

Republic of the Congo

Operational highlights

- UNHCR assisted some 25,080 refugees and returnees in the Republic of the Congo (RoC).
- The Office organized the voluntary repatriation of more than 19,400 refugees to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).
- All refugees were registered by UNHCR, and given identity cards by the Government.
- Some 210 victims of sexual and gender-based violence received medical and psychosocial assistance.

Working environment

The RoC was relatively peaceful and stable in 2007. However, government control was weak in the Pool region, some areas of which remained insecure due to the presence of armed groups. A government demobilization, disarmament and reintegration programme is underway and plans to reach 15,000 ex-combatants in the region.

In the June 2007 general elections, the ruling party, *Parti Congolais du Travail*, won 90 per cent of the seats in the National Assembly. Rev. Frederic Bitsangou (alias Pastor Ntoumi), a former rebel leader in the Pool region, was appointed General Delegate in charge of the promotion of peace.

The economic situation of the RoC did not improve in 2007, and some 70 per cent of its citizens remained impoverished.



Persons of concern

Type of population	Origin	Total	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
Refugees	DRC	27,600	23,800	53	53
	Rwanda	7,900	50	42	40
	Angola	2,700	1,000	48	46
	Various	260	80	45	38
Asylum-seekers	DRC	3,700	-	-	-
	Côte d'Ivoire	410	-	-	-
	Chad	170	-	-	-
	Central African Republic	140	-	-	-
	Various	380	-	-	-
Returnees (refugees)	Various	150	150	-	-
Total		43,410	25,080		

Achievements and impact

Main objectives

In 2007, UNHCR's main objectives were to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of refugees to their countries of origin, mainly the DRC; protect and assist refugees in the RoC; facilitate the local integration of urban refugees; and foster the resettlement of individuals who could not return home or integrate locally. The Office promoted self-reliance and durable solutions for refugees. Furthermore, it strengthened the national capacities to deal with asylum-seekers and refugees and to improve the response to sexual and gender-based violence against refugees.

Protection and solutions

UNHCR is gradually handing over its responsibilities for refugee issues to the *Comité National d'Assistance aux Réfugiés* (CNAR). In 2007, the Office registered all refugees and, together with the CNAR, distributed identity cards to them. The refugee status determination (RSD) process conducted by the Government handled some 300 cases in 2007.

Despite seasonal constraints on river navigation, UNHCR organized the repatriation of 19,400 Congolese refugees – against the planned figure of 16,000. Campaigns targeted at both refugees and local authorities encouraged the response.

Activities and assistance

Community services: More than 500 families with specific needs received financial assistance. Sanitary supplies were distributed to some 3,600 women in Impfondo and Betou. Community agents deployed by implementing partners discussed with the refugees the procedures for transferring site management responsibilities to refugee community leaders. Subsequently, these leaders were involved in site management and in the definition of assistance activities. The participation of women in these committees reached 40 per cent.

To respond to sexual and gender-based violence, UNHCR maintained 51 drop-in centres and conducted awareness sessions for about 3,000 individuals in areas covered by Loukolela and Betou field offices. Sensitization campaigns were also organized in 34 sites near Impfondo. Some 210 victims of sexual and gender-based violence were counselled and received medical and legal assistance.

Crop production: Most of the refugees in the RoC live off agriculture and fishing. Some 140 groups of farmers received training and material, and cultivated an average of 0.9 hectares of land per family. Some 90 groups were provided with farming and fishing equipment.

Domestic needs and household support: UNHCR provided rent guarantees to 220 refugee families in Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire and gave subsistence allowances for up to six months to 36 families with specific needs.

Education: Some 56 per cent of school-aged refugee children in rural areas attended school. They were given textbooks and other school supplies. In Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire, UNHCR provided secondary school scholarships to 128 children, of whom 62 were girls.

Health and nutrition: Refugees had access to some 20 health posts and mobile clinics. More than 21,000 consultations took place. UNHCR trained educators on HIV and AIDS prevention and response and established awareness committees in urban and rural areas. All people with HIV and AIDS were treated free of charge.

Income generation: Some 100 women's groups received financial assistance for self-reliance projects such as soap-making, cassava processing and sewing.

Legal assistance: All refugees were registered in the *proGres* database. The first draft of the RoC's Refugee Law is currently under review by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A joint commission, comprising representatives of the Ministry and UNHCR, has been established to vet the law before its final submission to Parliament.

Operational support: Implementing partners were given financial support. UNHCR trained their staff and flew their goods and personnel to less accessible field locations.

Shelter and infrastructures: Though the field offices in Betou, Impfondo and Liranga were closed, UNHCR maintained transit centres in each of these areas. Each centre could handle up to 250 refugees at a time.

Transport and logistics: UNHCR kept a fleet of 22 boats for the repatriation to the DRC, based in Impfondo, Betou and Loukolela. Field Offices were supplied with fuel and other goods from two rented warehouses.

Water and sanitation: All refugees had access to latrines and to drinking water. Ten wells were rehabilitated in Betou.



UNHCR/J. Hesseman

With the help of UNHCR staff and NGO partners, Congolese refugees (DRC) board the repatriation boat in Impfondo, Republic of the Congo, to navigate home on the equatorial Oubangui river.

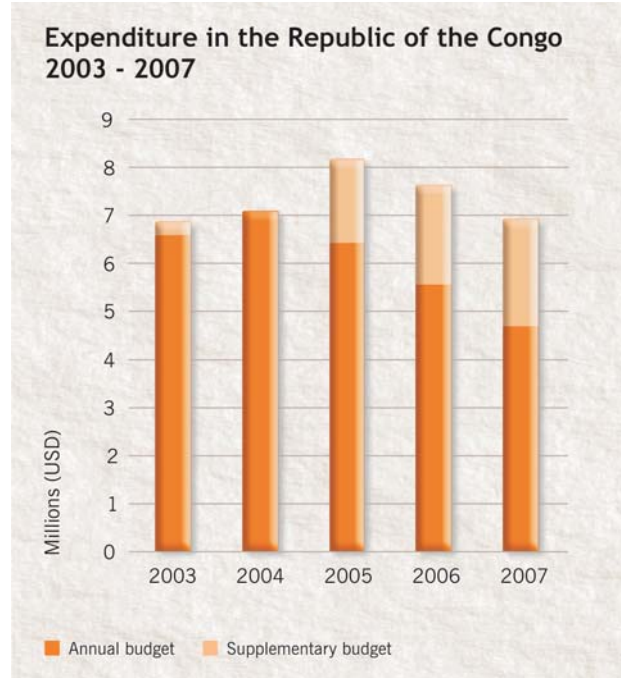
Constraints

Transportation in the north remained a challenge. Most transport was by boat and low water levels during the dry season significantly slowed the repatriation operation. In addition, the insecurity prevailing between Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire forced UNHCR to use expensive air transport.

Financial information

UNHCR's programmes in the RoC were fully funded. However, the budget was not enough to cover all needs, especially the procurement of medicines, assistance to those with specific needs, and support for urban refugee students.

UNHCR's expenditure under the annual programme in the RoC has decreased over the past five years. In 2005, a supplementary programme for the return and reintegration of DRC refugees accounted for higher overall expenditure in the RoC. In 2007, the bulk of funding was used for the repatriation to the DRC.



Organization and implementation

Management

UNHCR closed the Betou and Loukolela field offices in December 2007. The remaining field office in Impfondo will cover the entire northern area, supported by the Representation Office in Brazzaville. In 2007, UNHCR managed its activities with 11 international and 43 national staff, as well as seven UNVs (three national and four international).

Working with others

UNHCR worked with three national implementing partners. It also cooperated with the CNAR on various issues, particularly the distribution of identity cards.

Overall assessment

Increased stability in Equateur Province in the north-west of the DRC encouraged refugees to opt for

voluntary repatriation. As a result, more than 19,400 returned to the DRC with UNHCR's assistance, substantially more than in 2006. The Office continued to advocate for local integration in its search for durable solutions. UNHCR's assistance to refugees through self-reliance projects, health care and access to land remained critical.

UNHCR monitored the rights of refugees and intervened as appropriate. However, sexual and gender-based violence remained a serious problem, especially in the north-east, despite the establishment of standard operating procedures to deal with the issue in 2006. In this context, UNHCR is working to strengthen the physical protection of women and girls.

Partners
Implementing partners
Government agencies: <i>Comité National d'Assistance aux Réfugiés</i>
NGOs: <i>Action Humanitaire Africaine, Actions et IntervenAgence pour l'assistance aux Rapatriés et Réfugiés au Congo, Commission d'Entraide pour les Migrants et les Réfugiés, Médecins d'Afrique</i>
Others: <i>Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit, IOM</i>

Budget, income and expenditure (USD)					
	Final budget	Income from contributions	Other funds available	Total funds available	Total expenditure
Annual budget	4,677,772	1,162,214	3,966,073	5,128,287	4,671,201
DRC SB	2,648,370	197,522	2,084,694	2,282,216	2,282,216
Total	7,326,142	1,359,736	6,050,768	7,410,504	6,953,417

Note: Supplementary programmes do not include seven per cent support costs that are recovered from contributions to meet indirect costs for UNHCR. Income from contributions includes contributions earmarked at the country level. Other funds available include transfers from unearmarked and broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments.

Financial Report (USD)

Expenditure breakdown	Current year's projects			Previous years' projects
	Annual budget	Supplementary budget	Total	Annual and supplementary budgets
Protection, monitoring and coordination	1,362,153	619,507	1,981,660	0
Community services	156,502	15,441	171,943	257,474
Crop production	18,770	0	18,770	22,030
Domestic needs and household support	52,672	116,715	169,387	61,110
Education	296,108	0	296,108	289,801
Fisheries	367	0	367	0
Health and nutrition	302,736	21,752	324,488	380,338
Income generation	18,372	0	18,372	47,738
Legal assistance	101,652	5,255	106,907	93,156
Livestock	0	0	0	1,296
Operational support (to agencies)	237,317	149,264	386,581	316,807
Sanitation	4,853	7,223	12,075	12,667
Shelter and infrastructure	0	28,966	28,966	26,669
Transport and logistics	243,179	631,804	874,983	363,593
Water	2,313	14,299	16,613	14,650
Instalments with implementing partners	712,079	143,129	855,209	(1,887,328)
Sub-total operational activities	3,509,074	1,753,355	5,262,429	0
Programme support	1,162,128	528,861	1,690,989	0
Total expenditure	4,671,201	2,282,216	6,953,417	0
Cancellation on previous years' expenditure				(68,380)
Instalments with implementing partners				
Payments made	1,780,645	643,358	2,424,002	
Reporting received	(1,068,565)	(500,228)	(1,568,794)	
Balance	712,079	143,129	855,209	
Previous years' report				
Instalments with implementing partners				
Outstanding 1st January				1,674,218
Reporting received				(1,887,328)
Refunded to UNHCR				(152,064)
Adjustments				365,174
Balance				0