of protection activities.

In 2003, UNHCR's internal auditors made several recommendations on administration and logistics. In 2004, these were implemented: expert personnel were recruited and telecoms, RSD and community services teams expanded. As the security situation in RoC and neighbouring DRC remained volatile in some parts, UNHCR had to rely on the services of a small military detachment of the Congolese Armed Forces and private security services to provide security for staff and refugees.

Working with others

During 2004, UNHCR worked mainly with five partners: two government institutions, two NGOs and one German development agency. However, UNHCR implemented joint programmes with other UN agencies including WFP, UNICEF, UNFPA, FAO, UNDP and UNAIDS. UNHCR collaborated on HIV/AIDS with several national NGOs and the government *Conseil national de lutte contre le SIDA*.

Overall assessment

Thanks to the generosity of the Government and the local population, as well as the granting of access to natural resources, many DRC refugees attained self-sufficiency in food, and have found the means to support themselves in other respects as well. Similarly, Angolan and Rwandan refugees waiting to repatriate were largely self-reliant and in need of only limited assistance for health and education towards the end of the year. UNHCR was then in a position to phase out most of its assistance activities in the Komi and Kondi-Mbaka camps – except for some support during the transitional period. With the CNAR

becoming operational, RoC authorities gained full responsibility for RSD procedures with UNHCR's support, training and material assistance.

With far-reaching sensitization on SGBV, UNHCR gave particular focus to improving women's and girls' physical protection. Unfortunately, although basic humanitarian assistance was provided by UNHCR and its partners, education, health care, income-generating activities and logistical support were underfunded, leading to material and human resource gaps. Moreover, vulnerable persons needed far more support than was given in various sectors.

The search for durable solutions was substantiated with the ongoing repatriation of Angolan and CAR refugees and DRC refugees spontaneously returning home to the province of Equateur. The tripartite agreement signed for organized returns to Equateur paved the way for repatriation to regions deemed safe in DRC.

Although the security situation remained volatile, hindering UNHCR's operations and staff movements, the whole of RoC was considered safe for return, except for the Pool region, and returnees were not subjected to any kind of harassment or discrimination. UNHCR increased its cooperation with national and international development agencies operating in RoC, as well as RoC authorities, with a view to the inclusion of returnees and the "4Rs" strategy in their development programmes.

Offices

Brazzaville

Bétou
Impfondo
Loukolela

Partners

Government agencies

Comité national d'assistance aux réfugiés
Conseil national de lutte contre le SIDA

NGOs

Conférence épiscopale pour les migrants et les réfugiés
International Rescue Committee

Others

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit

Financial Report (USD)

Expenditure breakdown	Current year's projects	Prior years' projects
	Annual programme budget	Annual and Supplementary programme budgets
Protection, monitoring and coordination	1,817,077	0
Community services	219,091	73,882
Crop production	56,445	31,962
Domestic needs / household support	76,477	18,351
Education	395,595	164,699
Fisheries	16,793	0
Forestry	0	1,177
Health and nutrition	444,937	114,570
Income generation	42,731	19,817
Legal assistance	291,832	24,142
Livestock	12,652	0
Operational support (to agencies)	573,203	114,874
Sanitation	15,170	10,789
Shelter and infrastructure	8,558	52,357
Transport and logistics	661,925	145,851
Water	23,131	(3,198)
Instalments with implementing partners	965,206	(769,273)
Sub-total operational activities	5,620,824	0
Programme support	1,453,508	0
Total disbursements	7,074,332	0
Instalments with implementing partners		
Payments made	2,968,742	
Reporting received	(2,003,536)	
Balance	965,206	
Prior years' report		
Instalments with implementing partners		
Outstanding 1 January		807,733
Reporting received		(769,273)
Refunded to UNHCR		(42,665)
Currency adjustment		4,205
Balance		0
Unliquidated obligations		
Outstanding 1 January		392,335
Disbursements		(227,298)
Cancellations		(165,037)
Outstanding 31 December		0