

REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Operational highlights

- UNHCR assisted some 42,000 refugees and returnees in the Republic of the Congo (RoC).
- The Office organized the voluntary repatriation of more than 13,500 refugees to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).
- All refugees were registered by UNHCR and given identity cards by the Government.

Working environment

The year 2008 was marked in the RoC by local elections, paving the way for a presidential poll in June 2009. The country remained relatively calm throughout the year, but the Government was unable to exert effective control in the south-eastern Pool region.

The Government promised to earmark resources obtained from oil sales and external debt reduction in favour of priorities identified by the United Nations Country Team, which emphasized needs such as access to basic social services and food security as well as good governance.

The country benefited from economic growth of an estimated 7.6 per cent due to the vigorous revival of oil production in 2007. However, 50 per cent of the RoC's 3.9 million people still live below the poverty line.

Achievements and impact

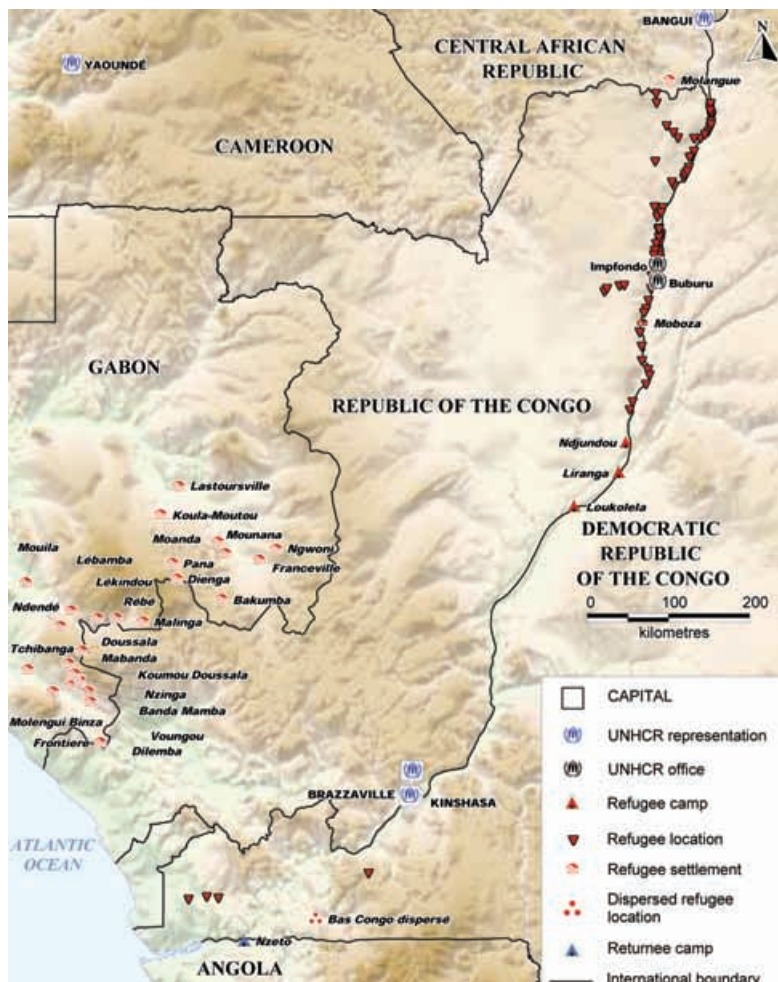
Main objectives

In 2008, UNHCR's main objectives were to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of refugees from the DRC and Rwanda to their country of origin; pursue durable solutions, particularly local integration, for refugees unwilling or unable to repatriate; strengthen the national capacity to

conduct refugee status determination (RSD); and improve the response to sexual and gender-based violence among refugees.

Protection and solutions

UNHCR helped the Government to issue more than 2,000 identity cards to refugees, while the National Commission for Refugees issued some 2,700 temporary certificates to asylum-seekers. Out of some 4,300 identified



Persons of concern					
Type of population	Origin	Total	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
Refugees	DRC	14,000	13,700	52	53
	Rwanda	7,900	50	42	38
	Angola	2,700	10	48	43
	Various	260	20	41	11
Asylum-seekers	DRC	2,900	-	43	39
	Various	360	-	34	14
Returnees (refugees)	Various	110	60	42	36
Total		28,230	13,840		

asylum-seekers, almost 1,500 persons were verified and granted refugee status, and their details inserted in the *proGres* database.

The Office continued to organize voluntary repatriation to the DRC's *Equateur* Province. By the end of the year, some 13,500 refugees were safely repatriated, against the planned figure of 12,000.

● *Activities and assistance*

Community services: UNHCR maintained 52 drop-in centres to respond to cases of sexual and gender-based violence. Some 80 victims received counselling as well as medical and legal assistance. Site management committees led by refugees were involved in the determination of assistance activities. The participation of women in these committees reached 47 per cent. Sanitary materials were distributed to more than 3,600 women in both urban and rural areas. More than 150 families with specific needs received financial assistance.

Crop production: Most of the refugees in northern RoC live off agriculture. In 2008, 87 groups of farmers received training and materials and cultivated land provided by the local communities.

Fisheries: In the areas of Betou and Loukolela, 62 groups of fishermen were provided with fishing boats and nets.

Domestic needs and household support: UNHCR provided a six-month subsistence allowance to six families with specific needs, and distributed non-food items and domestic kits to 270 vulnerable families. In addition, some 210 families in Brazzaville were provided with rent guaranties.

Education: In Brazzaville, 147 children were provided with secondary school scholarships. Some 56 per cent of school-aged refugees attended primary school in the rural areas and received textbooks and other school supplies. Responding to a lack of teachers in these areas, UNHCR, in coordination with local authorities, decided to recruit 191 short-term teachers for the period of January to June.

Health and nutrition: Refugees had access to 28 health posts and mobile clinics. UNHCR provided health and nutrition services through its partners, with a focus on community management of malnutrition as well as malaria and other prevalent diseases. Curative and preventive consultations were conducted in the areas of maternal and child health as well as HIV and AIDS awareness. Some 3,300 families embarking on voluntary repatriation were medically screened.

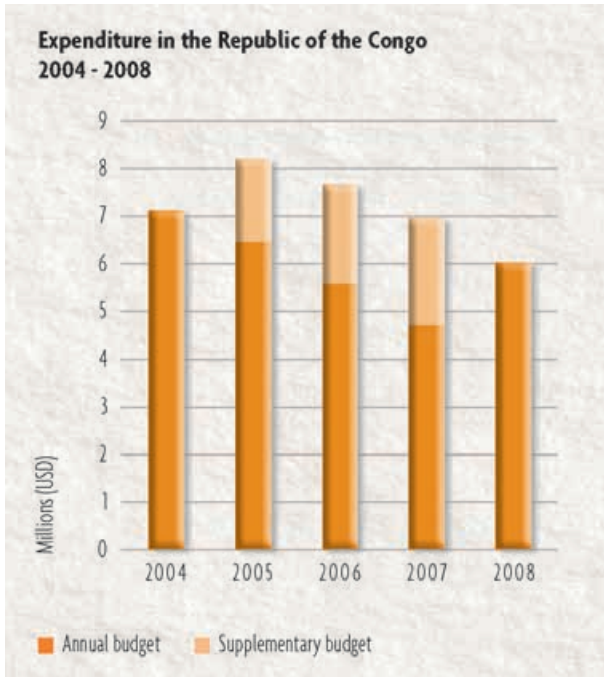
Income generation: In Betou and Loukolela, 54 refugees, of whom 28 were women, received financial assistance for self-reliance projects such as sewing, small trading, soap making and bakery.

Legal assistance: All refugees were registered in the *proGres* database. In order to reduce police harassment and to facilitate free movement of refugees, some 2,700 identity cards were issued and distributed. In addition to the more than 13,000 refugees repatriated to the DRC, 157 refugees were resettled in Sweden, Canada, the Netherlands and Australia. Finally, 50 RoC returnees from Gabon and Benin were assisted.

Voluntary repatriation to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) on the Oubangui river between the Republic of the Congo and DRC



UNHCR / J. HESEMANN



Operational support: Implementing partners received financial support from UNHCR. Their employees were offered training and logistical assistance in remote field locations.

Shelter and infrastructure: In order to implement the repatriation to the DRC, UNHCR maintained transit facilities in Betou, Liranga and Impfondo. Refugee committees were encouraged to improve housing and were given brick moulds.

Transport and logistics: UNHCR kept a fleet of boats to implement the repatriation operation. In addition, all non-food items and fuel supplied for the operation had to be transported on the river and stored in two rented warehouses.

Water and sanitation: Refugee committees were trained in the treatment of water in Betou and Loukolela. WHO provided 10,000 chlorine tablets and UNDP funded the rehabilitation of 14 wells in Betou. In Loukolela, the purification station was rehabilitated and subsequently provided all refugees with 20 litres of drinking water each per day. UNHCR helped the refugee communities construct 100 latrines in Betou and Loukolela.

○ Constraints

Access to refugee sites in the north remained a challenge. The supply and transportation of relief items was usually possible only by boat, making operations in the dry season difficult because of low water levels.

| Financial information |

UNHCR's programmes in the RoC were fully funded. However, financial constraints meant that not all identified needs could be fulfilled. UNHCR's expenditure under the annual programme has decreased over the last five years. In 2008, priority was given to activities related to the repatriation operations.

| Organization and implementation |

Under the supervision of the Representation Office in Brazzaville, the remaining field office in Impfondo covered the entire northern area. In 2008, UNHCR managed its activities with seven international and 27 national staff, as well as six UNVs (three nationals and three internationals).

| Working with others |

UNHCR worked with three national implementing partners. It also cooperated with the CNAR on various protection issues, especially the distribution of identity cards.

| Overall assessment |

The repatriation operation initiated in 2006 continued and refugees wishing to return home were assisted. As a result, 13,500 persons returned to the DRC. In the meantime, UNHCR continued to advocate for the local integration of those who wish to remain in RoC. In this respect, assistance through self-reliance projects, health care and access to land remain critical.

With the establishment of standard operating procedures on sexual and gender-based violence in 2006, and continued sensitization and monitoring, the number of victims of such violence was reduced. Nonetheless, UNHCR remained engaged in strengthening the physical protection of women and girls.

Partners
Implementing partners
Government agencies: <i>Comité National d'Assistance aux Réfugiés</i>
NGOs: <i>Action Humanitaire Africaine, Actions et Interventions, Agence pour l'Assistance aux Rapatriés et Réfugiés au Congo, Commission d'Entraide pour les Migrants et les Réfugiés, Médecins d'Afrique</i>
Others: UNDP, WHO

Budget, income and expenditure in the Republic of the Congo (USD)

	Final budget	Income from contributions	Other funds available	Total funds available ¹	Total expenditure
Annual budget	6,315,434	1,414,214	4,599,830	6,014,044	6,014,040

Note: Income from contributions includes contributions earmarked at the country level and do not include seven per cent support costs for NAM contributions. Other funds available include transfers from unearmarked and broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments.

¹ Total funds available include currency adjustments.

Financial report for UNHCR's operations in the Republic of the Congo (USD)

Expenditure breakdown	Current year's projects	Prior years' project
	Annual programme budget	Annual and supplementary programme budget
Protection, monitoring and coordination	1,861,232	0
Community services	67,986	62,305
Crop production	24,882	9,880
Domestic needs and household support	119,960	41,110
Education	40,670	239,956
Fisheries	10,967	0
Health and nutrition	79,165	193,275
Income generation	12,676	17,827
Legal assistance	68,406	55,404
Livestock	4,312	0
Operational support (to agencies)	255,322	86,776
Sanitation	6,732	681
Shelter and infrastructure	11,304	2,953
Transport and logistics	513,532	87,065
Water	14,391	4,347
Instalments to implementing partners	1,394,963	(801,579)
Subtotal operational activities	4,486,500	0
Programme support	1,527,540	0
Total expenditure	6,014,040	0
Cancellation on prior years' expenditure		(3,854)
Instalments with implementing partners		
Payments made	1,976,177	
Reporting received	(581,214)	
Balance	1,394,963	
Outstanding 1st January		855,209
Reporting received		(801,579)
Refunded to UNHCR		(68,246)
Currency adjustment		14,616
Outstanding 31st December		0