

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Main objectives

- Assist local authorities to improve the national system of asylum. Help to increase awareness of refugees' rights within the Government and civil society.
- Facilitate the repatriation of Rwandan and Burundian refugees and the mass voluntary repatriation of Angolan refugees in safety and dignity.
- Prepare and organise the repatriation of Sudanese and Congolese refugees when conditions in their home countries have improved sufficiently.
- Ensure that all refugees who wish to remain in DRC enjoy appropriate international protection.
- Provide international protection and humanitarian assistance to residual groups and urban refugees, to help them to become self-reliant.
- Support initiatives for Demobilisation, Disarmament, Repatriation, Reintegration and Resettlement (DDRRR) and the Multi-Country Demobilisation and Reintegration Programme (MDRP) in co-operation with UNDP, the UN Observer Mission in DRC (MONUC) and the World Bank.



Planning figures

Population	Jan. 2004	Dec. 2004
Angola (refugees)	110,500	39,800
Sudan (refugees)	75,500	76,000
Uganda (refugees)	23,000	20,000
Burundi (refugees)	19,000	19,000
Other refugees	16,600	800
Returnee refugees	10,000	10,000
Asylum-seekers	200	200
Total	254,800	165,800

Total requirements: USD 23,114,682

Working environment

Recent developments

After more than five years of conflict, which split the country into several zones, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) officially ended its war and has embarked upon a political transition that has reunified the country. This was the fruit of 18 months of arduous negotiations between the Government, rebel leaders, the political opposition and members of civil society, with the resolute and visible backing of the United Nations and the international community. Then in July 2003, a transitional government of national unity was formed. It unites formerly warring factions and members of civil society.

The National Follow-up Committee and the International Committee to Accompany the Transition (ICAT) were established in April 2003 to actively participate in the peace-making process. ICAT's members include the ambassadors of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council as well as representatives from South Africa, Angola, Zambia, Gabon, Belgium, Canada and the African Union. The involvement of ICAT is expected to continue throughout the transition period. It would be difficult to overstate the importance of the role of the international community in bringing about peace in DRC – and helping to maintain it.

The many challenges facing the Transitional Government include the continued instability in North and South Kivu and North Eastern Katanga, the need to assert control over the Ituri region, and widespread ethnic violence. The Government will also have to deal with widespread human rights abuses including rape, summary killings and abductions.



Refugee children at a water stand in Kilweka. UNHCR / C. Mirtenbaum

In territories formerly controlled by rebel movements, ex-rebel soldiers divested of leadership structures (pending their integration into the national army) have shown a propensity for continued insurgency. There is a risk that the localised power vacuum in these areas could lead to more generalised insecurity if not addressed effectively.

Other significant developments include the expansion of the mandate of MONUC. United Nations resolution 1493 of 28 July 2003 authorises MONUC to use all necessary

means to fulfil its mandate in the Ituri district and ensure the protection of the civilian population and humanitarian workers throughout the territory of DRC. The United Nations deployed a contingent of Bangladeshis and Pakistanis with a few military personnel from francophone countries in Africa to replace the French-led EU Force that was stationed in Ituri from June 2003.

During 2003, UNHCR witnessed some positive developments at the operational level. In August, the

Head of State signed a decree establishing the National Eligibility Commission, thereby paving the way for the implementation of a National Refugee Law, promulgated in October 2002. UNHCR also secured the introduction of international refugee law as part of the curriculum offered at universities in Kinshasa. Other achievements included completing the registration of Central Africans, Congolese from Republic of the Congo (RoC) and urban refugees. Registration of Angolan refugees continues.

Constraints

Living conditions in DRC remain extremely precarious. United Nations and NGO data suggest that DRC currently has the world's highest mortality rate. Food insecurity is as high as 64 per cent even though the soil and climate could yield up to four harvests per year. Long-suspended development aid has not been resumed. In 2003, anticipated interventions from other humanitarian and development actors (expected to complement UNHCR activities) did not materialise. Rather, attention was diverted to respond to the human tragedies in the Ituri region. UNHCR's efforts to decrease refugee dependence on external assistance have been hampered by the weakness of the local economy and the lack of social infrastructure. Angolan refugees in Katanga and Sudanese refugees in Province Orientale have achieved varying degrees of self-reliance. In Bas Congo and Bandundu, similar efforts for Angolans and Congolese refugees are hampered by the lack of adequate arable land.

With respect to the fight against sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), cultural taboos and the lack of access to some refugee communities in war-affected regions have limited UNHCR's ability to meet set objectives. Although women refugees were nominated to sit on all refugee committees in all camps and site locations, their part in decision-making was usually a marginal one. More efforts will be made to encourage and empower women to participate in these processes.

Delayed funding hampered timely preparation of the Angolan repatriation operation. As a result, the Office had to revise its target figure for refugees expected to repatriate in 2003.

Strategy

Protection and solutions

UNHCR will strive to develop and enhance national protection capacities. This will include pressing for the adoption of national eligibility procedures for refugee status determination, calling for adequate resources

and commitments to conduct protection activities and promoting the Government's accession to international instruments such as the 1954 Conventions on Statelessness.

The Office will support the newly established Eligibility Commission and enhance the Government's capacity to manage the refugee registration system. It will reach out to civil society and the higher education system to create a complementary pool of expertise on refugee issues. It will also strengthen its capacity to use resettlement as a durable solution for individual cases who meet the established criteria. To prevent refugee exploitation, the Office will focus on training and the sensitisation of refugees, staff and police officers. UNHCR will also monitor information and referral systems set up to tackle human rights abuses.

UNHCR will organise voluntary repatriation in safety and dignity for some 74,000 Angolan refugees from Bas Congo, Bandundu and Katanga, for some 12,000 Rwandans dispersed in the Kivus, Maniema, Equateur, Kasai, Kinshasa and Lubumbashi and for some 800 Congolese refugees in Kimaza.

Assistance

UNHCR will ensure the provision of basic services and support activities for refugees who have not yet attained self-reliance in food production. The Office's aim is to reduce the dependence of refugees on external assistance. A central theme is enhancing the local integration of some 40,000 Angolan refugees while helping them to make informed choices (based on accurate knowledge of prevailing conditions in their country) to either repatriate to accessible areas in Angola or to remain and settle in DRC. A group of residual Congolese refugees in Kimaza is to be assisted in its efforts to settle permanently in DRC. Similarly, 37,700 Sudanese refugees will receive humanitarian assistance in Province Orientale. While they await the commencement of voluntary repatriation, UNHCR will also facilitate local integration for some 4,000 Ugandan refugees in Province Orientale and some 2,000 Burundian refugees in the Kivus.

Desired impact

UNHCR's aim is that DRC authorities exercise their responsibilities with respect to RSD, leading to an increased number and improved quality of decisions. All refugees in DRC should be registered and thus receive identification documents. It is hoped that all refugees wishing to integrate locally will acquire the relevant legal status. It is also hoped that there will be no denial of parental access, nor forced recruitment or conscription of

refugee children. Identified perpetrators of SGBV offences will be prosecuted to the extent possible. Victims of SGBV will receive medical treatment and counselling.

UNHCR expects that refugee families will have access to the minimum amount of arable land required for subsistence (0.25ha/family). Like the local population, refugees will be able to afford to pay medical consultation fees by the end of 2004. Enrolment and school attendance rates should be maintained and/or improved. It is hoped that parents will be able to contribute towards the education of their children. With the exception of extremely vulnerable individuals, newly recognised urban refugees should be able to meet their basic needs after six months of assistance from UNHCR. Malnutrition amongst residual refugee populations will be severely reduced.

Organisation and implementation

Management structure

In 2004, 165 staff (35 international and 120 national staff, one JPO, nine UNVs) will implement UNHCR's programme. UNHCR plans to maintain offices in ten locations. Adjustments to this plan might become necessary as a result of UNHCR's repatriation activities.

Co-ordination

The Office will work with officials from the Government and the newly established Eligibility Committee to ensure compliance with the Framework Agreement and will maintain working contacts with local authorities in various parts of the country. In the context of repatriation, the Office will collaborate with embassies and consular offices in the refugees' countries of origin within the framework of tripartite agreements.

UNHCR will collaborate with UNDP and MONUC within the DDR programme. Collaboration with UNDP and the World Bank will be intensified with the preparation for the return and reintegration of DRC refugees. These collaborative efforts are expected to yield an integrated plan and a harmonised approach to refugee and IDP returns. UNHCR will participate in OCHA co-ordination mechanisms, in particular the CAP. The Office expects to receive support from UNFPA, UNICEF, UNOPS and FAO in the provision of inputs for the assistance programmes for refugees. It will organise quarterly co-ordination meetings with the participation of government authorities, donors and implementing partners working in DRC.

Offices

Kinshasa

Aru
Bukavu
Goma
Kahemba
Kimpese
Kinvula
Kisenge
Lubumbashi
Ngidinga

Partners

NGOs

Actions et interventions pour le développement et l'encadrement social
Association pour le développement social et la sauvegarde de l'environnement
ATLAS Logistique
Caritas-Congo
Catholic Relief Services
International Rescue Committee
OXFAM Quebec
World Vision

Budget (USD)

Activities and services	Annual Programme
Protection, monitoring and co-ordination	7,013,115
Community services	565,000
Crop production	342,000
Domestic needs	386,000
Education	983,500
Food	100,000
Forestry	220,000
Health	1,208,000
Income generation	312,000
Legal assistance	945,000
Operational support (to agencies)	1,238,000
Sanitation	59,500
Shelter / other infrastructure	163,000
Transport / logistics	4,598,500
Water	147,000
Total Operations	18,280,615
Programme support	4,834,067
Total	23,114,682