

RWANDA

INITIAL OBJECTIVES

Rwandan Returnees

- Continue to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of Rwandan refugees from neighbouring countries of asylum and ensure their sustainable reintegration.
- Continue to work with other partners to strengthen Rwanda's capacity to receive and reintegrate returnees, and promote a climate of unity and reconciliation conducive to peace and stability both in Rwanda and in the region.
- Assist the Government of Rwanda in adopting rights-based refugee legislation and procedures, in accordance with recognised international and regional laws and practices.
- Contribute to the economic, social and political empowerment of Rwandan women.

Congolese Refugees

- Pending voluntary repatriation, protect some 30,000 Congolese (DRC) refugees living in two refugee camps and ensure basic assistance.

Burundi Refugees

- In collaboration with the Government of Rwanda, seek durable solutions for the remaining 500 Burundi refugees living in a camp.

Urban Refugees

- Provide protection and basic assistance to some 2,000 refugees living in Kigali.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS, PROGRESS ACHIEVED AND CONSTRAINTS

Rwandan Returnees

Throughout the first six months of 2000, major changes in the Government led to generalised political instability in Rwanda. The departure of the Speaker of the House in January

and the resignation of the Prime Minister in February were succeeded by the resignation of President Bizimungu in March and the subsequent nomination and election of Paul Kagame as President in April. A parallel series of changes in the Government's ministries left UNHCR with no functioning counterpart at the central level for most of the first half of the year. The development of new initiatives was therefore hindered, although all planned activities were eventually implemented, largely because of good relations with the local authorities. In a positive development, the newly reconstituted Ministry of Local Government and Social Affairs presented, as one of its first official acts, draft legislation on refugee protection and assistance, which was endorsed by the Cabinet and presented to Parliament.

Since the massive return of refugees to Rwanda in late 1996 and 1997, UNHCR continued to work, in close collaboration with the Government of Rwanda and the governments of asylum countries through the established tripartite process, to facilitate the repatriation of Rwandans and their sustainable reintegration. Some 13,000 Rwandans returned between January and June, with some 7,500 returning from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), through the Goma-Gisenyi transit centres. These returnees were more vulnerable and in poorer physical and health conditions than those who returned in 1999. Most were Hutus who fled in 1994 and lived in extremely isolated areas of the DRC, in deplorable conditions, often under the intimidation of Interahamwe/ex-FAR militias. Because of their extended stay in the DRC, they are viewed with suspicion in Rwanda. UNHCR did not observe, however, any notable increase in the number of returnees detained upon arrival. The Office continued to provide the returnees with a basic assistance package (plastic sheeting, blankets, jerry cans and soap), which does not include shelter materials. Despite UNHCR's extensive shelter programme in the past few years, the lack of individual housing continues to be a serious problem. Some

370,000 are still living in refugee-like situations, under plastic sheeting, in seriously damaged houses or illegally occupying the homes of others. The planned distribution of an enhanced shelter package could not take place due to lack of funds. UNHCR continued to provide the returnees with transportation to their communes of origin. WFP continued to provide a three-months food ration.

UNHCR's large-scale reintegration activities were concluded in December 1999. In 2000, UNHCR is assisting the Government in its efforts towards reconciliation and peaceful co-existence of its people. To this end, UNHCR continued to provide support to the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC) and to the Rwandan Women's Initiative (RWI). The RWI aims to promote individual and collective empowerment of Rwandan women through projects that afford them greater economic independence and a sense of self-worth. The projects are implemented by five local implementing partners. One of these is an umbrella organisation for 38 women's associations that cover a range of activities, including vocational training, literacy classes, education of young girls, income-generation, micro-credit schemes and promotion of women's rights.

Achievements this year included the production and distribution of 12,500 brochures on the new inheritance law in English, French and Kinyarwanda. The new law gives women the right to inherit property from their deceased male relatives. Furthermore, training and capacity-building activities for the implementation of RWI projects took place for the newly-elected national women's committee. The committee will also hold seats in the national Parliament. A women's association based in the USA joined a local women's association to establish a "twin school" programme. A high school in the USA will send educational materials, including books, school supplies and used clothing, to a Rwandan girls' school, as well as provide scholarships for Rwandan girls to attend school. UNHCR also supported women's associations in the celebration of In-

ternational Women's Day on 8 March. The day was used to draw attention to particular problems affecting women, including access to education, the fight against poverty and the prevention of gender-based violence. Radio programmes on these issues continued to be broadcast through women's associations. UNHCR also supported the continuation of RWI projects from 1999, including young girls' education, literacy classes, income-generation and livestock production. This year, following an intensive training in micro-finance management, a micro-finance project was launched. 603 women from several prefectures were trained.

Furthermore, UNHCR provided support to and participated in a regional conference on Women as Partners for Peace that took place in June in Kigali. The conference brought together women from all of the countries involved directly or indirectly in the conflicts in the Great Lakes region, as well as scholars and peace practitioners who shared their experiences and activities.

As a result of financial constraints and following the prioritisation exercise, UNHCR could not build substantively on reconciliation and capacity-building activities initiated last year under the NURC and the RWI, which seriously undermines the sustainability of reintegration prospects. Reduced funding for the NURC increases the possibility of conflict on property-related issues and threatens the gains that have been made so far in resolving the problem. Reduced funding for the RWI results in slow implementation and curtailment of some projects. UNHCR received a formal complaint from the Government of Rwanda expressing deep disappointment over reduced funding for the RWI in 2000. Furthermore, environmental activities could not be carried out as initially planned. UNHCR reached an agreement with a local implementing partner to undertake planting of seedlings in and around the refugee camps and to construct more energy-saving stoves, but implementation could not start during the first part of the year due to lack of funds and staff. UNHCR is

looking into selecting a UNV environmental specialist. In addition, development agencies did not yet begin to implement development programmes in Rwanda, leaving a dangerous gap in the transition from relief to development.

Congolese Refugees

In May, UNHCR undertook a full registration exercise at the two refugee camps in Byumba and Kibuye, identifying a total refugee population of 27,637 (15,249 in Byumba and 12,388 in Kibuye). The results indicated a largely vulnerable population and will enable UNHCR to undertake more effective, targeted distribution of assistance. UNHCR ensured replacement of worn out non-food items, particularly plastic sheeting and blankets. UNHCR also provided basic health care in the camps, as well as medical referrals to local hospitals, and carried out HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns. Furthermore, the Office ensured education, including kindergarten, primary school for children in the camps and secondary school outside the camps, DAFI scholarships for university studies and adult literacy classes. In addition, UNHCR maintained latrines and water points in the camps. There is no prospect for a durable solution for these refugees other than voluntary repatriation. Issues of nationality, restitution of property, personal security and civil rights must be considered within the peace process and agreed to by the parties to the conflict before UNHCR can assist with organised returns. To prepare UNHCR and partner staff for discussion on these issues, a regional seminar on statelessness was organised in May in Kigali.

Burundi Refugees

Following the security incident in October 1999 in Burundi, plans for voluntary repatriation to the country were suspended. Discussions with the Government of Rwanda on local integration of individuals eligible for naturalisation under domestic nationality laws are stalled by the issue of compensation for lost or confiscated property raised by the refugees. Thirty-one newly-arrived refugees - who had previously sought asylum in the DRC and were forced to flee due to the conflict - were settled

in the Kigeme camp. UNHCR ensured replacement of worn out non-food items, particularly plastic sheeting and blankets. UNHCR also provided basic health care in the camp, as well as medical referrals to local hospitals, and carried out HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns. Furthermore, the Office ensured education, including kindergarten, primary school for children in the camp and secondary school outside the camp, DAFI scholarships for university studies and adult literacy classes. In addition, UNHCR maintained latrines and water points in the camp. These refugees require special protection, owing to suspicion by the Rwandans, which are apparently unfounded, that some of them were involved in the genocide. A UNHCR presence helps to prevent potential *refoulement*. Another 79 refugees are under review for resettlement.

Urban Refugees

Pending a formal registration exercise, the number of urban refugees in Kigali is estimated at 3,000. The majority is comprised of Congolese from the DRC, who are of different ethnic groups from the refugees in the camps and are mostly vulnerable persons. It has also proven extremely difficult to integrate these vulnerable refugees into the camps due to ethnic differences. The Office provides them with basic assistance in Kigali. UNHCR also conducts interviews and registration, provides identity documents and monitors protection concerns. As with other Congolese refugees from the DRC, repatriation is not possible until a positive outcome to the peace process is achieved. Eleven refugees have been successfully accepted for resettlement, while an additional 85 are under review.

REVISED OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITY ACTIVITIES FOR JULY - DECEMBER

Rwandan Returnees

- Rwandan refugees are expected to continue to return to Rwanda from the DRC and other countries in the region throughout the year. Therefore, the original objectives and activities remain unchanged. However, increased support to those institutions that are working towards reconciliation and

peaceful co-existence is required.

Congolese Refugees

- On the basis of the recent results of the registration exercise, emphasis will be placed on training to build the capacity of local government officials and implementing partners to better target assistance.
- Protection efforts will be more focused on ensuring the physical security and integrity of women and girls in the camps.

Burundi Refugees

- Pending the signature of a peace agreement for Burundi and subsequent voluntary repatriation, a renewed effort will be made to

integrate locally the Burundi refugees and close the Kigeme camp.

Urban Refugees

- The Office will continue to provide assistance to vulnerable refugees until such time as the Government is prepared to take over.
- Pending the ratification of the national refugee law, UNHCR will assist the Government in developing a comprehensive body of procedures for determining refugee status and a rights-based programme for their protection.

FINANCIAL DATA (USD)

	Initial Budget	Revised Budget	Total Funds Available*	Total Funds Obligated
AB and TF	14,087,045	13,739,934	5,777,807	5,684,700

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

