As of 31 December 2020, a total of 312,615 Burundian refugees were hosted in the four main asylum countries, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. The 2020 Burundi Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRRP) included an appeal for US$ 298.4 million for 37 partners to meet the critical needs of Burundian refugees in these four countries.

The relative stabilization in Burundi since the 2015 crisis and the mostly peaceful political transition in May 2020 offer new perspectives for solutions to this now protracted refugee situation. Since July 2020, an increasing number of Burundian refugees expressed their intention to return home, and close to 40,000 Burundian refugees were assisted in their voluntary repatriation over the course of the year.

In 2020, Burundian refugees continued to face multiple protection risks, in particular gender-based violence (GBV) including survival sex and early marriages as a result of limited access to livelihoods, school closures, overcrowded shelters, lack of domestic energy supply and reduced humanitarian assistance. Refugee children (over 50% of the refugee population) were exposed to particular risks. The situation of unaccompanied and separated children was particularly concerning, as many suffered neglect and adolescents have increasingly resorted to negative coping mechanisms.

The fact that the RRRP remained severely underfunded with only 40 per cent of the resources required led to acute gaps, including food ration cuts, inadequate shelters, lack of medicines, deficient WASH infrastructure and insufficient livelihoods activities. The large majority of the refugee population remained dependent on humanitarian assistance. The COVID-19 pandemic further compounded the situation. RRP partners faced enormous challenges in stabilizing existing programmes and in meeting the minimum standards of service provision, let alone investing in long-term and more sustainable interventions. Notably, severe underfunding compromised the quality of child protection and education, and the capacity to fully provide mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) and GBV prevention and response.

Notwithstanding these challenges, RRP partners promoted an inclusive protection and solutions approach by advocating for refugee integration into national systems, such as education, health, environment, livelihoods, child protection and
Despite heightened tensions in Burundi during the May 2020 elections, there was no major forced displacement inside Burundi or across borders. The new Government of Burundi urged refugees who had fled the country, including government critics and human rights activists, to return home. Since August 2020, an increasing number of voluntary returns have been facilitated from Tanzania and Rwanda, as well as from DRC and one repatriation flight from Uganda. DRC: As of 31 December 2020, a total of 46,829 Burundian refugees were still living in the DRC, most of whom in the province of South Kivu.

Rwanda: By the end of December 2020, Rwanda hosted 66,848 Burundian refugees. The vast majority, 55,658 refugees (83%), resided in the Mahama camp, while 11,190 refugees lived in urban areas, mainly in Kigali and Huye. 674 new Burundian refugees fled to Rwanda in 2020. In the last four months of 2020, RRP partners facilitated the return of 7895 Burundian refugees from Rwanda. 35 refugees with specific needs departed from Burundi for resettlement in third countries.

Tanzania: As of the end of 2020, 147,707 Burundian refugees and asylum-seekers were hosted in Tanzania, residing in the three camps of Nyarugusu, Nduta and Mtendeli. Throughout the year, the Burundi refugee population decreased by 11.5 per cent, as 30,631 Burundians voluntarily returned to Burundi and 18 refugees were resettled to third countries.

Uganda: By the end of 2020, Uganda hosted 49,728 refugees from Burundi. In December, voluntary repatriation was facilitated for 231 Burundian refugees.

2020 Monthly Arrival and Return Trends
In 2020, measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19, food ration cuts, limited livelihood opportunities as well as inadequate humanitarian funding further exacerbated inequalities and heightened protection risks for refugees. An increase in high-risk coping mechanisms among refugees and asylum seekers were reported in 2020, including child marriage and pregnancy, survival sex and theft. Against this background, RRP partners increased efforts to strengthen community-based protection in the settlements through empowerment of refugees, provision of material support, trainings and sensitization. Complaints and feedback mechanisms, child protection as well as GBV prevention and response were also strengthened through community-based approaches and remote case management in all asylum countries.

In the DRC child protection, including the psycho-social care for children was enhanced through specific training events with partners and local actors. 291 children with specific needs were identified and provided individualized support based on a Best Interest Assessment (BIA), while 17,196 adolescents received support through targeted programs. As regards GBV prevention and response, RRP partners with the involvement of community groups carried out 113 awareness-raising activities, reaching a total of 18,419 Burundian refugees and host community members. 77 cases of GBV were registered in refugee camps, settlements and transit centers and received psychosocial support from GBV social workers. 58 survivors of GBV received legal support and 19 cases were taken to court, which is a significant increase compared to previous years. Protection monitoring reinforced the overall protection system, with a total of 1,576 protection incidents having been addressed.

In Rwanda, the results of the 2020 Participatory Assessments reflected negative coping mechanisms and a strong socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on refugees. Burundian refugee women and youth reported 361 GBV incidents as well as survival sex, begging, child defilement, and teenage pregnancy. The survivors received individual case management services, including legal, medical, and material supports, safety and security, and psychosocial assistance. 12,345 children with specific needs (including 412 unaccompanied and separated children) received support. The introduction of the birth registration process at health centers improved refugees’ access to services and facilitated the issuance of birth certificates to 2,854 children in Mahama camp. RRP partners also supported 3,895 persons with specific needs, including persons with disabilities (2,074), old persons at risk (186), and persons with mental health or psychological issues (1,635).

In Tanzania, 76 Community Based Child Protection Structures were established and remained functional to ensure community mobilization, awareness on child protection issues and referrals to child protection case management processes. 13,527 Burundian children aged less than five were issued legal birth certificates. As a result of the deployment of 217 police officers and 310 community security workers trained in crime detection, the number of crimes in 2020 decreased by 27% as compared to the previous year.

Uganda continued to implement progressive refugee policies for asylum-seekers and refugees present in the country, including freedom of movement, right to work, establish a business, access Government services such as education and healthcare, and obtain land for housing and cultivation (for refugees who live in the settlements).

The COVID-19 pandemic combined with food ration cuts affected and worsened the well-being of refugees in Uganda and had a serious impact on their protection and livelihoods. The number of GBV cases across Uganda’s settlements also increased by an average of 55%. Teenage pregnancies have increased, and children have been increasingly exposed to GBV, child labour, family separation and severe forms of child neglect. Considering the challenges for outreach and mobility, the COVID-19 crisis prompted RRP partners to redesign their programmes with a heightened focus on community-based responses. A COVID-19 Community Engagement Plan was developed, outlining roles that communities can play in delivery of critical services, and how they can be empowered to perform such roles. Community structures, which have been at the forefront of protection monitoring, received protective equipment and additional airtime to provide support and follow-up on children and families, maintaining contact with partners on the ground.

RRP partners provided targeted support to 154 GBV survivors as well as to 3,191 Burundian refugees with specific needs. Psychosocial or psychological services were provided to 507 Burundian refugees in 2020, below the target of 2,000. 3,565 complaints by Burundian refugees were addressed through effective feedback mechanisms. Access to justice was also strengthened through support of legal aid clinics, mobile court sessions and capacity building of law enforcement and judiciary.
Burundian refugees individually registered in the DRC, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda

2,541 identified SGBV survivors assisted with appropriate support (99.5%, against a target of 100%) just down from 100% in 2019

3,384 Burundian refugee children with specific needs received individual case management (60%, against a target of 62%)

20,908 refugee children enrolled in Early Childhood Development programmes in the DRC, Rwanda & Tanzania (67%, up from 38% in 2019)

57,752 refugee children enrolled in primary school (Gross Enrollment of 97% up from 88% in 2019)

7,704 refugee children enrolled in secondary school (Gross Enrollment of 17%, against a target of 33%, down from 21% in 2019)

273,624 Burundian refugees received food assistance in 2020 (97% of those in need of food assistance) though only 35% received full recommended rations

15,711 refugee women delivered babies with assistance from qualified health personnel (94%, against a target of 95%) down slightly from 95% achievement in 2019

EDUCATION

The COVID-19 outbreak and subsequent school closures from March 2020 onwards in DRC, Rwanda and Uganda did not only result in loss of learning, but also led to increased protection risks, exacerbating vulnerabilities and persistent barriers to education, with girls disproportionally affected.

In Rwanda, the Government used radio, television, and other internet-based programs to provide remote learning to students. However, only 37% of the school-aged children in Mahama camp (some 10,000 refugee children) were able to participate in the remote learning programs due to the limited availability of devices. For the school reopening, 30 handwashing facilities were constructed as part of the COVID-19 preventive measures. In Uganda, RRP partners deployed resources to support the Government COVID-19 Response Plan, which is inclusive of refugees, to ensure continuity of learning through home learning materials, radio lessons and digital options, including tablets. RRP partners supported remote learning through provision of radios and scholastic materials, developed by the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC), including for refugee children in settlements hosting Burundian refugees. RRP partners promoted home-based education and child protection by empowering parents to develop social, emotional, cognitive and physical wellbeing skills of their children. Partners involved in mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) provided psycho-social support to learners while continuing individual home visits.

Whereas the attendance of school-aged children in primary education was high in all asylum countries (87% in the DRC – 8,199 refugee children; 128% in Rwanda – 15,151 refugee children, 97% in Tanzania – 29,292 refugee children and 63% in Uganda – 5,110 refugee children), enrolment in secondary education was significantly lower (1,797 refugee children - 31% in DRC, 4,479 refugee children - 58% of secondary school children in Rwanda, 1,019 refugee children - 4% in Tanzania, and 409 refugee children - 11% in Uganda). Overall, due to overcrowded classes and lack of science laboratories and libraries, the students’ learning opportunities remained limited.

In Rwanda, 262 refugee youths were in different universities across the country through various scholarship programs. In Tanzania, 64 Burundian refugees were admitted to higher education programmes. Educational technologies to advance access to quality education were expanded to the school in Nyarugusu camp through a programme which aims at providing quality education in refugee settings through the introduction of educational technology, resources and teacher training.

FOOD

The food ration cuts in DRC (reduction of the cash-for-
food assistance from 12 USD to an average of 7.5 USD/person/month), in Tanzania (from 96% food rations at the beginning of the year to 68% at the end of 2020) and in Uganda (70% of the full ration since April 2020) coincided with the COVID-19 containment measures and limited refugees’ livelihoods opportunities, resulting in increased vulnerability of refugees. The dire situation prompted some Burundian refugees in DRC, Rwanda and in Tanzania to opt for voluntary repatriation.

In Uganda, about 59% of settlement-based refugee households used medium or high food-based coping strategies (39 % higher compared to the end of 2019), and 44% of Burundian refugee families had a poor food consumption score. Emergency food assistance to all urban refugees in Kampala started in June 2020 through cash transfers.

In Rwanda, the most vulnerable groups with special nutritional needs received supplementary feeding with fortified blended food and were targeted with social and behavior change communication (SBCC) activities. Refugee students, along with their fellow nationals, attending the same schools, received school feeding. During school closures due to the pandemic an alternative take-home ratio was provided to all refugee families as a safety net for families to cope with the COVID-19 lockdown.

Despite the food ration cuts in Tanzania, food assistance for the more vulnerable segment of the population was maintained at 100%, whereby an average of 47,000 Burundians were assisted on a monthly basis with supplementary feeding.

HEALTH AND NUTRITION

Among health interventions, RRRP partners prioritized COVID-19 prevention measures in all asylum countries. In the DRC, 70 community workers were trained and 92 health staff received additional training on care and treatment of COVID-19. A triage point, three isolation centers and 14 quarantine centers were constructed in the surrounding areas of the camps including at entry points. Some 121 hand washing stations were installed and maintained inside camps and at the transit centers.

In Rwanda, RRP partners distributed facemasks to all refugees, constructed handwashing facilities, and provided adequate water and soaps. They raised awareness on the Government’s prevention measures, including the prohibition of all social gatherings, and supported the identification of new cases. A cholera facility was rehabilitated to serve as an isolation center for suspected cases of COVID-19. In Mahama camp, 210 COVID-19 cases were identified. Two health facilities provided primary health care to refugees and the host community free of charge, including COVID-19 treatment. Refugees were included in the COVID-19 vaccine deployment plan.

In Tanzania, the blanket distribution of soap was maintained

8,842 Burundian refugees tested for COVID-19 by 31 December 2020

305 Burundian refugees tested positive for COVID-19, with 2 deaths reported

80% of Burundian refugees and host communities reached with COVID-19 related messaging

21 health centres supported or established for COVID-19 response, as well as 8 isolation centres & 7 quarantine centres

71% of health staff participated in COVID-19 related trainings

6,046 additional handwashing facilities established across Rwanda, Tanzania & Uganda

22% of Burundian refugee students reached with remote learning (e.g. radio lessons, study packs etc.) in Rwanda and Tanzania

66,131 Burundian refugee households received additional core relief items in Rwanda & Tanzania and 6,142 households in Rwanda & Uganda received cash / vouchers as part of the COVID-19 response
for 100% of the population at 500g/person/month from March 2020 onwards and re-usable face masks were distributed to 29,089 individuals.

In **Uganda**, RRP partners implemented a series of activities in support of the Ministry’s COVID-19 Response Plan. Institutional quarantine and treatment centres were established across refugee-hosting districts and support provided to district health facilities to improve health service delivery for refugees and host community members during the COVID-19 pandemic. RRP partners further carried out COVID-19 infection, prevention and control activities across settlements. Refugees have also been included in the COVID-19 vaccine deployment plan.

Another critical priority was the response to malnutrition. In **Rwanda**, RRP partners identified 1,379 moderately malnourished and 206 severely malnourished cases among children through community-based nutrition activities and provided them with therapeutic and supplementary feeding programs. In **Tanzania**, 683 Burundian refugee children received treatment through the therapeutic feeding program for management of Severe Acute Malnutrition. In **Uganda**, 21 refugees recovered from severe acute malnutrition and were discharged, while others continued to received treatment.

**LIVELIHOODS AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

Despite the commitment of RRRP partners to strengthen self-reliance of refugees and enhance the protection of the environment, livelihoods activities were severely impacted by resource constraints and the COVID-19 restrictive measures. As a result, 24,000 Burundian refugees in the **DRC** were left out from livelihoods activities, 53% of the livelihoods needs of the Burundian population in **Tanzania** remained unmet, and Burundian refugees could not be included in the quick impact income-generating activities including joint host and refugee community agricultural projects and local production initiatives developed by RRP partners in **Uganda**.
In the **DRC**, in 2020, RRP partners supported 16,838 Burundian refugees and host community members with self-reliance and livelihoods, including agricultural production and fishing; livestock breeding; processing facilities such as mills; access to employment; and activities aimed at reducing environmental degradation, such as cookstoves and biomass briquettes. About 300 Burundian refugee youth and community members (15-30 years old) were supported with professional training and skills acquisition on tailoring/embroidery, and electrical work. As a result, 20 small businesses were constituted in 2020 (8 embroiderers, 12 electricians). The Government made 275.7 hectares available to refugees and host community members for farming.

In **Rwanda**, with the introduction of cash-based assistance through banks and financial service providers 80.5% of Burundian refugees aged 18 and above in the camp were able to use banking services. 1,062 refugees in Mahama camp accessed business skills training, mainly on bookkeeping, cash flow, inventory management, and business advisory services. 196 refugee entrepreneurs received loans worth approx. USD 130,141 to grow their businesses. 95 refugee women got refresher training in weaving skills to produce high-quality woven baskets sold at both local and international export markets as part of the Global MADE51 campaign. 528 refugees earned incentives/wages, mainly from casual work with RRP partners operating in the camp. In urban settings, 150 refugees were trained on entrepreneurship and received cash grants worth USD 500 each for starting/growing their businesses under the graduation project. As part of an environmental programme, 19,039 trees were planted inside Mahama camp.

In **Tanzania**, livelihoods interventions for Burundian refugees were implemented in line with the agenda of “resilience for return”. RRP partners supported returning refugees with livelihoods and skills training to facilitate a smooth integration upon return.

A priority intervention for RRP partners was the rehabilitation of degraded ecosystems within and around the refugee camps. Almost 1 million seedlings were planted in camps’ woodlots and at household level, and in the host communities. However, deforestation and environmental degradation remained a concern and perpetuates competition among refugees and hosting communities for limited shared natural resources.

In **Uganda**, the Government’s Jobs and Livelihoods Response Plan increased investment in income-generating activities, access to savings and credit, and to sustainable employment opportunities through strengthened engagement of local government and private sector in the delivery of services to refugees and host communities (e.g. agriculture extension and registration of small businesses). Green livelihoods activities such as beekeeping and

---

**Key Figures:**

- **16,454** refugees received **productive assets, training** and / or **business support** in 2020 (13% of refugees 18 - 59 years, down from 20% in 2019)
- **12,708** refugees **employed or self-employed** in the DRC, Rwanda & Tanzania (6% of refugees 18 - 59 years)
- **52,732** refugee households live in **semi-permanent shelter** in Rwanda, Tanzania & DRC (64%, against a target of 74%)
- **43,557** refugee households have a **household latrine** (Rwanda excluded) (54% up from 38% in 2019)
- **26.1 L** regional average **litres of water per person per day** (against a target and standard of 20L) up from 20.7L in 2019
- **50,186** refugee households in the DRC, Rwanda & Tanzania have **energy saving stoves**
agroforestry continued to be supported by RRP partners, in addition to other environment activities such as community mobilization and sensitization, environmental restoration and protection, raising tree seedlings and tree growing and maintenance to address environmental challenges in refugee-hosting districts in furtherance of the objectives of the Government’s Water and Environment Response Plan. In 2020, 2,225 hectares of woodlots were established and maintained in areas hosting Burundian refugees and RRP partners supported 9,252 Burundian to have access to energy-saving equipment, including energy saving stoves, solar lanterns and heat retaining baskets.

SHELTER AND NFIS

In the context of the pandemic, RRP partners supported the construction of reception, isolation and quarantine centers in addition to the creation of emergency and transitional shelters, as well as the upgrading of housing for refugees to varying extents in all asylum countries.

In the DRC, RRP partners provided shelter support to 1,500 refugees and to the host communities, constructed three isolation centres, 13 quarantine centres and rehabilitated 249 emergency and transitional shelters in Lusenda and Mulongwe.

In Rwanda, two durable communal accommodation facilities were constructed in Mahama camp to accommodate 343 new arrivals from Gatora Transit Center. Following the start of the repatriation, 1,115 vacant shelters were allocated to 1,567 refugees from high-risk zones in the Kigeme camp. RRP partners also provided families with shelter kit repair materials, as a result of which 787 family shelters in different villages were improved. In Mahama camp, a pre-departure center for refugees opting to voluntarily return to Burundi was constructed with a capacity for 1,200 refugees, with four office rooms, public lights, waiting area, kitchen, and WASH facilities. UNHCR used cash-based interventions (CBI), through banks, as a modality to address the refugees’ basic and domestic items’ needs in the Mahama camp. All refugees received domestic items such as kitchen sets, and all girls and women of reproductive age received cash and in-kind assistance to meet their sanitary and hygiene items needs.

In Tanzania, by the end of 2020, only 79 of the planned 2,273 shelters were constructed. Despite shelter coverage for only 81% of the Burundian population, no significant improvement could be made due to the government restrictions on construction of new shelters in camps since March 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, 19% of the population remained in unacceptable living conditions. The deteriorated situation of shelters for refugees and asylum-
seekers was further worsened by the new government policy to demolish the transitional shelters left behind after repatriation of refugees, instead of accommodating in these the refugees living in dilapidated shelters. 31.3 km roads were constructed and maintained across the camps.

In Uganda, a total of 1,484 Burundian refugees who arrived in the settlements before the closure of the borders on 19 March 2020 due to the pandemic, received emergency shelter kits and were allocated a plot of land. Several transit and reception centres were turned into institutional quarantine facilities for the district, hosting refugee and host communities. Overall, gaps and challenges in provision of shelters for persons with specific needs remain.

WASH

In the context of the COVID-19 response, RRP partners support reinforced WASH interventions. In the DRC, 48 sanitation facilities were constructed in isolation and quarantine sites, health centres and in transit centres. In Rwanda, awareness messages (community radio and posters) focused on handwashing, wearing facemasks, physical distancing, and proper disinfection of key convergent areas. 433 handwashing facilities were installed across the camp and all refugees received soap. In Tanzania, all schools were provided with handwashing facilities, reaching the standard of 100 pupils per handwashing station. Hygiene awareness sessions were conducted for refugees to encourage them to contribute to environmental cleanliness as well as construction of sanitation facilities. In Uganda, pumping hours were increased in settlements hosting Burundian refugees. Soap distribution was doubled from 250g/person/month to 500g/person/month to support hygiene and sensitization on hand hygiene and general hygiene promotion was increased.

Against a target of 20 liters of water per person per day, the average was 19 L in DRC, 20L in Rwanda (slightly higher in Mahama camp), 32 L in Tanzania and 18.2 L in Uganda. In the DRC, an increase in water supply capacity was achieved with the establishment of additional water points (Human Powered Pump) at the Mulongwe site. Maintenance, monitoring and control of water quality were also carried out at all refugee camps/sites to ensure an increased access to water for refugees. In Tanzania, quality, quantity and reliability of water provision was improved and 5,042 new household latrines were constructed, increasing the latrine coverage to 70% of the households. However, due to underfunding 30% of households were left without latrines. In Uganda, the Water and Environment Sector Refugee Response Plan (WESRRP) was launched by the Ministry of Water and Environment in March 2020, providing a comprehensive framework for WASH delivery in refugee hosting districts. 99.5 per cent of the daily water demand is supplied through permanent water schemes, whilst only pockets of settlements which have until recently received new arrivals rely on water trucking (<0.5%). Access to sanitation and hygiene services for refugees and host communities in Uganda further improved with 79% of Burundian refugees having access to households’ latrines by the end of 2020, compared to 67% at the end of 2019.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Burundi Data Portal - https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/burundi  Catherine Wiesner Head of External Engagement wiesner@unhcr.org; Simone Schwartz-Delgado Senior Inter-Agency Coordination Officer schwartz@unhcr.org Kabami Kalumiya, Reporting Officer kalumiya@unhcr.org; Laura Swanson, Info. Management Officer swanson@unhcr.org

REGIONAL RRP PARTNERS

- Adventist Development and Relief Agency
- Association des Femmes pour la Promotion et le Developpement Endogene
- African Initiative for Relief and Development
- Alight
- Care and Assistance For Forced Migrants
- CARE International
- Caritas
- Church World Service
- Community Environmental Management and Development Organization
- Danish Refugee Council
- Food and Agriculture Organization
- Good Neighbours Tanzania
- Handicap International
- Help Age International
- Impact Initiatives
- International Organization for Migration
- International Rescue Committee
- Medical Teams International
- Norwegian Refugee Council
- Oxfam
- Plan International
- Relief to Development Society
- Save the Children International
- Tanganyika Christian Refugee Service
- The Legal Aid Forum
- Uganda Red Cross Society
- United Nations Capital Development Fund
- United Nations Development Programme
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
- United Nations Children’s Fund
- United Nations Population Fund
- UNWOMEN
- Water Mission
- Women Legal Aid Center
- World Food Programme
- World Health Organization
- World Vision International