

Southern Africa Operational Update

1 - 30 September 2021

Highlights

Voluntary repatriation: UNHCR facilitated returns for Burundian, Central African, Congolese and Rwandan refugees.

Refugee inclusion: World Bank social safety nets project launched in the Republic of the Congo, with technical support from UNHCR.

COVID-19: Vaccination rollout across the region, with persons of concern included in vaccination plans and receiving doses.



Displaced and host community girls play football in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique, in a game organized by UNHCR. © UNHCR/Martim Gray Pereira

During the month of September:



8,122 people accessed outpatient care in **Zambia** in facilities supported by UNHCR



1,449 refugees repatriated from the **Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)**



2,746 IDPs reached with food and household items in Cabo Delgado, **Mozambique**



278 refugee families received shelter assistance in **Republic of the Congo**



2,650 unique visits to UNHCR **South Africa's** new 'Help' website



200 smallholder farmers trained on basic marketing skills in **Angola**

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)

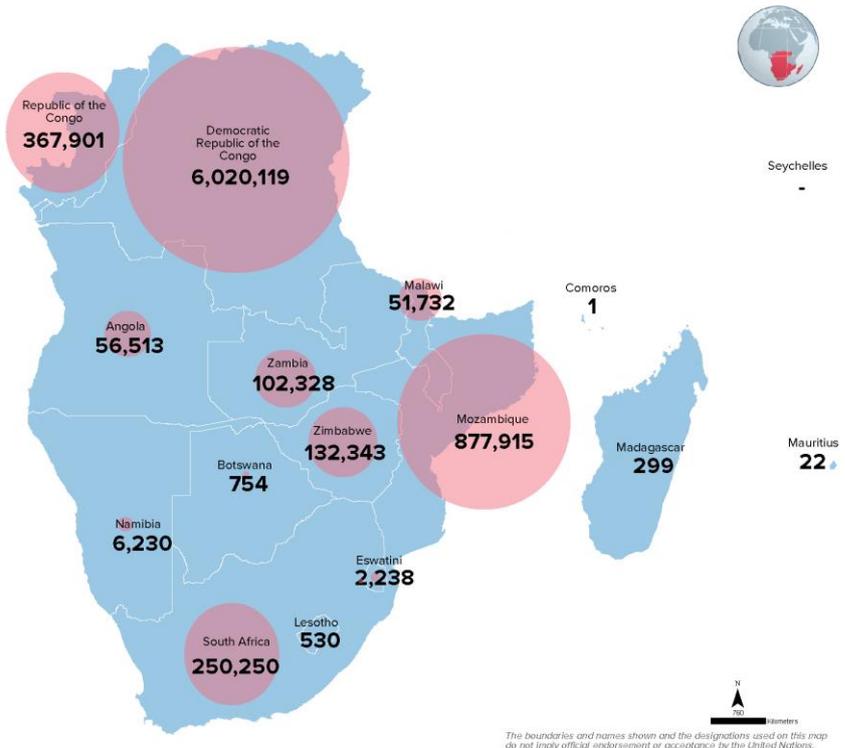


394,960 returnees



36,498 other persons of concern

(as of 30 September 2021)



Operational context: Key developments

Access: Humanitarian access has a significant impact on UNHCR's operations, particularly in complex emergencies and internal displacement contexts. In Mozambique, access has improved in Palma District, after UN security specialists conducted a rapid security assessment mission to the town of Palma Sede and nearby areas on 6 September. The security report concluded that humanitarian missions could be conducted in neighbourhoods in Palma including Afungi, Palma Sede, Quitunda and Quionga, with the necessary internal and government clearances. Meanwhile, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), nearly 30 per cent of all refugees from the Central African Republic remain in hard-to-reach border areas. This is not in line with the UNHCR standard to settle refugees at least 50 kilometres from the border with their country of origin to ensure safety and preserve the humanitarian and civilian character of asylum. Their location also renders the delivery of protection and assistance difficult, with poor road and communication networks causing severe logistical challenges including difficulties procuring items locally or transporting construction materials, leading to delays in the implementation of activities. UNHCR continues to engage with government, partners and other relevant stakeholders to advocate for improved access, amidst security and administrative barriers, and to seek innovative solutions to logistical challenges.

Voluntary repatriation: Returning home remains a dream for most refugees and asylum-seekers, and voluntary repatriation is one of the durable solutions supported by UNHCR for those who wish to return home. In the DRC, as of 30 September, more than 8,000 Central African refugees living in camps in North and South Ubangi Provinces confirmed their desire to return voluntarily to their country of origin during an intention survey carried out by UNHCR and the Government's National Commission for Refugees (CNR). The first convoys are scheduled to depart in October from Mole camp for Bangui. Meanwhile, in Zambia, the operation has established a joint task team with UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to draft a voluntary repatriation plan for approximately 5,000 individuals who have expressed an intention to return to the DRC by 31 December 2021.

Operational highlights

Angola

- **Border monitoring:** UNHCR and partners conducted border monitoring missions to Tchissanda, Furi, Tchikolondo and Itanda, on the border with DRC, aimed at evaluating the security situation, the status of infrastructures at transit centres, the state of roads, and to establish modalities for early warning for possible influxes. The team observed the situation along the border to be calm with no indications of new arrivals.
- **Documentation and assistance to persons with specific needs:** Protection teams registered 20 newborns, identified and recorded 121 persons with specific needs, issued 122 registration documents, and served 70 persons of concern at the Protection Hub in Lóvua refugee settlement.
- **Health and hygiene support:** 1,260 primary health consultations were carried out (1,085 refugees and 175 host community), while 24 antenatal and 102 prenatal visits were recorded, along with 19 live births. Additionally, 17 medical staff and health mobilizers were trained on referral pathways and case management, while 10 hygiene awareness sessions were carried out and attended by 480 individuals.
- **Livelihood training:** Two hundred smallholder farmers from 10 farmers clubs received training in basic marketing skills (SMART Skills) for agricultural production.
- **Shelters damaged:** Heavy rains affected and damaged 105 shelters in Lóvua refugee settlement. Repair work began immediately, and most houses were fully repaired by the end of the month.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

- **Voluntary repatriation:** UNHCR facilitated the voluntary repatriation of 185 Rwandan refugees and 1,264 Burundian refugees to their countries of origin in dignity and safety from North and South Kivu Provinces. So far, a total of 1,438 Rwandan refugees and 6,789 Burundian refugees have been repatriated from the DRC in 2021.
- **Gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and response:** Sixty-one cases of GBV were recorded in North Kivu, including 42 cases of rape. Among them, 39 survivors received medical assistance within 72 hours and 41 benefited from emergency cash assistance, helping them to reach vital medical, legal or psychosocial services, to seek shelter or to be reunited with family members.
- **Cash assistance:** UNHCR and the World Food Programme reached 30,937 South Sudanese refugees through a joint cash-for-food distribution in the three sites in Haut-Uele and Ituri Provinces, to meet their most urgent needs.



*A group of Rwandan refugees who requested voluntary repatriation from the Democratic Republic of the Congo board the bus which will bring them to Gisenyi, in Rwanda.
© UNHCR/Antonia Vadala*

- Central African Republic Situation:** UNHCR and CNR continued distribution of refugee identity cards in North and South Ubangi Provinces. As of 30 September, over 7,000 IDs have been distributed in Modale and Boyabu sites, to ease movement of refugees, prevent unlawful arrests and detention, and facilitate access to socio-economic services. UNHCR and CNR intend to distribute about 40,000 such IDs this year. In addition, following advocacy by UNHCR and CNR, local authorities in Bosobolo Territory, North Ubangi Province, have provided over 9,000 hectares of arable land for use by Central African refugees, many of whom arrived during the latest influx. Another 3,000 hectares have been approved by local authorities of Modale, North Ubangi Province, to allow farming by newly relocated refugees.

Malawi

- Registration:** 382 people were individually registered, including 230 new arrivals and 152 new-born babies. Most new arrivals came from South Kivu Province in the DRC. Among refugees hosted in Malawi, those from the DRC remain the largest group, accounting for more than a third of individuals, with smaller groups from Burundi and Rwanda.
- Engagement on refugee education:** UNHCR engaged the Ministry of Education and development partners to advance the agenda of refugee inclusion in education systems, and UNHCR has become a member of Local Education Group and Development Partners Group. To date, advocacy has resulted in refugee schools benefiting from COVID-19 cash grants on par with national schools.
- Camp overcrowding:** Dzaleka refugee camp was initially established to accommodate up to 12,000 people and is now heavily congested hosting a population of over 51,000. The situation has become more concerning as the Government of Malawi issued a relocation order for refugees living in rural and semi-urban locations to return to back to the camp. This is not only a step back in the push towards an out-of-camp policy, but it is also expected to increase pressure on space and shelter in the camp. A contingency plan has been drawn up to mitigate the situation.

Mozambique

- Distributions in IDP communities:** UNHCR, along with NGO and government partners distributed food, household, and hygiene items to 2,746 people in Empire and Mavala/Angalia IDP sites in Balama, Cabo Delgado.
- GBV response survey:** UNHCR conducted focus group discussions with community volunteers and midwives in Pemba, Cabo Delgado Province. Main GBV risks identified were sexual exploitation of women and children; child labour and risk of sexual abuse; and trafficking and sexual slavery. In addition, lack of access to specialized health-care services; case management; and accessing mental health and psycho-social support were identified as the major challenges in Pemba, with existing services understaffed, functioning at reduced capacity and overwhelmed due to the influx of IDPs. Additional partners and government support are required to scale-up specialized GBV services.



Distribution of core relief items to displaced and host communities in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique. © UNHCR/ Martim Gray Pereira

- **Instant Network Schools (INS):** UNHCR has identified 10 new schools for expansion of the INS Project, following technical assessments in schools in refugee-hosting areas of Nampula District. Expansion plans were discussed in a meeting with the National Director of Secondary Education, and a UNHCR Education team from headquarters and the Regional Bureau were on mission to Nampula to support the process. Next steps include meetings with the local authorities and workshops with INS coaches and teachers.
- **Voluntary repatriation:** UNHCR carried out the voluntary repatriation of seven individuals to Kinshasa, DRC, and nine Burundians back to Bujumbura, Burundi.

Republic of the Congo

- **Launch of the Lisungi safety net system project:** The World Bank project aims to help the Government of the Republic of the Congo foster socioeconomic inclusion for refugees and host communities primarily in Likouala region as well as in Brazzaville and Pointe Noire. As of 30 September, the conditional cash transfer, for which UNHCR is providing technical support, began rolling out to vulnerable individuals, so far reaching 1,140 persons out of 2,758 planned. To complement the launch, UNHCR completed eight workshops, where more than 120 decision makers and over 270 local authorities were trained on refugee protection, economic inclusion and the Global Compact on Refugees.
- **Prevention of statelessness:** With the aim of reducing the risk of statelessness in indigenous communities, the Congolese Ministry of Justice, with support from UNHCR, completed a 25-day campaign to issue birth certificates to indigenous peoples in the departments of Sangha, Cuvette-Ouest and Plateaux. A total of 5,000 birth certificates were issued during the campaign.
- **Protection training:** Fifty public officials and humanitarian partners participated in UNHCR protection training on the prevention and response to GBV. During the session, they drew up a road map to prevent and fight against GBV, and to promote women's dignity through their daily actions.
- **Shelter improvements:** In Bétou, 228 refugee families received shelter kits to renovate their houses. In Bouemba, 50 refugee housing units (RHU) were reinforced with wooden posts to ensure their durability and weather resistance. A total of 170 units will be reinforced through this process in 2021.
- **Livelihood support:** In Bétou, 220 market gardeners, including 162 refugees, received tillage kits, comprised of seeds and fertilizers, to increase income generation and improve their living. In Bouemba, 72 fishermen received fishing equipment to support their income generation.



*Reinforcing RHUs with wooden posts to increase weather resistance in Bouemba, Republic of the Congo.
© UNHCR/Harlette Mafouenta*

South Africa Multi-Country Office

- **South Africa page on UNHCR's 'Help' website:** The operation launched a South Africa page on UNHCR's 'Help' website – accessible at the following link: <https://help.unhcr.org/southafrica/>. On this page, refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless persons can find information to know more about their rights, obligations and services available to them in South Africa, including where to seek further assistance and answers to frequently asked questions. There were 2,650 unique visits to the website in September.

- **Refugee status determination training:** As part of the Asylum Decisions Backlog Elimination Project – whereby UNHCR is supporting the Government of South Africa to process more than 150,000 pending asylum claims over the next four years – 31 new members of the Refugee Appeals Authority underwent refugee status determination training. Delivered by UNHCR and partners, the training aims to prepare the new members to begin adjudicating the asylum appeals backlog.
- **Durable solutions:** Resettlement submissions stood at 571 individuals submitted to six different resettlement countries. Additionally, 73 individuals have departed for resettlement primarily to Europe, Canada and Australia, while the moratorium on the departures to USA is being lifted with departures resuming and eight individuals departed during the reporting period.

Zambia

- **Support to health facilities:** UNHCR supported the Ministry of Health with assorted medicines and medical supplies in three settlement health facilities, which serve persons of concern and the host community. The supplies helped to improve the quality of healthcare provision and benefited 8,122 people who accessed the outpatient department during the month.
- **Livelihoods and self-reliance:** UNHCR continued providing solutions-oriented support for livelihoods and self-reliance, while advocating for the inclusion of refugees and other persons of concern in the national system. More than 130 business owners benefited from cash-based interventions to grow their businesses and improve their livelihoods. The cash assistance totalled US\$ 58,211.
- **Orientation on learning tablets:** Learners in schools in the three refugee settlements were oriented on how to use learning tablets. The 500 tablets were procured under funding from Education Cannot Wait, intended to support distance learning initiatives in the camps.

Zimbabwe

- **Training and awareness-raising:** Nineteen community-based rehabilitation assistants attended a one-day workshop on mental health and psycho-social support organized by the Department of Social Development. The aim of the training was to strengthen community-based protection structures in assisting affected individuals and families. The training also enhanced access to knowledge on handling personal stressors, GBV services available and prevention of sexual exploitation in abuse. In addition, GBV and child protection awareness sessions about reporting and referral pathways for protection incidents continued, with 455 individuals reached.
- **Refugee status determination and documentation:** UNHCR and the Government continued to issue identity documents for refugees and asylum-seekers, including 600 photo slips and 490 ration cards. Furthermore, preparatory activities for refugee status determination sessions led by Government have begun in Tongogara refugee camp. These comprise verifications and case preparation for 94 asylum-seekers scheduled to be assessed by the Zimbabwe Refugees Committee in October.
- **World Sanitation Week:** Commemoration of World Sanitation week was marked on 29 and 30 September. Clean-up campaigns were conducted to promote sanitation at the community level.

Spotlight: Regional NGO Consultations for Southern Africa

The 2021 Regional NGO Consultations for Southern Africa brought together UNHCR, the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), international and national NGOs, civil society and refugee-led organizations from across the region. The event was an opportunity for participants to share experiences, good practices and lessons learned, and to constructively discuss opportunities and challenges in the region.

The event was held virtually from 1 to 3 September, with daily sessions covering three themes: 1) Localization of humanitarian action and engagement with communities; 2) Partnerships in challenging times; and 3) Implementation of the Global Refugee Forum pledges. Session speakers were from UNHCR, ICVA, NGOs, refugee-led organizations, women-led organizations and community-based organizations.

Recommendations from the sessions, which are highlighted in the final report, will feed into the meetings of UNHCR's Executive Committee in October 2021 and the High-Level Officials Meeting on the Global Compact on Refugees in December 2021, as well as the 2022 Global NGO Consultations. An action plan will be devised based on the recommendations, acting as a blueprint for the subsequent steps in the process of localizing the humanitarian response, strengthening partnerships and bringing the Global Refugee Forum pledges to fruition.

More information is available on the [dedicated website](#).



“To make a difference, we need to work together. Governments, UN agencies, NGOs and civil society organizations should work in harmony, focused on supporting people in need.”

*Dr. Emmanuel Taban, keynote speaker,
leading Pulmonologist in South Africa,
and former refugee*

COVID-19

There were 4,024,357 reported cases of COVID-19 in the 16 countries of the Southern Africa region as of 28 September. The rate of infection continued to drop across the region, with the number of active cases in the month of September almost halved in comparison with the previous month. Some 990 cases of COVID-19 have been reported among persons of concern to UNHCR since reporting began in 2020. The low case rate is in part due to lack of testing facilities and reliance on voluntary reporting.

Vaccination rollout continues across the region. As of 27 September, 8,801 persons of concern had received at least their first dose, of whom 2,799 are fully vaccinated. Some 79 per cent of persons of concern who have received at least one dose are refugees and asylum-seekers, while 21 per cent are IDPs. These numbers mainly reflect people in camps and settlements as it is difficult to track vaccination in urban areas.

COVID-19 response highlights from September include:

- **Angola:** The vaccination campaign began in Lóvua refugee settlement in the second half of September, with 709 refugees and asylum-seekers receiving their first dose. Vaccination will continue into October, accompanied by an information campaign to raise awareness about the benefits of vaccination. Reaching the urban-based refugees in Lunda Norte is challenging due to lack of documentation amongst the out-of-camp population, but as they remain a priority group within the national campaign the issue has been escalated to ministerial level.

- DRC:** Vaccination continued throughout September, despite logistical challenges following heavy rainfall that compromised the medical supply chain in some areas. As of end of September, vaccination was ongoing for Central African refugees in North and South Ubangi Provinces, and South Sudanese refugees in Haut-Uele and Ituri Provinces. UNHCR is supporting government-run vaccination programmes in refugee- and IDP-hosting areas and is running risk awareness campaigns to combat vaccine hesitancy.
- Zambia:** To address the issue of limited access to testing, UNHCR distributed 12,000 rapid diagnostic testing kits in Meheba, Mantapala and Mayukwayukwa refugee settlements, improving access to testing for the refugee population and local community members using the settlement clinics. Risk awareness efforts are ongoing in the three settlements, which participated in a national vaccine awareness campaign to improve uptake countrywide.
- Zimbabwe:** An outbreak of COVID-19 cases followed the reopening of schools in the Tongogara refugee camp. To encourage mask wearing and other preventive measures in the classroom and boost attendance to lessons broadcast over the local radio station, a targeted awareness campaign was conducted at food distribution points, reaching 455 people affected by the outbreak.



UNHCR handing-over COVID-19 hygiene prevention materials at Mayukwayukwa refugee settlement, Zambia. © UNHCR/Deborah Mwewa

Financial Requirements

UNHCR's financial requirements for the Southern Africa region in 2021 total **US\$ 388.5 million**. As of 28 September, **47 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 13M | Sweden 5.6M | European Union 4.2M | Japan 4.1M | Canada 2.7M | Denmark 2.4M | Education Cannot Wait 2M | Central Emergency Response Fund 2M | UNO-Fluechtlingshilfe 1.6M | 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

Unearmarked contributions (USD)³: Norway 80M | Sweden 66.9M | Private donors Spain 55.7M | Netherlands 36.1M | Denmark 34.6M | Private donors Republic of Korea 28.5M | United Kingdom 28.4M | Germany 26M | Private donors Japan 23.6M | Japan 23.4M | France 20.2M | Switzerland 16.4M | Private donors Italy 14M | Private donors Sweden 13M | 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.