**Rwanda**

**March 2021**

**HIGHLIGHTS**

A. Rwanda hosted a total of 137,975 refugees and asylum seekers at the end of February 2021. The population of concern included mainly persons from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (56.3%) and Burundi (43.5%).

B. 17,644 Burundian refugees in Rwanda voluntarily repatriated to Burundi since August 2020. Most of the returnees are from Mahama camp (17,256) compared to a small number of urban refugees (388).

C. Rwanda has included refugees in the national COVID-19 vaccination program. A total of 416 refugees have been vaccinated so far. As of 14 March, 452 COVID-19 cases had been identified among refugees, 433 had recovered, 15 were still active and 4 deaths had been recorded.

**KEY INDICATORS**

1,069

Refugees departed for resettlement and complementary pathways in 2020 and 31 since January 2021.

515

Refugees and asylum seekers arrived in Rwanda in Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM) since September 2019 and accommodated in Gashora Transit Centre.

**FUNDING (AS OF 16 MARCH 2021)**

USD 90.1 million

requested for Burundi, DR Congo, Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM) in Rwanda.

**UNHCR PRESENCE**

Staff:

- **186** National Staff
- **114** International Staff
- **131** Affiliate (UNV, UNOPS, Refuge Point, and ICMC) Staff.

Offices:

- **Representation Office** in Kigali
- **Sub Office in Kirehe District**
- **Field Offices in Huye, Karongi, Gicumbi, and Bugesera Districts.**
- **Field Unit in Gatsibo District.**

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Working with Partners

- The Government of Rwanda (GoR), through MINEMA, leads the refugee response in the country with UNHCR and partners providing direct operational support, capacity development, and technical advice to the local authorities. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MINAFFET), Directorate of Immigration/Emigration (DGIE), the National Identification Agency (NIDA), and the National Refugee Committee are also involved in the refugee response.

- Rwanda is among eight countries that have piloted the UN Delivering as One approach, in which UN system agencies work to capitalize on the strengths and comparative advantages of the different members of the UN family. UNHCR coordinates the refugee response, ensuring overall protection and multi-sectoral assistance for all refugees, and leads the One UN programme for return and reintegration of Rwandan returnees.

- The Government of Rwanda officially accepted the application of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) in February 2018 and contributes to the progressive implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees. Rwanda made 9 pledges at the Global Refugee Forum (GRF) in December 2019, which focuses on education, livelihoods, protection, environment, energy, and health. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, Rwanda was the first country to develop thematic action plans per pledge. All operational responses are in line with this inclusive protection and solutions approach.

Main Activities

Protection

- Rwanda has been welcoming refugees for over two decades. Rwanda generally provides a favorable protection environment. Rwanda has a National Asylum Law which complies with international standards and refugees are included in the national birth registration system, which decreases the risks of statelessness.

- Since the signature of the Tripartite agreement GoR/AU/UNHCR in September 2019, 515 refugees and asylum seekers have been evacuated from Libya to the ETM Rwanda (incl. 209 in 2020). Movements had temporarily been halted since March 2020 by the COVID-19 pandemic, but resettlement departures have resumed since August 2020 and evacuations flights since 19 November 2020. A total of 215 refugees found a durable solution through resettlement.

Education

- The Government of Rwanda supports the refugee students’ integration into the national education system. UNHCR supports the initiative by building classrooms, science laboratories, and libraries as well as paying teachers’ salaries, in national schools near the camps attended by refugee children and youth. 87% of the refugee students in Rwanda are integrated into national schools.

- In 2021, UNHCR and partners will implement a Connected Learning Program targeting about 17,952 students, both refugees and nationals from Grade 4-6 in 14 public schools in refugee-hosting areas across the country. The objective of the program is to strengthen the quality of primary education, improve teacher ability to manage classrooms and teach using digital tools and online platforms, encourage student participation and generate enthusiasm in classrooms, and improve student enrolment and retention.

Health

- UNHCR Rwanda works to ensure that all refugees have access to life-saving and essential health care, reproductive health care, HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment, and nutritional
well-being through the national Community-Based Health Insurance and camp-based health facilities.

- It has been two years since the Government of Rwanda and UNHCR signed the Memorandum of Understanding to include urban refugees and refugee students in boarding schools into the national Community-Based Health Insurance. This year, 85% of the targeted population has been enrolled.

- Thanks to the Government of Rwanda, refugees in Rwanda were included in the COVID-19 prevention and response plan, including the vaccination campaign. At the beginning of the pandemic, UNHCR, MINEMA camp management, health, and WASH partners as well as refugee leaders were part of the District hosting refugees’ COVID-19 prevention and response task force. The Government prevention and response measures were implemented in the camps, including an extended lockdown period where necessary.

- As of 14 March, 452 cases of COVID-19 had been identified among refugees in Rwanda, 433 had recovered, 15 were still active and 4 deaths had been recorded. Mahama camp continued to come top with most of the cases (312) followed by Kigeme (60), Kiziba (28), Nyabihake (12), Mugombwa (11), ETM Gashora TC (9), Kijote TC (08), Gihembe (06) and Kigali urban (06).

- Health infrastructures were developed and additional 1,336 health workers were recruited and trained to support identified and suspected cases, 30 isolation units were established to attend to suspected cases, a treatment center was built in Nyamagabe District to treat cases identified in Kigeme camp and hosting district and 447,570 facemasks were distributed to refugees and staff.

- As of 14 March, a total of 416 refugees had received their first shot of COVID-19: 224 in ETM Gashora Transit Center, 59 in Kiziba camp, 46 in Gihembe camp, 46 in Nyabihake camp, and 41 in Kigeme camp. The health workers at health posts and centers in the camps were also vaccinated.

- Thanks to the Government of Rwanda through the Ministry of Health, 106,719 refugees aged 15 years and above in the camps had been screened for Viral Hepatitis (B and C) by the end of 2020. Of these, 766 were food positive and enrolled in the treatment program. Om February 2021, 3,338 refugees in the Nyabihake camp vaccinated against Hepatitis B.

### Food Security and Nutrition

- Refugees in all camps receive cash for food from the World Food Program (WFP), apart from refugees in Mahama camp (Burundians) who receive a hybrid of the cash and in-kind food assistance. For the ETM Rwanda, UNHCR provides hot meals daily to the refugees and asylum seekers in the ETM Gashora Transit Center.

- WFP has announced to the refugee community in camps the reduction of the monthly cash for food assistance due to funding decrease in 2021. A reduction of 60% to the individual monthly cash assistance started in March onward and may continue unless otherwise.

- The food and nutrition assistance, other than the general food assistance mentioned above, targeting refugees in camps and returnees in reception centers will continue to be prioritized with full rations. These are nutrition activities that are targeting pregnant and lactating women, children under 2 years of age, and school feeding programme as well as three-month food assistance packages for returnees.

- UNHCR, WFP, and MINEMA are developing a joint graduation program for refugees in Rwanda. The program aims at graduating the camp-based refugees in Rwanda from blanket food assistance provided by UNHCR and WFP to targeted food assistance based on needs starting in the second quarter of 2021. The program is in line with the Government’s commitment to graduating refugees from their dependence on humanitarian assistance, in consideration of the limited resources, to become self-reliant.
Based on selected vulnerability criteria, data from a Joint Post Distribution Monitoring exercise conducted in the refugee camps showed that 71% of the population are highly vulnerable. The assessment took into consideration individual and family existing protection concerns, access to food, livelihood opportunities, economic capacity, and the impact of COVID-19.

**Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)**

- In 2021, WASH objectives are to maintain and increase the level of potable water supply in all the camps by increasing the capacity of water boreholes and water intake from the public Water and Sanitation Corporation (WASAC), repairing the old water grids in the camps to minimize leakages, building water kiosks to protect the infrastructures from vandalism and conducting daily bacteriological sampling to ensure refugees access potable water.

- The adequate quantity of water, 20 liters per person per day standard, is met in Mugombwa, Kiziba, and Mahama camps as well as in all the reception and transit centers. Water shortage remains a problem in Nyabiheke camp (12 liters/person/day) due to the limited capacity of the water borehole, and in Gihembe camp (18 liters/person/day), and Kigeme camp (16 liters/person/day) due to the limited supply capacity from the national water grid.

- As part of the COVID-19 prevention and response activities in camps, 6,044 handwashing facilities were established across all the camps and schools to ensure that refugees have access to adequate water and soaps to meet the sanitation requirement.

- A joint UNHCR and WFP Decentralized Fecal Sludge Treatment (DEFSAT) project are in its early stages of implementation in the Nyamagabe District targeting refugees in Kigeme camp and hosting community. The project aims to improve the sanitation and hygiene conditions and environmental protection as well as supporting livelihood initiatives and provision of a clean cooking solution of both communities through sustainable fecal sludge treatment and production of marketable end-products, such as non-toxic fertilizer used in agriculture and production of cooking briquettes.

**Shelter and Non-Food Items**

- UNHCR provides shelter and communal infrastructures as a core life-saving activity to all refugees living in camps in Rwanda. UNHCR’s shelter and infrastructure strategy in Rwanda consist of providing semi-permanent houses. UNHCR also ensures that camps are well-planned with access roads, drainage systems, and communal spaces such as markets and community halls, to support protection, basic needs services as well as environmental protection.

- Shelters in Congolese camps are old and require constant rehabilitation. In 2020, 2,359 old shelters were rehabilitated, and 210 new shelters were constructed in the camps. Due to constant environmental degradations, including landslides and big ravines due to soil erosion and lack of proper water channels in the camps, families in high risks zones are relocated into new shelters or to other camps, like Mahama with empty shelters left by repatriated refugees. Mahama camp has a total of 6,907 duplex family shelters in mud bricks.

- As of March 2021, 3,292 refugees from high-risk zones in the Kigeme camp had been relocated to Mahama camp. The relocation will continue from Kigeme and 2,459 refugees in the same situation in Gihembe camp will also be relocated to Mahama camp from April this year.

- In terms of non-food items assistance, UNHCR provides all the essential items (soaps, blankets, jerry cans, kitchen sets, sanitary pads, sleeping items, etc.) to all refugees through cash program, except for certain targeted groups, including new arrivals who are still receiving in-kind assistance while waiting for bank registration or according to specific and immediate needs.

**Camp Coordination and Camp Management**
The Government of Rwanda, through MINEMA, and UNHCR co-lead the Camp Coordination and Camp Management mechanisms in Rwanda and ensure that services are delivered efficiently and that refugees are properly protected in the different camps.

Access to Energy

- UNHCR ensures that all refugee households in camps have access to cooking energy through cash assistance program in Congolese camps and the provision of cooking gas to refugees in Mahama camp. In 2021, UNHCR will expand access to cooking gas to Mugumbwa camp.

- Through the Renewable Energy for Refugees project, with a market-based approach, refugee households in Kigeme, Gihembe, and Nyabiheke camps were supported to access clean and renewable electrical energy for their homes and businesses. By the end of 2020, 3,288 households and businesses had Solar Home Systems equaling 46% of the total population of the camps. A total of 185 streetlights were installed in the camps which increased the safety and security in the camps, improved the socio-wellbeing of the refugees as well as business opportunities.

Community Empowerment and Self-Reliance

- UNHCR and partners are working on the activation of the community centers in all the locations, camps, and urban settings, to strengthen the community engagement, including promoting effective communication with the refugees. The focus of the community engagement is currently on youth engagement taking the lead in the organization of community activities. New community centers in Kigeme and Kiziba camps were constructed and others were rehabilitated in other camps to host different activities, such libraries, Information Communication and Technology (ICT) classes, different youth clubs meeting and information sharing sessions, access to the internet, etc.

- Following the COVID-19 prevention and response measures, all community gatherings, including meetings and class sessions organized in community centers were halted. However, UNHCR and partners continued to reach out to the refugee communities through megaphones with pre-recorded messages, bulk messages on SMS and WhatsApp, hotlines, etc.

- In Rwanda, land scarcity remains a challenge to promote agri-business livelihood activities. While refugees enjoy a generally favorable protection environment, the poor situation of the refugee camps and lack of livelihood opportunities mean that most refugees are still highly dependent on humanitarian assistance to meet their basic needs like shelter, food, health, education, nutrition, and energy for cooking.

- To promote refugee self-reliance through livelihood projects, the Government of Rwanda, UNHCR, and partners are collaborating for the implementation of the socio-economic inclusion of refugees in national systems. Agriculture is one of the sectors which was proven to be effective considering the success of the Misizi marshland project in the Mugumbwa camp. The project is going to be replicated in two other locations, Nyabiheke and Kigeme camps together with the host communities.

- Following the COVID-19 lockdown, refugees in urban settings were among the most affected due to the loss of jobs and closure of some businesses that provided them with income to sustain them in urban settings. UNHCR supported 8,136 most vulnerable refugees in urban areas, mostly in Kigali and Huye, with one-time cash assistance.

Durable Solutions

- Following the first tripartite consultation at the technical level between UNHCR and both Burundi and Rwanda on 13 August 2020, UNHCR and partners have deployed all necessary efforts to respect the right of refugees to go back to their country of origin after five years of exile. A total of 17,644 Burundian refugees, 97% from Mahama camp, voluntarily repatriated to Burundi in safety and dignity. UNHCR continues to see a growing number of refugees
willing to return with 8,448 individuals on the waiting list. UNHCR anticipates that 40,000 Burundian refugees from Rwanda will return to their home country in 2021.

- Given the volatile political and security situation, promoted voluntary repatriation is not envisaged for Congolese refugees, though UNHCR has proposed to the GoR that those who wish to voluntarily return may be supported by UNHCR to ensure that they benefit from a return package and be included in the repatriation monitoring plan. This proposal is under discussion for a potential tripartite framework to be developed with the DRC in 2021.

- Following the reduced admissions ceiling for resettlement to the USA, a revised solutions strategy focusing on self-reliance and integration for those who meet the eligibility criteria is envisaged for 2021 and beyond. Resettlement will continue to be pursued as a durable solution for refugees with specific vulnerabilities.

- In 2020, UNHCR submitted 1,789 resettlement cases of refugees with different specific protection needs, 1,501 Congolese, 251 in ETM Rwanda, and 37 Burundians, most to Canada, followed by Norway, France, Sweden, Denmark, Australia, USA, and Finland. This is 89% of the 2020 Rwanda resettlement quota. By the end of the year, 1,069 refugees had departed on resettlement and complementary pathways, 838 Congolese, 194 in ETM Rwanda, and 37 Burundians, the majority to the USA, followed by Sweden, Canada, France, Norway, Australia, and New Zealand.

- In 2021, 31 refugees, 13 Burundians, 21 from ETM Rwanda, and 06 Congolese, have departed for resettlement and complementary pathways.

- UNHCR and partners, including WFP, continue to support Rwandans returning to the country from different locations, the majority from DR Congo. In 2020, 794 Rwandans were received in Kijote Transit Center and assisted to join their previous districts of origin in collaboration with MINEMA. The assistance provided includes reintegration grants, three months food package, health insurance, and documentation.
Financial Information

UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors to this operation as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with unequipped and broadly earmarked funds.

Funding received in million USD 16,253,449

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Other softly earmarked contributions | USD
Germany 5 million

Unearmarked contributions | USD
Norway 80 million | Sweden 66.9 million | Netherlands 36.1 million | Denmark 34.6 million | Germany 22.1 million | Switzerland 16.4 million | Private donors Spain 13.3 million | Ireland 12.5 million | Belgium 11.9 million

Algeria | Armenia | Bulgaria | Canada | Costa Rica | Estonia | Finland | Iceland | Luxembourg | Malta | Monaco | Montenegro | New Zealand | Portugal | Republic of Korea | Saudi Arabia | Singapore | Thailand | Turkey | Uruguay | Private donors

For more information: http://reporting.unhcr.org

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