

Republic of the Congo

August 2020

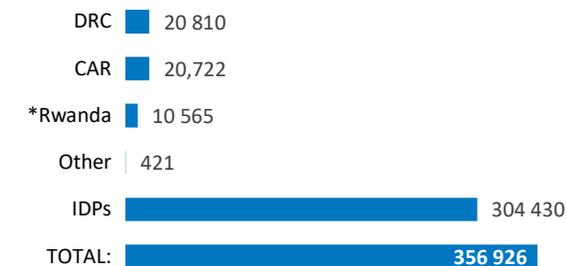
Republic of the Congo hosts **43,656** refugees and asylum-seekers, living in both rural and urban areas. Over **304,000** people are internally displaced

More than **155,000** people are without birth certificates, hence, at risk of statelessness.

Amidst COVID-19 and an ailing economy, livelihoods of refugees and asylum-seekers have been greatly impacted.

PEOPLE OF CONCERN (POC) AS OF AUGUST 2020

Country of Origin

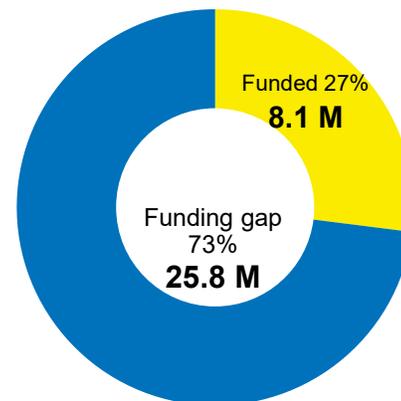


* Including non-exempted

FUNDING (AS OF 25 AUGUST 2020)

USD 27.4 million

requested for the situation of PoCs in the Republic of the Congo



UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

- 46 National Staff
- 9 International Staff
- 8 IUNV (affiliated workforce)

Offices:

- 01 Branch Office in Brazzaville
- 01 Field Office in Betou
- 01 Field Office in Gamboma



A refugee girl from the DRC washes her hands at a UNHCR-installed handwashing station at a school in Brazzaville © UNHCR / S. Duysens

Working with Partners

- Aligning with the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), UNHCR in the Republic of the Congo (RoC) has diversified its partnership base to include five implementing partners, comprising local governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as well as international NGOs.
- The National Committee for Assistance to Refugees (CNAR), is UNHCR's main governmental partner, covering general refugee issues, particularly Refugee Status Determination (RSD). Other specific governmental partners include the Ministry of Social and Humanitarian Affairs (MASAH), the Ministries of Justice and Interior (for judicial issues and policies on issues related to statelessness and civil status registration), and the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH). UNHCR also works with Marien Ngouabi University on research relating to statelessness, asylum and general refugee issues.
- Local NGO partners are AARREC (for education, child protection, social and community-based protection), and CEMIR (for SGBV-related issues).
- International NGO partners are Terre Sans Frontières (TSF) for issues of health and nutrition, AIRD for issues of WASH, shelter and logistics, and the World Bank for the "Lisungui" Social Safety Net project.
- Inter-agency partnership: UNHCR partners with other UN agencies including UNICEF, WFP, UNFPA, WHO, FAO, and UNDP at the operational level to strengthen assistance to refugees and asylum-seekers.

Main Activities

Protection

- UNHCR supports the Congolese government within the framework of its international protection mandate, and in the search for durable solutions, through several actions that contribute to inclusion in national systems. Main countries of origin for refugees and asylum-seekers are the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the Central African Republic (CAR), and Rwanda.
- UNHCR works with implementing partners on Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA). AARREC, CNAR, CEMIR and TSF are also involved in issues of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). UNHCR builds capacity of these partners, as well as refugees and survivors, to improve the prevention of and response to SGBV issues. Capacity-building for staff of partner organizations has included typology and mastery of the Gender-Based Violence Information Management System (GBVIMS).
- UNHCR trains refugees and asylum-seekers in the Safe from the Start (SftS) project, to strengthen the prevention and response to SGBV at the onset of emergencies. The project is empowering PoCs and survivors, both in terms access to resources and establishment of income-generating activities.
- Refugee Status Determination (RSD): UNHCR builds capacity of government partners in charge of examining refugee applications. Areas of emphasis are basic principles of RSD, including preparation of dossiers, analysis of credibility and examination of founded fear. 207 cases have been examined, and 20 cases were approved in 2020. Many of the cases are applicants from the DRC, Cameroon, Rwanda and Mauritania.
- Statelessness: As an outcome of UNHCR's active advocacy, the Congolese Parliament has adopted two bills authorising Congo's accession to the various UN conventions on statelessness: the 1954 convention on the status of stateless persons, and the 1961 on the reduction of statelessness. The file is pending transmission to United Nations Secretariat to finalize the process.
- Asylum law: As a result of UNHCR's advocacy, the Congolese National Assembly has adopted a law on asylum. Pending adoption by the Senate, the law spells out criteria for eligibility for refugee status (clarifying the difference between refugees and economic migrants) in the RoC and guarantees recognized refugees' protection throughout its territory and on the areas of extraterritoriality (embassies, Permanent Representations and Consulates). Upon a senate adoption, RoC, will be able to address legal shortcomings on asylum and refugee issues.

- Amidst COVID-19, UNHCR, through its social partner AARREC has distributed 4,250 bars of soap to refugee households, with a focus on households of people with specific needs. UNHCR advocates for government to include vulnerable populations in its national and local assistance programs. As part of COVID-19 assistance, cash vouchers of up 100,000 XAF, depending on the size of the household, have been distributed to 351 vulnerable households in Brazzaville, to subsidize rents, as well as support small businesses start-ups.

Education

- UNHCR ensures a healthy learning environment in five public schools attended by refugee and host community children, including disinfection, in compliance with governmental measures to curb the spread of COVID-19. UNHCR has provided handwashing equipment and hydro-alcoholic gel to support good hygiene in the schools.
- Access to education: A strategy to monitor school-going-age children is underway, targeting schools where most refugee children are enrolled. UNHCR coordinates the COVID-19 fund for education from the Global Partnership for Education.

Health

- UNHCR provides financial and human resources assistance to the Congolese Ministry of Health, to support the national preparedness and response plan for various diseases, as well as for COVID-19.
- UNHCR provides essential medicines and has provided 60 refugee housing units (RHUs) to district hospitals and health centres, for COVID-19 case management and suspected case isolation, in the departments of Plateaux and Likouala, which host refugees.

Food Security and Nutrition

- General food distribution is ongoing in the Plateaux department on a monthly basis (rice, soybean, sugar, oil). Meanwhile, in the Likouala department, UNHCR in collaboration with WFP are assisting refugees facing food insecurity with cash-based transfers.

Water and Sanitation

- UNHCR is supporting 70 flood-affected villages hosting PoCs, having provided hygiene and sanitation equipment comprising wheelbarrows, shovels, rakes, forks, hoe, and personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Relating to COVID-19 prevention in refugee settlements and host communities, 60 health workers have carried out awareness-raising campaigns on preventive measures, and demonstrations of handwashing procedures. Disinfection of public offices and premises is conducted on a weekly basis in Betou, Impfondo and Bouemba. Over 2,608 handwashing devices have been provided to PoCs and some vulnerable households from the host communities.

Shelter and Core Relief Items

- UNHCR in the Republic of the Congo continues to provide shelter and core relief items (CRIs) assistance to populations affected by the 2019 flooding in the Likouala, Plateaux and Cuvette. Approximately 4,000 households both PoCs and host community are receiving emergency shelter kits and CRIs (sleeping mats, blanket, mosquitos' nets, soap, plastic sheet, construction wood, nails and hinges).
- In line with COVID-19 prevention, UNHCR distributes soap to refugees and host populations. More than 100 RHUs were used to build isolation centres in refugee settlements, health care facilities and in towns bordering CAR and the DRC.

Community Empowerment and Self-Reliance

- UNHCR is engaged in self-sufficiency projects for refugees, to ensure access to necessities, including health, education, housing, and nutrition needs.
- As a direct consequence of COVID-19 on refugees and other PoCs there has been a surge in requests for assistance from UNHCR's social partner. 668 applications from refugees, to either revive or start up work, have been processed since the COVID-19 response began in March 2020.
- Seven trainees have been selected to receive a monthly scholarship of XAF 30,000, for vocational training in the areas of tailoring, state-registered nursing, banking and finance, motor mechanic, and hotel management.

- To give purchasing power to communities, while empowering and promoting peaceful coexistence, a cooperative of refugees and local populations produced 1,750 masks in Brazzaville, over 14,000 masks in Betou, and nearly 10,000 in Gamboma, to combat COVID-19.
- Funded by the World Bank, the social safety net “Lisungui” project is poised to empower up to 4,000 PoC households, including 2,000 of the most vulnerable, to meet basic needs.

Durable Solutions

- Two repatriation convoys to CAR comprising 427 people (151 in Brazzaville and 276 in Betou) have been organized. The compilation of more declared intentions for voluntary repatriation is underway in Betou, Brazzaville and Gambomba.
- Since January 2020, resettlement activities have focused on finalizing 274 cases submitted in 2019 for resettlement. 63 refugees have been resettled (44 in Canada, and 19 in the USA).
- Local integration activities focus on advocacy for the adoption of a national strategy. Congolese authorities put forth good practices that are currently in consideration as part of a national strategy for local integration, pending the adoption of a law on this subject.

Logistics

- As emergency assistance to flood-affected refugees and host populations in northern RoC, UNHCR contributed 82 tons of building materials, 70 tons of planks and rafters, 12 tons of soap and 77 tons of various humanitarian items, including kitchen utensils, buckets, tarpaulins, jerrycans and mats.
- Responding to COVID-19, the supply section monitored, cleared customs and made available PPEs to staff, 40,000 surgical masks and purchased medicines and medical equipment to cover the needs of 50,000 refugees in the health and WASH sectors.
- At the local market level, and to combat COVID-19, 120 hand washing devices, 8,028 surgical masks, 3,455 hydroalcoholic gel, 128 tons of soaps, 10,453 3-litre ablution cans, 25 hygiene kits consisting of 2 shovels, 2 rakes, 2 forks, 2 hoes, 2 wheelbarrows, 2 picks, 5 pairs of plastic sanitation gloves have been contributed by UNHCR to affected populations in Gamboma and Betou.

Financial Information

UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have contributed earmarked funds to this operation including the United States of America (USD 2.6M), Central Emergency response Fund (USD 1M) and UN Programme on HIV/AIDS.

Thanks to the major donors of softly earmarked contributions that can potentially be used for this operation due to their earmarking to a related situation or theme, or to the region or sub-region. Special thanks to the major donors of unearmarked contributions.

OTHER SOFTLY EARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS | USD

Germany 70.6M | United States 46.8M | United Kingdom 24.8M | Denmark 14.6M | Canada 10.2M | Private donors USA 7.7M | Private donors Australia 7.4M | Private donors Japan 4.4M | Spain 3.4M | Ireland 3.3M | Finland 3.3M | Sweden 3M | France 2.8M | Private donors United Kingdom 2.2M

UNEARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS | USD

Sweden 76.4M | Private donors Spain 45.9M | Norway 41.4M | Netherlands 36.1M | Denmark 34.6M | United Kingdom 31.7M | Germany 25.9M | Private donors Republic of Korea 23.9M | Private donors Japan 17.9M | Switzerland 16.4M | France 14 | Private donors Italy 10.8M | Italy 10.6M

CONTACTS

Pechulano Ngwe Ali, Associate External Relations & Reporting Officer, ngweali@unhcr.org
Majolie Carolle Okoumaka, Sr Executive Support Asst, okoumaka@unhcr.org, +90(242) 01 2101

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