Promoting and strengthening local solutions for refugees and host communities in the Republic of Congo

Non-transactional support mechanisms for socio-economic inclusion refugees and host communities

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Symbol of integration since the beginning of the influx of refugees from the DRC arrived in 2022 in Ngabé, in the Pool, who live and work among local populations. © UNHCR/Cyprien Cheval

The Republic of Congo hosts **over 65,000 refugees and asylum seekers** [1], mainly from the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Signatory to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, as well as the Organization of African Unity's Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, the Republic of Congo is characterized by a **context conducive to the socio-economic inclusion of refugees.** The latter benefit from a positive protection environment, with no restrictions on freedom of movement, access to social services (including health and education) and to the judicial system, as well as access to the labor market.

[1] *In this document, the term "refugees" is used in its broadest sense, including asylum seekers and all persons under UNHCR mandate.*

As early as 2017, the Republic of Congo committed to local solutions for socio-economic integration in its *Lettre de Politique de Développement* related to support for refugees and their host communities. This has notably enabled initiatives promoting socio-economic inclusion such as **the Lisungi social safety net project, funded by the World Bank,** which was extended to the Likouala Department in 2021.

In line with the Global Compact on Refugees, diversified partnerships and collaboration have been developed since 2021 in the Republic of Congo to strengthen empowerment through increased access to basic services, national protection systems and economic opportunities. This whole of society approach illustrates the **paradigm shift from a humanitarian response model to a refugee response model focused on inclusion and development**, benefiting refugee hosting areas, and thus local populations and promoting living together.
Concrete examples of the impact of UNHCR's facilitator role in mobilizing diverse actors for the socio-economic inclusion of refugees and the populations hosting them are detailed below. This multisectoral area-based approach contributes to local development and social cohesion through the active participation of communities and diverse actors.

Between 2021 and 2023, $24 million has benefited refugees, asylum seekers and their host community through UNHCR's institutional and technical collaboration and advocacy with development actors, line ministries, private sector and civil society.

This has resulted in **increased access to basic services** (education, health, housing, social protection) **and economic opportunities in remote localities**, ensuring the preservation of **fundamental rights** and leaving no one behind. This has also made it possible to develop **environmental protection** activities and has contributed to the **promotion and maintenance of social cohesion**.

Improving living conditions

18,132,793 USD

2021

- Mobilization of **private-sector support for the construction of 45 shelters in local materials** in Bétou (Likouala) for the recently arrived families.
  Improvement of living conditions in an emergency context with private sector support for 274 refugees from the Central African Republic (CAR)
  Likouala Timber Company

- **Inclusion of the Moungoungui village (Likouala) in the Lisungi national program of social safety nets**
  550 refugee families (1,300 people), the host community and many other vulnerable community members receive quarterly conditional cash transfers in Moungoungui.
  UGP Lisungi – World Bank

2022

- **Extension of the Lisungi project to the Likouala department with additional funding of $33 million** for the Covid-19 response in June 2022

  Reduced impact of Covid-19 crisis on more than 2,600 vulnerable households.

In 2023, 2,162 refugee households benefited from conditional cash transfers (health, education, social protection) and 2,917 refugee households benefited from cash to carry out Income Generating Activities (IGA).

- **Support for earthworks, organization and addressing of alleyways in the Moungoungui village**
  - Improvement of the living environment of refugees and the host population promoting social cohesion
  - **La Congolaise Industrielle des Bois (CIB–OLAM) Company**

2023

- Mobilizing **private-sector support for the rehabilitation of the Bétou multi-purpose center**
  - **Improving reception conditions** for refugees at the multi-purpose center
  - **Likouala Timber Company**

- **Inclusion of the "Vision Plus" group of refugee market gardeners** from Bétou in the **national Commercial Agriculture Development Project** (PDAC) financed by the World Bank.
  - **Improving the livelihoods** of refugees
  - **PDAC of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries - World Bank**

Improving access to health and nutrition services

5,762,100 USD

2021

- Delivery of **two tons of medical supplies to 17 health facilities** accompanied by **staff training and rehabilitation of installations** in the department of Likouala as part of the Lisungi project.
- **Inclusion of refugees in the expanded national COVID-19 vaccination program and other primary health services**
  - **Reducing the impact of the COVID-19 crisis** on vulnerable households
  - **World Bank - Ministry of Social Affairs, Solidarity and Humanitarian Action - health districts - local authorities**

2022

- Call for department authorities to **build the capacity of state healthcare staff at the Bétou integrated healthcare center (CSI).**
  - **Transformation of the CSI into a Referral Hospital** with a boost to its human resources (19 new staff) & an improvement in the standard of patient care.
  - **Ministry of Public Health and Population**

2023

- Advocacy with the Ministry of Public Health and Population for **the development of a strategy for the inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers in the health system at the local and national level** and for the deployment of medical personnel in the structures of UNHCR-supported health to include the needs of refugees and asylum seekers in national planning.
  - **Joint UNHCR-Ministry of Health** field mission to develop sectoral inclusion strategy.
  - Assessment of current needs with a view to improving the quality of care in refugee hosting areas
  - **Reinforcing human resources** in the three UNHCR-supported health facilities (deployment of 10 national medical staff)
  - **Ministry of Health and Population**

2023

- Advocacy with UN agencies and development actors working in the health and nutrition sector to include refugee hosting areas in their planning.
  Inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers in the 2023-2025 grant from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis, and in the national 'Kobikissa' project (World Bank) aimed specifically at health system strengthening, so that refugees benefit free of charge from the national vaccination campaign.
  WHO, UNICEF, WFP, World Bank

- **Inclusion of refugees** in the **GAVI Fund's annual expanded program on immunization**
- Leveraging **UNFPA's capacities for the benefit of refugee-hosting areas**
  Strengthening of human resources: a minimum of one UNFPA midwife and psychologist are assigned to each health center in refugee hosting areas. UNFPA also provides delivery kits and family planning kits.
  Ministry of Health and Population - UNFPA

- **Regular UNICEF support for nutritional inputs in** health centers including refugee -hosting areas.
- Mobilization of NGO *Médecins d'Afrique* (MDA)'s **support in refugee hosting areas in the Likouala and Plateaux departments**
  With its core funds and under the incentive of UNHCR, MDA carries out screening and referral activities for malnutrition at community level, as well as awareness-raising activities.
  UNICEF – MDA

Health care for a refugee at the Bétou integrated health center in the Likouala region, where the local population also benefits from improved health care services.
UNHCR/Armand Christ Kiyaloulou

Improving access to education and learning conditions 19,928 USD

- **Advocacy for provision of school kits** for refugee children
  - Delivering school kits to **308 refugee children from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in Ngabé** (Pool), offering immediate access to learning opportunities after displacement and limiting school drop-out.
  - **UNICEF**

2022

- **Mobilization of the private sector** to support the response to new arrivals and host populations through the **construction of 30 school tables** for the Moungoungui elementary school.
  - Improving learning conditions for refugee (500) and local children and reinforcing school inclusion
  - **La Congolaise Industrielle des Bois (CIB–OLAM) Company**

- **Collaboration with the World Bank's PRAASED project** to facilitate the distribution of schoolbooks in remote areas hosting refugees.
  - Improved access to quality education through the distribution of **new schoolbooks to refugee and Congolese pupils in Ngabé, Plateaux and Likouala.**
  - **World Bank**

- **Mobilization of the private sector** to supply school kits to urban refugees in Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire.
  - Granting of **131 school kits in Brazzaville and 60 in Pointe-Noire to vulnerable refugees** to offer them equitable access to education and improve their learning conditions.
  - **Burotop-Iris Foundation**

- Advocacy at local, departmental, and ministerial level **for tuition-free schooling** for new arrivals in Ngabé (Pool)
  - Strengthening equitable and inclusive access to education for refugee pupils
  - **Ministry of Primary, Secondary and Literacy Education and decentralized services**

2023

- Mobilization **of private sector support for the construction of the Moungoungui elementary school canteen** in partnership with the **local community structures**.
  - Improved learning conditions for refugee and national students through access to nutrition and better conditions of hygiene.
  - **La Congolaise Industrielle des Bois (CIB-OLAM) Company**

Ensuring access to water, hygiene and sanitation 98,177 USD

2021

- **Integrated water, hygiene and sanitation response to 6,911 new arrivals** from the Central African Republic (150 kg chlorine, 1,368,000 water purification tablets, 161 water purifier cartons, 50,000L water, 349 latrine slabs and 150 dignity kit cartons)
  - **Improved access to safe drinking water and promotion good hygiene practices**
  - **UNICEF**

- Mobilization of the private sector to **build 50 family latrines for refugees and host populations of Moungoungui**

Improved access to drinking water
La Congolaise Industrielle des Bois (CIB–OLAM) Company

Access to training and economic opportunities 14,248 USD

2021

- **Mobilization of the private sector to strengthen technical and professional capacities** and build refugee skills through the training of 24 workers from CAR and DRC in the construction sector.
  - Participation of workers trained in the **rehabilitation and construction of shelters in community infrastructure** in Bétou and Moungoungui
  - **Likouala Timber Company**

- **Partnership with the European Institute for Cooperation and Development (IECD) to finance the training of 16 refugees** (10 women and six men) who run their own businesses. They also benefited from the IECD's "Top Sales" training.
  - Improving the capacity of beneficiaries to meet the needs of their households (education, health, housing, and nutrition) despite the constraints of the Covid context, through effective management of their activities. There is a real willingness to take charge.
  - **NGO IECD**

2022

- **Support for the development of a market gardening site in Moungoungui** by granting agricultural tools.
  - Improving **food security** and livelihoods benefits from a group of 30 host and refugee community members (60% women)
  - **German Embassy**

- **Participation in training on agropastoral management techniques**
  - Access to training on techniques for managing agropastoral activities in Kinkala (Pool) of an asylum seeker from Bouémba and a Congolese from Bouanga (Plateaux) who subsequently allowed the realization of their livestock projects with financial support from UNHCR.
  - **FAO**

Promoting environmental preservation 17,030 USD

2021

- **Training and provision of farming tools** to 50 members of the environmental protection brigade in reforestation and erosion treatment techniques.
  - **Community capacity-building to fight the effects of climate change** through integrated actions: development of water drainage channels, reforestation, revegetation and site backfilling, creation of a 1000-tree nursery in Bouémba.
  - **Fighting erosion in refugee reception sites and reinforcing social cohesion** for the benefit of 8,000 asylum seekers and 5,000 people from local communities.
  - **French Embassy in Congo**

2022

- **Mobilization of the private sector to enhance reforestation activities** and limit the impact of the presence of refugees.

Allocation of **50 cocoa tree seedlings (cash crop) for the Bétou refugees** so that they can support their self-empowerment efforts and contribute to environmental protection efforts by **reducing the cutting of forest plants** for charcoal-making.

Likouala Timber Company

- **Collaboration with the project management units of environment-related projects** (*Projet d'appui aux activités économiques inclusives et résilientes au changement climatique* - ProClimat; *Projet Agroforesterie Nord Congo*) for the inclusion of refugee hosting areas.

Increased consideration of the needs and specificities of refugees and their host communities in project design and implementation.

World Bank

2023

The "Vision Plus" group of refugee market farmers from Bétou (Likouala) has been selected by the government's World Bank-funded Projet d'Appui au Développement de l'Agriculture Commerciale - PDAC in 2023. UNHCR/Armand Christ Kiyaloulou

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