

BURUNDI

INITIAL OBJECTIVES

Burundi Returnees

- Sustain the return and reintegration of Burundi refugees and promote peace and stability.

Congolese Refugees

- Provide protection and assistance to Congolese (DRC) refugees accommodated in a refugee camp in Cibitoke Province and, security permitting, facilitate voluntary repatriation.

Urban Refugees

- Provide multi-sectoral assistance, based on an assessment of needs, to urban refugees (Congolese, Rwandans, Somalis).
- Facilitate the voluntary repatriation of Rwandan refugees and identify durable solutions for those who do not wish to repatriate.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS, PROGRESS ACHIEVED AND CONSTRAINTS

Burundi Returnees

Following the security incident in October 1999 in which two UN international staff lost their lives, the UN imposed countrywide security restrictions that led to the evacuation of all non-essential staff and the suspension of UN programmes. Life-sustaining activities continued, but strict security restrictions limited movement outside of Bujumbura. These remained in force until 25 April of this year when they were partially lifted, allowing access to northern and north-eastern Burundi, where the security situation was relatively stable.

The repatriation programme to Burundi from neighbouring countries had also been suspended in October 1999. At the time of writing, it has not been re-launched. Notwithstanding this suspension, UNHCR registered, in col-

laboration with the local authorities, some 2,280 spontaneous returnees from the DRC and Tanzania in the period between January and June. Where conditions allowed, UNHCR, together with the *Ministère à la Réinsertion et à la Réinstallation des Déplacés et des Rapatriés* (MRRDR), facilitated their reintegration process. The returnees were provided with identity documents to enable them to return to their communes of origin.

Overall, assistance to returnees consists of the rehabilitation and construction of houses, schools, health centres and related infrastructure in returnee areas, benefiting the local population as well. Projects which had been suspended were only re-activated with the partial lifting of the UN security restrictions, when new ones were also launched. Besides the re-activated project for one primary school in Cibitoke Province (including houses for teachers and medical staff), other re-activated projects include the Community Rehabilitation Project, implemented in collaboration with the World Bank, in the Provinces of Muyinga and Ruyigi. This project aims to complete the rehabilitation of primary schools, health centres and water systems that were started prior to October 1999. Activities for the construction of temporary shelter for homeless returnees and of 2,500 houses for landless returnees were also re-activated in the northern communes of Cibitoke, Kirundo and Muyinga. A new education project started in May in the northern provinces of Kirundo, Muyinga and Ruyigi, which aims to assist 15,000 returnee children to reintegrate into the Burundi educational system. Cloth was purchased to make 15,000 uniforms, which will be delivered with the start of the new school year in September.

A new project, expected to start shortly, is the Women for Peace and Development Project, implemented in collaboration with the *Ministère de l'Action Sociale et de la Promotion de la Femme*. This project sensitises the population

to peaceful co-existence through meetings, seminars and training workshops that encourage women from various provinces to meet and exchange ideas on peace-building and their role in the consolidation of peace. UNHCR supported the *Ministère de l'Action Sociale et de la Promotion de la Femme* to carry out a media campaign for the celebration of International Women's Day on 8 March.

UNHCR continued to pursue co-operation with UNDP and is endeavouring to enlarge it to include other UN agencies and the World Bank for the development of reintegration and peace-building activities.

Tracing of families and life-sustaining assistance to unaccompanied minors (UAMs) continued, although tracing was often difficult in areas of instability. Some 234 UAMs were traced and re-united with their families, while tracing for 1,434 UAMs is on-going.

Continuing instability constituted the main constraint to the effective implementation of UNHCR's programme. Insufficient funding and repeated budget cuts further limited UNHCR's activities and made long-term planning difficult. Community projects, identified as a priority by the population, could not be carried out as planned. Furthermore, the evacuation of non-essential staff in 1999 left UNHCR offices with limited human resources.

Congolese Refugees

The majority of Congolese refugees who fled the DRC in 1998 to Burundi have returned home. At the beginning of the year, there were some 400 remaining Congolese refugees living in the Rugombo camp in the Province of Cibitoke. An additional 425 arrived between January and June. Despite the on-going conflict in the DRC, these refugees continued to express an interest in voluntary repatriation. Sporadic attacks on the main road between Bujumbura and the Province of Cibitoke occasionally obstructed the delivery of assistance to the refugee camp. Assistance consisted of a package of non food-items and monthly food rations. Fol-

lowing UNHCR's interventions, the Government approved the transfer of the camp to a safer location away from the border. The Government also approved the establishment of a transit centre for 1,000 Congolese refugees in Bujumbura Mairie, while awaiting the establishment of a refugee camp in the interior of the country.

Urban Refugees

The Office assisted the most vulnerable amongst the urban refugees, by providing a monthly subsistence allowance. Moreover, UNHCR provided food, medical care, educational assistance for school children and funding for income-generation projects on a case-by-case basis. Refugees awaiting resettlement were housed in hotels while the Burundi authorities processed their exit visas. Some 54 Rwandan refugees repatriated between January and June with UNHCR's assistance, while another 100 are expected to repatriate later this year.

REVISED OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITY ACTIVITIES FOR JULY - DECEMBER

Burundi Returnees

- Within the framework of the Arusha peace process on Burundi, a joint UN plan is being elaborated to prepare Burundi society to receive the returnees and to facilitate their subsequent reintegration, while at the same time creating a basis for social and economic development. In this plan, UNHCR's role is to facilitate repatriation and support initial reintegration activities. In preparation for eventual implementation of the plan, during the next six months UNHCR will undertake preparatory activities aimed at increasing the absorption capacity of the returnee communities.
- The number of Burundians repatriating from neighbouring countries with UNHCR's assistance is expected to be lower than initially planned. UNHCR believes that major repatriation movements will only occur after the implementation of a peace agreement has commenced. UNHCR has prepared contingency plans

for various repatriation scenarios.

Congolese Refugees

- The planned project activities will be revised to include costs for the transfer of the Congolese refugees from Bujumbura to the transit centre and, subsequently, to the interior of the country, as well as the establishment of a new site. The revision will also include costs for the rehabilitation of the current site.

Urban Refugees

- Due to increasing tensions in Rwanda, repatriation is expected to be limited. Initial objectives for urban refugees remain unchanged.

FINANCIAL DATA (USD)

	Initial Budget	Revised Budget	Total Funds Available*	Total Funds Obligated
AB and TF	15,404,721	5,115,146	2,824,480	2,788,600

*Includes income from unrestricted contributions, income from contributions restricted to the region/country, opening balance and adjustments.

