

Annual Results Report

2023

Congo, Republic of

Acknowledgements

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- 4.1 - Lessons Learned and Future Outlook

Section 1: Context and Overview

1.1 Changes to the Operational Context

The context in the Republic of the Congo (Congo) was characterized by a stable political and security context, a 3.2 % economic growth, and a 4.3 % inflation rate in 2023. The International Monetary Funds (IMF)'s financing in 2023 (\$43 million) enabled the authorities to preserve the country's socioeconomic stability and strengthen the economic recovery.

The Congo has a population of 6 million inhabitants, according to the 2023 general population census, out of which 58.2% live in the two major cities of Brazzaville and Pointe Noire. Despite being a middle-income country, 46.6% of the population lives below the poverty line, in particular in the rural and hard-to-reach areas in the north of the country, where most of the refugees are hosted. Since its 2017 Letter of Development Policy, the Government has committed to integrating refugees into national socioeconomic services.

As of 31 December 2023, the Congo hosted 65,000 refugees and asylum-seekers from the Central African Republic (34,000), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) (28,000), Rwanda (3,300), and from 21 other nationalities (519). Refugees and asylum-seekers are unequally located throughout the country, with a high concentration in the departments of Likouala, Brazzaville, Pool, and Plateaux.

Refugees and asylum-seekers enjoy a favorable protection environment in the Congo. Law 41-2021 of 29 September 2021 establishing the Right of Asylum and Refugee Status creates a comprehensive legal basis and an appropriate framework for the Government to provide international protection to this population. In October 2023, the Congo acceded to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. During 2023 Global Refugee Forum, the Congo reiterated previous pledges on statelessness and made new pledges related to the development of a national asylum strategy and increased socioeconomic inclusion of refugees.

The Congo is increasingly vulnerable to climate change, which results in recurring flooding episodes. Starting in October 2023, torrential rains have affected most of the refugee-hosting areas of the country, increasing protection needs and the vulnerability of refugees and their host communities. As such, a state of emergency was declared in December 2023.

1.2. Progress Against the Desired Impact

1. Impact Area: Attaining Favorable Protection Environments

By 2024, all refugees, persons at risk of statelessness, internally displaced people enjoy their fundamental rights and live above the extreme poverty line while enjoying equitable access to basic social services.

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Actual (2023)
1.1 Proportion of people seeking international protection who are able to access asylum procedures	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	15.94%	96.95%
1.2 Proportion of people who are able to move freely within the country of habitual residence	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	99.99%

Access to the authorities for registration, refugee status determination (RSD), and documentation continued to be challenging in 2023. Operational and technical support to the National Committee for Refugee Assistance (CNAR) contributed to improve the quality of the RSD process (interviews and assessments), as well as the authorities' capacity to manage and handle updates of decision notifications and reception of asylum-seekers and refugees. A work plan was put in place to clear the backlog of over 400 asylum claim decisions, making it possible to reduce (and prevent) the backlog of asylum applications.

UNHCR supported the CNAR in activities to update the legal status of refugees and asylum-seekers in UNHCR databases, training two legal advisers on updating the legal status in the system and training three legal assistants on RSD, filing and ongoing archiving of all Eligibility and Appeals Board decisions and other documents related to RSD, and on the Asylum Capacity Development Learning Module 2023.

In 2023, several elements illustrated the expansion of the protection space. As a result of continued advocacy for the issuance of documentation for asylum-seekers from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the Government granted refugee status on a prima facie basis to those who arrived in Plateaux in 2018 and Pool in 2022 (respectively 8,887 and 5,233 individuals). This led to the reduction of the backlog of asylum-seekers by 77%. At least 20% of these newly-recognized refugees were provided with refugee identity cards, and during the joint verification exercise, 6,000 new cards were issued.

Additionally, the Government published a decree setting the fees for issuing, transferring, and renewing biometric travel documents for refugees as the same as those for Congolese citizens. However, while freedom of movement is officially recognized and reiterated in documents delivered by the CNAR, refugees continue to report challenges as their identity documents are not always recognized as valid by law enforcement. One family of three asylum-seekers from the DRC in Pool were refouled in 2023.

Regarding documentation, the Republic of Congo issued the decree no. 12548 /MAEFCE/MIDDLE/MASSAH/MEF/MBCPP setting fees and conditions for issuing, transferring and renewing biometric travel documents for refugees, in the same conditions as nationals. This decree contributes to reinforce refugee's access to fundamental rights.

Three-fifths of all refugees and asylum-seekers in the Congo live in remote rural and hard-to-reach areas, particularly in the Likouala and Plateaux departments in the northeast of the country. Refugees and host communities face similar struggles with access to basic services. In particular, despite universal access to basic health services, lack of staff, medicines, equipment, resources, and medical waste disposal facilities hamper quality delivery, especially in refugee-hosting areas, adding pressure to the fragile system. Access to clean water and decent sanitation is difficult, and the lack of quality food leads to high levels of malnutrition. Although all populations have access to education, those in rural areas are adversely affected by the lack of staff and resources.

In terms of access to employment, though refugees have the same rights as nationals to access the labour market, Decree n°2011-491 of 29 July 2011 provides specific restrictions to access some professions (taxi driving, retail sales in shops, bread factories, urban or road transport, bread distribution, pharmacies, clinics and medical practices, private educational). Additionally, formal employment opportunities remain rare and

knowledge of refugee rights with regards to access to employment is limited while access to financial services is restricted to some banks.

Refugees live with host communities in rural settlements (80%) or urban areas (20%), generally in peaceful coexistence. Gender-based violence remains one of the main threats to the safety of women and children. In line with the Government's integration strategy, UNHCR continued its gradual shift from provision of basic social services to inclusion into national systems in 2023. Continued advocacy was conducted to ensure effective access to education for all children, health for all, and access to economic opportunities through fiscal appropriation and increased interventions in refugee-hosting areas.

As part of its efforts to strengthen the integration of refugees, in collaboration with the Ministry of Social and Humanitarian Affairs, UNHCR combined the physical verification of refugees and asylum-seekers with the collection of socioeconomic data, which will be shared with the Ministry. The Single Social Register (Registre Social Unique, RSU) is an information system that manages data and statistics on poor households for the benefit of social protection programmes. Its functions include recording, centralizing, and directing the social demands of poor and vulnerable people; producing a unique identification code for each household surveyed for use by social protection programmes; extracting lists meeting a set of predefined criteria, at the request of care structures; and providing indicators on the effectiveness of social protection programmes on the target population. One of the aims of the Single Social Register (RSU) is to improve the targeting of social protection programme interventions. In the case of the Republic of Congo, the introduction of the RSU will provide the country with a database for all social projects, making public action more effective.

3. Impact Area: Empowering Communities and Achieving Gender Equality

By 2024, 50% of refugee's including women, youth and vulnerable groups, are able to enjoy productive decent lives and benefit from National Social Safety nets when needed.

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Actual (2023)
3.1 Proportion of people who have the right to decent work	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	61.89%	40.81%
3.2a Proportion of children and young people enrolled in primary education	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	90.00%	87.02%
3.2b Proportion of children and young people enrolled in secondary education	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	74.99%	12.94%
3.3 Proportion of people feeling safe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	77.36%	50.63%

The socioeconomic situation of refugees and asylum-seekers in the Republic of the Congo improved through the various partnerships undertaken both by UNHCR and its partners, which enabled refugees to be included in national programmes. Collaboration between the Government, UNHCR, and the World Bank under the Lisungi project allowed refugees to be included in the national social safety nets project, resulting in significant improvements in the living conditions of refugee families in 2023. The conditionality of social allowances also contributed to enhancing school attendance and child health. Due to budget constraints, UNHCR discontinued allowances to 59 voluntary teachers in public schools attended by refugees between 2021 and 2023, while those granted by the Lisungi project to 200 teachers in the Likouala department for 2 years also ended 2023.

The low rate of 12.03% can be explained by the small number of secondary schools in the area, the absence of boarding schools in the refugee reception areas, difficulties in collecting data, especially from refugees in the field. The absence of a systematic data collection systems and of an operational education management information system hinders the capacity to monitor refugee school enrollment and attendance.

The lack of qualified, trained regular education staff affects access to quality education. Pending their integration as civil servants, teachers rely on voluntary contributions. UNHCR collaborated with UNICEF

and the World Bank and provided operational support to support access to education. Thanks to the textbooks and activity books from the PRASSED project, funded by the World Bank, the learning environment of 70 refugees and asylum-seekers from Ngabé in department of Pool at first levels of primary schools (CP1 and CP2) was improved. Similarly, 308 UNICEF school kits were handed over to the local committee, benefitting children in Ngabé. The diversification of partnerships is illustrated by an increased number of NGOs including refugees in their regular activities. Public institutions (French Cultural Center) and private companies also contribute to promote craft entrepreneurship.

In 2023 some 4,000 refugees households have benefited from solar lamps for adequate lighting in their Betou and Gamboma areas of residence. To ensure their maintenance, training of young people has been prioritized in 2023.

De jure, refugees and asylum-seekers enjoy socio-economic rights across the country. However, these services are quite weak and unequally distributed across the country with people having to resort to private services and may not afford fees requested in public facilities. UNHCR was supporting 3 health centers near refugee sites to ensure effective access of refugees.

4. Impact Area: Securing Solutions

By 2024, at least 70% of refugees have enjoyed their desired durable and alternative solutions.

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Actual (2023)
4.1 Number of refugees who voluntarily return in safety and dignity to their country of origin	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	9,220	0
4.2a Number of people who departed on resettlement	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	7	28
4.2b Number of people who departed through complementary pathways	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0	9
4.3a Number of stateless people for whom nationality is granted or confirmed	Stateless Persons	0	0
4.3b Number of refugees for whom residency status is granted or confirmed	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	896	0

At the end of 2023, the number of voluntary return intentions collected during the joint verification exercise was 2,526. No convoy was organized during the year due to lack of candidates. In total, 11 resettlement departures were recorded in 2023. No applications for resettlement were submitted this year. The most favorable durable solution in the Congo, naturalization, is a complex and lengthy process. UNHCR advocated with national experts in the naturalization procedure for the integration of refugees through the right to nationality. These court lawyers and jurists committed to strengthen collaboration to this end.

Other Core Impact Indicators

Country	Indicator	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Actual (2023)
Congo-Brazzaville	2.2 Proportion of people residing in physically safe and secure settlements with access to basic facilities	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	91.60%	60.44%
Congo-Brazzaville	2.3 Proportion of people with access to health services	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	97.00%	59.91%

1.3 Challenges to Achieving Impacts

The Congo's middle-income status hinders development financing from bilateral and multilateral development partners, thus largely limiting UNHCR's prospects for diversifying partnerships. The operation will, however, continue and intensify its efforts to increase collaboration with the Government, development actors, the private sector, and civil society actors, as well as its more traditional partners, using its comparative advantages so that refugees can achieve decent levels of livelihood.

Access to basic social services is a challenge due to the limited capacity of national systems. The World Bank's financing through Lisungi is an opportunity to improve the living conditions of refugees through income-generating activities and conditional cash transfers (for health and education). In 2023, UNHCR supported CNAR's activities through the provision of the services of a consultant during the first half of the year. Thanks to its intervention, the continuous registration process and documentation were improved, and the capacity of the members of the eligibility and appeals committees were strengthened. Although CNAR is a government department, its activities are supported almost entirely by UNHCR.

Ongoing advocacy with authorities, development actors, United Nations agencies, and financial partners such as the World Bank and the African Development Bank, was stepped up to ensure that cooperatives in rural areas are included in social safety net and empowerment programmes. The main challenges related to this goal are the lack of financial resources, insecurity in the intervention zones, and climatic hazards, particularly flooding in Ngabé, Pool region, which prevented shelters from being built in 2023.

The pressure exerted on natural resources by refugees in certain areas has an impact on peaceful coexistence between host and forcibly displaced populations. The exceptional floods of late 2023 in the main refugee-hosting areas affected livelihood activities, which had a negative impact on their self-reliance efforts.

1.4 Collaboration and Partnerships

In line with UNHCR's goal of mainstreaming engagement with development actors, collaboration and advocacy were maintained in 2023. Collaboration with the World Bank continued through briefings, data-sharing, and support to field visits in view of mainstreaming refugees into projects beyond the International Development Association (IDA) Window for Host and Refugees. Discussions to include refugee-hosting areas in the upcoming Urban Resilience and Restructuring of Vulnerable Neighbourhoods project, as well as in the Education project, were initiated, while dedicated advocacy led to the inclusion of refugees into the World Bank-funded 2021-2024 "Kobikisa" national project to strengthen the national health system and into the World Bank-funded national Commercial Agriculture Development Project.

Refugees are also included in the 2023-2025 Global Fund. Through the technical support to the World Bank-funded Lisungi national social safety net project, UNHCR strengthened collaboration with the National Institute of Statistics to carry out an in-depth analysis of the project's impact on the living conditions of forcibly displaced people. An ongoing impact evaluation supported by the Joint UNHCR-World Bank Data Centre, will identify the impacts of the social protection programme in refugee-hosting areas and will inform future interventions.

Similarly, discussions with the African Development Bank and International Monetary Fund were initiated, capitalizing on the collaboration with the World Bank. UNHCR worked with the Ministry of Social and Humanitarian Affairs to collect data on refugees and asylum-seekers for the Unique Social Register (RSU), which has resulted in the availability of socioeconomic information that will enable the future integration of refugees and asylum-seekers into national Social Safety Nets Programmes. UNHCR works closely with the National Committee for Refugee Assistance and two NGO partners, Terre Sans Frontières and Assistance Agency for Repatriates and Refugees in the Congo, in the first quarter of 2023 and ensured a smooth transition of services with in-coming local NGO partners Doctors of Africa for health, Mutual Aid Commission for Migrants and Refugees for logistics, and Association of Child Protection Professionals for protection.

UNHCR is an active member of the United Nations Country Team and UN working groups and its technical and financial partners. In collaboration with UN agencies including United Nations Development

Programme, United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Children's Fund, World Food Programme, World Health Organization, UNHCR advocates for the principle of Leave No One Behind and to ensure the inclusion of refugees in their programmes. In 2023, activities focused on mobilizing development-oriented resources for refugee-hosting areas through non-transactional mechanisms. Germany continued to support the inclusion of refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and their host communities as part of the DRC Regional Refugee Response Plan and through the "Kwa na kwa" market gardening group in Mougoungui. France provided funding for the design of communication tools as part of the activities linked to the Global Refugee Forum. In view of diversifying partnerships, UNHCR also worked with public institutions like the French Institute and the private sector to offer opportunities for refugees and promote craft entrepreneurship (AfricaShop, Burotop Iris Foundation). Progress was also achieved in improving reception conditions for refugees by rehabilitating the Bétou multifunctional centre with support from Likouala Timber and supporting the construction of the school canteen at Mougoungui primary school with a community-based approach with the support from Congolese Industrial Wood of OLAM Group.

In line with UNHCR's 2022-2024 resource mobilization strategy and UNHCR's strategic directions – protect, respond, empower, include, and solve –, external engagement was strengthened with a wide range of stakeholders and partners, including donors, the Government, development actors, the private sector, civil society, the media, and philanthropic and faith-based entities. Support through earmarked contributions was provided by Germany (\$256,813), the UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (\$65,275), the EU (\$55,933), and the UK (\$27,691). The operation's budget was only 19% funded in 2023, requiring efforts to increase the profile of the context and cultivate donors' interest through innovative projects on climate and resilience, as well as through regular funding channels and joint fundraising mechanisms (such as the 2024-2025 DRC Regional Refugee Response Plan).

UNHCR's external engagement activities in the Congo in 2023 focused on mobilizing development-oriented resources for refugee-hosting areas. Continued close collaboration with the World Bank through coordination, organization of field visits and data sharing to ensure the inclusion of refugees in health, education, climate, livelihoods and resilience projects.

Close work with the Government to prepare for the 2023 Global Refugee Forum (GRF) resulted in renewed commitments related to access to asylum, statelessness and socio-economic inclusion of refugees. Similarly, interagency efforts led to the development of UNCT pledge on ensuring the inclusion of refugee hosting areas in planning and programmes and contribute to the advocacy for increased and equitable access to basic services and economic opportunities of forcibly displaced people in the Republic of the Congo.

The operation actively participated in the launch of the Central African Republic Situation support platform for solutions to forced displacement and contributed to the organization of the related high-level side event that took place during the GRF.

In view of fostering a Whole of Society approach to provide solutions for refugees, UNHCR actively engaged with public institutions, the civil society, and the private sector in 2023. Examples of such engagements are: collaboration with local private sector such as BUROTOP IRIS Foundation on World Refugee Day celebrations; awareness-raising activities for primary school students in collaboration with the St Exupéry French school in Brazzaville; inclusion of refugees in food processing and agriculture training courses with the NGO ESSOR; and collaboration with the European Institute for Cooperation and Development (IECD) on vocational training and job placement for refugees.

To support the operation's external engagement regular situation reports and operational updates are published, and contribution made to the UN Congo Bulletin. Regular social media updates showcase donor support and reinforce communications with partners and communities. Audiovisual materials (web story on the integration of asylum-seekers hosted in Ngabé); event organization and participation to raise awareness about refugees and their plights (WRD in Brazzaville; participation of refugees and UNHCR experts to the Summit of the Three Basins) contribute to enhance visibility of the refugee needs.

Challenges remains with a widened gaps between needs and funding, increasing vulnerabilities for refugees and their integration perspective in the long term, whose situation receives less attention from donors (2023 budget reduced by 53 per cent compared with 2022). The main challenge faced in resource mobilization relates to the middle-income country profile of the Country, resulting in less interest from humanitarian and development donors. While the engagement with the World Bank has been key in positioning the operation's among development partners, efforts still need to be made to increase non transactional partnerships. Enhancing data collection and evidence-based programming will contribute to increase informed advocacy and partners' interest to support refugee integration and inclusion of refugee hosting areas in planning and programming of different stakeholders. Limited capacities in communication

and public information also hampers the operation’s ability to showcase its achievements and needs.

Section 2: Results

2.1. Outcomes and Achievements

1. Outcome Area: Access to Territory, Reg. and Documentation

By the end of 2024, the implementation of the national legal framework will offer permanent access to territory, timely RSD procedures and will allow fair registration, profiling and documentation in line with international and regional conventions.

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
1.1 Proportion of refugees and asylum seekers registered on an individual basis	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	50.00%	80.00%	97.04%
1.2 Proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	51.57%	90.00%	72.88%
1.3 Proportion of people with legally recognized identity documents or credentials	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	59.79%	85.00%	93.00%

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In view of ensuring quality control and integrity of refugee and asylum seeker statistics in the Republic of Congo, the National Committee for Assistance to Refugees (CNAR), in partnership with the UNHCR, conducted a physical verification and biometric registration of all refugees and asylum seekers residing in the Republic of Congo. This activity held between July and December 2023, allowed for the update of individual information of all refugees and asylum seekers in proGres database. It also enabled the issuance of asylum seeker/refugee documentation (renewal or new). As of December 2023, 51,700 out of 61,200 planned refugees have been through the verification process (coverage of 84%). Among them, 10,900 were newly registered in proGres V4. This exercise was combined with a socio-economic data collection that will enable inclusion in the Unique Social Register (RSU), as well as in other development projects and programmes. As of December 2023, socio-economic data of 16,054 refugee households were collected. The data will inform programmatic decisions and joint targeting approaches to further increase the inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers in national social protection programs.

Registration of new births is conditioned to the presentation of a birth certificate issued by the civil registry authorities, a requirement to which refugees are adapting, especially in urban areas where civil registration services are accessible. In rural areas, alternative birth registration mechanisms are in place. Mobile court hearings are held through the Commission on Statelessness to facilitate the issuance of birth certificates. UNHCR has supported civil registry offices by providing them with registers and computer equipment to improve their working conditions. All documents issued to refugees and asylum seekers are officially recognized, resulting from joint outreach efforts carried out in collaboration with the government partner. This recognition ensures the freedom of movement of holders within the country of asylum. 6,000 new cards were issued thanks to the 2023 joint verification operation, mostly to urban refugees.

Regarding status determination, first instance decisions and appeal decisions will be prepared by the registry service within two weeks in accordance with paragraphs 8 (Notification of first instance decisions) and 11 (Notification of appeal decisions) of the DSR SOPs. The average time provided for in the texts from registration to the first instance's decision is 90 days. This deadline is not respected because of the irregularity of registration and the holding of committee sessions, the slowness in the processing of applications due to the change of staff in charge of the RSD, the insufficient human resources, the lack of training of the officers in charge of the RSD and the lack of follow-up of asylum applications by the persons concerned. These shortcomings have a negative impact on reducing the backlog of asylum applications and increase the frustration of asylum seekers. To address these shortcomings, UNHCR recruited staff dedicated exclusively to the evaluation of the entire asylum process and made recommendations that

constitute the government partner's roadmap for improving the working environment and achieving the expected results. UNHCR is continuing its advocacy for the issuance of documentation to the newly recognized refugees from the DRC and former CAR in Likouala, in line with international and regional conventions. All refugee claimants have access to the appeal mechanism. During this year, only one appeal session was held. Out of 160 cases examined by the Eligibility Committee, 20 asylum seekers lodged an appeal. 20 cases were examined by the Appeals Committee.

3. Outcome Area: Protection Policy and Law

By the end of 2024, the national legal framework offers permanent access to territory, timely RSD procedures and allows fair registration, profiling and documentation in line with international and regional conventions.

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
3.1 Extent national legal framework is in line with the 1951 Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Broadly aligned: ≥ 90 points	Broadly aligned: ≥ 90 points	Broadly aligned: ≥ 90 points
3.2 Extent national legal framework is in line with the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness	Stateless Persons	Broadly aligned: ≥ 90 points	Broadly aligned: ≥ 90 points	Broadly aligned: ≥ 90 points

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

UNHCR has been continuously advocating with national authorities that led to Congo's accession in October 2023 to the two conventions on statelessness, the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness that were ratified in 2020. This act constitutes a strong gesture by the country in the process for the protection of persons in the fight against statelessness. UNHCR supported awareness-raising by community radios in the 12 departments of the country on the importance of birth registration as a means of preventing statelessness enabled more than 180,000 people to be reached, for a target of 150,000 people, and to become aware of the importance of always obtaining birth registration in a health environment and going to the civil registry services for the birth certificate. It is also worth noting the awareness-raising activities in public places such as markets, places of worship and health centres, supported by the distribution of 1,000 leaflets, including 700 in French and 300 in Lingala.

A capacity-building session was organised for members of the National Committee for the Eradication of Statelessness in November 2023. Other actors such as the National Institute of Statistics (INS) and civil society (human rights NGOs, indigenous peoples' NGOs) also took part, demonstrating their involvement and commitment to tackle the issue head-on. Participants agreed on a road map for further actions to reduce the risk of statelessness in 2024. During the physical verification operation, 40 awareness-raising sessions were held on the prevention of statelessness reaching 3,000 people. Also, discussions have been held with the authorities in charge of civil registration/birth registration and health centres, to better understand the issue of children without birth certificates. To spread the message on the fight against statelessness, posters on statelessness have been installed at town halls and districts of Bétou, Impfondo, Dongou, Liranga, Pointe Noire, Gamboma, health centers in the departments of Brazzaville, Pool, Niari, Cuvette West and Centre, in collaboration with the authorities.

4. Outcome Area: Gender-based Violence

By 2024, ROC Government can provide equal and adequate protection services enabling resilience opportunities for GBV survivors and Children.

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
4.1 Proportion of people who know where to access available GBV services	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	77.36%	100.00%	63.38%
4.2 Proportion of people who do not accept violence against women	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	49.64%	93.00%	40.00%
4.3 Proportion of survivors who are satisfied with GBV case management services	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	65.02%	70.00%	52.90%

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

The Mouebarara Law No. 19-2022 of May 4, 2022, and the National GBV Strategy for 2021 and 2025 provide the legal and operational framework to address the risks, prevent and mitigate GBV. However, these two documents are still not widely disseminated. UNHCR together with other United Nations agencies such as UNFPA, UNICEF and implementing partners advocates to ensure authorities have the necessary resources to implement the strategy and the law. Additionally, no national operational referral mechanism is in place.

In 2023, a total of 138 survivors identified in Gamboma, Bétou and Brazzaville had access to GBV support services provided by UNHCR, other UN agencies (UNFPA, UNICEF, etc.) and their implementing partners. In the absence of a proper satisfaction survey, the few feedback received from stakeholders, notably through case monitoring by UNHCR and its partners with the involvement of GBV committees composed of refugees, showed acceptable results, estimated at 53% or 73 cases expressing good satisfaction. Psychological and medical follow-up, support for economic activities and the conviction of perpetrators remain the main concerns of survivors.

As part of the psychological care, UNHCR and others NGO such as the International Solidarity Association (ASI) provided psychological care to four refugee women and provided one woman with support for economic rehabilitation with hairdressing equipment. UNHCR's intervention approach is based on prevention through awareness-raising and capacity building of actors involved in the fight against gender-based violence, risk mitigation and multisectoral response.

As part of the annual campaign to fight against GBV, awareness-raising activities and the provision of kits to at-risk women were carried out in Impfondo and Bétou, jointly with UNFPA between 25 November and 10 December. The celebration of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence in collaboration with the departmental authorities was the culmination of UNHCR's advocacy for the popularization of the theMouebarara Law No. 19-2022 of May 4, 2022, through local, national and international media. National institutions and various organizations involved in the protection framework against GBV have been working on a platform to strengthen the referral system for cases.

As regards child protection, activities in favour of children were carried out with the collaboration of the Directorate of Legal Protection of Children (DPLE), childcare facilities, district courts and town halls. UNHCR advocated with public justice services to issue late registration requests for 20 children who do not have a birth certificate in order to protect them and conducted advocacy to include refugees and asylum-seekers in the Universal Health Insurance Fund project.

25 best Interests assessments and best interest determinations were undertaken, including advocacy to state structures to improve the conditions for registering births and obtaining birth certificates for refugees and asylum seekers in the same way as nationals.

Educational, sports and recreational activities were organized for 174 children to develop in the various refugee hosting areas. They also participated in the various commemorative events of the Day of the African Child, the presentation of the new office of the Children's Parliament of Congo, the inauguration of the Children's Parliament, the festival of children's rights UNHCR also promotes the voice of child and youth refugees from Congo at the Summit of the Three Basins.

7. Outcome Area: Community Engagement and Women's Empowerment

By 2024, more women can play an active role for peaceful coexistence in all rural communities hosting Persons of concern.

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
7.2 Proportion of people who have access to safe feedback and response mechanisms	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	77.36%	100.00%	90.69%
7.3 Proportion of women participating in leadership/management structures	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	40.00%	60.00%	10.00%

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

UNHCR has strengthened its outreach system with the support of refugee committees, the CNAR and local authorities.

It is worth highlighting that in some areas, refugees have maintained informal organizations into and/or are members of local community-based mechanisms indicating their level of integration into their local environment. Some of these mechanisms have operated under the supervision of local village chiefs and local dispute resolution structures. Refugees were represented in some agricultural associations, ensuring their participation and contribution to local development.

In the three locations where UNHCR operates, feedback and response mechanisms exist to collect complaints and feedback through various collection channels (one to one discussions; help desk, suggestion boxes, protection helpline) and referrals are made to the appropriate partners.

8. Outcome Area: Well-Being and Basic Needs

By 2024, All refugees & asylum seekers identified in acute needs receive adequate basic assistance enabling their well-being in a sustainable manner

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
8.1 Proportion of people that receive cash transfers and/or non-food items	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	85.99%	87.00%	39.16%
8.2 Proportion of people with primary reliance on clean (cooking) fuels and technology	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	41.67%	50.00%	15.00%

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In 2023, provision of CRIs and clean fuels systems were not prioritized due to budget constraints. 25,490 (39.15%) received non-food items in the Plateaux, Likouala and Pool departments. Among those, 2,144 women and girls from the host population and refugees received hygiene kits through health posts for breastfeeding and pregnant women, students in schools, middle schools and high schools, i.e. (1,038 students and 1,106 students breastfeeding and pregnant women).

The global implementation rate is of 15% regarding access to the energy sector. Added to this is the low income of households who are unable to purchase improved stoves themselves. This keeps them using firewood, especially in rural areas, despite the HCR's efforts to raise awareness of the problem of deforestation.

In the Likouala department, assistance in core relief items (CRIs) was provided to refugees and asylum.

Collaboration with the local private sector enabled the refugees and host population in the Likouala

department support refugee well-being through provision of raw materials to build or renovate local and community infrastructures.

The management and monitoring of water and sanitation works was ensured by the WASH committees through skill transfers. There are two functional WASH committees, one for Likouala department and one for Plateau department. The two committees are composed of 98 members (composed of 96 men and 2 women). Within these two committees, there are 42 (40 men and 2 women) craftsmen who repair borehole pumps.

In 2023, the target was 60% of people with access to drinking water. By the end of 2023, 51% or 33,198 people have access to drinking water. All water points on the sites and in the communities are managed by the mixed committees. Unfortunately, many of the boreholes are not working due to breakdowns for which they do not have the capacity to purchase spare parts. This does not help the community's access to clean water.

Capacity building of the WASH committee members enabled them to acquire more skills to ensure the upkeep and maintenance of the structures and improve the quality of water and sanitation. This committee will eventually be able to take over as a partner for the good of their community.

Four hand pumps were repaired at the 15 April site (Bétou). A total of 28 water points were purified, 22 of which were carried out by the WASH committee and six by the partner AARREC. AARREC also rehabilitated the water points.

Despite the efforts of the WASH committees, the daily quantity of drinking water remains below the norm: 8.8 litres per person per day on average with disparities between sites (14.54 litres per person per day in the 15 Avril site and 5.6 litres per person per day at the Bouémba site). UNHCR distributed 586,222 water purification tablets to 15,018 people, including 5,157 refugees.

The WASH committees contributed to the emptying of 57 latrines to create a healthy environment in the refugee hosting areas.

UNHCR provided 3,007 families with treated mosquito nets in Likouala and 13,042 pieces of soap were distributed to 2,474 people, or 522 families, to strengthen personal hygiene.

WASH committee members conducted awareness-raising sessions for 6,722 refugees, asylum seekers and host community members to improve hygiene and sanitation practices.

UNHCR distributed 39,694 dignity kits were distributed to 12,587 women and girls of reproductive age, including 2,902 from the host population, for menstrual hygiene management. UNHCR also provided 32 chlorine bottles to nine health centres to support disinfection and prevention and control of infections.

Bétou and Ikpengbelé (Likouala) received three chlorine tablets to disinfect homes, latrines and classrooms following the floods.

Collaboration with the State's technical services strengthened WASH committees, repair craftsmen and community participation.

UNHCR continues to advocate with the Ministry of Hydraulics to include refugee hosting areas in the national programme's borehole construction plan.

10. Outcome Area: Healthy Lives

By 2024, all refugees and asylum seekers receive equitable, affordable and quality, both preventive and curative, healthcare services through the national health system.

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
10.1 Proportion of children aged 9 months to five years who have received measles vaccination	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	65.50%	70.00%	42.21%
10.2. Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	94.89%	90.00%	98.94%

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

UNHCR is supporting three health centers next to refugee-hosting areas, home to almost 60% refugees as of April 1st, 2023 (6 from January to March 2023). In May 2023, the integrated health center of Betou to a reference hospital thanks to UNHCR continued advocacy with local health authorities, as well as through improvement of health facilities, in collaboration with UN sister agencies and the local private sector.

UNHCR held discussions with health authorities, United Nations agencies (UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO, WFP, etc.) involved in activities for the strengthening of health services (primary health care, maternal and child health, nutrition, and reproductive health) in refugee-hosting areas.

In 2023, 30,783 people received access to care (18,217 refugees (59%) and 12,566 host population (41%)). Malaria comes to the first place in morbidity for children aged 0-5 years, the mortality rate in this age group is 0.21 deaths/1000 people/month (standard: <1.5 deaths/1000 per month). Vaccination coverage for RR1 (Measles-Rubella) among refugee children under 5 years of age is 42%, or 1,879 children have been vaccinated out of a target of 4,453 in the localities of Bétou, Impfondo, Gamboma, and Brazzaville. This result is below the annual target of 60% and remains below the public health standard of 95%. This coverage performed poorly because of repeated vaccine disruptions, particularly from January to June 2023. To improve this situation, 20 mobile clinics were set up in different sites. Through this activity, we recorded a performance for 400 children vaccinated in the first semester to 1,479 children in the second semester. The proportion of births attended by skilled personnel is 98.54% (3465/3502), above the target of 98% set, but home births (12) are still noted.

In 2023 the operation's enhanced its inclusion strategy through collaborations and advocacy with MoH, international stakeholder (WB, UN agencies, NGO) to have efficiency and complementary actions for the care of host and refugee populations (improve access of health care, availability of nutritional inputs, delivery kits and family planning inputs, availability of midwives and psychologists). The operation is also part of sectoral working groups (Global Fund for malaria, tuberculosis and HIV; World-Bank funded projects including health components) and is member of the financial and technical partners under the lead of WHO.

11. Outcome Area: Education

By 2024, all refugees children in age of being in primary school have equal access to national education systems and enjoy quality education.

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
11.1 Proportion of young people enrolled in tertiary and higher education	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	1.19%	0.00%	0.00%
11.2 Proportion of children and young people enrolled in the national education system	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	44.97%	67.00%	66.68%

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In coordination with the authorities in charge of education at the national level and in the remote Likouala, Plateaux, Pool departments and partners, advocacy was carried out for greater involvement of all education actors to strengthen the inclusion of refugee students in the national education system. To these advocacy

activities, the Ministry of Preschool, Primary, Secondary and Literacy Education (MEPPSA) responded favorably with a note that authorizes the inclusion of newly arrived refugee children in schools in Ngabé in Pool.

UNHCR asked MEPPSA for the increased allocation of staff to rural areas and for the inclusion of community teachers in the recruitment quota allocated by the Government.

Refugee pupils' attendance was monitored and data and school results were collected. It shows that 7,075 refugee students, i.e., 3,531 girls (49.90%) and 3,544 boys (50.10%) were enrolled in school this year. The admission rate to the next class is around 60%. However, there is a dropout rate of nearly 17%, mainly due to the financial difficulties of parents in taking care of their children's educational needs, among other things. State examinations: Elementary Primary School Certificate (CEPE): out of 435 refugees (228 girls and 207 boys) candidates, there were 322 admitted, i.e., 74%. At the departmental level (all nationalities combined), the overall admission rate is 89.45%, i.e., Likouala ranked 5th at the country level. At middle school examination Certificate of Lower Secondary Education (BEPC): out of 29 candidates (11 girls and 18 boys), 17 were admitted, i.e., 58%. At the departmental level, the overall admission rate is 73.13%, i.e., Likouala placed 3rd at the country level. At the baccalaureate: out of 19 candidates (8 girls and 11 boys), there were eight admitted, including three girls, i.e., 42%. At the departmental level, the overall admission rate is 70.33%, i.e., Likouala ranked 4th at the country level.

2023 was also marked by the end of the payment of the monthly allowances of 65 community teachers/volunteers, as of 1 October. In this context, coordination meetings were organized involving the authorities at the national, prefectural and departmental levels as well as relevant education stakeholders to reflect on the strategy to be adopted after the end of UNHCR care and also to strengthen the inclusion of refugee students in the national education system. In addition, awareness-raising campaigns for parents and students on inclusive education after UNHCR stopped paying 65 volunteer teachers and reached nearly 3,000 individuals. Some community teachers formerly supported by the UNHCR have been enrolled by the Congolese state with a view to taking them into account in the 2023 budget. Statistical data on community teachers formerly supported by UNHCR and taken over by the Ministry of Primary Education are being collected.

Participation in the Local Group of Education Partners also ensures continued mainstreaming of the needs of refugee hosting areas in national planning and programming.

13. Outcome Area: Self Reliance, Economic Inclusion and Livelihoods

By 2024, 50% of youth and adults are able to carry out economic activities generating enough income to support the family basic needs.

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
13.1. Proportion of people with an account at a bank or other financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	10.00%	60.00%	71.19%
13.2. Proportion of people who self-report positive changes in their income compared to previous year	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	40.00%	40.00%	88.46%
13.3 Proportion of people (working age) who are unemployed	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	37.76%	68.00%	16.45%

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

The inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers in national systems remains at the heart of the vision.

In 2023, UNHCR and its partners continued advocating with stakeholders for the economic inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers in the Republic of Congo. Through the CNAR, awareness-raising activities were carried out with 2,000 refugees and asylum seekers on economic inclusion during the holding of awareness-raising workshops on refugee empowerment.

In line with the Government's strong engagement taken towards the inclusion of refugees and support to host community since its 2017 Development Policy Letter, and with the support of the World Bank, 8840 individuals including 3629 refugees have been included on par with nationals in the national safety nets project (Lisungi project) benefitting from conditional cash transfer and income generating activity financial support. Sharing the socio-economic data collected for the Unique Social Register (RSU) will provide the government with reliable data for better targeting of refugees and asylum seekers in future years and will facilitate their integration into national social programmes. Refugees and asylum seekers in the Republic of Congo have benefited from the Lisungi project through support for income-generating activities and conditional cash transfers for health and education. Discussions are underway for the World Bank's new programmes, so that refugees and asylum seekers can be taken into account in these projects.

Official employment continues to be a major issue for the population in the Congo, refugees included, and many of them are unable to access work and generate an income. They remain dependent on petty activities and assistance.

Advocacy and work with private sectors, NGOs and bilateral partners also enabled refugees to improve their livelihoods (e.g., support for market gardening activities; capacity building and trainings as well as in-kind donations from the private sector to support construction works by refugees and locals).

14. Outcome Area: Voluntary Return and Sustainable Reintegration

By 2024, 100 per cent of refugees who opt for voluntary repatriation are granted support for return.

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

At the end of 2023, the number of voluntary return intentions collected during the joint verification exercise was 2,526 (886 from CAR; 1,630 from DRC; nine from Rwanda and one from Chad). All candidates who expressed their intention to return were briefed on the situation in their countries of origin. No convoy was organized during the year due to lack of candidates.

15. Outcome Area: Resettlement and Complementary Pathways

By 2024, all refugees in acute need of adequate protection solutions are resettled, and alternative opportunities in third countries are offered

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
15.1 Number of refugees submitted by UNHCR for resettlement	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0	20	8
15.2 Average processing time from resettlement submission to departure under normal priority	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	4.00	1,460.00	5.00
15.3 Number of people admitted through complementary pathways from the host country	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	2	2	9

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

UNHCR in the Congo has no specific quota for resettlement, given the Congo protection environment. Resettlement is mainly used for emergency cases. A target of around 200 refugees to be resettled per year was set. Refugees are resettled based on their vulnerability, with priority given to severe protection or medical cases.

In 2023, one case of three individuals was submitted for resettlement consideration based on legal and physical protection needs. The total number of departures during the year, including referrals since 2014, was 28. There were nine departures in complementary pathways.

16. Outcome Area: Integration and other Local Solutions

By the end 2024, legal and socio-economic opportunities enabling local integration are available for refugees in Congo

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
16.1 Proportion of people with secure tenure rights to housing and/or land	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0.01%	5.00%	20.00%
16.2 Proportion of people covered by national social protection systems	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%	62.73%

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

Regarding inclusion in national protection systems, and in line with the 2017 policy development letter, the joint verification of refugees was combined with the collection of socio-economic data. These data have been collected for around 16,000 refugees enabling the update of their status within the national social registry or their future inclusion for those who were previously not included. This exercise supports effective integration and inclusion into national services. Equally important is the advocacy for strengthening of basic services (education, health etc.) in refugee hosting areas. UNHCR also continues to advocate with the CNAR to facilitate access to land for refugees in rural areas in Likouala, Plateaux and Pool.

Local integration through naturalization is the most favorable durable solution in the Congo. The legal framework governing naturalization is made of the 1961 nationality code (Law 35-1961 of 20 June 1961), subsequently modified by Law 2/95 of 30 September 1993 and Law 32/2011 of 3 October 2011 and the 2021 Asylum law no. 41-2021 of 29 September 2021. While a number of refugees have indicated their interests in naturalization, including those married to nationals, born on the territory, or who have been in Congo for an extended period of time. UNHCR is yet to collect intentions and profiles.

2.2. Age, Gender and Diversity

In 2023, age, gender and diversity monitoring focus groups were organized across the country with diverse stakeholders. In Brazzaville, Kobo was used to collect information during the participatory assessments that included 52 refugees, asylum seekers, and members of the host community of whom were men with 52% followed by women with 48%. In the Likouala department, 468 participants (including 138 men, 40 boys; 220 women and 70 girls) participated to the participatory assessment. The main results of the consultations indicate the lack of availability and quality of basic services (education, health, WASH), as well as limited livelihoods opportunities.

Section 3: Resources

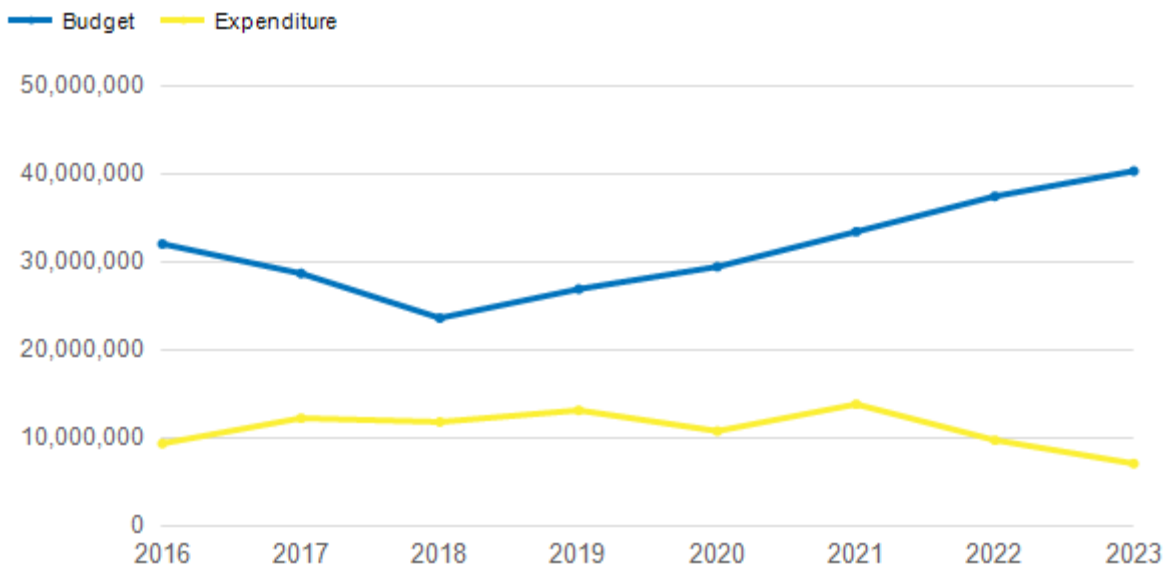
3.1 Financial Data

(Financial figures in USD)

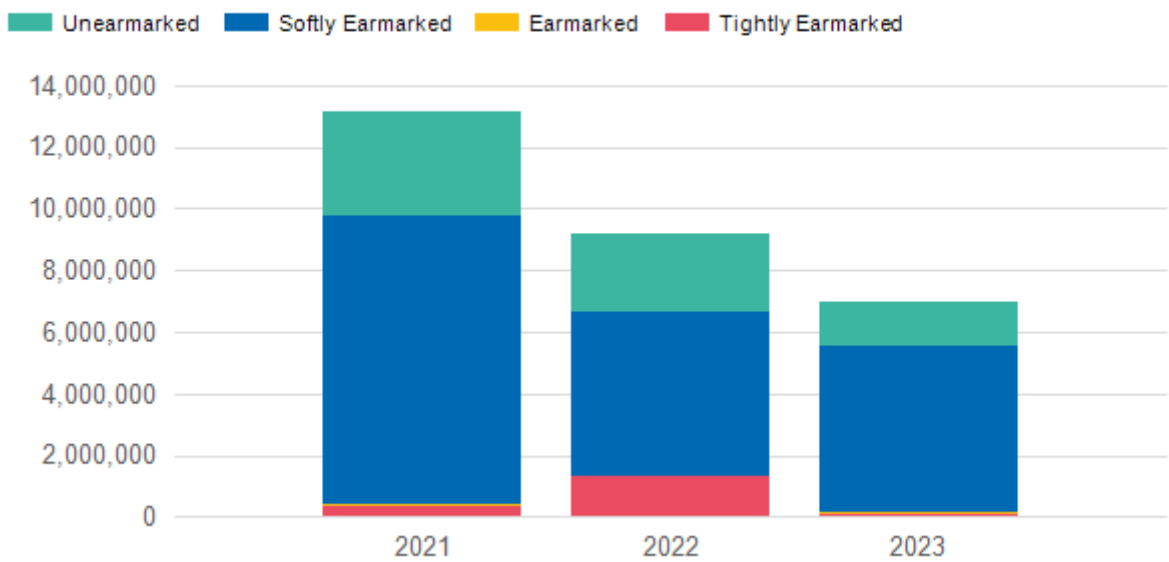
Impact Area	Final Budget	Funds Available	Funds Available as % of Budget	Expenditure	Expenditure as % of Funds Available
IA1: Protect	24,368,083	4,278,650	17.56%	4,278,650	100.00%
IA3: Empower	8,877,341	1,612,190	18.16%	1,612,190	100.00%
IA4: Solve	7,023,525	1,168,086	16.63%	1,168,086	100.00%
All Impact Areas		2,490			
Total	40,268,949	7,061,417	17.54%	7,058,927	99.96%

Outcome Area	Final Budget	Funds Available	Funds Available as % of Budget	Expenditure	Expenditure as % of Funds Available
OA1: Access/Doc	400,000	159,826	39.96%	159,826	100.00%
OA3: Policy/Law	6,598,273	1,962,057	29.74%	1,962,057	100.00%
OA4: GBV	3,295,012	709,196	21.52%	709,196	100.00%
OA7: Community	960,343	147,688	15.38%	147,688	100.00%
OA8: Well-being	9,755,885	1,384,252	14.19%	1,384,252	100.00%
OA10: Health	5,498,355	281,594	5.12%	281,594	100.00%
OA11: Education	2,046,119	374,264	18.29%	374,264	100.00%
OA13: Livelihood	2,575,866	381,042	14.79%	381,042	100.00%
OA14: Return	4,166,329	383,701	9.21%	383,701	100.00%
OA15: Resettle	861,010	400,036	46.46%	400,036	100.00%
OA16: Integrate	1,996,187	384,349	19.25%	384,349	100.00%
EA18: Support	2,115,570	490,921	23.21%	490,921	100.00%
All Outcome Areas		2,490			
Total	40,268,949	7,061,417	17.54%	7,058,927	99.96%

Budget and Expenditure Trend



Contributions Trend by Type



3.2. Resources Overview

In 2023, out of an OP of USD 40,268,949, an expenditure of \$6.8 million was achieved. The reduction in the budget from 2022 was an opportunity to reasonably disengage from the assistance approach and focus on the strategy of including refugees in national systems and concluding partnerships with local NGOs. Resources were allocated as a priority to physical verification and socioeconomic data collection and gender-based violence and operation Management.

The UNHCR operation in the Republic of the Congo plays a crucial role in advocating for the inclusion of refugees into national services, safeguarding access to protection, and providing support for refugees. Funding sources include government contributions, grants, and donor contributions, with specific allocations for various programmes and operational needs. To cope with budget constraints, UNHCR

implemented measures to streamline administrative processes and prioritize activities. These included leveraging technology for cost-effective solutions and renegotiating contracts.

The decline in funding posed challenges, such as delayed project implementation, limitations in capacity-building initiatives, and potential gaps in service delivery. Despite the funding shortfall, the focus remains on ensuring the continued provision of essential services. Resilience of the staff and ongoing efforts to adapt to changing circumstances will contribute to overcome the current constraints and continuing to provide critical assistance to those in need.

However, UNHCR has managed to leverage partner's capacity to support refugee inclusion and improvement of basic services in refugee-hosting areas, amounting to 5.4 million USD in 2023 in the sectors of social protection, health, nutrition, education, environment, WASH and livelihoods.

Section 4: Lessons Learned and Future Outlook

4.1 Lessons Learned and Future Outlook

Due to budget constraints in 2023, the operation has opted for the rationalization of resources in several sectors, including partnerships with international NGOs. The operation has therefore signed partnership agreements with national NGOs to avoid high costs, including PICS. The positive change from international NGOs to national NGOs closer to local authorities and populations. The national NGOs selected (MDA, CEMIR and APPE) have made a substantial contribution to the operation, paying the rent for their offices from their own funds. This is a gain for the operation, as the funds set aside for rent have been reallocated to other activities benefiting the refugees.

The committees acting as partners guided the implementation strategy that incorporated community participation with ownership. With this strategy, the management of day-to-day activities on the sites, the distribution of CRIs and the construction of shelters and community infrastructure were made possible. The multifunctional team has been active in monitoring the achievements with the involvement of the CNAR and the refugees and asylum seekers through their committees.

The flexibility of partners in discussing new programmatic tools such as work plans, financial plans and indicator plans facilitated the process of preparing partnership agreements. Also, there is good cooperation between UNHCR and the authorities of Republic of the Congo, who have shown a good will to support UNHCR in its mission. Building on these lessons and collaboration, UNHCR will continue a responsible disengagement while the authorities strengthen their presence and services in refugee-hosting areas, with the support of official development assistance.



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