

Refugee children from the Democratic Republic of the Congo collect water from the Ubangi river.

## | Working environment |

While relative calm has returned to many countries of Central Africa and the Great Lakes, the region continues to suffer from the consequences of conflict and political turmoil, forcing hundreds of thousands of people to flee to safer areas within their countries or abroad. UNHCR is concerned about nearly 3.3 million people in the subregion, of whom refugees and asylum-seekers from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) represent the largest group.

Despite joint military action by the armies of the DRC, Rwanda and Uganda in the eastern areas of the DRC, which had raised hopes of peace and stability in North and South Kivu as well as in the *Province Orientale*, the situation in the area remains volatile owing to the presence of various armed groups. In November 2009, inter-ethnic clashes in DRC's Equateur Province prompted more than 130,000 people to flee to the Central African Republic and to Congo. In addition, at least 70,000 persons have been forcibly displaced internally.

In the Central African Republic (CAR), the security situation remains tense, notably because of the country's long and porous borders with neighbours plagued by internal conflict, such as Chad, the DRC and Sudan. The civilian character of the refugee camps in CAR is threatened by the presence of armed elements, increasing the risk of refugees being forcibly recruited as fighters, or sexually abused.

Since June 2009, violence at the hands of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in the eastern DRC has forced some 5,000 refugees to flee their homes and seek asylum in the Haut Mbomou prefecture of CAR. Subsequently, in November 2009, the chaotic situation in DRC's Equateur Province led some 18,000 refugees to flee to the CAR's southern prefecture of Lobaye.

**Burundi**

**Cameroon**

**Central African Republic**

**Congo (Republic of the)**

**Democratic Republic of the Congo**

**Gabon**

**Rwanda**

**United Republic of Tanzania**

# Central Africa and the Great Lakes



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The Republic of the Congo hosts more than 114,700 refugees from the DRC's Equateur Province. UNHCR is assisting and seeking durable solutions for this group. The Office advocates for the local integration of the 10,000 refugees living in northern Congo, who have opted to remain there following the end of voluntary repatriation to DRC in 2008. For this group, the main difficulty lies in attaining self-sufficiency, due to the lack of economic opportunities.

The United Republic of Tanzania demonstrated its commitment to ending the refugee situation in the country by taking the unprecedented decision to naturalize more than 162,200 Burundian refugees. These refugees had lived in north-western Tanzania's "Old Settlements" since 1972. Although newly naturalized, they are still of concern to UNHCR, as they are not yet able to exercise all their rights as citizens. This will happen only when the procedures for their local integration are finalized and implemented. By the end of 2010, these new citizens will have been relocated to 51 districts in 16 regions in the country.

In 2011, the local integration of these newly naturalized Tanzanians in their new homes will be a major objective for the Government, for UNHCR, for other UN agencies and for district authorities. Tanzania is also planning to complete the repatriation of some 38,000 Burundian refugees still living in Mtabila Camp. Should security in the eastern DRC improve, the voluntary repatriation of Congolese refugees will also be promoted in 2011.

In Burundi, it is expected that the results of elections in 2010 will consolidate peace and build an environment conducive to development, even though the opposition's withdrawal from the electoral process could threaten stability in the country. Peace

could facilitate the return of some 20,000 of the 38,000 Burundian refugees living in Mtabila Camp in Tanzania.

In Rwanda, the Government has called on UNHCR to consider invoking the cessation clause for Rwandan refugees in December 2011. A roadmap for actions leading to such a declaration has been developed, and UNHCR is working to implement it in collaboration with the Rwandan Government, asylum countries and relevant stakeholders.

Meanwhile, UNHCR is promoting the voluntary repatriation of Rwandans still in exile and searching for other solutions for those who cannot return. Reintegration projects are important to ensure the sustainability of returns to Rwanda, where scarcity of land makes self-sufficiency difficult.

## Strategy in 2011

UNHCR continues to promote durable solutions, especially voluntary repatriation, for refugees from Burundi, DRC, Congo and Rwanda. Tripartite agreements have been signed to allow for the voluntary repatriation to the DRC of refugees in Congo and Rwanda. Another tripartite agreement between the Governments of the DRC, Rwanda and UNHCR is designed to ensure the repatriation of refugees from Rwanda to the DRC, and vice versa.

When voluntary repatriation is not an option, UNHCR pursues local integration and resettlement to broaden the choice for refugees with specific needs. UNHCR is also leading the protection clusters in CAR and the DRC, where it provides protection and assistance, and coordinates the activities of various agencies to prevent and respond to incidents of sexual and gender-based violence.

UNHCR will continue to provide technical assistance to governments to strengthen their national asylum frameworks, especially in Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, the DRC, Gabon and Congo.

**Constraints**

The political and security situation in the DRC remains precarious, and threatens humanitarian work and access to refugees. The location of refugees and asylum-seekers in remote places complicates registration, and the distribution of humanitarian assistance to the vulnerable. Moreover, refugees' dependence on protection and assistance, and the lack of income-generating activities, make it difficult for UNHCR to achieve its objectives with regard to voluntary repatriation and local integration.

**Operations**

Operations in **Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Republic of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, and the United Republic of Tanzania** are covered in separate country chapters.

**Gabon** hosts some 13,000 refugees and asylum-seekers, who began to receive identity cards in 2007 at the Government's initiative. However, difficulties in collecting data from refugees

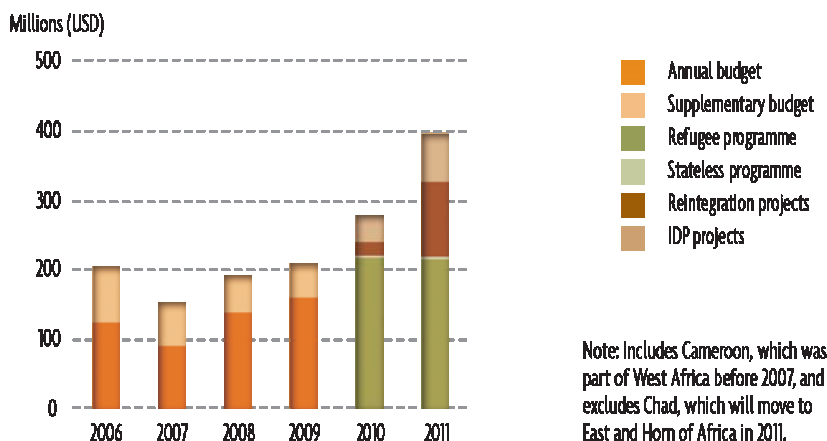
settled in remote areas have made it difficult to complete the process. UNHCR will continue to help the Government and will provide assistance to the refugees who choose to integrate locally or repatriate voluntarily. Where neither local integration nor voluntary repatriation is possible, UNHCR searches for resettlement opportunities for the most vulnerable among people of its concern.

**Financial information**

Between 2005 and 2009, efforts to secure durable solutions in the subregion, particularly repatriation, local integration and reintegration, led to increases in related budgets. These increases were accompanied by corresponding reductions in care and maintenance budgets. In 2011, while the overall requirement remains similar to that for 2010, budgets per country have increased, while Chad has been moved to the East and Horn of Africa subregion. The significant increase in the country budgets in 2011, as compared to previous years, reflects efforts to remedy gaps in the provision of protection and assistance that have been revealed in the comprehensive needs assessments of 2010.

UNHCR will require more than USD 397 million in 2011 to respond to the needs of its people of concern in the subregion, with a particular increase in the requirements for refugee programmes.

**UNHCR's budget in Central Africa and the Great Lakes 2006 – 2011**



**UNHCR budget for Central Africa and the Great Lakes (USD)**

OPERATION	2010 REVISED BUDGET	2011				TOTAL
		REFUGEE PROGRAMME PILLAR 1	STATELESS PROGRAMME PILLAR 2	REINTEGRATION PROJECTS PILLAR 3	IDP PROJECTS PILLAR 4	
Burundi	37,057,145	34,277,347	285,362	9,180,490	640,017	44,383,216
Cameroon	20,661,773	22,834,527	1,063,000	0	0	23,897,527
Central African Republic	18,560,051	13,045,987	910,012	0	10,685,655	24,641,654
Congo, Republic of the	29,614,412	32,639,356	0	0	0	32,639,356
Democratic Republic of the Congo	101,922,206	61,537,149	1,984,749	20,183,182	58,903,643	142,608,723
Gabon	2,943,788	3,105,610	0	0	0	3,105,610
Rwanda	22,389,658	31,617,255	0	2,799,319	0	34,416,574
United Republic of Tanzania	45,308,995	16,564,295	0	75,184,500	0	91,748,795
<b>Total</b>	<b>278,458,028</b>	<b>215,621,526</b>	<b>4,243,123</b>	<b>107,347,491</b>	<b>70,229,315</b>	<b>397,441,455</b>