

WATER PROVISION FOR CONGOLESE REFUGEES IN LUNDA NORTE, ANGOLA



16 July 2018

Introduction

Water is vital for the life of refugees and is used for human consumption, hygiene for clothes washing, showers and for agriculture. Water provision is part of the group of Basic Needs and Essential Services that is implemented by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and is included into the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) cluster of the Comprehensive Refugees Response Framework (CRRF). As such, water is always prioritised at the onset of the emergency phase of any humanitarian response as well as during the search for durable solutions.

Refugees in the Lunda Norte province of Angola

Water was provided to the 35,000 Congolese refugees who fled the instability in the Kasai regions of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in 2017. Initially, refugees were settled in two transit centres in the capital of Lunda Norte, Dundo called Mussunge and Cacanda, whilst others were welcomed by the local communities in Dundo and the surrounding areas. Following the decision of the authorities to relocate the refugees to a newly built settlement in Lóvua Municipality, some 13,600 refugees moved to Lóvua between August 2017 and March 2018. However, nearly 8,700 refugees are waiting in the communities in Lunda Norte with the aim of relocation to Lóvua in the near future.



Figure 1: Refugees in Lóvua settlement waiting to receive water © UNHCR/Omotola Akindipe

Water trucking

Water trucking has been introduced in the operation as an initial way to provide refugees with potable water in the transit centres in Dundo and the Lóvua settlement. It involves four steps:

1. Water is collected from a designated water source and water trucks utilise motorised pumps and generators to draw water from the source, a creek (cf. figures 2) near the Lóvua settlement, to the trucks. As springs are perennial, the water source does not deplete, even during dry seasons.
2. The water is then disinfected with chlorine prior to distribution. During the rainy season, more chlorine is required as rainfall may cause an increased level of contamination.
3. The disinfected water is distributed to each village using water tanks or bladders that have been installed in each of the occupied villages over the 56 planned for development in Lóvua.
4. After the distribution of water in Lovua, visits are carried out to each village 30 to 40 minutes after distribution to assess the level of residual chlorine as safe drinking water falls between 6-8.5pH.



Figure 2: The spring situated in a creek where water trucks collect water from for the Lóvua refugee settlement © UNHCR/Omotola Akindipe

At the time of writing, some 13,600 refugees are currently living in Lóvua settlement. There are three project partners (Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) and People In Need (PIN)) who implement WASH activities with the financial support from UNHCR and UNICEF. NCA, LWF and PIN have been providing water services to refugees including the construction of water facilities and water distribution. The daily average of water supply is 252m³ (252,000 litres), which equates to almost 19 litres per person per day against the standard need for 453.2m³ per day (20 litres per person per day).

The partners use five water trucks, including two provided by the Angolan government, and three, that are leased from private contractors. The current capacity of the water trucks range from 18,000 litres to 20,000 litres per truck. Furthermore, each village has either a water bladder or a tank with the capacity of 5,000 litres each and water management involves five volunteers selected per villages, who form part of a Water Committee.



Figure 3: Water tank in a host community village

Promoting integration and peaceful coexistence between the refugee and host community

As a way of initiating the promotion of integration and ensure peaceful coexistence between the refugee and host communities, four water tanks have been installed by UNICEF, PIN and LWF in four local villages to serve the neighbouring communities. These tanks are filled with water by humanitarian partners several times a week.

Contribution by the Angolan government

In 2017, the Angolan Ministry for Social Welfare, Family and the Promotion of Women (MASFAMU) donated two water trucks to the operation to facilitate water trucking in Lóvua refugee settlement. The trucks were initially handed over to UNICEF and managed by PIN, but they are currently managed by LWF and the division of Civil Protection from the Ministry of the Interior (Protecção Civil). To date, the trucks have provided 8,065m³ of water to refugees.

Future plans for water provision to refugees in Lunda Norte

In order to have a sustainable water delivery and reduce the high cost of water trucking, UNHCR and UNICEF will support the development of boreholes. As part of the strategy, 10 boreholes will be drilled, including three for the host communities. Two companies (DTIG and GEOAGUA) have been identified to construct boreholes that will be complemented by pipelines.

Challenges

Distance and road condition usually determine the timeframe, the speed and frequencies of water delivery. During the emergency and transitional phases of an operation, water trucking is the ideal way to respond quickly to the population need, but not the ideal way to sustain water provision as a longer term solution.



Figure 4: Sandy road on the way to the water source
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The tropical climate in Lunda Norte involves a lengthy 7-month rainy season (October – April) followed by a dry period. Due to the poor road infrastructure, it can be difficult for water trucks to reach the water point. A similar observation was made during water distribution in the Lovua settlement, however there has since been a tremendous improvement in road infrastructure with the construction of 50km of road within the settlement.

A key challenge is also the organisation of the government water trucks that, at times, can be unreliable. For instance, several times the tyres have become flat therefore making the trucks unable to move, which has forced trucks from NCA to divert their routes to cover the villages that are usually serviced by the government trucks. This means that some villages may receive more than 19 litres per person, whilst others may receive no water and this makes planning quite difficult.

Views of beneficiaries



Figure 5: A leader of a host village at the water point donated by the humanitarian response © UNHCR/Omotola Akindipe



Figure 6: a refugee woman collecting water at a water point in Lovua settlement © UNHCR/Omotola Akindipe

The views of the beneficiaries are important in any service provision. The village that was approached stated that they were happy with the provision of water. The additional 10,000 litres per week that the host community receives from humanitarian partners is considered adequate by the leader of the community as it forms part of the overall water needs. The refugee female (Figure 6) who is a member of a Water Committee mentioned that the water is sufficient for the needs of the village.

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