

# Republic of the Congo

August 2024

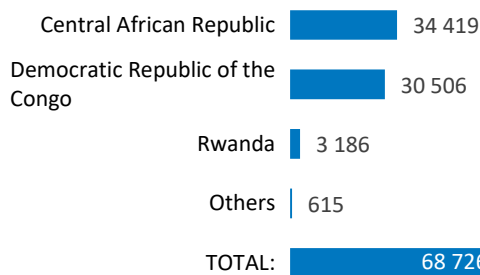
The Government of the Congo revised its **Development Policy Letter**, reflecting progress in **refugee socio-economic integration** and adopting a comprehensive **inclusion policy**.

**Multi-sectoral flood response**, focused on community-based protection for affected host populations and refugees and **refugee inclusion** in the national response.

**Provision of civil registries** to the Ministry of Justice to enhance **civil registration access** for 150,000 individuals and **prevent statelessness**.

## POPULATION UNHCR SERVES (AS OF 31 AUGUST 2024)

68,726

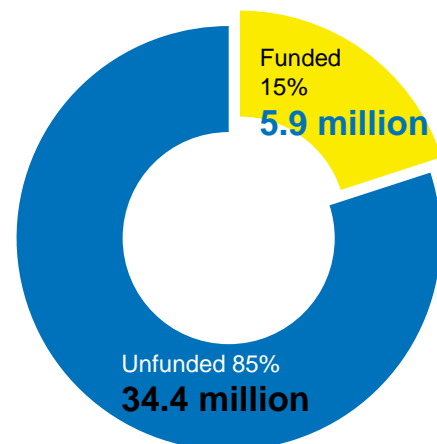


There are also some **68,000 persons at risk of statelessness** in Republic of the Congo, according to Government estimates.

## FUNDING (AS OF 31 AUGUST 2024)

USD 40.3 million

Requested for the Republic of the Congo operation



## UNHCR PRESENCE

**Staff: 52**

**40 National Staff**

Including:

1 National UN Volunteer

**12 International Staff**

Including:

5 International UN Volunteers

1 Consultant

**Offices:**

1 National Office in Brazzaville

2 Field Offices: in Bétou (Likouala department) and Gamboma (Plateaux department)



Refugee in the Likouala Department trained on using and maintaining manual, non-electric, water-efficient machines. These innovative and eco-friendly solutions will allow refugees and members of host communities to engage in other activities, unlocking their livelihood opportunities while fostering their empowerment. © UNHCR/Armand Christ KIYALOLOU

## Operational Strategy

Through its 2022-2024 multiyear strategy, UNHCR aims to strengthen the protection environment of refugees and asylum-seekers by improving their living conditions, through **integration into all national systems and advocating for the strengthening of socio-economic systems in refugee-hosting areas in the northern and remote rural areas where most of them live**. UNHCR's strategy is aligned with the Congo's 2022-2026 National Development Plan, the revised 2020-2024 UNDAF strategy, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the Global Compact on Refugees.

### SUSTAINABLE PROGRAMMING

UNHCR operates in a **context conducive to sustainable programming**, as since 2017, the Republic of the Congo has been committed to finding local solutions for socio-economic integration in its Development Policy Letter related to support for refugees and host communities. This shift from subsistence programming towards self-reliance has been effective in the operation for several years as reflected in the 2022-2024 multiyear strategy as well as the 2025-2027 under development. The latter focuses on maximizing development interventions by partners for the benefit of refugee-hosting areas, utilizing an **area-based programming and whole-of-society approach**. This inclusive and diversified refugee response model involves development actors, civil society, and the private sector. Localization efforts emphasize local implementing partners, capacity building, and community empowerment. Data and evidence generation are prioritized through socio-economic surveys and collaboration with national statistical offices. The results of these efforts are evident in the strong and diversified collaboration with local and national government services, development actors and the local private sector. As an example, from 2021 to 2023, \$24 million USD was leveraged from partners outside of UNHCR's operational budget to address refugee needs, despite a 54% decrease in the operational budget.

Building on the government's commitment to a more inclusive policy sectoral roadmap, engagement with development actors, led by the Minister of Planning, will be developed, ensuring effective linkages between UNHCR's programming and government priorities, leveraging technical and financial support from development actors. In view of fostering self-reliance, UNHCR's strategy will focus on key basic services, namely education, health, and social protection as well as on employment. This alignment to sustainable programming requires staff support for advocacy and inclusion in areas such as development, public health, WASH, M&E, and data analysis.

## Working with Partners

UNHCR works closely with its government partner, the **National Commission for Refugee Assistance (CNAR)**, and three local NGO partners, namely **Médecins d'Afrique, APPE and CEMIR** to provide protection and sectoral assistance to asylum-seekers, refugees, and persons at risk of statelessness. UNHCR expands its advocacy and activities with non-transactional stakeholders as well: local NGOs, private sector, and foundations.

Within the framework of the UN SDGs, UNHCR is an active member of the **UN Country Team and its working groups**, thereby ensuring coordination and the pooling of efforts to Leave No One Behind and ensure the inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers in their programmes and projects.

UNHCR is involved in the **National Coordination Mechanism for Flood Response**, with UNHCR serving as one of the lead agencies. Additionally, UNHCR adheres to the **Regional Response Plan for DRC Refugees (PRR) 2024-2025**, launched in February 2024, an inter-agency planning, coordination, and fundraising tool providing protection, assistance, and durable solutions to refugees from the DRC and their host communities. UNHCR adheres as well to the **Central African Republic Solutions Support Platform (CAR-SSP)**, this initiative aims at finding sustainable and inclusive solutions for forced displacements related to the Central African crisis.

## Protecting and ensuring inclusive access to fundamental rights

- On 8 August 2024, UNHCR and CNAR launched the **joint countrywide verification exercise of all refugees and asylum-seekers, starting from Ngabé district, Pool department**. Village chiefs committed to spreading information about the verification process, ensuring targeted populations are informed and ready for the upcoming verification. The verification results will provide updated population figures of asylum-seekers and refugees, prioritize verified asylum-seekers for RSD, and help develop a plan to reduce the current RSD backlog.
- Since January 2024, **CNAR has benefited from capacity-building activities aimed at improving case management and addressing the RSD backlog**. These activities included training sessions and ongoing, close monitoring to enhance the efficiency of the system, reduce waiting times, and improve the overall quality of RSD

assessments and decisions. Dedicated training was also provided to proGres and BIMS users within CNAR to enhance the accuracy and effectiveness of registration data.

- UNHCR continues to advocate for the provision of documentation to refugees and asylum-seekers. Since January 2024, **1 781 individuals have been successfully registered**.

## Access to basic social services toward integration

- Simultaneously with the verification exercise, a **socio-economic survey will be conducted**. Launched in 2023 and to be completed in 2024, this survey will collect detailed and updated data for the remaining localities (Pointe-Noire, Kouilou, Niari, Pool, Sangha, Plateaux, and Likouala). This data will be used to advocate for the inclusion of refugees in national registries and to obtain the government social registry (RSU) number, which will facilitate **refugees' access to government social programs**. This operation also aims at gathering refugees' intentions regarding voluntary repatriation or integration as part of durable solutions.
- The Ministry of Health announced the **upgrade of Bouemba health post to an integrated health centre**. Located in the Plateaux department that hosts more than 10,000 refugees, the Bouemba health post has been supported by UNHCR for several years while continued advocacy has been carried at field and central level to encourage increased state investment.
- A data collection on mixed groups (refugees and local populations) engaged in income-generating activities in Likouala was completed in June 2024. A total of 72 recognized groups were identified: 27 in Bétou, 25 in Dongou, 9 in Enyellé, and 11 in Impfondo. The majority focus on agriculture, particularly food crops (46 groups, 63.9%), followed by livestock (11 groups, 15.3%) and horticulture (8 groups, 11.1%). Commerce (4 groups, 5.6%), fishing (2 groups, 2.8%), and handicrafts (1 group, 1.4%) are less common but indicate economic diversity. This data is crucial for planning and advocacy efforts **to include refugee groups in projects by other stakeholders in operational and refugee-hosting areas**. In Bétou, it will inform the implementation of the World Bank-funded North Congo Agroforestry Project (PANC), targeting 46 groups, 30% of which will be refugees. Additionally, the WFP will use these results to target horticultural groups for its support project.
- On World Refugee Day (June 20) and African Child Day (June 16), UNHCR and UNICEF organized an event for young refugees and Congolese at the Ministry of Justice. The theme was "Education for All Children in Africa: The Time is Now." The event featured Congolese youth (ages 8 to 17) in the country's "Junior Parliament," which includes 328 elected junior deputies from 12 departments. Thanks to UNHCR advocacy efforts, over 20 young refugees also participated. The debate covered the **right to education, rights of children with disabilities, and the protection and humanitarian aid for refugee children**.
- Under the WFP school canteen programme, nearly 1,500 pupils in Bouémbe, **70% of whom are refugees**, receive **hot meals at both primary and pre-school levels**.

## Advances in socio-economic inclusion

- As part of the "Lisungi" national social safety net project, which supported 4,000 people with conditional cash assistance and 8,000 with cash for income-generating activities, 50% of whom are refugees, young refugees received **training for socio-economic inclusion and self-reliance**. Certificates and integration kits were delivered to 603 young people, including **117 refugees**, who completed qualification-based training. This initiative strengthens the capacity of youth to contribute to their own and their host community's development, demonstrating effective integration in practice.
- UNHCR continues its **advocacy efforts with the World Bank** to promote the **socio-economic inclusion** of refugees, with a focus on **education** (upcoming project) and **social protection** (ongoing project). The education project, "Transforming the Education Sector for Better Outcomes and Results", aims to improve access to quality basic education and strengthen the management systems. The project, starting in September, will benefit from the Windows for Host and Refugees initiative to ensure effective inclusion of refugee-hosting areas. A collaboration between UNHCR, World Bank, and the Ministry of Education will be undertaken moving forward. During a monitoring mission of the Social Protection and Youth Productive Inclusion Project (2020 – 2027), UNHCR, World Bank and project implementation unit explored the possibility of integrating this project with the former Lisungi Project and the new national social protection programmes. The principle of inclusion of new refugee-hosting areas (Plateaux and Pool departments) has been reiterated, and field assessment of refugee vulnerability is already ongoing. **Both projects will ensure sustainable socio-economic inclusion in refugee hosting areas**.

- UNHCR participated in the meeting with DGSSA and the World Bank to prioritize activities related to maternal and child medical care through the Kobikisa project. With the view of determining the project's priorities for the coming months up to 2025, **UNHCR advocated for the continuation of Kobikisa in Likouala and the rehabilitation of two maternity wards in Makotimpoko** and another **maternity ward in Likouala**.
- Thanks to UNHCR's advocacy efforts, **34 refugees have been enrolled to the business entrepreneurship caravan launched in Gamboma-Centre alongside national candidates**. They participated in a business plan training session led by government experts from the Small and Medium Enterprise Development Agency (ADPME). This training helped the refugees refine their business ideas by defining clear objectives and strategies. The knowledge gained will support them in successfully launching or expanding their businesses. UNHCR continues to advocate for the inclusion of more refugee entrepreneurs in future training sessions.
- UNHCR and Genie Agricole Plus and Environment (GAPE) are continuing their collaboration to carry out **technical studies for the development of six market gardening sites in Bétou and Enyellé**. This initiative, part of the World Bank-funded North Congo Agroforestry Project (PANC), will benefit 500 national and refugee households. The collaboration with the Project Implementing Unit is part of the operation's non-transactional engagement with the World Bank, outside the Window for Host and Refugees, supporting sustainable programming.
- The social enterprise, the Washing Machine Project, with which UNHCR partnered up to **improve living conditions of refugees and locals, especially women and girls**, conducted a 2-week mission in the country in August 2024. During the mission, training sessions were held for beneficiaries on **using and maintaining manual, non-electric, water-efficient machines**. These innovative and eco-friendly solutions will allow refugees and members of host communities to engage in other activities, unlocking their livelihood opportunities while fostering their empowerment. Additionally, focus groups were conducted to establish a data baseline to assess the impact of these washing solutions on beneficiaries' lives.

## Ensuring access to durable solutions

- A delegation of trainers from the RSC Africa, US Refugee Admissions Programme, conducted a two-week mission in Brazzaville from July to August to deliver cultural orientation training. This training benefited **64 refugees who will be resettled in the United States** and aims to raise candidates' awareness about the culture and traditions while providing them with practical and technical advice in preparation for their reintegration.
- UNHCR, CNAR, and APPE are collaborating to organize the first **voluntary repatriation** convoy of **62 Central African Republic candidates** to Bangui, scheduled for October 8. WFP will assist by providing UNHAS flights to facilitate the operation.

## Fight against statelessness

- UNHCR provided technical sessions to the statelessness focal point to prepare them for **mobile court sessions** scheduled in August and September 2024 across 5 departments, aiming to reach **10,000 people**.
- UNHCR **enhanced Ministry of Justice capacities to strengthen access to civil registration and address statelessness**. 3000 birth registers, 18 computers and other stationery supplies have been handed over to the Minister of Justice, Human Rights, and Indigenous Peoples, Mr. Ange Aimé Wilfrid Bininga. These registers, provided thanks to the financial support of US PRM, will enable the **birth registration of 150,000 individuals**, contributing to protecting rights and preventing statelessness.

# Financial Information

**UNHCR is grateful for the generous support of donors who have contributed to UNHCR in the Republic of the Congo and to UNHCR programmes globally in 2024.**

Australia | Australia for UNHCR | Belgium | Central Emergency Response Fund | Denmark | España con ACNUR | France | Ireland | Japan for UNHCR | Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS | Netherlands (Kingdom of the) | Norway | Private donors | Republic of Korea | Sweden | Switzerland | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | United States of America | UNO-Flüchtlingshilfe

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