

# DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO COUNTRY REFUGEE RESPONSE PLAN

January 2019-December 2020



**Cover photograph:**

*Burundian refugees at Mulongwe settlement in South Kivu, Democratic Republic of the Congo- UNHCR/Georgina Goodwin*

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## 2019-2020 PLANNED RESPONSE

**546,123**

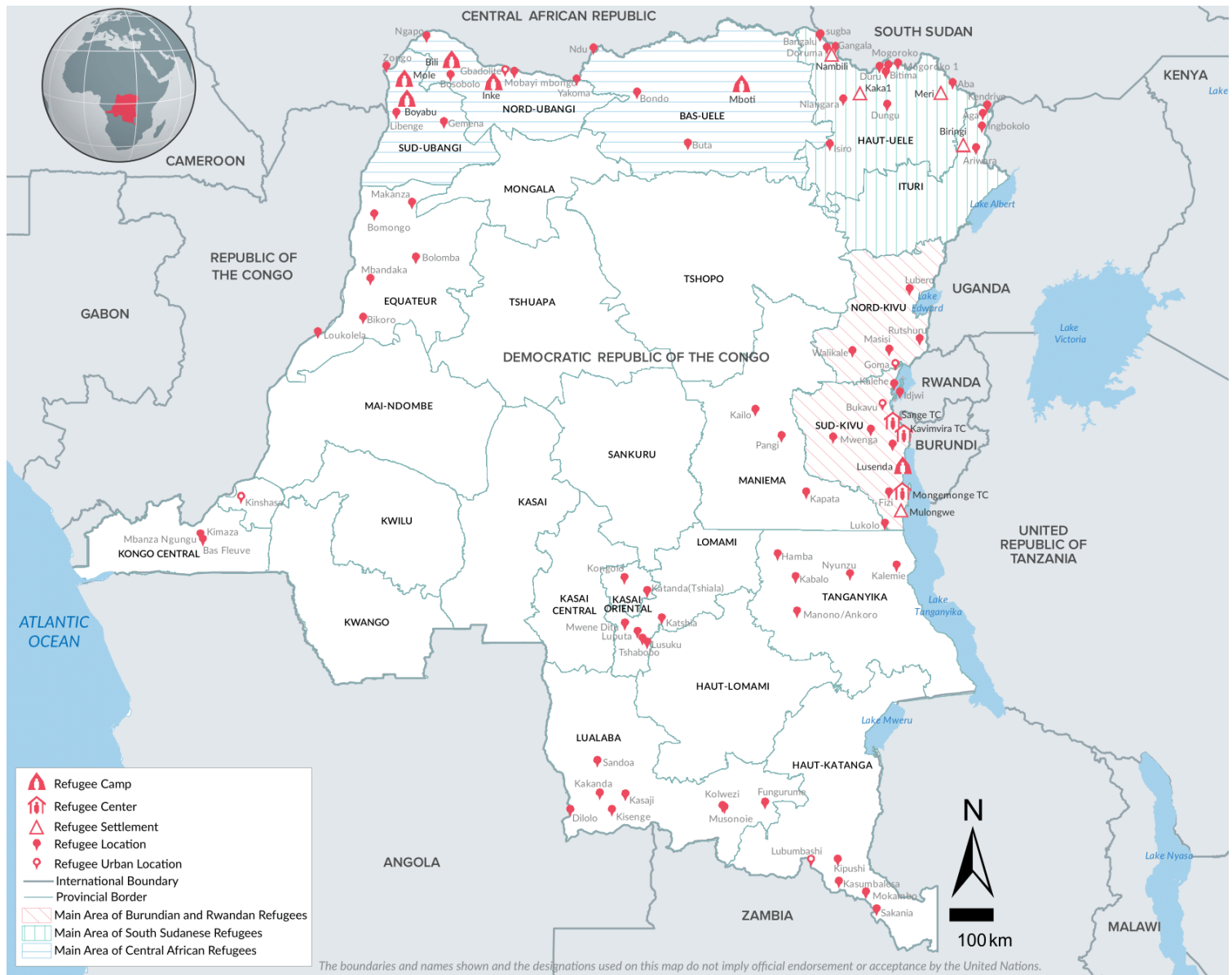
PROJECTED  
REFUGEE  
POPULATION BY 2019

**US\$ 174,637,118**

REQUIREMENTS FOR  
2019

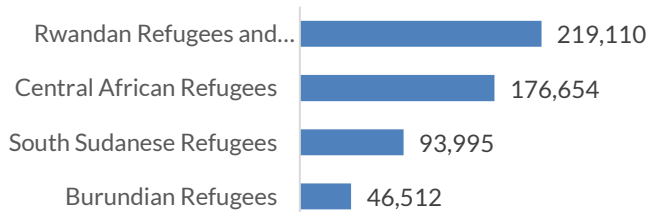
**11**

PARTNERS  
INVOLVED



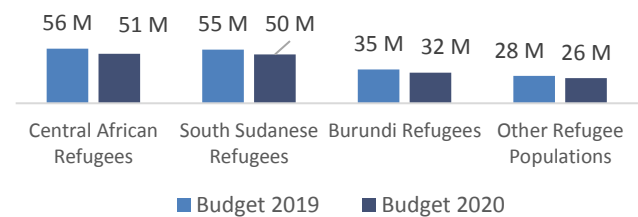
### Refugee Population Trends

As of 1st Sept. 2018



### Requirements for 2019-2020

In millions\$



## Background and Achievements

For decades, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has maintained an “open-door policy” to refugees, welcoming on its territory hundreds of thousands of people fleeing conflict and violence from neighbouring countries. DRC is party to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol, and the 1969 AU Convention. In 2002, the DRC adopted a national refugee law, establishing the CNR (Commission Nationale pour les Réfugiés – the National Refugee Commission) to process asylum applications and ensure the protection of refugees.



To date, the overall political and security situation in the region remains highly volatile with little prospect for large-scale repatriation. Many of the DRC’s nine neighbouring countries face socio-political instability, while the DRC itself is going through a turbulent period, with a lengthy pre-electoral period complicated by internal conflict, large-scale displacement and a challenging humanitarian and development environment.

At the end of 2018, the total refugee population is expected to reach over 546,000, living in communities, in camps, as well as in urban areas.

Refugees from the Central African Republic (CAR) are located primarily in the provinces of North and South Ubangi and Bas-Uele; South Sudanese are largely in the provinces of Haut-Uélé, and Ituri; Rwandans live mainly in the provinces of North Kivu and South Kivu, and Burundians mostly in the province of South Kivu. Urban areas across the country such as Kinshasa, Goma, Bukavu and Lubumbashi also host refugees of other nationalities (including Republic of Congo, Sudan, Uganda and Somalia). Conflict and insecurity in neighbouring countries have resulted in continued arrivals of refugees into the DRC throughout 2018; this trend is expected to continue throughout 2019 and 2020, with high and low periods related to both security concerns and to seasonal changes that affect flight. These continued arrivals, coupled with a drop in voluntary repatriation numbers, create various protection and multi-sectoral needs.

In the Central African Republic (CAR), while there are some improvements in Bangui, and indications that refugees may wish to repatriate there in the coming months, new arrivals have continued to arrive in small numbers throughout 2018. It is expected that the CAR refugee population in DRC will reach around 187,000 individuals by the end of 2018. Discussions are underway regarding preparation for facilitated voluntary repatriation, which will commence if the political situation in CAR becomes more stable and refugees begin to see the situation as conducive for return. Some self organised cross-border movements serve partly to facilitate income generation for those who do not receive assistance, and partly to maintain contact with return areas to facilitate return when that becomes possible.

Despite the presence of armed groups in areas hosting refugees and IDPs, the security situation in South Kivu and the overall protection environment for Burundian refugees improved in 2018, notably in Fizi territory where Congolese forces regained control of large swathes of territory. Burundian asylum seekers continue to arrive in small numbers in DRC, with an expected refugee population of 50,000 individuals at the end of

2018. Despite considerable challenges, including late availability of funds, access and security challenges that restricted movement and an increasingly difficult security context, the new Burundian refugee site of Mulongwe (in Fizi territory, South Kivu province) opened at the end November 2017. The site aims to encourage self-reliance and community participation from the start.

Voluntary repatriation to Rwanda continued in 2018, albeit in much lower numbers than in 2017, when some 18,000 refugees were repatriated. At the request of the DRC Government, UNHCR started in 2018 a large-scale verification and biometric registration of Rwandan refugees in North and South Kivu in an effort to provide a baseline for durable solutions, paving the way towards the Cessation Clause. As of the end of September, some 75,000 Rwandan refugees had been registered in the operation, which is ongoing. With some 70% of registered Rwandans having been born in the DRC, preparations for the invocation of the cessation clause will need to involve steps to facilitate legal stay arrangements for those who have established ties. It is expected that the number of Rwandan refugees in the DRC will decrease significantly in the course of 2019.

In South Sudan, the security and humanitarian situation also remains volatile. With several violations of the cessation of hostilities accord and no agreement in the former Central Equatorial State and Western Equatoria State, current expectations are that arrivals into the DRC will continue in small numbers and that there will be relatively low rates of voluntary repatriation in 2019. The two existing refugee settlements are overcrowded and thousands of refugees are living in communities along the border, facing significant security challenges, as well as a lack of services and food insecurity. A new site has been identified for a refugee settlement, with access to farm land to support self-sufficiency within a limited period. An initial registration and mass information campaign is currently being conducted in the border areas as a precursor to moving refugees to the new site. Plans reflect the expectation that the population will remain at around 100,000 throughout 2019.

Many refugees and asylum-seekers in urban areas face protection risks, including access to documentation and/or expired identity documentation often leading to harassment, violations of freedom of movement, as well as arbitrary, illegal detention, extortion, etc... The vast majority of refugees in the DRC will have participated in biometric registration by the end of 2018, while some smaller communities in less accessible areas will go through the process in early 2019. All refugees in camps and urban areas have been biometrically registered and have received refugee ID cards issued by the Government of the DRC.

Although the right of freedom of movement and access to services including the justice system is guaranteed by law in the DRC, the government has identified designated secure areas (camps or settlements) where refugees can access regular assistance. The government does not prevent refugees who choose to do so from settling in host communities, provided these are sufficiently far from the border and do not pose a security threat for refugees themselves, or for the host country. The socio-economic situation in most of the rural zones hosting refugees is poor, with limited access to basic services, and very few employment opportunities. Medical care, education and other services are all paid for by the user, despite the national goal of making universal primary education and primary healthcare freely available. Refugees have access to the same services as nationals, on the same terms, but suffer from the same institutional weaknesses as their neighbours.

In urban areas, the cost of living is particularly high, access to services is limited, and there is a scarcity of civil society structures in place to address weak state institutions. Urban refugees rely on community networks to survive, and many seek material assistance from partners. A significant portion of education and healthcare services for Burundian and South Sudanese refugees depend on interventions by humanitarian actors, despite the possibility of access to land in rural areas. Camp-based Central Africans also benefit from food and services in the camps, while the majority live in communities and share what few resources and services are available to their hosts. Progress towards supporting self-reliance among refugees has been hampered

by lack of funding and by a paucity of experienced partners willing to engage in isolated areas. With limited resources available, Country RRP partners have been forced to focus almost exclusively on the delivery of assistance and have not been able to take advantage of plans for a more robust approach toward solutions and self-reliance in order to reduce dependency on humanitarian aid.

The overall refugee response is critically underfunded. Core refugee programming in the DRC in recent years has focused on registration and other protection activities, on the development of sites, and on the provision of basic assistance and services to newly arrived populations. The remoteness of certain operational zones combined with high security risks, poor roads and other infrastructural weaknesses represent critical challenges that jeopardize timely provision of assistance in a country around two thirds the size of Western Europe. In some areas, including Haut-Uele, Bas-Uele, and South Kivu, this is further aggravated by lack or limited presence of partners able to contribute to the response with their own funding.

Without sufficient funding to support Country RRP partners in DRC, provision of and better access to protection, shelter, health and nutrition services, cannot be fully delivered. Given the size of the country, with four different refugee populations settled in different regions, and the general lack of infrastructure to facilitate access, Country RRP partners continue to need logistical support to deliver assistance and other programming.

Despite these challenges, local markets in some hosting areas have the capacity and reactivity to respond to some of the refugees' needs in terms of goods and services, allowing for the usage of cash-based interventions as a relevant and flexible response modality. The availability and reliability of private financial service providers to support cash assistance distributions to refugee populations still constitute a challenge, especially in the most remote areas, but the situation is improving: Some Country RRP partners have developed effective partnerships with the private sector to develop this area of work.

Although DRC has not formally adopted the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), many elements of this response are consistent with the 2016 New York Declaration and the practical application of the CRRF in other settings. The response is based on a legal framework which places very few restrictions on refugee inclusion in and access to functional services in hosting areas as well as to the labour market; application of the out-of-camp policy; the availability of irrigable land for crop cultivation, and the promotion of a culture of self-reliance in all aspects of refugees' lives. The Country RRP in 2019 will emphasize relationships with development and peacebuilding partners to improve services for all who reside in hosting areas.



## Population Planning Figures

	Population as of end of December 2018	Planned Population as of end of 2019	Planned Population as of end of 2020
<b>Assisted Refugee Population</b>			
Central African refugees	187,000	164,000	139,000
Burundi refugees	50,000	45,000	35,000
South Sudan refugees	100,000	105,000	108,000
Rwanda refugees	216,377	167,377	142,377
Other refugee groups <sup>1</sup>	1,345	1,345	1,345
<b>Total</b>	<b>554,722</b>	<b>482,722</b>	<b>425,722</b>
<b>Assisted Host Population</b>			
	73,869	67,469	60,069
<b>Total</b>	<b>628,591</b>	<b>550,191</b>	<b>485,791</b>



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