

Southern Africa Operational Update

1 - 31 October 2021

Highlights

Statelessness: High-level engagement continued in the region to strengthen the prevention of statelessness.

Human rights of persons of concern: Memorandum of Understanding signed with South African Human Rights Commission.

COVID-19: Vaccination rollout continued for persons of concern, as outreach was conducted to address vaccine hesitancy.



An indigenous family in front of their house in Vono Village, Republic of the Congo. None in the family has identity documents, posing a risk of statelessness. See story on page 7. © UNHCR/Hélène Caux

During the month of October:



2,739 people reached through door-to-door hygiene promotion in **Republic of the Congo**



1,159 refugees in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)** supported to repatriate



804 callers assisted through the UNHCR Helpline in **South Africa**



553 refugees received multi-purpose cash assistance in **Zambia**



429 IDPs reached with household kits in Niassa Province, **Mozambique**



117 households in **Angola** received support for shelter construction and installation

Persons of concern to UNHCR in Southern Africa

7,869,175 persons of concern to UNHCR in Southern Africa, including:



768,040 refugees and **312,393** asylum-seekers



6,357,284 internally displaced persons (IDPs)

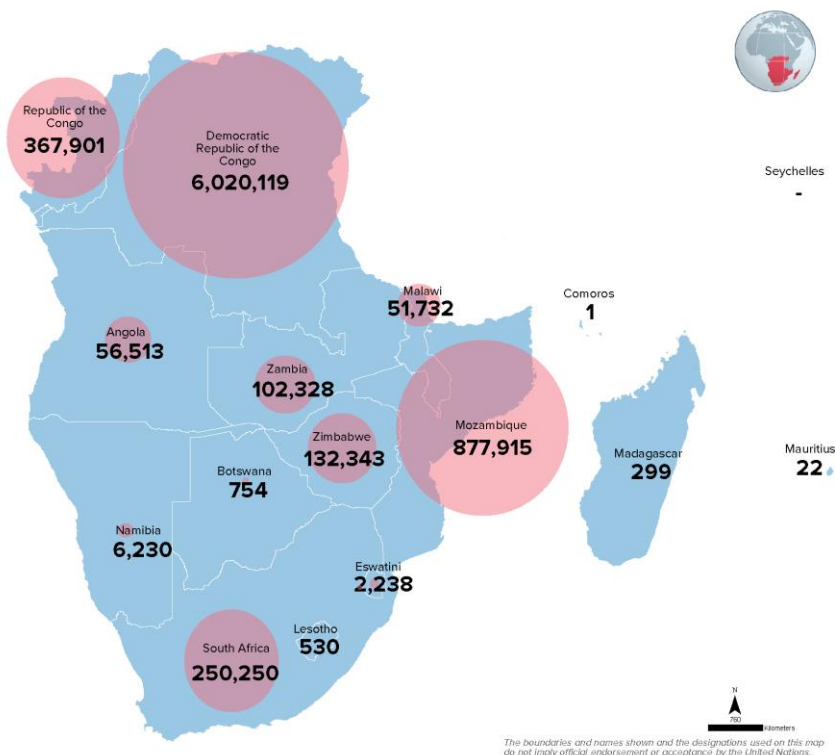


394,960 returnees



36,498 other persons of concern

(as of 30 September 2021)



Operational context: Key developments

Statelessness: As UNHCR marks the 7th anniversary of the #IBelong campaign, several factors – including gender and ethnic discrimination, lack of legal safeguards against stateless, and lack of birth registration – lead to heightened risk of statelessness in Southern Africa. With three more years left to achieve the goal of eradicating statelessness by 2024, significant achievements have been and continue to be made. Almost all States in the region have committed to taking up activities in line with the 10 campaign targets aimed at ending statelessness, with about 60 pledges being made at the High-Level Segment on Statelessness held in 2019. Six countries – the DRC, Republic of the Congo, Eswatini, Madagascar, Namibia and Zambia – have developed a National Action Plan to eradicate statelessness in their territories. In October, work continued towards the prevention and eradication of statelessness, as UNHCR conducted high-level advocacy with Governments in Angola, Comoros and Malawi. At the operational level, initiatives to increase birth registration made progress in the DRC and in the Republic of the Congo.

COVID-19 vaccination: Vaccination rollout continues across the region, and vaccination rates are primarily linked to the availability and supply of vaccines, as well as vaccine hesitancy. Mozambique began its third phase of vaccination on 21 October through the COVAX facility, which is expected to reach 7 million people in predominantly rural areas by March 2022. Seychelles became the first country in the region to offer booster shots, with a media campaign to encourage uptake. As of 26 October, some 14,107 persons of concern have received at least their first dose, of whom 4,667 are fully vaccinated. These numbers reflect an increase of approximately 60 per cent compared to the previous month, which is significant in the context of widespread vaccine hesitancy in the region. These numbers mainly reflect people in camps and settlements as it is hard to track vaccination in urban areas. As a result, the actual number of vaccinations amongst the persons of concern may be higher than the reported rate. Based on available figures, Angola has the highest number of persons of concern who have received at least one dose, followed by the Republic of the Congo and Malawi.

Operational highlights

Angola

- **Community-based protection:** Training and awareness-raising for community leaders and mobilizers in Lóvua refugee settlement was conducted to strengthen community-based protection. This included awareness-raising on prevention and response mechanisms for arbitrary detention, and a workshop aiming at improving the relationship between refugees and the police. The initiatives reached 82 and 139 individuals, respectively.
- **Shelter construction and installation:** In Lóvua refugee settlement, transitional shelters were constructed for 71 households, including 50 mud brick houses and 21 houses using poles and mud plaster. Twenty-four refugee housing units were also installed, and 22 family tents were set up to accommodate refugee families.
- **Prevention of statelessness:** UNHCR and the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights conducted a statelessness conference on 28 October, focused on the causes, consequences, and solutions to statelessness at the national and global levels. The event was attended by the Secretary of State for Human Rights and 47 members of Government, civil society, academia, UN agencies and embassies. By the end of the conference, participants proposed solutions to both prevent and address statelessness, in line with Angola's Global Refugee Forum pledges.
- **Human rights training:** UNHCR facilitated training on 'Human Rights and Protection of Refugees' on 20 October for 72 officials from Lucapa, Cambulo, Tchitato and Lóvua. The session was opened by the Provincial Delegate of the Ministry of Interior, who reinforced the international obligations assumed by the Government of Angola to provide protection to refugees. UNHCR is in discussions to hold similar training for officials at border posts.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

- **Voluntary repatriation:** UNHCR resumed voluntary repatriation of refugees from the Central African Republic (CAR) on 22 October. As of 29 October, 768 people returned to Bangui in three convoys, bringing the total number who voluntarily repatriated to CAR since 2019 to 5,980. In addition, UNHCR and the Government's National Commission for Refugees (CNR) facilitated the voluntary repatriation of 162 Rwandan refugees and 229 Burundian refugees from North and South Kivu, to their countries of origin in October. So far 1,590 Rwandan refugees and 7,015 Burundian refugees have been repatriated in 2021.
- **Shelter support:** In North Kivu Province, 500 displaced families, comprising approximately 2,500 persons, received emergency shelter to improve their living conditions. The families



UNHCR and Protection Cluster partner speak with internally displaced women about their needs and concerns in Bitobolo, DRC. © UNHCR/Antonia Vadala

are accommodated in IDP sites coordinated by UNHCR in Masisi and Rutshuru Territories. In Ituri Province, 260 individual emergency shelters were built for IDP families in the Plaine Savo site, while construction began on 350 transitional shelters for IDPs living with host families in Irumu Territory.

- **Prevention of statelessness:** UNHCR and provincial authorities in Kasai Province signed Letters of Understanding on 20 October to facilitate the delivery of 3,500 birth certificates for IDP children, returnees and children in the host community in the localities of Tshikapa, Monkamba, Kapinga Nkundi and Shamusanda.
- **CAR Situation:** As of 31 October, 5,033 individuals had been relocated from Yakoma to the Modale settlement, since relocation began in April 2021. This represents about 78 per cent of registered refugees in Yakoma. Newly relocated refugees received CRIs including blankets, soap, sleeping mats and solar lamps. In addition, UNHCR and CNR produced 5,607 refugee identity cards for newly arrived Central African refugees. This makes a total of 12,669 IDs issued since April 2021, in Modale, Yakoma, Limasa, Gomba, Boyabu, Mole, Zongo, Bondo and Bosobolo. The IDs improve refugees' access to social and economic services and eases movements within the country.

Malawi

- **UNHCR Regional Director mission to Malawi:** The Director of UNHCR's Regional Bureau for Southern Africa, Mr. Valentin Tapsoba, travelled to Malawi from 25 to 28 October where he held meetings with Government officials – namely the Minister of Homeland Security and the Office of the President and Cabinet – as well as the UN Country Team and donors. In these meetings, the Director addressed key issues including preservation of asylum space, refugee relocation, prevention of statelessness, migration policy, registration and documentation, food security and food pipeline shortages, Global Refugee Forum Pledges, and the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework Roadmap. The Director also travelled to Dzaleka refugee camp where he visited projects including the site extension, COVID-19 facilities, and livelihood projects. He met with refugee leadership and with partners working in the camp, where he had opportunity to receive feedback on service delivery and to discuss issues pertaining to the wellbeing of refugees living in Dzaleka refugee camp.
- **Registration:** 371 people were individually registered, including 226 new arrivals and 145 new-born babies. Most new arrivals were from South Kivu Province in the DRC. Congolese remain the largest refugee population in Malawi at nearly 32,000 individuals, followed by approximately 12,000 individuals from Burundi and 7,600 individuals from Rwanda.
- **Global Handwashing Day:** UNHCR and partners marked Global Handwashing Day in Dzaleka refugee camp on 15 October. Awareness-raising messages were broadcast over Yetu Community Radio, complemented by community activities including handwashing demonstrations and hygiene quizzes.

Mozambique

- **Technical and vocational training:** The National Institute of Employment and the Alberto Cassimo Institute of Vocational Training and Labour Studies launched a technical and vocational training programme for refugees, asylum-seekers and host communities living in Maratane, Nampula Province, and surrounding areas. The programme targets 215 people, among whom 20 per cent are from the host community. The programme is being run both in Maratane refugee settlement and in the city of Nampula.

- **Distributions for IDP families:** In Niassa Province, UNHCR distributed 119 kits of household items to families living in IDP sites in Lichinga and Marrupa Districts. The distribution benefitted 428 individuals. During the distribution, UNHCR met with Marrupa's District Administrator, who welcomed UNHCR's support and requested further assistance for displaced communities from Cabo Delgado hosted in Niassa Province.
- **Voluntary repatriation:** UNHCR facilitated the voluntary return of 15 people (two families) back to Burundi. The families left Nampula on 24 October, arriving in Bujumbura on 25 October. UNHCR expects to repatriate 80 people to Burundi by the end of 2021 in view of growing interest in return.
- **Protection mainstreaming in preparedness planning:** UNHCR together with the Provincial Department of Social Action (DPGCAS) undertook a workshop on 21 October to mainstream protection within the cyclone season preparedness plans of the National Institute of Disaster Risk Reduction (INGD). Workshop participants including from DPGCAS, INGD, UN agencies, national and international NGOs discussed the next steps in refining cyclone season preparedness plans, including a stocktaking of protection actors, developing protection mainstreaming key messages, and updating the protection mainstreaming assessment tool.

Republic of the Congo

- **Protection awareness-raising:** UNHCR and partners reached nearly 700 people from the refugee and host community through awareness-raising initiatives about gender-based violence, physical and domestic violence, the rights and duties of refugees, and the need for schooling for children. Awareness-raising was conducted through focus group discussions and door-to-door visits.
- **Hygiene promotion and sanitation:** 2,739 people in Likouala and Plateaux Departments were reached through hygiene promotion campaigns, involving home visits conducted by hygiene promoters. Additionally, 75 latrines were rehabilitated in Bouemba, Plateaux Department.
- **Livelihoods and vocational training:** 117 refugees were pre-registered at the Likouala Timber Catholic Learning Centre in Betou for vocational training, including in mechanics, sewing, computers, catering, agropastoral, electricity, plumbing, welding, masonry, and carpentry. In Gamboma, seven asylum-seeker families residing in the Bouemba site were provided with arable land in Bouanga, some 7 kms away from Bouemba site. These families were provided with farming tools.

South Africa Multi-Country Office (SAMCO)

Botswana, Comoros, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mauritius, Namibia, Seychelles and South Africa

- **UNHCR Representative mission to Comoros:** The SAMCO Representative led a UNHCR delegation to Comoros and held talks with the President and other stakeholders. Discussions focused on finding solutions and providing humanitarian assistance to persons of concern; offering UNHCR technical assistance to strengthen the asylum system and accede to the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol; and encouraging implementation of statelessness pledges made in 2019. UNHCR also offered its commitment to support measures to mitigate the



UNHCR delegation, led by SAMCO Representative Leonard Zulu (third from left), meeting with Comorian President Azali Assoumani (centre left) in Moroni, Comoros. © UNHCR

impact of climate change, recognizing the effects of climate change on displacement, and slow and sudden-onset natural disasters in Comoros.

- **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC):** UNHCR signed an MoU with SAHRC on 2 October. The MoU seeks to ensure protection of human rights for persons of concern to UNHCR. A task team, composed of experts from UNHCR and SAHRC, is being established to operationalize the MoU.
- **Children in migration:** UNHCR and UNICEF continued collaboration through the Global Promotion of Best Practices for Children in Migration Project via a stakeholder meeting and the first Taskforce on Birth Registration. The Taskforce seeks to enhance coordination around access to birth registration for undocumented persons of concern to UNHCR.
- **Communication with communities:** Communication with communities continued through the toll-free Helpline, which dealt with 804 calls. Callers mainly had queries about resettlement and voluntary repatriation, and requests for social assistance. Online, the [Help South Africa](#) platform received 6,224 visits (up from 2,650 in September, when it was first launched) and 15,859 page views.

Zambia

- **Livelihoods and cash assistance:** Cash assistance reached 553 persons of concern. This included cash assistance aimed at supporting livelihoods, which benefitted 132 refugees in Lusaka, Meheba and Mayukwayukwa refugee settlements and 50 women from Meheba refugee settlement. The women received cash assistance as asset empowerment to help them take up income generating activities.
- **Access to tertiary education:** UNHCR signed an MoU with Cavendish University, which will allow 200 refugee students to enrol at university in Lusaka, with a 50 per cent tuition fee waiver. This will improve chances of accessing tertiary education for young refugees.
- **Awareness-raising about refugees:** Radio programmes were broadcast in Lusaka and across the country to raise awareness and understanding about refugees. The programmes were broadcast twice weekly on the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation. Representatives from the Government's Office of the Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR, partners, and refugees featured as guests on the programmes and covered a variety of topics. The radio programmes will run until November, reaching hundreds of thousands of Zambians.

Zimbabwe

- **Exam preparations:** Schools remained open for the second and final term under enhanced prevention and control measures following the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education COVID-19 prevention and response standard operating procedures. Exam classes prepared for external examinations that will take place in November and December.
- **Hygiene promotion:** To promote good hygiene practices, 'tippy taps' – basic handwashing stations – were installed in 82 households to ensure regular handwashing. Community health promoters will monitor and promote the use of the tippy taps.
- **Livelihood strategy:** UNHCR and partners conducted a livelihood workshop to develop a strategy for 2022-2026, ensuring positive impacts for refugees through agricultural and non-agriculture-based activities. This updated strategy seeks to promote self-sufficiency, particularly among those refugees who have lived a long time in Zimbabwe.

Story from the field: Birth registration brings Congo's indigenous in from the shadows and addresses risk of statelessness

Marie does not know her age but looks to be in her late thirties. She has never had a birth certificate nor any other identity document. She has never been to school, either. She lives in poverty with her six children and her husband in Vono, a small village in the Republic of the Congo's Plateaux region.

"I would love to go look for a job... and be able to support my family more. But you need to have papers to get hired," she says. Like Marie, most of the indigenous people in the village do not have birth certificates – the first legal proof of one's existence, without which one faces the risk of statelessness. Marginalization, combined with the remoteness of their communities, makes it harder to register children at birth and to obtain IDs.

A civil state census conducted three years ago identified some 199,400 people – including at least 25,000 indigenous people – without birth certificates. Acting on this data, the government launched an extensive countrywide operation in 2020, with the support of UNHCR, to issue birth certificates.

Mobile hearings have been held to register people and deliver the documents. "The goal is to make sure that every Congolese has a birth certificate. And the indigenous people are Congolese," stressed Justin Assomoyi, Director for the Promotion of Indigenous People's Rights at the Ministry of Justice.

Read the full story [here](#).



*Director for the Promotion of Indigenous People's Rights at the Ministry of Justice, Republic of the Congo, hands over a birth certificate to an indigenous boy in Ngoulayo site.
© UNHCR/Hélène Caux*

COVID-19

There were 4,089,318 reported cases of COVID-19 in the 16 countries of the Southern Africa region as of 26 October. The rate of infection continued to drop across the region, with the number of active cases reducing by over a third in the month of October in comparison with the previous month. Some 1,023 cases of COVID-19 have been reported among persons of concern to UNHCR since reporting began in 2020. The low case rate is attributable in part to the lack of testing facilities in refugee-hosting areas and the reliance on voluntary reporting in urban areas. Actual case numbers may be much higher.

Vaccine hesitancy continues to be the biggest issue compromising vaccine uptake in the region. To combat hesitancy and dispel misinformation, UNHCR is running awareness raising programmes in camps and host communities across the region, notably in the north-western provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo that are sheltering refugees from the Central African Republic, and in South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe, where vaccination uptake is slow, despite the widespread availability of the vaccine.

COVID-19 response highlights from October include:

- **Angola:** A group of 198 undocumented refugees received their COVID-19 vaccinations in October, through a platform set up by the Ministry of Health specifically to facilitate the vaccination of undocumented people. The platform was made possible in part due to advocacy by UNHCR and partners, who are at present engaged in raising awareness among the undocumented refugee population about this new opportunity.

- Democratic Republic of the Congo:** Since the first vaccines arrived in Goma in September, UNHCR and partners have been engaged in advocacy with the North Kivu local authorities to include the refugee and internally displaced communities in the provincial vaccination campaign. Simultaneous awareness raising activities are ongoing within the displaced and host communities, to encourage uptake once the vaccine is available to them.
- Mozambique:** To complement the return to school, Health Hubs were created in the primary and secondary schools of Maratane refugee camp. The Hubs are staffed by school students, who engage in peer-to-peer risk communication and awareness-raising within the student body about COVID-19 prevention and response, especially on the importance of good hygiene. The students, who number 20 in total, were trained by UNHCR and partners in collaboration with the Maratane Health Centre.
- Zambia:** The pandemic has had a devastating impact on the livelihoods of persons of concern. To help the refugee community recover from the shock, UNHCR began a livelihoods recovery programme to support small business owners from the refugee community. In October, some 243 refugee women and young adult entrepreneurs in Lusaka and the three refugee camps received grants to reignite their businesses.

Financial Requirements

UNHCR's financial requirements for the Southern Africa region in 2021 total **US\$ 388.5 million**. As of 26 October, **50 per cent** of needs have been funded. UNHCR is grateful to donors who have supported operations in Southern Africa, including¹:



United States of America 76.5M | Germany 14M | Sweden 5.6M | European Union 4.2M | Japan 4.1M | Canada 2.7M | UNO-Fluechtlingshilfe 2.5M | Denmark 2.4M | Education Cannot Wait 2M | Central Emergency Response Fund 2M | UN Peacebuilding Fund 1.6M | France 1.6M | Country-Based Pooled Funds 1M

Flexible financial support greatly facilitates UNHCR being able to kick-start an emergency response, bolster forgotten or under-resourced crises, and enable the fullest possible implementation of programmes. They enable UNHCR to plan and manage its resources efficiently and effectively, contributing to the collective success in every life that is transformed and saved. UNHCR is grateful to the donors that have provided unearmarked and softly earmarked contributions in 2021, including:

Other softly earmarked contributions (USD)²: Germany 39.2M | United States of America 33M | Private donors Australia 8.7M | Canada 5.6M | Private donors Germany 2.6M | Private donors Republic of Korea 2.1M

Unearmarked contributions (USD)³: Norway 80M | Sweden 75.4M | Private donors Spain 62.6M | United Kingdom 40.4M | Netherlands 36.1M | Denmark 34.6M | Private donors Republic of Korea 31.9M | Private donors Japan 27.7M | Germany 26M | Japan 23.4M | France 20.2M | Switzerland 16.4M | Private donors Italy 15.7M | Private donors Sweden 14.4M | Ireland 12.5M | Belgium 11.9M | Italy 10.7M

Notes: 1. Donors contributing US\$ 1M or more are listed. 2. Donors contributing US\$ 2M or more are listed. 3. Donors contributing US\$ 10M or more are listed.

Contacts: Joan Allison, Head of External Engagement, Regional Bureau for Southern Africa, allison@unhcr.org
 Miranda Gaanderse, Reporting Officer, Regional Bureau for Southern Africa, gaanders@unhcr.org

Links: [Global Focus](#) | [Operational Data Portal](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#)