

Zambia

Executive Summary

Following the end to the Angolan conflict in 2002, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), supported the voluntary repatriation of Angolan refugees. From 2003 until 2005, this durable solution was implemented in partnership with the Government of Zambia, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the World Food Programme (WFP). However, as of January 2006, an estimated 35,000 Angolan refugees still resided in refugee camps and settlements namely, Meheba, Mayukwayukwa and Nangweshi in the Northwestern and Western Province of Zambia.

Due to the large number of the residual caseload, the Tripartite Commission between the Zambian and Angolan Governments and UNHCR agreed to extend voluntary repatriation operations into 2006. Based on an intention survey, 12,000 Angolan refugees were targeted for repatriation. A joint appeal by UNHCR and IOM for \$4.8 million was made to fund the operation. Initially, no response was received towards this joint appeal. However, the decision by UNHCR to start the repatriation exercise with the limited resources available triggered some positive response from the American Government. The Government of the United States committed \$1.2 million, which was shared between IOM in Zambia and IOM Angola. The Danish Embassy in Zambia also followed and committed \$1.6 million bringing the total funds available to \$2.8 million, with a shortfall of \$2 million on the initial appeal. All the funds received were channeled to IOM to cover the transportation of refugees.



The names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

The repatriation exercise with one airlift started on 15 August 2006 and increased information campaigns resulted in a steady rise in the number of refugees that showed a willingness to repatriate between September and October 2006. This situation posed further challenges to UNHCR given that the Government had decided to close Nangweshi camp at the end of 2006. This meant that IOM had to either repatriate those willing to go back to Angola (estimated at 8,843) and relocate the remaining caseload (estimated at 6,000) to Mayukwayukwa or repatriate the whole caseload in Nangweshi of up to 15,000 in the event that they opted not to go to Mayukwayukwa. IOM also had to repatriate a further 5,138 refugees from Meheba and 770 refugees from Mayukwayukwa. It would not have been possible for IOM to meet the costs of all these operations with the funds that were available at the time.

UNHCR Zambia then sought funding from the CERF to ensure that the repatriation exercise did not stall in the middle of the operations with people who were willing to repatriate but could not be helped because of insufficient funds. CERF allocated \$500,000 to support both the relocation and the repatriation of the Angolan refugees from Zambia.

Implementation

Table 1: Implementing partners and activities

Implementing partner	Activities
International Organization for Migration (IOM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Arranging the transport and logistics for the physical movement of refugees from the camps to the transit centers ▪ Managing road convoys from the departure centers to the airlift transit centre in Mongu and to the reception centers in Angola, as well as airlifts from Zambia to Angola
Christian Outreach Relief and Development (CORD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In-camp transportation of refugees from their sections/villages to the departure centers in Meheba, Mayukwayukwa and Nangweshi ▪ Rehabilitation and management of departure and transit centers, including the preparation and distribution of food to refugees ▪ Community support services including identification and counseling for the vulnerable refugees prior to and during repatriation ▪ Carrying out HIV/AIDS sensitization campaigns at the departure and transit centers
African Humanitarian Action (AHA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Screening of refugees to determine fitness for convoy movement, provision of medical escorts on road convoys and air-lifts, provision of medical services in Nagweshi departure centre and Mongu transit centre ▪ Management of water transport (speed boat and MV Lubbers ferry) during repatriation
Commissioner for Refugees – Ministry of Home Affairs (COR-MHA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Producing statistical data on the camp's/settlement's refugee population available for UNHCR for voluntary repatriation planning purposes, including for verification of refugees' voluntary repatriation intentions ▪ Escorting all voluntary repatriation convoys by the police officers and the refugee officer so as to guarantee the security of refugees and the humanitarian workers during the convoys ▪ Accompanying each airlift flight ▪ Coordinating and ensuring that the decisions adopted by the Tripartite Commission meetings were applied in the border areas for the

facilitation of repatriation movement, such as waivers, support and involvement of the District Joint Operations Committees (DJOCs)

- Liaising with the Angolan Consulate for the translation of birth, death, and education certificates to Portuguese for those refugees repatriating to Angola.

For UNHCR, each of these partners brought value in terms of their expertise. The tasks required were clearly spelt out according to the expertise of each agency avoiding any overlapping in the implementation of the repatriation exercise. For example, African Humanitarian Action (AHA) was responsible for medical screening and provision of medical services during the entire repatriation exercise and they dealt with any health related matters.

Staff of the implementing partners worked long hours both at the camps, departure centers and transit centers to ensure that the plans were on course. To this effect, the repatriation exercise was conducted in record time, well before the onset of the rains.

Christian Outreach Relief and Development (CORD) contributed substantial resources through the provision of agricultural tools, inputs, and associated training for each family that relocated from Nangweshi to Mayukwayukwa to become self-reliant. This was based on the premise that WFP would only feed the new inhabitants of Mayukwayukwa up to May 2007. It was therefore imperative that those moving to Mayukwayukwa were provided with appropriate agricultural tools and inputs to enable food self-sufficiency. In addition, many of the refugees coming from Nangweshi were not historically farmers and required schooling in farming techniques and subsequent advisory services.

The partners also brought to UNHCR's attention any challenges they were facing in implementation through regular inter-agency meetings that were held on a weekly basis. Furthermore, some agencies took on added responsibilities including staff to ensure that the exercise ran smoothly.

In terms of weaknesses, because 2005 was scheduled to be the last year of organized voluntary repatriation of Angolan refugees, most of the implementing partners were not prepared, institutionally, to implement the repatriation exercise when the decision was made to resume the operation. As a result, most of the implementing partners could only make little contributions towards the project. Additionally, the implementing partners had to stretch the existing budgets to meet additional expenses as a result of resuming the repatriation exercise notwithstanding that the local currency had appreciated by over 30 percent within this period.

Results

The objectives set out at the beginning of the repatriation exercise were to repatriate an estimated 12,000 Angolan refugees to Angola by road and air by the end of 2006 and to relocate an estimated 6,000 Angolan refugees from Nangweshi to Mayukwayukwa who will remain in Nangweshi after the camp is closed

During 2006, 8,309 Angolan refugees were repatriated from Western and North Western Provinces of Zambia. At the same time, 4,971 refugees from Nangweshi who opted not to be repatriated, were relocated to Mayukwayukwa. At the end of the repatriation operation, Nangweshi camp was closed. It is assumed that a large number of people from Nangweshi camp that chose not to be repatriated or to be relocated either returned spontaneously to Angola based on reports received from Angola or headed for Namibia or areas between the Angolan and Zambian borders.

The CERF funding, which was used to reduce the funding gap of 42 percent in the funding requirements for the repatriation and relocation of Angolan refugees, was critical in ensuring that operations did not stall midway. The CERF funding was applied to meet the costs of:

- In-camp transportation of refugees from their sections/villages to the departure centers in Meheba, Mayukwayukwa and Nangweshi. This included fuel and maintenance of trucks,
- Urgent repairs to departure and transit centers. This included provision of lighting, clean up of the surroundings, digging new pit latrines and emergency repairs of dormitories,
- Road repairs in the most critical spots to facilitate movement. Work was done on the Kalongola - Senanga road linking the Nangweshi camp and the Kamapanda – Jimbe road on the way to Cazombo,
- Stationery for printing voluntary repatriation forms (VRFs), issuance of birth and school certificates and testimonials, special ID cards for under five children and unaccompanied minors etc.,
- Information campaigns,
- Provision of water in the departure and transit centers,
- Construction material for refugees that were relocated from Nangweshi to Mayukwayukwa, and
- Staff costs for all the staff involved in the repatriation exercise. This included payment of salaries and daily subsistence allowances for staff escorting convoys

CERF funding was therefore essential in meeting the costs of facilitating and ensuring that the repatriation exercise went on smoothly.

Lessons Learned

One of the major lessons learned is the need for all UN agencies to participate in the repatriation exercise, especially in areas of return. For example, UNDP should participate in infrastructure development in the country of return. UNICEF should take an active role in the situation of children in the country of return. WHO should take an active role in the provision of health services in the country of return e.g. how to take care of the terminally ill who are on anti-retroviral drugs (ARV) if there is no guarantee for continuation in the village of return. All these issues counteract the success of the repatriation exercise as refugees opt not to go back home.

The repatriation exercise should therefore not be seen as the responsibility of UNHCR only. All UN agencies should take an active role from inception.

The second lesson learned, was that continuation of life in the country of return is delayed. Some refugees who owned assets such as hammer mills and livestock were not allowed to repatriate with these assets back home and had therefore no option but to sell them. This meant that the process of quickly re-integrating in their country of return is hampered, as they have to start from scratch. Meanwhile, WFP could only provide food rations for these returnees for a period of less than a year. This again works against the efforts of repatriation as a durable solution.

Related to the above lesson is the need for establishing a system that can facilitate the exchange of currencies as the refugees cross borders. For example, a number of refugees who were selling their assets had kwacha and needed to exchange it for kwanza to be use in Angola.

The third lesson learned, is the need for adequate funding way before the operation starts. The Angolan repatriation in 2006 was greatly hampered by procrastination on the part of donors therefore sending wrong signals to the refugees that the exercise would go ahead as UNHCR did not have funds. By the time the exercise started, a number of the refugees had changed their mind about returning to Angola. Additionally, UNHCR standards were greatly compromised because of inadequate funding.

The fourth lesson is the need for adequate and consistent information campaigns. The repatriation exercise was marred by inconsistent information being given to the refugees causing a lot of anxiety among them. This however could be attributed to combining both repatriation and relocation in the case of Nangweshi camp.

Finally, the timing of the repatriation exercise should be sensitive to weather conditions. In trying to beat the onset of rains, staff worked long hours, there was overcrowding in the transit centre as the flights were either cancelled or delayed due to weather conditions. This could have been a recipe for outbreak of epidemics.