



DONOR UPDATE: VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION OF ANGOLAN REFUGEES

JULY 2011

Angola's 30 year brutal civil war ended in 2002. During the subsequent five years, some 450,000 of the estimated 600,000 Angolan refugees repatriated to their areas of origin, as did the majority of the more than 4 million internally displaced people. In March 2007, UNHCR officially ended its large-scale voluntary repatriation operation for Angolan refugees, although small numbers of refugees continued to return, in many cases with UNHCR support.

In early 2011, an estimated 146,000 Angolan refugees remained in the neighbouring countries, of whom some 34,000 have indicated that they would like to return to Angola during 2011 and some 16,000 would return in 2012. Discussions are under way to bring **closure to the Angola refugee chapter**. In cooperation with all governments concerned, UNHCR has renewed efforts to find a durable solution for the remaining Angolan refugees, through voluntary repatriation, local integration or an alternative status. This would create the conditions for invoking the ceased circumstances or cessation clause, as of 31 December 2011.

The **Government of Angola** has expressed strong commitment to supporting the return and integration of these Angolan citizens and will provide them with reintegration assistance upon return. The Ministry for Social Welfare and Reintegration (MINARS) will coordinate the return and reintegration process in Angola, with the support of UNHCR and the **International Organization for Migration (IOM)**. Furthermore, UNHCR and IOM will be the conduit for international solidarity and support for organizing the return movement in the countries of asylum to their final destinations in Angola.

In the countries of asylum **Botswana, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Namibia, Republic of the Congo** and **Zambia**, UNHCR will continue its mass information campaigns, promoting voluntary repatriation and organizing "go-and-see" visits to allow refugees to take a well-informed decision about returning. In close coordination with the local authorities, UNHCR will be responsible for preparing the refugees for return, including by ensuring documentation and vaccination. The Office will organize the refugees' transport to transit centres, from where IOM will be responsible for onward transportation of the refugees and their belongings to Angola. Depending on the distance and road conditions, return movements may include air transport.

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In Angola, MINARS and IOM will set up reception and transit centres in the main areas of return in the provinces of Bengo, Cabinda, Huambo, Moxico, Uige and Zaire. MINARS will provide returnees with social reintegration kits, including household items, “do-it-yourself” construction tools, agricultural tools and seeds. Each family will receive a 90-day food ration. The Ministry of Health and its partners will ensure basic healthcare, including vaccination against polio and yellow fever of all returnees who did not receive them prior to departure. **Documentation** and **civil registration** will be the responsibility of the Ministry of Justice with the support of **UNHCR**. The issuance of birth certificates to every minor under 18 years of age will be guaranteed. The existing charge for the issuance of the national identity documents to returnees will be waived.

While all transportation arrangements in **Angola** will be under the direct responsibility of IOM, UNHCR will provide overall technical advice and support to the Angolan Government. The Office will conduct returnee monitoring through field-based mobile teams, with a view to ensuring that return is taking place in a safe and dignified manner, as well as to identify and quickly address any protection problems that may occur. Portuguese language instruction will be provided by UNHCR to returnees from Zambia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, who have been educated in English or French in their countries of asylum.

This is **a unique opportunity** to bring closure to one of the most protracted refugee situations worldwide. To take advantage of this window of opportunity and considering that different circumstances prevail in each of the five asylum countries, as well as in the return areas, **UNHCR** and **IOM** are appealing for **flexible** and **additional funding**. This joint appeal will be presented in the second week of July and seeks to raise the necessary funds to provide humane and dignified voluntary repatriation assistance to some 34,000 Angolan refugees wishing to return home this year.

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