

REPUBLIC OF CONGO

UNHCR OPERATIONAL UPDATE

01 – 31 March 2016

KEY FIGURES

168

Unaccompanied minors assisted by UNHCR

20,138

NFIs distributed

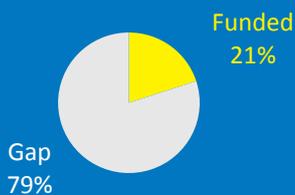
100

SGBV survivors who have received support from UNHCR

FUNDING

USD 10,865,000

requested for the operation



PRIORITIES

- Operational priority 1 in the coming weeks :ensure registration and documentation of all CAR refugees
- Operational priority 2 in the coming weeks :lifesaving activities for CAR refugees living in northern Congo
- Operational priority 3 in the coming weeks :reduce exposition to SGBV, especially in camps
- Operational priority 4 in the coming weeks: reinforce assistance for education, including secondary education and vocational activities.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Despite the swearing oath of Central African Republic's new President Faustin-Archange Touadera and the appointment of his former campaign director as Prime Minister, UNHCR offices in Betou and Brazzaville are still registering the arrival of CAR asylum seekers at a rate of ten (10) on a daily basis in the Republic of Congo. This few newly arriving refugees explained UNHCR staff that their country is plagued by security instability and lack of social peace due to abuses still being committed by some active militias.
- Presidential elections took place on the 20th March in the Republic of Congo. The slogan "dead city" has been observed several times all over the country especially in Brazzaville and Bétou Field Office, following the announcement of the re-election of incumbent President Denis Sassou Nguesso. However the political climate didn't affect UNHCR's operations in the country.
- Celebration of International Women's Day on March 8 in Bétou

Population of concern

LOCALITIES	NUMBER
Bétou	16.937
Impfondo	1.206
Ouéssou/Pokola	607
Brazzaville	8.434
Pointe noire	1.469
TOTAL	28.653

UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENTS

Operational Context

Final results: Republic of Congo's president is re-elected

The Republic of Congo's Constitutional Court has published the final election results stating that President Denis Sassou N'Guesso, who has been ruling for more than 30 years, has been re-elected. The results issued by the head of the court, Auguste Iloki, presented Sassou N'Guesso winning with 60 percent of the constituency, followed by Guy Brice Parfait Kolelas with 15 percent and Jean Marie Michel Mokoko with nearly 14 percent. Of more than 2 million people making the constituency, 69 percent participated in the elections, according to the court.

However the political climate didn't affect UNHCR's operations in the country.

Achievements



Protection

Achievements and Impact

- Continuous registration in the country remain a priority for protection and assistance. UNHCR offices of Betou and Brazzaville continue to receive non-registered refugees during the biometric registration operation that took place from August to December 2015 all over the country. UNHCR with its government partner CNAR (National Committee for Assistance of Refugees) ensured registration of all CAR refugees and enrolment in the new biometric system. The CNAR has a presence in Brazzaville as well as in Betou, Impfondo, Ouesso, Pointe Noire and Loukolela where CAR refugees and asylum-seekers are located.
- On an international level, the 2016 theme for International Women's Day was "*Planet 50-50 2030: Step it up for Gender Equality*". In Bétou, UNHCR organized with its partners WFP (World Food Program), AARREC (Agence d'Assistance aux Rapatriés et Réfugiés du Congo), TSF (Terres Sans Frontières). 60 CAR refugees benefited from presentations on several sub-themes adapted to the socio-cultural, political and professional realities. Among the themes covered were: women empowerment, women and sexual violence / gender, women and HIV/AIDS, psychosocial response. During the presentations, CAR refugee women gave their testimonies by presenting their experience in the rural area, including the female director of the Bétou College. Several activities took place including a solidarity march, singing and dancing.
- Among UNHCR priorities in 2017, to enable conditions for voluntary repatriation of CAR refugees and to mobilize support for returnees.



International Women's day Walk : CAR Women refugees and asylum seekers promoting equal rights and women empowerment in the Republic of Congo/Bétou/March 08, 2016/UNHCR

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- UNHCR is negotiating the CAR refugee status determination with the government. Indeed, 2,216 CAR asylum seekers have not obtained refugee status since Government of Republic of Congo announced the end of the Prima Facie refugee status for those who arrived in the country after 20 July 2015. All those who arrived since then are not recognized as refugees and are registered by UNHCR as asylum seekers.

Education

Achievements and Impact

- From 24 to 26 March 2016, Primary Education Council of the Bétou district organized a workshop to strengthen teaching and managerial capacities, with financial support from UNHCR through its Education partner AARREC. A total of 100 teachers from both public and private education were expected. They represented 14 schools in the District, among 09 public schools attended by refugee students. This workshop brought together 95 teachers including 40 CAR volunteers. During these sessions, school failure causes have been identified and teachers should be able to suggest corrective measures.
- For 2016 school year, 3033 CAR refugees including 1405 girls are enrolled in primary school in the public schools of Bétou.



Training workshop for primary school teachers at Bétou (from 24 to 26 March 2016)

Health

Achievements and Impact

- Awareness raising session on "Women and HIV, women and violence, their psychosocial consequences and responses", during the celebration of World Women's Day March 8, 2016. More than a hundred women refugees participated in the activities.
- UNHCR's medical partner held a sensitization session on severe malnutrition in the rural areas in which 960 CAR refugees took part. Various topics were discussed including the prevention of severe acute malnutrition in children aged between 6–59 months and the benefits of breastfeeding. Also a training workshop of primary school teachers in Bétou (from 24 to 26 March 2016).
- UNHCR continues to provide primary health care and essential drugs to health centres through its implementing medical partner Terre Sans Frontières.
- Complex medical cases are referred to hospitals for secondary and tertiary care and medical evacuations organized from the rural areas to Brazzaville in accordance.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Ambulance for emergency management broken down
- Lack of adequate number of male and female condoms, Immunocomb serological test and delivery kits.
- Malnutrition remains a serious public health concern in the rural areas. Seven (7) moderate acute malnourished children (MAM) became severe acute malnutrition (SAM) cases. The supplementation program has not been effective during this month of March 2016 due to the lack of nutritional supplements (plumpy sup, CSB and oil) from World Food Program (WFP) who are currently facing nutritional supplement stock out. However, WFP country office with the collaboration of UNHCR in Brazzaville have already taken logistical arrangements to issue these commodities in Bétou by river or land routes.
- Reduced number of healthcare workers (including nurses and midwives) in health facilities in Bétou and Moualé are leading to work overload of the health staff who receive an average of 70 to 100 patients daily. This can have a considerable influence on the health care quality. Thus, for strengthening there is need for an increase number of health staff in these facilities.



Water and Sanitation

Achievements and Impact

- The World Water Day was celebrated on Wednesday, March 30 in Betou after having being delayed due to the March 20 elections. After speeches made by local officials, films and presentations were shown to raise the participants' awareness of water quality. CAR refugees were invited to this celebration, through the members of health and wells managing committees. Water films were screened, followed by talk-debate.
- UNHCR has built to date 18 wells for the site of 15 Avril and 22 wells at Betou Centre. UNHCR is also proceeding to their regular treatment and maintenance. For March, bacteriological analysis were carried out on two specific wells in Bétou. Results from this research showed that in general the water remains safe for consumption.



Shelter and NFIs

Achievements and Impact

- Through the Congolese Red Cross (Impfondo branch), UNHCR provided prompt support in the form of NFIs to the 10 CAR refugees arrested at Bétou and detained at the Impfondo prison for theft, embezzlement charges. The donation consisted of mats, buckets, soap, jerry cans and blankets to improve refugee's condition of detention. This support is a response to complaints made by refugees during the last UNHCR mission to Impfondo. On this occasion, the UNHCR monitoring mission was given a guided tour of the Impfondo prison.
- UNHCR, through its distribution partner AARREC, has distributed NFIs to asylum seekers in March 2016. A total of 178 people (102 families) have been provided with assistance. WFP food aid is the only source of food for refugees.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- During the night of March 10 to 11, heavy rain accompanied by strong winds struck the Betou area and its surroundings. This rain has unfortunately caused considerable damage to the 15 Avril site. All in all, 7 family shelters were damaged (collapsed walls, roofs torn off). However, thankfully there were no casualties.
- UNHCR conducted a monitoring mission to evaluate the housing conditions in the 15 Avril refugee site. It was noted that a hundred (100) families who arrived in 2015 are still using mats, blankets and mosquito nets in poor condition, as the general distribution of NFIs to former CAR refugees took place on 2014. It should be noted that consumable supplies such as soaps or hygiene kits are available monthly. But the non-consumable supply list such as mats or blankets should be renewed on an annual steady pace. UNHCR managed to renew these items.



Food Security and Nutrition

Achievements and Impact

- End of WFP food distribution for the month of March on the southern river route.
- Missions were conducted to the southern sites of Ite, Eboko Liboko, South Africa, Eboko Boyele. In all these sites, CAR / DRC refugees were informed about the issues of distribution lists and procedures for identifying vulnerable refugees by UNHCR and its partners

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- The low-water period enables practice of the river only between May and November. That impedes food availability on ground and provisions must be made during that period to make sure rations are available on time for distribution.
- Reduced ration are distributed to refugees

- During this operation the following amenities are distributed: Rice, 300 g per day, a ration of 30 days per person; Beans, 100 g per day, a ration of 30 days per person; Oil, 20 g per day, a ration of 30 days per person; Salt, 5g per day, a ration of 60 days per person.

Community Empowerment and Self-Reliance

Achievements and Impact

- In 2015 and for lack of financial resources, our activities relating to income-generating activities have been limited to monitoring groups set up in 2014. Those who practice fishing on the contrary are now better equipped than others. Results of their campaigns are difficult to quantify given that more often sales are made off the river. For food crops, one will wait for crop to reach maturity. UNHCR obtained from the Mayor, 20 ha of arable land made available to refugees.
- The partnership with the Catholic Church has provided with 1 ha for vegetable crops, opposite to the site of the 15 Avril and in the extension of IKPENGBELE site, one also has spaces for gardening. The fishing zones on the river are not prohibited to anyone, which enables all fishers to go about their business quietly. A breeding space is also available at the 15 Avril site.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Refugees who have chosen to do market gardening found themselves faced with seeds supply problem and some of them had to give up. These new market gardeners having a weak control of seed production techniques, an additional support seems necessary to us
- A great number of families who have implemented activities on their own are always expecting support in order to improve their little business. A need of support in this sector is important. Those Income Generating Activities will facilitate autonomy of those persons and will help with their integration.
- However, with the arrival of new families from CAR, many other persons forming clusters have been waiting for support. The situation is still unstable in Mouale and Mokabi where no policy assistance has been put in place so far. There is a strong need to have machines to facilitate the tilling of land.
- It is also necessary to continue advocating to facilitate access to the land and to the natural resources. Diversify the inputs to facilitate the multi-cropping in the Betou area.
- At year end, following the reduction of the quantities of food by WFP, we noticed a real passion of refugees in the gardening sector and food crops. Unfortunately, we were unable to meet the lack of equipment and seeds.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

UNHCR is very grateful for the financial support provided by donors who have contributed to UNHCR activities with broadly earmarked funds as well as for those who have contributed directly to the situation.

However, support for higher education requires more funds in the Republic of Congo. The lack of resources to support CAR students enrolled in secondary education led to interruption of their studies at the primary level.

Moreover, UNHCR in the Republic of Congo currently covers less than 30% of needs in NFIs.

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Links:

UNHCR operation page

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