

# Republic of the Congo

## Main objectives

Support the Government of the Republic of the Congo (ROC) in the implementation of national refugee legislation and the establishment of a National Eligibility Commission; support the Government with refugee registration and issuance of legal documents to all refugees in the country; promote local settlement activities and facilitate voluntary repatriation, where feasible, for Angolan refugees from Cabinda; provide humanitarian assistance to refugees from the Central African Republic (CAR); provide international protection and humanitarian assistance to refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC); promote local settlement assistance for urban refugees and ensure access to refugee status determination; undertake reception and reintegration of Congolese returnees, mainly from Gabon and the DRC.

## Impact

- Refugee men and women, particularly in Betou, participated in activities in all sectors, showing greater self-sufficiency and helped promote local integration of refugees.
- A total of 51 refugee committees were created to enhance the delivery of assistance in the various sectors. A health committee was made responsible for recovering medical fees from patients. A parents association contributed to the payment of stipends for 54 teachers in the refugee primary schools.
- Some 534 adults (99 per cent women) enrolled in adult literacy classes. The students were highly motivated to acquire new skills, particularly French language and basic management skills for income-generating activities.
- As a result of sensitisation campaigns, refugees in Betou, Impfondo and Loukolela became more aware of their rights. Complaints were lodged against security officials and others in authority who violated refugee rights. Redress was sought in 387 cases of domestic violence.



## Working environment

### The context

The socio-political situation in ROC was relatively stable and presidential and legislative elections were organised in the first half of the year. Nevertheless, conflict prevailed in some areas and sporadic yet sustained attacks by Ninja rebels in the Pool region displaced some 80,000 Congolese civilians. One of the most serious attacks occurred on 14 June 2002, when two military barracks and the international airport were attacked in Brazzaville. The persistent conflict had a negative impact on respect for human rights in general and, in particular, the living conditions of the displaced persons from the Pool region. The economy suffered as a result of the conflict and fuel shortages became frequent in the capital.

The Government took several measures to resolve the Pool crisis, including an offer of amnesty to all rebels, however, only 400 rebels surrendered voluntarily. The National Parliament set up a committee for peace, and in November, residents from the Pool region held a meeting during which recommendations were made for a resolution of the crisis. To foster confidence in the political process, the UN revised and lowered the UNSECOORD security phases (precautions) in Brazzaville and other parts of the country.

## Constraints

As in previous years, security was the major constraint faced by UNHCR in 2002. Over 80,000 refugees were residing in more than 50 locations along the Oubangui river. The whole area was insecure as a result of the presence of armed forces from the DRC and ROC. It was therefore difficult, and sometimes impossible, to move staff and goods from place to place in the normal course of implementing, or monitoring, assistance and protection activities. In addition, the dense forests and swamps in the area posed serious geographical hazards in the delivery of assistance. The river either flooded its banks or the water level was too low for navigation and food aid had to be temporarily suspended in Loukolela and Impfondo due to navigational difficulties. Almost 30 per cent

of the budget was used to hire an aircraft to continue minimal monitoring and implementation of activities. UNHCR faced problems in identifying and deploying staff in the field locations of Betou, Impfondo and Loukolela.

Although relations between refugees and the host communities were cordial, the local community did not grant refugees access to arable land for cultivation. This made it difficult for the refugees to achieve self-sufficiency in food production.

## Funding

Budget reductions adversely affected the delivery of assistance to refugees in 2002. In Betou, UNHCR had to suspend the payment of salaries to 54 teachers and the construction of the new landing strip in Loukolela. Funds were insufficient to provide the required logistical support to field locations. It was also difficult to improve staff welfare and working conditions in Betou and Loukolela.

## Achievements and impact

### Protection and durable solutions

Of the 111,670 persons of concern to UNHCR, 81,568 received material assistance. 51 per cent of

Persons of Concern				
Main Origin / Type of Population	Total In Country	Of whom UNHCR assisted	Per cent Female	Per cent under 18
DRC (Refugees)	83,500	78,100	51	61
Angola (Refugees)	17,700	1,710	52	40
Rwanda (Refugees)	5,990	30	42	41
Asylum-seekers	2,760	-	19	-
CAR (Refugees)	1,720	1,720	39	40
Returnees from Gabon, DRC and elsewhere	613	613	-	-

Income and Expenditure (USD) Annual Programme Budget				
Revised Budget	Income from Contributions <sup>1</sup>	Other Funds Available <sup>2</sup>	Total Funds Available	Total Expenditure
7,471,927	2,305,832	4,591,734	6,897,566	6,897,566

<sup>1</sup> Includes income from contributions restricted at the country level.  
<sup>2</sup> Includes allocations by UNHCR from unearmarked or broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments.  
 The above figures do not include costs at Headquarters.

the refugee population were women. Refugees in urban areas enjoyed a higher level of security than those in rural areas. Generally, urban refugees and asylum-seekers were allowed greater freedom of movement and obtained identification documentation from the authorities more quickly. By contrast, refugees in rural areas were often exposed to arbitrary arrest, fines and assaults. To resolve these problems, UNHCR advocated the provision of certificates to refugees in the rural areas. While refugees from the DRC had good relations with their host communities, the Rwandan refugees experienced some difficulty. On several occasions, UNHCR had to intervene with the local authorities to ensure that they protected all refugees and persons of concern on Congolese territory.

The Government is yet to adopt national refugee legislation; nevertheless, it created national structures to handle all refugee and asylum issues. The

National Commission for Refugee Assistance, and the Eligibility and Appeal Committees, created in December 2001, began analysing asylum requests at the end of 2002.

UNHCR carried out a refugee census in Pointe Noire and Loukolela (Loukolela town) in 2002. 1,548 Angolan refugees were registered in Pointe-Noire and 2,840 in Loukolela. The census of refugees settled in Betou, Impfondo and Loukolela will be completed in 2003.

The Governments of ROC, Angola and UNHCR signed a tripartite agreement on the voluntary repatriation of Angolan refugees on 11 December 2002. Voluntary repatriation will commence in June 2003, after the rainy season. Meanwhile, the office received 266 Congolese returnees from Gabon, 315 from the DRC and 32 from elsewhere. The persistent insecurity prevailing in the areas of return precluded the



Unaccompanied minors from Rwanda living in Ndjoundou camp. UNHCR / B. Garden

repatriation of Congolese refugees from the neighbouring countries. 30 Rwandan refugees, including seven unaccompanied minors were repatriated to Rwanda. A total of 41 refugees were resettled: six to Canada, seven in the USA, 12 in Denmark and 16 in Sweden. Seminars were conducted on Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV) and international protection for UNHCR and implementing partner staff.

## Activities and assistance

**Community services:** UNHCR assisted 736 refugee families (i.e. 3,679 people) with micro loans to set up dressmaking, soap making and knitting enterprises. Some 256 pygmies benefited from the project in the three camps. Sanitary kits were distributed to 3,076 women in the health centres.

The Office ensured the welfare of 212 unaccompanied Rwandan and DRC minors by placing them with foster parents in Brazzaville and refugee sites. Regular visits allowed for adequate monitoring and dialogue to prevent child exploitation. 30 unaccompanied minors were successfully reunited with their families.

**Crop production:** Due to financial constraints, crop production activities were not adequately pursued. 5,000 farming tool kits and seedlings provided by FAO were distributed to refugees in Impfondo and Loukolela. 1,025 villagers, including 143 pygmies also benefited from this donation. Each kit contained one cutlass, one hoe, one axe and 50 kilos of seedlings.

Refugees had difficulties in accessing farmland at some of the sites because of resistance from the local population. In Impfondo, UNHCR carried out some fairly successful sensitisation campaigns (culturally sensitive public information campaigns) in collaboration with the local authorities. Similar campaigns will be carried out in Betou and Loukolela, to promote better understanding of others.

**Domestic needs/household support:** Some 1,238 urban refugees in Brazzaville received domestic items and cash allowances to cover subsistence needs. Overall, some 4,500 individuals in Brazzaville and

Pointe-Noire from the total urban population were assisted. In Betou, 15,000 refugees in 28 sites benefited from the distribution of basic domestic items. This assistance targeted the most needy families.

**Education:** In the camps, UNHCR organised primary education for 13,790 children (7,024 of them girls). With a total of 334 teachers, the teacher: pupil ratio was 41:1 on average. A survey in Betou showed a discrepancy between the number of potential school-aged children and actual attendance. In Betou, UNHCR assisted 5,376 out of a potential 7,238 school-aged children. This survey suggests that only 70 per cent of educational needs were being met; greater efforts will be made to raise primary school enrolment in future.

The Ministry of National Education approved the organisation of the end-of-year examination for refugees in the camp primary schools. A total of 811 candidates sat the examinations in July 2002 with a 90 per cent pass rate.

Four new schools were constructed in 2002. Impfondo and Loukolela camps each received one new eight-classroom school, while the Betou camp received two new six-classroom schools, in addition to six refurbished existing schools. The total number of schools in the refugee sites was 55. There was a huge demand for the provision of secondary education for refugees.

In the urban areas, 245 refugees (78 of them girls) attended primary or secondary school or received professional or vocational training. Some 141 persons successfully completed the academic year.

**Food:** Some 306 urban refugees from CAR who fled to Brazzaville in 2001, and were living in a temporary facility provided by the Government received food assistance. This group was also assisted in obtaining individual accommodation in Brazzaville. WFP distributed 1,550 tons of food rations to 55,000 refugees in Loukolela and Impfondo. Nutrition surveys of this population revealed only 25 cases of moderate malnutrition and three cases of severe malnutrition.

**Forestry:** In order to address the deforestation caused by intensive coal production and the resulting adverse impact on the environment in Kondi-Mbaka

and Komi where Angolan refugees settled, some 3,150 fruit-bearing plants were planted. This measure was implemented with the technical support of an engineer, after environment-awareness campaigns were undertaken for the refugees. The sale of the fruits was also a means of generating some income, as there were relatively few other opportunities for the refugees to supplement their livelihood.

**Health/nutrition:** UNHCR evaluated the reconstruction of the existing health posts to make them more effective. Over 80,622 patients were treated at the health facilities in the three camps. With the creation of 12 health committees in Betou, the refugee community began to participate in the delivery of health services. A cost recovery scheme, at the rate of CFA 100 francs (in view of exchange rate fluctuations, approximately, USD 20 cents) per consultation, was introduced for all except the most vulnerable patients. Malaria accounted for 36 per cent of all cases treated.

**Income generation:** Five training sessions were organised for refugees to give them the skills to start up and manage small businesses. Of the 190 participants, 45 then requested finance for micro-projects. Using well-established criteria, the committee selected and financed 25 projects, including 13 run by female heads of families. It must be noted that the socio-economic environment offered very few opportunities to promote self-sufficiency for refugees.

**Legal assistance:** Over 1,500 Angolan refugees were registered in Pointe-Noire and 2,840 refugees from CAR and DRC have been registered in Loukolela ville. Official identity documents will be issued to all registered refugees by government authorities in 2003.

**Operational support (to agencies):** Various office equipment and stationary supplies were made available to government counterparts and implementing partners. Financial support was also provided to working partners for training on refugee law and related issues.

**Sanitation:** A total of 183 public latrines were built in various refugee schools, public schools, health posts and local markets in Betou. After receiving technical training, refugees constructed 804 latrines by themselves. A survey undertaken in May 2002 in Betou

revealed a ratio of one latrine to 12 persons (better than the standard of one latrine for 25 persons). Some 43,081 participants benefited from the sensitisation campaigns on personal hygiene, the prevention of diarrhoea, the management of waste disposal and the maintenance of a clean environment. In Loukolela refugee camp, 42 latrines and 24 bathrooms were constructed.

**Shelter/other infrastructure:** Refugee shelters were huts of similar fabrication to the local housing. A few vulnerable families received assistance when their houses were destroyed by wind and rain.

**Transport/logistics:** Some 415 tons of various items, including school kits, tools, non-food items and fuel were transported from Brazzaville to field locations in Loukolela, Betou and Impfondo. The Office rehabilitated five kilometres of road and two bridges in Loukolela to facilitate transportation of goods. However, the rehabilitation of the Betou airstrip was not completed due to financial constraints.

**Water:** Despite the challenging technical and physical environment associated with the high water table, efforts were made to control the quality of potable water distributed to refugees in all the field locations. Unfortunately, the minimum standard of 17 litres of water per refugee per day could not be met. Average daily consumption in Loukolela was 10 litres, per person, per day. In Betou, 13 wells were constructed or rehabilitated for a population of 30,000. Refugees and the local population contributed to the construction and rehabilitation of the wells by supplying sand and gravel. Some 30 water committees were established to ensure clean surroundings, resolve conflicts and collect funds for the purchase of disinfectants and water containers.

## Organisation and implementation

### Management

The UNHCR Liaison Office in Brazzaville supervised three field offices in Betou, Impfondo, Loukolela and was under the overall supervision of the Regional Office in DRC. There were 13 international and 60 national staff.

## Working with Others

In addition to working with the National Committee for Refugee Assistance and the Eligibility Commission, the Office worked closely with NGO partners to carry out the planned activities and provide humanitarian assistance for refugees. Collaboration with UN agencies such as WFP, UNICEF and FAO was maintained throughout the year as each agency provided assistance to refugees according to its mandate.

## Overall assessment

UNHCR did not encounter major problems relating to the protection of refugees and other persons of concern. International protection was improved for refugees and asylum-seekers in the urban areas. Refugees in the rural areas faced some abuses, but UNHCR was able to intervene to ensure that the local authorities met their international obligations.

The Eligibility and Appeal Board only started its activities at the end of 2002, and few cases were examined. The examination of asylum requests will be accelerated in 2003, to reduce the backlog.

The Tripartite Agreement signed on 11 December 2002 between the Governments of Angola and ROC and UNHCR will allow Angolan refugees to return in 2003.

Despite budgetary and logistical constraints, the needs of refugees were addressed in the areas of health, education, water and sanitation. However, there is room for future improvement in the sectors of agriculture and income generation. Such improvements would engender a minimum level of self-sufficiency among refugees facing prolonged exile from countries of origin caught up in protracted political difficulties.

### Offices

Brazzaville

Betou

Impfondo

Loukolela

### Partners

#### Government Agencies

National Committee for Refugee Assistance

#### NGOs

International Rescue Committee

*Commission épiscopale pour les migrants et les réfugiés*

#### Others

*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit*

## Financial Report (USD)

Expenditure Breakdown	Annual Programme Budget			
	Current Year's Projects	notes	Prior Years' Projects	notes
Protection, Monitoring and Co-ordination	1,163,209		21,394	
Community Services	58,613		132,118	
Crop Production	14,745		3,937	
Domestic Needs/Household Support	48,490		63,324	
Education	85,792		205,079	
Forestry	4,588		0	
Health/Nutrition	90,848		160,468	
Income Generation	17,538		3,257	
Legal Assistance	26,676		60,198	
Operational Support (to Agencies)	211,890		382,743	
Sanitation	0		20,273	
Shelter/Other Infrastructure	11,984		6,689	
Transport/Logistics	690,418		606,173	
Water	2,061		19,853	
Instalments with Implementing Partners	2,097,260		(1,178,053)	
<b>Sub-total Operational</b>	<b>4,524,113</b>		<b>507,450</b>	
Programme Support	1,994,079		2,325	
<b>Sub-total Disbursements/Deliveries</b>	<b>6,518,192</b>	<b>(3)</b>	<b>509,775</b>	<b>(5)</b>
Unliquidated Obligations	379,374	(3)	0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,897,566</b>	<b>(1) (3)</b>	<b>509,775</b>	
<b>Instalments with Implementing Partners</b>				
Payments Made	2,513,404		839,105	
Reporting Received	416,144		2,017,159	
<b>Balance</b>	<b>2,097,260</b>		<b>(1,178,053)</b>	
Outstanding 1st January	0		1,214,096	
Refunded to UNHCR	0		21,096	
Currency Adjustment	0		(242)	
<b>Outstanding 31 December</b>	<b>2,097,260</b>		<b>14,705</b>	
<b>Unliquidated Obligations</b>				
Outstanding 1st January	0		605,529	(5)
New Obligations	6,897,566	(1)	0	
Disbursements	6,518,192	(3)	509,775	(5)
Cancellations	0		95,755	(5)
<b>Outstanding 31 December</b>	<b>379,374</b>	<b>(3)</b>	<b>0</b>	

Figures which cross-reference to Accounts:

(1) Annex to Statement 1

(3) Schedule 3

(5) Schedule 5