

**- Phased Return to DRC -**

# **Repatriation and Reintegration of Congolese (DRC) Refugees**

**Supplementary Appeal**

**January 2005 - December 2005**



Logistical challenges: Boats are needed to cross the Oubangui River from the Republic of the Congo to the DRC to transport refugees back home. Libenge, January 2005. ©Hesemann/ UNHCR

## Introduction

While the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has been at the epicentre of war and regional crises in the Great Lakes Region since the mid-1990's, more recent developments usher hopes for the repatriation of refugees to some areas in the country. Certain provinces within the DRC have been relatively calm over the past three years, in particular the Equateur province. At the same time, since 2003, some estimated 25,000 refugees have returned on their own initiative to the South Kivu and Katanga provinces. This has resulted in UNHCR initiating an assistance operation for Congolese refugees returning to their home areas within the DRC. In the last quarter of 2004 UNHCR has facilitated the voluntary return and initial reintegration of some 1,800 refugees from the Central African Republic (CAR) to the Equateur province.

According to surveys conducted by UNHCR in the refugee camps, the majority of refugees hosted by the Republic of Congo (RoC) and CAR wish to repatriate. Many Congolese refugees in the United Republic of Tanzania (Tanzania) have voted with their feet returning by themselves, without even waiting for UNHCR assistance. Over the past weeks the UNHCR office in Uvira alone has reported up to 200 spontaneous returnees per week

from Tanzania. The lack of UNHCR's presence in northern Katanga makes it difficult to set any approximate figure of spontaneous returns.

The 2005 return operation will be guided by a two-pronged approach: Repatriation to Equateur province will be *facilitated*, covering all aspects of the return movement and initial reintegration assistance, while *spontaneous returnees* in DRC's South Kivu province will be provided with community-based assistance.

Operational planning is based on the assumption that in 2005, of the 381,000 Congolese refugees in asylum countries, some 24,000 from RoC will opt for voluntary repatriation under the facilitated return programme and another 20,000 will spontaneously return to eastern DRC, mainly from Tanzania.

This initial repatriation and reintegration programme is part of a phased multi-year framework for return to the DRC which is under development. UNHCR initially appeals for US\$ 15.6 million for the first phase of the programme in 2005. Once the benchmarks for facilitated refugee return in other areas of origin in the DRC are met, the operation may involve return from up to nine neighbouring countries.



Equateur (left) and eastern DRC (right): Refugees often find their houses and village infrastructure completely destroyed upon return © Hesemann / UNHCR

The table below indicates the estimated Congolese refugee populations\* in countries bordering the DRC:

Location	Refugee Population
Angola	13,000
Burundi	30,000
CAR	4,600
RoC	59,000
Rwanda	40,000
Sudan	1,500
Tanzania	153,000
Uganda	14,000
Zambia	66,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>381,100</b>

\*Provisional statistics based on latest available data provided by Branch Offices.

Diverse assistance modalities in Equateur and South Kivu are necessary, as UNHCR has found that the overall situation in eastern DRC does not allow for facilitated repatriation. At the same time, spontaneous returnees in South Kivu are in dire need of assistance. The situation in return areas will be reviewed on a regular basis to assess if the assistance strategy will need to be adapted. UNHCR will ensure in collaboration with the authorities of both the country of asylum and the country of origin that repatriation is voluntary, and that refugees can take an informed decision on returning to their home areas. UNHCR facilitated return will take place under conditions of safety and dignity.

Tripartite agreements between the DRC Transitional Government, countries of asylum and UNHCR will form the legal framework for repatriation. So far agreements have been signed with CAR, RoC and Tanzania. UNHCR works closely with the DRC Transitional Government, and

supports the capacity building of the National Commission for Refugees. The transitional authorities will play an important role in consolidating and establishing a conducive climate for refugee return within the DRC.

## Background

Since the mid-1990s, millions of Congolese have fled their homes to escape fighting between rebel groups and the national authorities in a complex conflict which has involved almost all neighbouring countries. More than three million people have died as a result of the conflict, which was accompanied by widespread human rights violations including systematic killings and rape. Massive population displacement took place. An estimated 2.3 million Congolese are internally displaced, while another 381,000 Congolese are in exile as refugees, mainly in neighbouring countries.



Lessons have restarted in the shell-pierced school building of Fizi in South Kivu © Hesse-mann/UNHCR

In 2002, a series of peace agreements were signed between the main belligerents, paving the way for the installation, in July 2003, of an all-inclusive Transitional Government, with a two-year mandate period leading up to the 2005 elections. In this period, the Transitional Government is tasked to ensure political stability, restructuring and reunification of the national army as well as to establish sound governance structures, in particular a working parliament.

The deployment in 1999 of the UN peace-keeping force, the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC), has assisted to maintain the peace in the country. MONUC is mandated to monitor the disengagement of forces from conflict areas. Ten thousand UN peacekeeping troops and three thousand civilian personnel had been deployed by January 2004. The UN Security Council Resolution 1565 dated October 2004 agreed to expand the peace-keeping force of MONUC by 5,900 to 16,000 troops. The majority of the additional troops have been deployed in the troubled eastern DRC. Under Chapter VII of the mandate, MONUC can militarily engage to end hostilities.

Military and political instability in March and June 2004 cast a long shadow of doubt on the prospects of the political future of the DRC. However, the past three months have been encouraging for the DRC. The troubled north-eastern provinces of Orientale and North Kivu continue to send signs of discomfort in the transition process, and remain a source of conflict and concern.

### **Beneficiaries**

In 2005, UNHCR plans to repatriate 24,000 refugees under the facilitated return programme to the Equateur province, from RoC. Another 20,000 refugees are ex-

pected to return on their own initiative to the South Kivu in eastern DRC. Returnees in the east will mainly come from Tanzania, but possibly also from Rwanda, Burundi and Zambia. Thus, the initial total number of direct beneficiaries will be 44,000 refugees returning to their areas of origin in DRC in 2005.

In addition to returnees the beneficiary population comprises the recipient local communities in the DRC in line with the community-based approach. Although UNHCR is not directly engaged in assistance to IDPs in the DRC, the Office will ensure that those IDPs returning to the same areas as refugees will be included in the community-based approach, so as to promote peaceful coexistence.



Spontaneous returnees in an Uvria transit centre, South Kivu © Hesemann/ UNHCR

### **Assistance Activities**

The assistance programme will encompass legal, physical and material aspects for a dignified return. UNHCR's strategy envisages a holistic community-based support in its intervention with the aim to:

- (a) Monitor returns
- (b) Avoid further internal displacement
- (c) Anchor sustainable return in the receiving communities,
- (d) Avoid the creation of inequalities between returnees and the local communities



Health centre in Gemena, Equateur, rehabilitated and equipped with an extension. © Hesemann/UNHCR

- (e) Promote peaceful co-existence and
- (f) Link its programme to longer term development assistance within the framework of the “4Rs” strategy (Repatriation, Reintegration, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction).

#### ***Main objectives***

- Ensure that refugees have the possibility to make a free and informed choice to return home. To this end, a mass information campaign will be put in place using various means of communication as well as “go-and-see” visits within the facilitated approach.
- Facilitate the return and reintegration of Congolese refugees originating from DRC's Equateur province and ensure the voluntary nature of return.
- Receive and register Congolese returnees at transit centres, ensure access to civil documentation as well as transportation to drop-off points as close as possible to their final destination
- Provide medical screening prior to departure from RoC.
- Provide all Congolese returnees including spontaneous returnees in the South Kivu province with basic humanitarian assistance to facilitate reintegration in local communities. The most vulnerable will be provided with individual assistance.

### **Return Movement**

#### ***Equateur Province***

UNHCR will provide for registration documentation, medical screening and vaccinations before departure. The programme will focus on the reception and transportation of returnees to their home areas, the provision of individual housing packages as well as peace and reconciliation activities and the rehabilitation of community infrastructure that will benefit returnees, returning IDPs as well as the recipient local community. Transportation from refugee camps to a central point in the area of origin will present a major challenge as proper roads and bridges in the Equateur region are almost non-existent. Transport will be provided by trucks, boats across the Oubangui River and, where appropriate, by plane. In some cases cash will be provided to returnees to organize their own transportation back home. UNHCR will establish way stations providing drinking water, food and sanitary facilities, transit centers and drop-off points. Convoys from afar will be accompanied by an emergency medical team and protection staff.

#### ***South Kivu***

There will be no UNHCR organized repatriation movements to the South Kivu province. However, vulnerable spontaneous returnees will be assisted with internal transportation, existing transit centers will be

supported, additional waystations will be constructed and roads will be rehabilitated. This approach will continuously be revised, in order to allow the operation to react in a flexible way to improvement or deterioration of the situation in areas of return. The assistance programme might also be extended to other provinces if appropriate, including northern Katanga.



Preparing bricks for rehabilitation of community infrastructure, Equateur© Hessemann/UNHCR



### Return package

Each returnee family will receive a return package comprised of mats, blankets, kitchen sets, mosquito nets, hygienic cloth, soap, buckets and jerry cans. The package will be complemented by food rations provided by WFP, which will ideally be sufficient for the first six months after return. Seeds, agricultural and fishery tools will equally be distributed to facilitate reintegration and self-sufficiency of returnees.

### Shelter

Returnee families in need will receive a basic shelter package, which will enable the beneficiaries to construct their own provisional homes, or rehabilitate an existing destroyed structure. Many construction materials will be locally available. Vulnerable returnees who are not able to reconstruct their own homes will receive a basic shelter constructed by UNHCR's partners. The shelter package will be comprised of the following items: hoes, string, nails, plastic sheets and other construction tools

### Community-Based Initial Reintegration Assistance

UNHCR will implement multi-sectoral initial reintegration assistance through a community-based approach. Interventions to ensure access to potable water, rehabilitation of clinics and schools, as well as rehabilitation of community infrastructure will likewise benefit the returnees and the receiving communities. UNHCR's intervention strategies aim at promoting peaceful co-existence and thereby anchor its programme within the receiving communities maximising their participation. Returnee children will receive support to attend school, by for example payment of school fees for six months.

### Protection

According to UNHCR's benchmarks on voluntary return, the Office will monitor the rights, welfare and safety of returnees. The voluntary nature of repatriation will be strictly upheld; returnees must be able to return in safety and dignity and with due respect for their human rights; vulnerable

groups will receive special care and protection appropriate for their specific needs. To this end UNHCR will establish a returnee monitoring system. This will enable the agency to monitor the situation of returnees in the areas of return. UNHCR will support campaigns to raise awareness of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence issues as well as the rights of the child. HIV/AIDS sensitisation campaigns will be carried out.

UNHCR has opened two field presences in the vast region of Equateur, in Libenge and Gemena, and will open two others, in Dongo and Mbandaka to support and monitor repatriation and reintegration from returnees coming from RoC and CAR. In the second half of the year UNHCR envisages the use of a mobile office on the Oubangui River on a barge provided by operational partners. The protection, assistance and reintegration activities in South Kivu will be monitored by UNHCR's field presence in Uvira. They will be supported by another office in Baraka in South Kivu. Within the multi-year repatriation plan UNHCR envisages opening further presences in Kalemie and Pweto for repatriation to north Katanga.

### **Coordination**

In collaboration with the Government of the DRC and the UN Country Team, UNHCR will coordinate the voluntary repatriation of the DRC Congolese refugees, and promote the engagement of other assistance agencies in return areas. UNHCR in Kinshasa is convening a weekly task-force on repatriation to the DRC, comprised of UN agencies, Non-Governmental Organizations, the ICRC and donor representatives.

In order to promote the "4Rs" strategy, UNHCR arranged for inter-agency assessment missions to Equateur and the South Kivu in mid-January 2005. The missions included UN sister-agencies and some de-

velopment partners. The aim was to establish collaborative linkages and forge partnerships at an early stage of programme planning. The findings and recommendations of these missions will form the basis of concerted and complementary interventions in return areas.

UNHCR continues to work closely with the UN Humanitarian Coordinator and the OCHA facilitated Consolidated Appeals Process including, in particular, plans and programmes relating to the voluntary return and reintegration of Congolese refugees. Within the existing UN Country Team framework, UNHCR coordinates its humanitarian interventions with its partners, particularly OCHA, UNICEF, WHO, WFP, FAO, UNAIDS, UNDP, World Bank and MONUC. Memoranda of Understanding with some of these agencies will be signed for a complementary approach to assist the repatriation and reintegration.



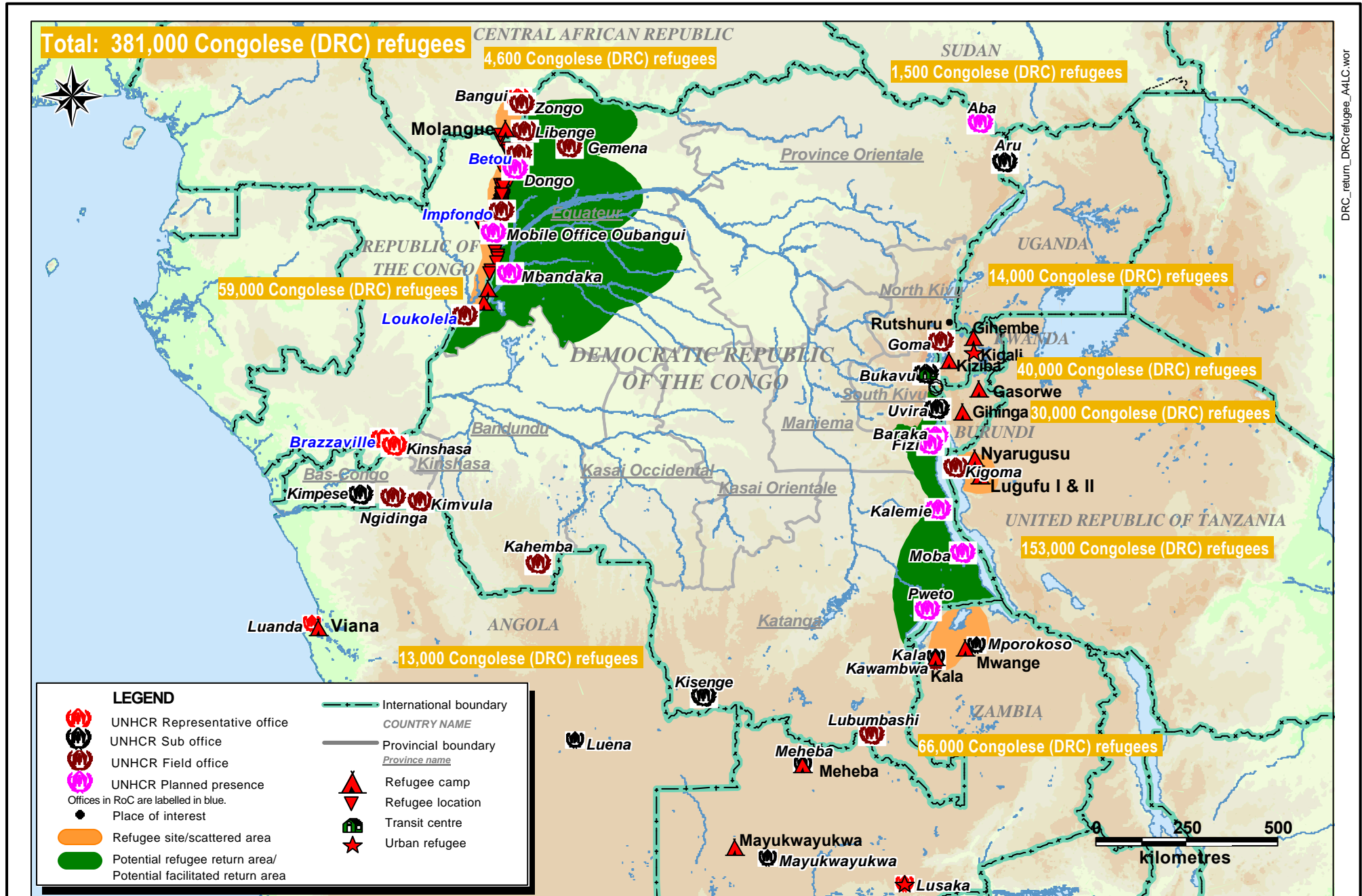
Children in Equateur, looking forward to attend school in rehabilitated classrooms © Hesemann/UNHCR

SUPPLEMENTARY PROGRAMME FOR  
THE REPATRIATION AND REINTEGRATION OF CONGOLESE (DRC) REFUGEES  
TO EQUATEUR AND THE SOUTH KIVU REGION  
Overall Requirements 1 January 2005 - 31 December 2005  
(in US Dollars)

ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES	DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO	REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO	TOTAL
Protection, Monitoring and Co-ordination	4,721,811	471,952	5,193,763.00
Community Services	98,698	26,925	125,623.00
Crop Production	-	-	-
Domestic Needs/Household Support	308,084	286,856	594,940.00
Education	696,264	-	696,264.00
Food	-	-	-
Forestry	16,933	89,749	106,682.00
Health/Nutrition	1,018,527	26,406	1,044,933.00
Income Generation	222,795	-	222,795.00
Legal Assistance / Protection	287,518	111,991	399,509.00
Operational Support (to Agencies)	1,164,330	510,541	1,674,871.00
Sanitation	-	-	-
Shelter / Other Infrastructure	960,071	90,672	1,050,743.00
Transport / Logistics	2,333,937	546,178	2,880,115.00
Water (non-agricultural)	416,073	-	416,073.00
<b>Total Operations</b>	<b>12,245,041</b>	<b>2,161,270</b>	<b>14,406,311</b>
Support Costs (7%) (*)	857,153	151,289	1,008,442
Programme Support	-	189,739	189,739
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>13,102,194</b>	<b>2,502,298</b>	<b>15,604,492</b>

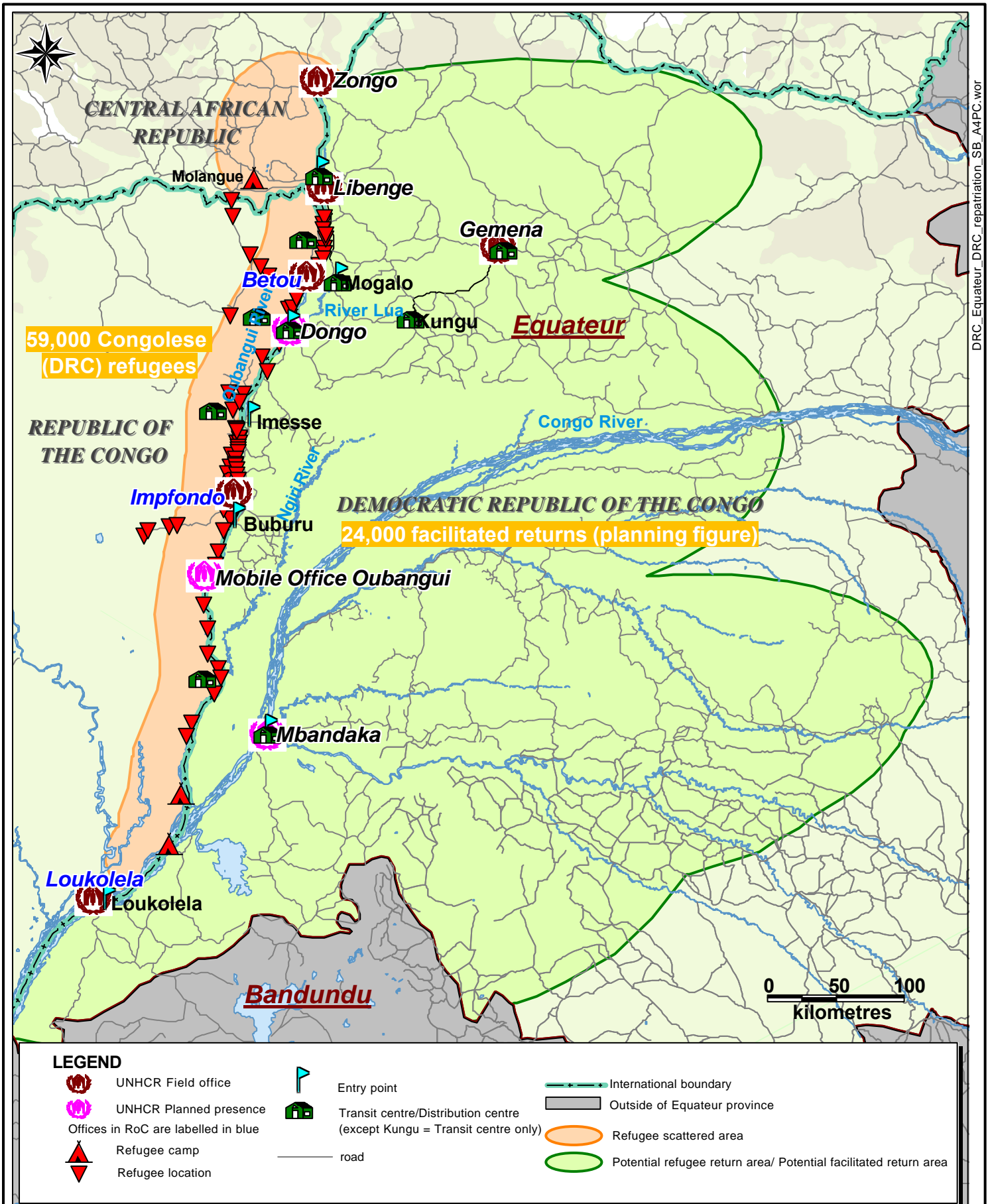
(\*) A 7% support cost has been added to the total operational requirements and will be recovered from each contribution to meet indirect support costs in UNHCR (Field and HQs).





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# REPATRIATION OF OF CONGOLESE (DRC) REFUGEES



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