

FINAL REPORT ON THE
**2018 REGISTRATION OPERATION
FOR RWANDAN REFUGEES**
THE KIVUS, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO



© UNHCR / Natalia Micevic

This operation was jointly conducted in 2018 by the National Commission for Refugees (CNR) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in North and South Kivu provinces, Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Sub-Office Goma, North Kivu & Field Unit Bukavu, South Kivu
December 2018

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the request of the Government, **UNHCR undertook in 2018 a large-scale verification and biometric registration exercise of Rwandan refugees in the Eastern provinces of North and South Kivu**. The goal of this exercise was to continue the biometric registration of Rwandan refugees that had been interrupted in 2016 for security reasons in order to **provide a baseline for the implementation of comprehensive solutions** ahead of the invocation of a Cessation Clause for this group of refugees.

The exercise started in April and lasted until 30 November 2018. Two methods of registration were carried out in parallel, namely a **biometric registration with issuance of refugee certificates** and a **verification exercise** allowing for a more flexible and faster count of higher numbers of refugees, also helping to map their presence. During the biometric exercise, letters of attestation were also provided for those refugees already registered in previous exercises whose letters had expired.

In view of the complete data collected throughout the 2018 operation, below are the key figures:

76,067 Registered refugees 2015 – 2018	35,416 Biometrically registered refugees in 2018	215,942 Baseline (2014 CNR)
Intentions for global solutions	67.7% born in the DRC	
53% Voluntary Repatriation	48% of children are out of school	
46% Local Integration	21% displaced in the past 12 months	

During the verification and registration, refugees were asked a number of questions as to their living conditions as well as their intention for long-term solutions. Based on their answers, **the main recommendations as to the way forward towards comprehensive solutions are:**

- **Map out the whole range of solutions available to refugees in DRC** (not limited to repatriation) with clear calendar of steps to be taken ahead of the invocation of the Cessation Clause
- **Immediate implementation of some solutions**, starting with **legal/documentation**
- **Integrate Rwandan refugees in inter-agency humanitarian response**, in particular in situations of forced displacement
- **Adopt a community and area-based approach to local integration** with a focus on stabilization and development of the areas in the Kivus where Rwandan refugees live
- **A focus on Rwandan refugee youths is needed to better understand their aspirations and options**; Lack of access to services and in particular to education is a grave concern
- **Voluntary repatriation to continue** throughout the process until invocation

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dashboard on biometric registration of Rwandan refugees	4
Map of biometric registration of Rwandan refugees from 2015 to 2018	5
Context, Objectives and Methodology	6
Key figures on biometric registration	8
Verification exercise	11
Map of Rwandan refugees in the DRC.....	12
Conclusions and Recommendations.....	13
Glossary.....	15

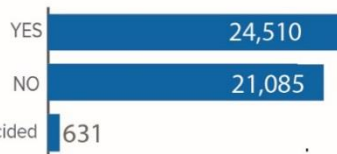
Context

Following a pilot phase in early 2018, the National Commission for Refugees (CNR) resumed in June 2018 the biometric registration of Rwandan refugees in North and South Kivu provinces, with the support of UNHCR. The main objective of the operation was to register new households of Rwandan refugees, following the 2015/2016 registrations. It also aimed to allow the renewal of certificates issued in 2015/2016. An awareness campaign for this operation was conducted through several media and sensitization in the field. However, most refugees stated that they had been informed by other refugees already registered. Regarding solutions, 24,510 individuals (that is 53 % of the total) opted for voluntary repatriation and 21,085 individuals (46 % of the total) have opted against repatriation.

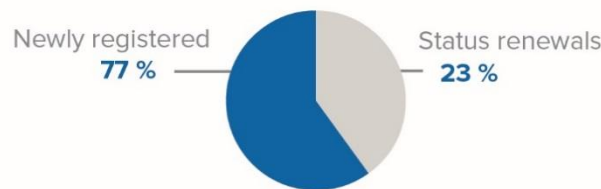
Key Figures



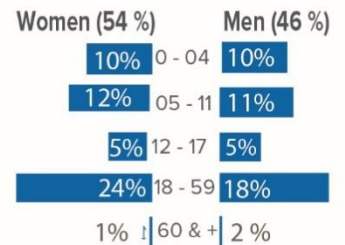
Intentions to return



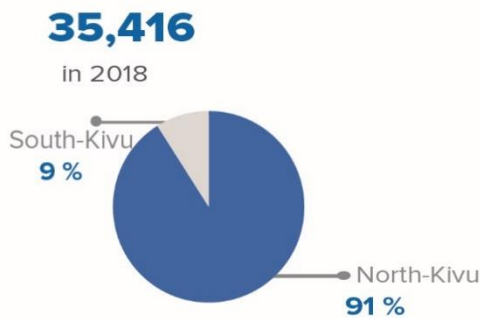
Newly registered refugees and status renewals in 2018



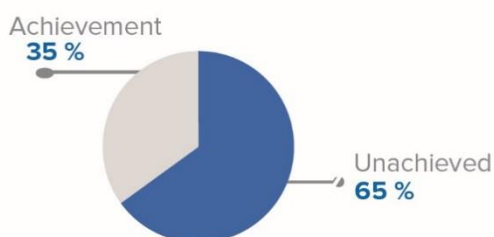
Age/Sex groups



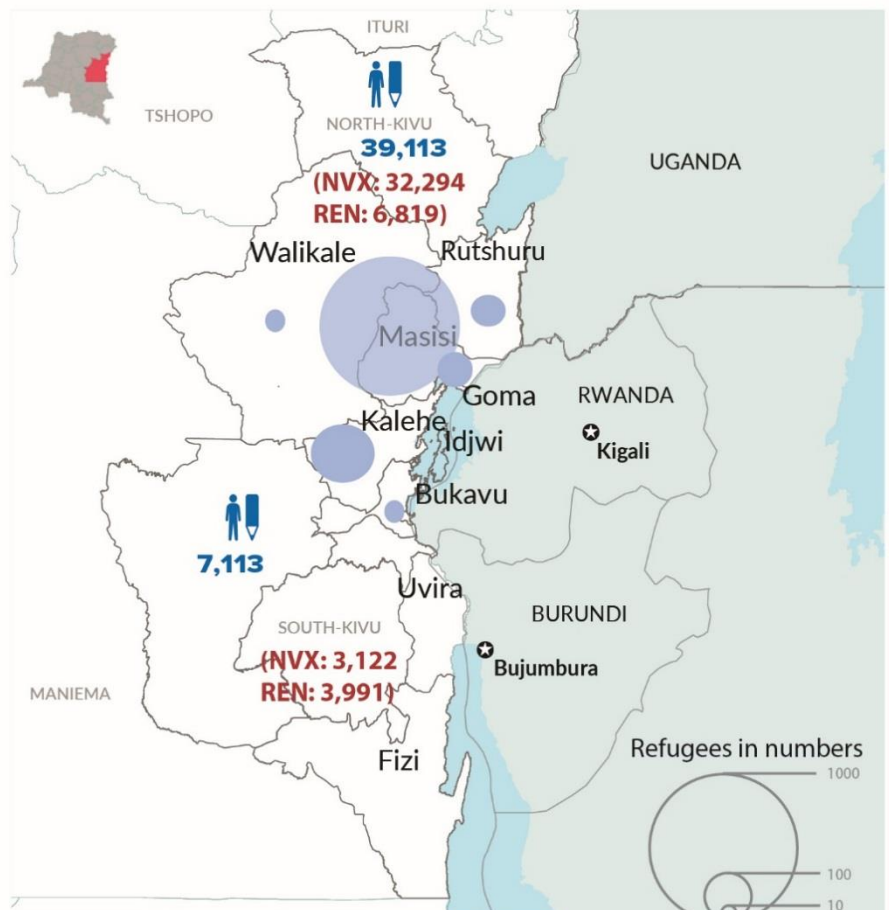
Newly registered refugees by province



Target of Rwandan refugees to register in the RDC: 215,942



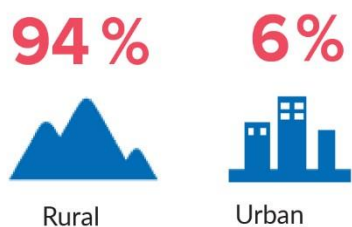
Asylum areas in Kivus Newly registered refugees and status renewals



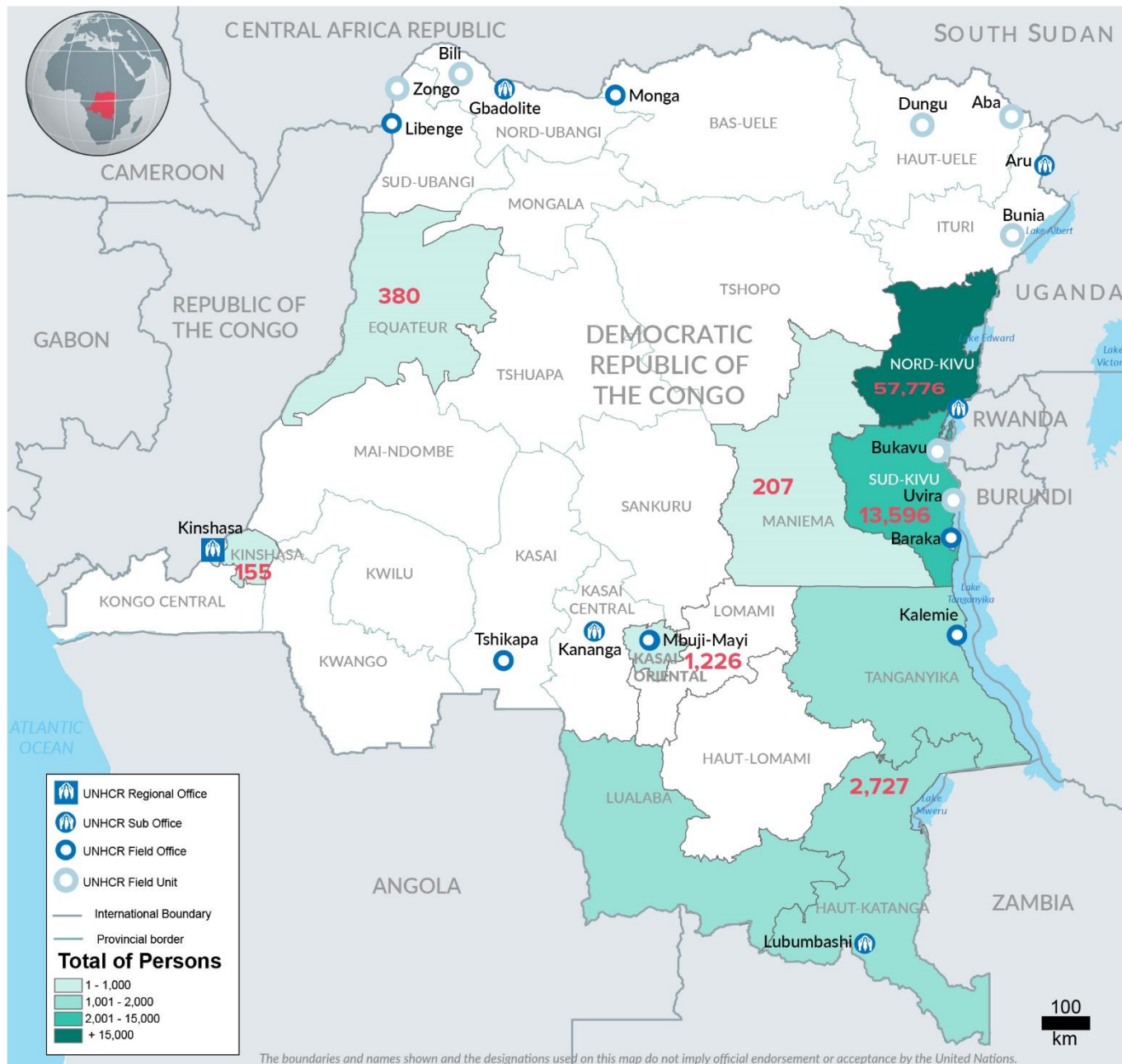
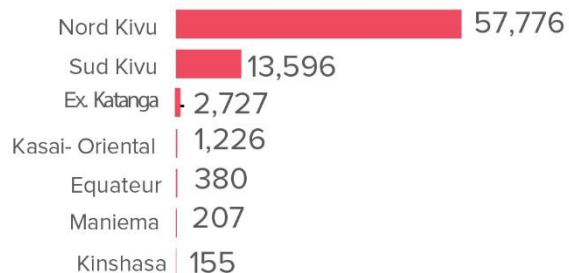
Number of Rwandan refugees registered biometrically



Type of location



Number of refugees by province



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

CONTEXT

In 2013, UNHCR and several asylum countries in the region agreed on the development of a comprehensive solutions strategy for Rwandan refugees aiming to lead to the invocation of a ceased circumstances cessation clause as of 31 December 2017.

In 2013/2014, the Congolese Government, through the CNR, conducted a pre-registration exercise of all Rwandan refugees on its territory. This paper exercise gave a final result of 260,866 individuals. In order to confirm these figures, the CNR, supported by UNHCR, launched a biometric registration operation in April 2015. By the end of 2015, biometrics was finalized in the provinces of Katanga, Maniema, Equateur, Kinshasa and Kasai Oriental.

In North and South Kivu – the two provinces with the highest number of Rwandan refugees by far - the operation was suspended in June 2015 for security reasons. It resumed in December 2015 and was stopped again following an armed attack on one of the registration centers that killed four people in April 2016. By that date, a total of **42,186 individuals** had been registered in the DRC.

In 2013/2014, a total of 247,712 individuals were pre-registered specifically in the Kivus, of which 205,513 in North Kivu and 42,199 in South Kivu. Only 13% of pre-registered Rwandan refugees in North Kivu (that is 26,516 individuals) and 26% of those pre-registered in South Kivu (that is 10,949 individuals) in 2013/2014 had been confirmed with biometrics in 2015/2016, for a total of 37,465 individuals.

In a ministerial meeting in September 2017, the DRC declared that it could not invoke the cessation clause as of 31 December 2017 as conditions were not met due to the political and security context. The DRC cited in particular the high number of Rwandan refugees remaining on its territory and requested **the resumption and finalization of the biometric registration as an essential step to be able to move towards comprehensive solutions.**

UNHCR therefore supported CNR to resume biometric registration in the Kivus in 2018. In order to avoid a repetition of the security problems that had marred the previous two attempts, a number of measures were taken. One was increased dialogue with all stakeholders, including armed groups. The other measure was to include a “lighter” registration approach, using Kobo tablets, in case the traditional registration approach did not work (biometric registration requires significant amount of heavy equipment and may expose the teams to higher risks as it limits their capacity to move quickly).

OBJECTIVES

The biometric registration of Rwandan refugees had the following objectives:

- 1) **Complete the biometric registration operation started in 2015/16 in North and South Kivu**
- 2) **Confirm intentions for solutions** (voluntary repatriation and local integration)
- 3) **Renew the certificate of all registered refugees whose letter of attestation had expired**

METHODOLOGY

Two methods were used in parallel throughout the operation, namely a **biometric registration with issuance of refugee certificates** valid until 31 December 2018, and a **verification exercise** using Kobo tablets allowing for a more flexible and faster count of refugees, also helping to map their presence more accurately. It should be noted however that the Kobo verification did not support biometrics. The refugees registered and verified were those who arrived in the DRC between 1994 and 1998, as well as their dependents.

Based on lessons learnt from previous years, **communication with refugees and local authorities was prioritized at the start of the exercise**. Local radios were used to broadcast messages, flyers and banners were printed and distributed. In addition, field missions were carried out by the CNR and UNHCR to explain the objectives of the registration and seek the support of local decision-makers. Members of the local communities were recruited to take part in the exercise.

A pilot phase was initially conducted with two biometric registration centers set up in the Goma and Bukavu Transit Centers between 28 February and 15 May 2018. CNR hired 40 monitors and 5 supervisors and UNHCR provided training for the Kobo verification to begin in March. This initial verification helped to define the locations with the highest number of refugees where to open the registration centers.

Following this pilot phase, three main biometric registration centers were successively opened in each province. In addition, extension centers of each main center were subsequently opened in the surrounding areas to respond to the needs. The centers were set up in environments secured by state security forces. UNHCR registration and database personnels were present during the exercise in North and South Kivu.

The information provided by the refugees was recorded on the dedicated registration form, then encoded and updated in the proGres database, respecting the confidentiality of data of UNHCR's persons of concern. The database manager verified and controlled the data quality.

Registration activities in the CNR/UNHCR registration center in Lushebere, North Kivu; October 2018.



A female Rwandese refugee and her child coming for registration at the center in Lushebere; October 2018.

KEY FIGURES ON BIOMETRIC REGISTRATION

In view of the complete data collected throughout the 2018 operation, below are the key figures:

Biometric registration

- **76,067 REFUGEES as of 31 December 2018 in the DRC**
- **35,416 individuals registered in 2018 in the Kivus**
- **71,372 of the total – or 94% of the registered population in the DRC live in the Kivus, of which 57 776 individuals in North Kivu** (that is 76% of the total registered population)
- About 3.5% of refugees were registered in the ex-Katanga, about 2% in Kasai Oriental, 380 individuals in ex-Equateur and 155 individuals in Kinshasa

Verification (without biometrics)

- 2014 Baseline: 215,942 Rwandan refugees
- 2018 (Kobo tablets): **82,802 individuals verified**

Renewal of proofs of refugee status (letters of attestations)

A total of 46,222 certificates were issued as follows:

- All newly registered refugees (35,416) received a certificate, that is 77% of the individuals received in the registration centers
- 10,810 individuals renewed their status from 2015/2016 by biometrics in 2018 in the Kivus, that is 23% of the individuals received in the registration centers

It should be noted that because current policy limits the validity of the certificates to one calendar year, all Rwandan refugees in DRC will be undocumented again as of 01/01/2019.

Intentions for global solutions

53% of the individuals received, that is **24,510 individuals**, said they were **in favor of voluntary repatriation**;

46% of the individuals received, that is **21,085 individuals**, are **not in favor of repatriation**. 631 individuals were indecisive regarding their intentions (that is around 1%);

Several disparities need to be highlighted to further break down return intentions figures cited above:

- **North Kivu versus South Kivu: 61% of the individuals received in North Kivu** said they were **in favor of voluntary repatriation and 38% against**; conversely, **only 10% of those received in South Kivu** said to be **in favor of voluntary repatriation and 86% against**
- **Verification versus biometric registration:** During the verification exercise (tablets) **only 25% opted in favor of voluntary return and 70% against** (see below the dashboard on the verification exercise)
- **Many refugees did not specify when and under which condition they would eventually repatriate**, with repatriation perhaps more a long-term dream than a practical immediate solution
- Additionally, **it is likely that those refugees who chose to come forward for biometric registration are more likely to favor voluntary repatriation, while those who prefer local integration tend to avoid registration** as they fear they will be “forced” to return if their presence is known

Despite the high rate of return-oriented refugees, voluntary repatriation was relatively low in 2018. The majority of refugees reported the difficulty of resettling in Rwanda given the current cost of living and without being paid the return grant within a short timeline in Rwanda during

2018. Moreover, in South Kivu specifically, the majority of refugees also declared that the current political regime does not allow them to return to Rwanda.

Country of birth

67.7% of the individuals received, that is 31,325 individuals, were born in the DRC (of which 99.6% of the children and 29% of the adults). **32.2% of the individuals received, that is 14,880 individuals, were born in Rwanda.** 21 individuals were born in other countries (that is 0.1% of the individuals received). In other words, since nearly seven refugees out of ten were born in the DRC, the majority of them are now the second and third generations of the initial refugees who fled Rwanda between 1994 and 1998. **The vast majority of them have therefore most likely never been in Rwanda, meaning their main family ties and social/economic interests are established in the DRC and not in Rwanda anymore.**

Children born to mixed marriages

Only 742 children were born to couples from mixed marriages; that is around 2% of registered Rwandan refugees. This number is not exhaustive since many refugees did not wish to declare their cases of mixed marriages. This appeared to be due to a misunderstanding of the registration awareness messages, which indicated that it only concerned Rwandan refugees from 1994 to 1998. Indeed, despite the CNR and UNHCR raising awareness on this aspect after the issue had been identified, many refugees continued to believe that they would be erased from records by declaring a mixed marriage.

Consequently, only 411 Rwandan refugees married to Congolese citizens were registered; that is around 1% of registered Rwandan refugees.

Protection concerns

Women and children are the main categories of persons at risk. They represent more than 76% of the vulnerable individuals received. Out of **10,111** vulnerable individuals registered, among the main categories, **47% are women at risk, 29% are children with specific needs of education and/or at risk of not attending school,** 11% are persons with specific needs for legal and/or physical protection, especially in cases of mixed marriages, and 7% are elderly persons at risk. Other categories represent minor percentages.

Forced displacement

21% of refugees verified in 2018 were forcibly displaced in the last 12 months. The refugees most affected by this situation are those settled in Masisi territory, North Kivu. **Armed and/or interethnic conflict is the major cause of displacement,** accounting for 91% of refugees in this category. About 6% reported being forced to move because of land conflicts.

NB: this data was gathered through the verification exercise and not the biometric registration. The collection of data could not be sufficiently refined to allow gathering information on whether refugees were victims of single or multiple displacement(s) in the last 12 months.

Age and sex breakdown

Women and children (0-17) represent 79% of the total number of individuals received; that is 36,553 individuals. **55% of the individuals received are children;** that is 25,355 individuals. 99.6% of the registered children were born in the DRC.

	0-4 years	5-11 years	12-17 years	18-59 years	60+ years	Total
Females	10.47%	12.34%	5.21%	24.23%	1.47%	53.72%
Males	10.30%	11.40%	5.13%	17.69%	1.76%	46.28%
Total	20.77%	23.74%	10.34%	41.92%	3.23%	100.00%

Activity/Education

70% of adults received are mixed seed growers and only 5% of adults declare to have no activity. In regard to education, out of **14,129 children of school age, 48% are out of school**. This rate is 56% for girls and 44% for boys. The main reasons include lack of interest, lack of financial resources, distance from schools, insecurity and lack of schools and/ or lack of teachers.

VERIFICATION EXERCISE

Besides the biometric registration, a verification exercise was conducted. The data collection on Rwandan refugees who arrived in the DRC between 1994 and 1998 and their dependents had for main objectives to carry out a count to update the current figures, as well as to map the concentration areas of these refugees in the Kivus.

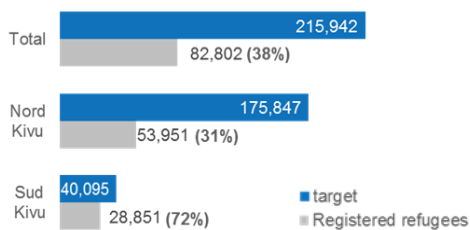
The verification exercise had the following objectives: determine the number of Rwandan refugees in Eastern DRC to update the current figures; determine the mapping by obtaining the necessary data on the location of refugees in Eastern DRC; determine the demographic characteristics of these refugees.

To conduct the data collection, teams of monitors and supervisors were deployed in both provinces with same number of staff in each. The use of a faster and simpler but efficient method for data collection has been favored through the use of UNHCR's KoBoToolbox server. This method allowed the collection of individual data, which was available in real time or as soon as the data registration tablets were synchronized with the Kobo server.

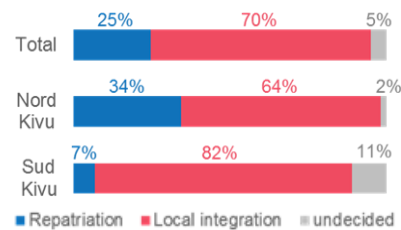
82,802 INDIVIDUALS HAVE BEEN VERIFIED

53,951 individuals in North Kivu and 28,851 individuals in South Kivu

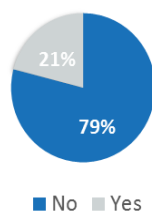
Verified refugees



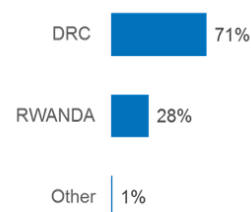
Intentions for solutions



Internal forced displacement in the Kivus (last 12 months)



Country of birth



VERIFICATION OF RWANDAN REFUGEES IN 2018

82,802

NORTH KIVU PROVINCE

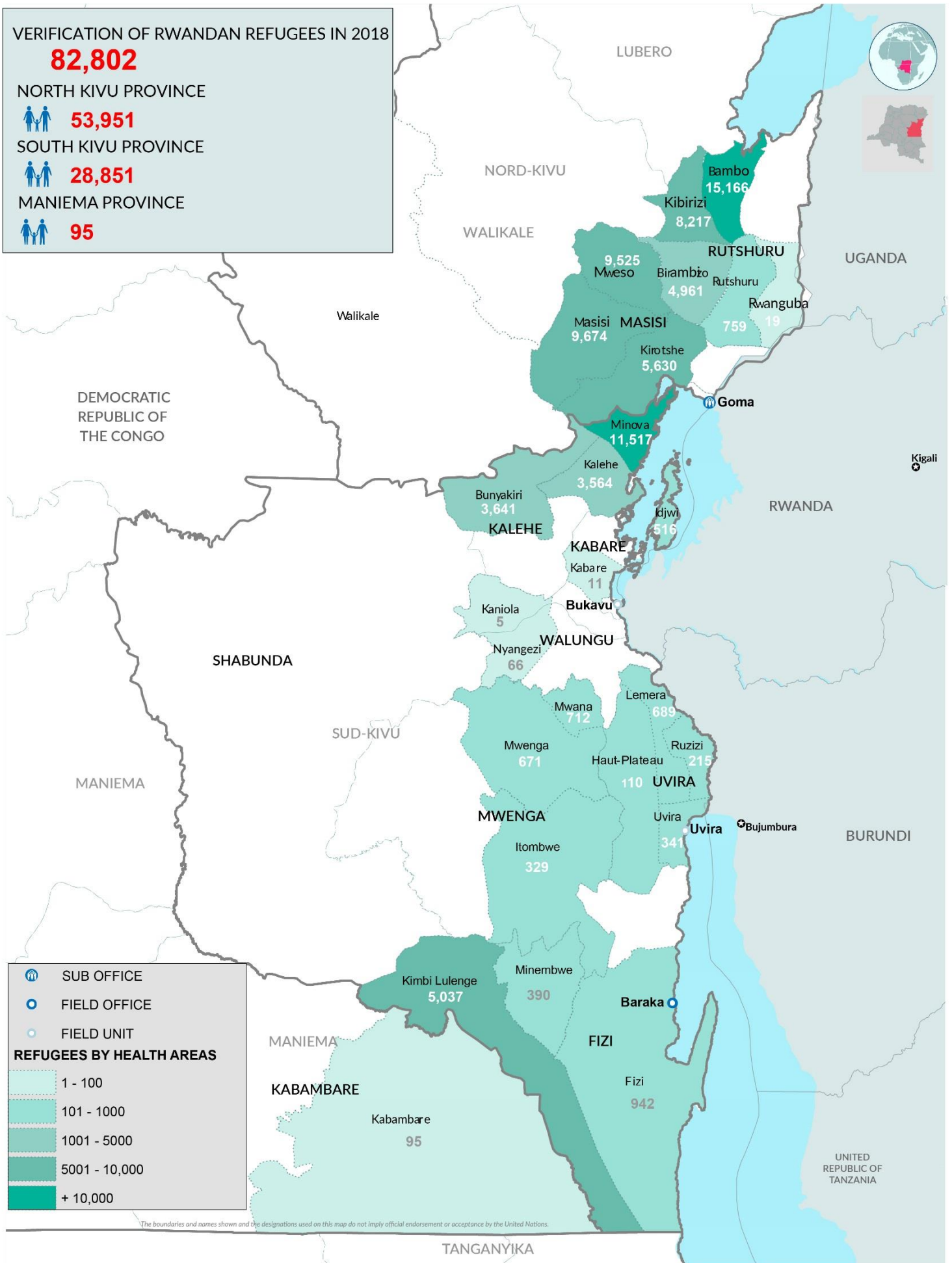
 **53,951**

SOUTH KIVU PROVINCE

 **28,851**

MANIEMA PROVINCE

 **95**



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

CONCLUSIONS

Not all Rwandan refugees in the Kivus willing to be registered by biometrics could be reached within the time available for the operation. This registration operation faced several challenges, including difficult access to the Rwandan refugee populations due to an overall precarious security context, intercommunity tensions, control of these populations by armed groups in certain areas and forced displacements. All these reasons generally lead to a high isolation of these populations. The CNR and UNHCR also faced logistical limitations. In addition, it is clear that a number of refugees do not wish to be biometrically registered, either because they fear being forcibly repatriated or because they do not wish to be identified as Rwandans because of high ethnic tensions in the Kivus. **As a result, it should be stressed that the figure of 76,067 cannot be considered as definitive.**

More than two third of Rwandan refugees were born in the DRC and constitute the second or even third generations of refugees. They have decreasing ties with Rwanda and their main family, social and economic interests are increasingly more established in the DRC, as time passes and the original generation of refugees from 1994-98 decreases for the newer ones. For the latter, voluntary repatriation may not be the preferred solution anymore, since the majority would go to a country that de facto remains mostly unknown to them.

In this context, it is particularly preoccupying to note that almost half (48%) of Rwandan children do not go to school, either because of a lack of financial resources or of very poor integration. It is also a concern that 21% of verified refugees told UNHCR that they had been forcibly displaced in the previous 12 months. **There is a need to approach local integration using an area-based, multi-partner approach targeting stabilization, peaceful co-existence and economic development.**

Lack of documentation negatively impacts on chances of local integration. In this respect, the current policy of limiting the validity of certificates to the calendar year is a serious hindrance. In practice, it means that as of 1 January 2019, all Rwandan refugees in the Kivus will be undocumented. **The renewal of certificates on a yearly basis is costly and inefficient. There is an urgent need to review the policy.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on all the aforementioned findings, below is a list of recommendations on possible steps to be taken:

Short-term needs

- **Review duration of certificates** to extend to up to five year validity (CNR Kinshasa)
- Rwandan refugees to renew their refugee certificates in 2019, in Goma and Bukavu
- Opening of CNR field units at the territorial level in Masisi and Rutshuru to issue certificates at local level
- **Urgently review access to education** for Rwandan refugees with concerned stakeholders
- Advocate with clusters/stabilization actors to **include areas hosting large number of Rwandan refugees in their projects**
- Continue Voluntary Repatriation operation

Medium-term needs

- **Confirm nationality of those children born of one Congolese parent**

- **Review legal possibilities as well as protection risks and financial costs of issuing residence permits for Rwandan refugees wishing to remain in DRC after a cessation clause**, with the following possible priorities:
 - Permanent residency to Rwandan refugees legally or customarily married to Congolese citizens for at least a number of years to be defined
 - Permanent residency/ 5 year temporary residency/ humanitarian visa to highly vulnerable refugees (those identified as persons with specific needs)
 - Congolese citizenship/ permanent residency/ 5 year temporary residency to all children born in the DRC upon reaching majority age (if they have continuously lived in the DRC since birth)
 - Permanent residency/ 5 year temporary residency to elderly refugees (60 and above)
 - Permanent residency/ 5 year temporary residency to adult refugees with skilled worker profiles that are in shortages in the DRC (university and higher technical level)

Longer-term needs

- **Integrate refugee-hosting areas in development plans**, including through World Bank
- **Set date for Cessation Clause and set up exemption procedures operation**
- **Communication campaign** to be launched 18 months before effective date of Cessation Clause coming into effect
- **Plan for increased voluntary repatriation in 18-12 month period before Cessation Clause comes into effect**

GLOSSARY - classified by thematic

Biometric registration operation:

Biometric registration - Biometrics is the technical term for body measurements and calculations. It refers to metrics related to human characteristics. For this registration operation, the biometrics information gathered was fingerprints and photos, besides biographic data as well.

Refugee certificate - A refugee identity certificate is a document that refugees use as proof of identity. It is either issued by the UNHCR or by the State of asylum. In the present report, it is the document delivered to Rwandan refugees by the Congolese Government through the CNR during the biometric registration. The certificate was issued on the day of registration with a validity until the 31/12/2018.

Registered refugee - This term is used in this report to refer to the refugees who were registered through the use of biometrics technology during the biometric registration operation. Following this registration, any adult refugee was issued a refugee certificate valid until 31/12/2018.

Newly registered refugee - This term is used in this report to refer to the refugees who biometrically registered for the first time in 2018, as opposed to the refugees who renewed their previous biometric registration conducted in 2015 or 2016.

Status renewal - This term is used in this report to refer to the refugees who renewed their previous biometric registration conducted in 2015 or 2016, as opposed to the refugees who biometrically registered for the first time in 2018. Any adult was issued a new refugee certificate, since the previous one had expired on 31/12/2017.

Verification exercise:

Verification exercise - A verification exercise was conducted in parallel to the biometric registration operation. Data collection on Rwandan refugees who arrived in the DRC between 1994 and 1998 and their dependents was conducted, in order to carry out a count to update the current figures and to map the concentration areas of these refugees in the Kivus. UNHCR's Kobo platform has been used during this verification exercise.

Verified refugee - This term is used in this report to refer to a refugee whose presence in the DRC was verified through the verification exercise. No document/certificate was issued to any refugee during this exercise.

KoBoToolbox - KoBoToolbox is a suite of tools for field data collection for use in challenging environments. The software is free and open source. It was used in this verification exercise through tablet computers (small portable computers that accepts input directly on to its screen rather than via a keyboard or mouse) Lenovo Tab 2.

proGres database - UNHCR's unified database application. It contains written details of individuals and also their photos.

UNHCR's solutions and miscellaneous:

Global solutions - UNHCR's term that can be referred to as "durable solutions, "global solutions" or simply "solutions" for refugees. They include voluntary repatriation to the country of origin, local integration in the country of asylum and resettlement to a third country.

Voluntary repatriation - Voluntary repatriation or voluntary return is usually the return of a refugee, a rejected asylum seeker, an illegal immigrant or over-stayer, a displaced person or an unaccompanied minor who is unable or unwilling to remain in the host country and who volunteers to return to their country of origin, or that of their ancestors. Once the reasons for being displaced or having fled have disappeared and it is safe again to live in this country, refugees are free to go back to their country of origin.

Local integration - Local integration is aiming at providing the refugee with the permanent right to stay in the country of asylum, including, in some situations, as a naturalized citizen. It follows the formal granting of refugee status by the country of asylum.

Cessation clause - The cessation clauses of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees can be invoked in situations where, due to a change of circumstances in their home country, refugees no longer require international protection and cannot, therefore, refuse to avail themselves of the protection of their country.

Mixed marriage - A marriage between persons of different racial, ethnic, or religious groups. This term is used in this report to refer to a female or male refugee of Rwandan citizenship who married a female or male Congolese citizen.