



Central Africa and the Great Lakes

Working environment

Hopes for greater stability in the region were not realized in 2007. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), a ceasefire between the Government and rebels led to improved security in the Ituri district, but fresh fighting between State forces and rebel groups in the North Kivu province led to the internal displacement of more than 300,000 people. In Burundi, a ceasefire agreement signed in September 2006 by the Government and the rebel group *Front National de Libération* (FNL) has yet to be implemented. Indeed, a year later the FNL withdrew from negotiations and resumed attacks in western Burundi. Security also deteriorated in the northern areas of the Central African Republic (CAR); the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in this country rose 30 per cent in 2007.

Despite these setbacks, relative stability in parts of the region allowed 84,000 refugees to return home between January and September 2007. Among those who repatriated were 6,000 Angolan refugees from the DRC and the Republic of the Congo (RoC); and 20,000 Burundians, most from the United Republic of Tanzania. Some 42,000 Congolese returned to the DRC, mainly from the RoC, Tanzania and Zambia. Approximately 7,000 Rwandans repatriated, mainly from the DRC; and 9,000 Sudanese returned home from the DRC and the CAR.

As for IDPs, between January and June 2007 some 675,000 who had been displaced within the DRC went back to their areas of origin. The majority returned to Ituri district and South Kivu and Katanga provinces.

Burundi

Cameroon

Central African Republic

Chad (see under Chad/Sudan situation)

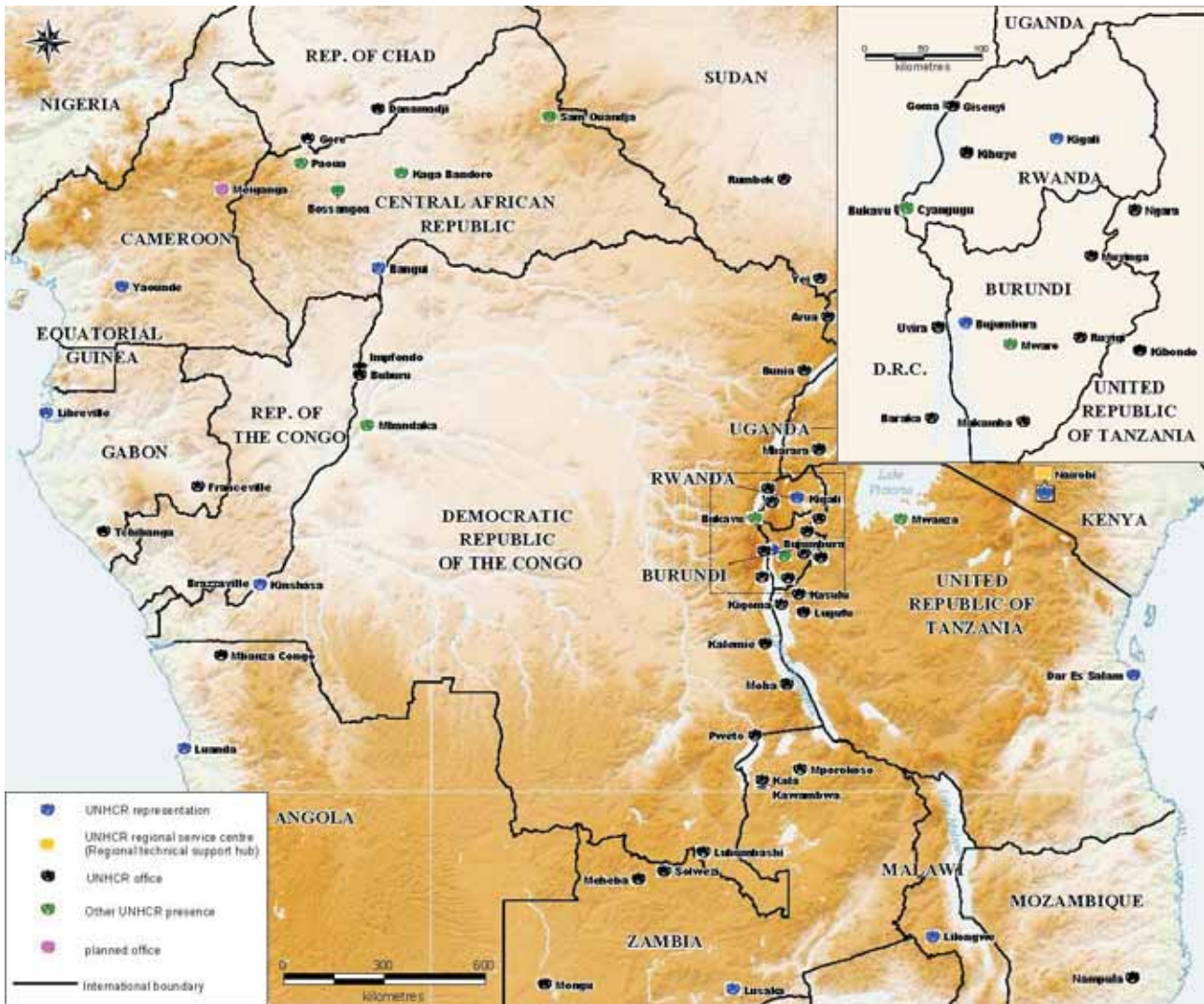
Congo (Republic of the)

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Gabon

Rwanda

United Republic of Tanzania



While voluntary repatriation is seen as the main durable solution in the region, there have been some positive developments with regard to local integration of residual groups. The Government of the DRC has agreed to integrate the remaining Angolan and Sudanese refugees who wish to stay permanently in the country. Similarly, the Government of Cameroon is prepared to integrate remaining Nigerian refugees. The Government of Tanzania has indicated it will consider the local integration of Burundian refugees in the “old settlements” – those set up during the first Burundian influx in 1972.

Strategy

In 2008 and 2009, UNHCR will promote or facilitate the voluntary repatriation of Burundian, DRC and Rwandan refugees in the region. Should the situation improve in the CAR, refugees from that country currently in Cameroon and Chad would be prepared for return. For the remaining Sudanese, Angolan and RoC refugees the Office will pursue the option of local integration. With the help of concerned governments and the

international community, a comprehensive solution will be found for the 1972 group of Burundian refugees in Tanzania. This will include support for the local integration of the majority of the group. The naturalization of the remaining 2,000 Somali refugees in Tanzania is expected to be completed in 2008.

Resettlement will be pursued for individuals and groups of refugees with specific protection needs – or for whom repatriation and local integration are not feasible. Up to 3,500 refugees per year are expected to be referred for resettlement in 2008 and 2009.

To improve the protection of asylum-seekers and refugees, UNHCR will help to strengthen national asylum frameworks, particularly in the DRC, Tanzania and Burundi. In the DRC, the Office will support the national authorities as they gradually take responsibility for Refugee Status Determination (RSD). UNHCR will protect and assist IDPs in the DRC and the CAR, and will lead the IDP protection clusters established in both countries. Furthermore, the Office will actively engage in camp coordination and management in the DRC's North Kivu province and will support return and reintegration of IDPs.



UNHCR/N. Rost

Food distribution in the Sam Ouandja refugee camp, in the Central African Republic, where 2,600 Sudanese refugees from South Darfur started arriving in May 2007.

In collaboration with relevant national programmes and with support from subregional schemes, such as the Great Lakes Initiative on AIDS, and the OPEC Fund for International Development, UNHCR will implement comprehensive HIV and AIDS programmes for people of concern and host communities. Selected health facilities will offer essential HIV and reproductive-health packages. Furthermore, the Office will promote the inclusion of refugees in national anti-retroviral treatment programmes, as is the case in Rwanda, Burundi and Tanzania.

UNHCR will implement comprehensive strategies to prevent and address sexual and gender-based violence and exploitation in refugee camps. Also, legal support will be offered to victims. The Office will protect children's rights by addressing the root causes of child labour and exploitation and ensuring access to education. Field offices will make sure that unaccompanied and separated refugee children benefit from care arrangements and durable solutions that are in their best interest.

Constraints

A major constraint is the unpredictability of the region and volatility of the political and security environment. Insecurity often means that UNHCR has limited access to some people of concern and that staff mobility is restricted by heavy security measures. Logistics are another constraint in the region: most operational areas are remote, far from capitals and served by poor transport links. Moving staff and supplies can therefore be difficult and expensive.

Operations

Operations in **Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, the Republic of the Congo, and the United Republic of Tanzania** are covered by individual country chapters.

Cameroon hosts 43,000 refugees and 3,000 asylum-seekers. They come mainly from central African countries and more than a quarter of them live in the urban areas of Yaoundé and Douala. Some 28,000 refugees from the Central African Republic are settled in the Eastern and Adamaoua provinces, while 2,900 Nigerian refugees live around Banyo, by the Nigerian border.

UNHCR will facilitate the local integration of the remaining Nigerian refugees in Cameroon. As a first step, the office will ensure that identity documents are distributed to all refugees of 18 years and older, and that birth certificates are provided for all children born in Cameroon. Local authorities will be trained and assisted to take over the protection and assistance of these refugees. UNHCR will continue to assist the CAR refugees who have arrived in several waves since 2005. These refugees, particularly women and children, are in a vulnerable condition and will be assisted with food, domestic items, emergency shelter, health care and therapeutic feeding. UNHCR will also ensure access to education. Until the establishment of the National Eligibility Committee for RSD, all protection activities will remain the responsibility of the UNHCR office in Yaoundé.

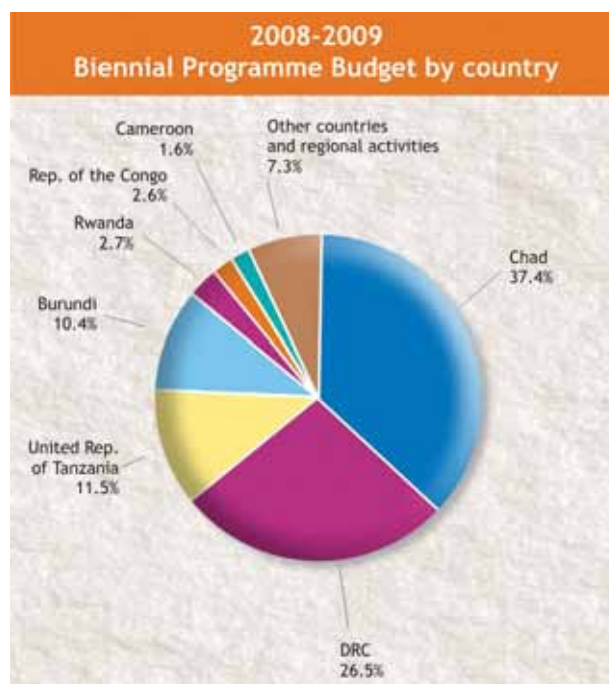
In the **Central African Republic**, repeated outbursts of violence in the last two years have resulted in the forced displacement of about 212,000 people in the northern prefectures. In 2006, UNHCR began to implement a protection strategy based on three pillars: making key actors aware of IDPs' rights; monitoring displacement patterns and the availability of protection; and helping victims of protection incidents. In 2008, the strategy will be enhanced by a return and reintegration component which will assist returning IDPs and facilitate their long-term reintegration.

UNHCR will encourage development actors to rebuild damaged infrastructure to facilitate sustainable reintegration. To strengthen national capacities to protect IDPs, UNHCR will assist the Government to draft a national law on internal displacement, based on the model legislation of the African Union. Members of Parliament will be sensitized on international human rights and humanitarian law and the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*.

In **Gabon**, the Government began issuing identity cards to refugees in Libreville in May 2007, making it easier for them to gain employment. UNHCR will help the Government deliver these cards to refugees in other parts of the country. The Office will also assist the *Commission Nationale pour les Réfugiés* (CNR) to resolve the backlog of asylum-seekers awaiting RSD and register people of concern who were not included in a 2005 verification exercise.

UNHCR will pursue durable solutions for all refugees in Gabon. However, since many refugees are reluctant to

repatriate, the Office has re-oriented its programme to support self-reliance and economic integration through agriculture, income-generating activities and skills training. In this regard, a joint proposal by UNHCR, UNDP, WHO and FAO was submitted to the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security. By supporting community-based projects, the Fund aims to make refugees self-sufficient and able to contribute to the development of host communities. The project is also an effective way for UNHCR to gradually withdraw from the protracted refugee situation in Gabon as soon as communities become more self-dependent.



Budget (USD)					
Country	2007			2008	2009
	Annual Programme Budget	Supp. Programme Budget	Total	Annual Programme Budget	Annual Programme Budget
Burundi	23,792,407	0	23,792,407	21,833,225	19,647,769
Cameroon	2,036,177	0	2,036,177	3,150,673	3,180,673
Central African Republic	2,013,589	2,860,533	4,874,122	2,133,674	2,974,607
Chad	69,368,365	9,221,809	78,590,174	73,766,150	74,824,136
Congo, Republic of the	4,947,726	2,082,350	7,030,076	5,970,813	4,307,344
Democratic Republic of the Congo	11,520,750	48,776,502	60,297,252	40,922,027	64,161,295
Gabon	2,274,905	0	2,274,905	1,994,337	1,569,494
Rwanda	4,927,870	0	4,927,870	5,450,315	5,271,839
United Republic of Tanzania	24,357,957	4,046,593	28,404,550	24,671,621	20,996,629
Regional activities ¹	8,775,000	2,715,000	11,490,000	8,415,000	12,000,000
Total	154,014,746	69,702,787	223,717,533	188,307,835	208,933,786

¹ Includes assistance to refugees in the Central Africa and the Great Lakes region, such as resettlement, repatriation and care and maintenance, as well as support costs for UNVs and consultants, and light aircraft charters costs.

Note: The Supplementary Programme Budget excludes a 7 per cent support cost that is recovered from contributions to meet indirect costs for UNHCR.