MAHAMA REFUGEE CAMP FACTSHEET

Mahama Refugee Camp, Rwanda
July 2023

58,927 refugees live in Mahama refugee camp located in Kirehe District in the Eastern Province of Rwanda. 50.2% of the camp’s population is younger than 18 years old. The camp was established in 2015. 160 hectares of land were allocated to host refugees. MINEMA administers the camp and is responsible for security and protection of the refugees in coordination with UNHCR. On 24 and 26 July, UNHCR transferred 1,395 new asylum seekers from Nkamira Transit Centre to Mahama refugee camp to prevent overcrowding. Initially new arrivals are accommodated at the departure centre before being officially registered and provided shelter.

POPULATION OF CONCERN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total</th>
<th>58,927</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Refugees</td>
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<td>Others of Concern</td>
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<td>Asylum Seekers</td>
<td>1032</td>
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<tr>
<td>Congolese Asylum Seekers</td>
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39 UNHCR STAFF ARE BASED IN KIREHE SUB-OFFICE COVER THE NEEDS OF REFUGEES IN MAHAMA REFUGEE CAMP

UNHCR staff in Mahama camp register newly arrived asylum seekers from DRC after they are transferred from Nkamira Transit Centre to Mahama. Registration forms an important part of ensuring asylum seekers can access services in Rwanda and provides them with documentation.

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Main Activities

Camp Coordination and Camp Management
- Mahama refugee camp is managed by the Ministry of Emergency Management (MINEMA) represented by Camp Manager, Deputy Camp Manager and supported by Directorate-General of Immigration and Emigration (DGIE) staff and Rwanda National Police (RNP). Camp coordination is undertaken by MINEMA and UNHCR through coordination meetings and multi-functional monitoring conducted on a quarterly basis.
- Mahama refugee camp is divided into two sites Mahama I and II within which there are 18 villages. A refugee leadership structure is in place comprising of eight refugee executive committee members, nine quartier leaders and 18 village leaders who provide a voice for the refugee community.
- UNHCR works with seven implementing partners in Mahama refugee camp; The Ministry of Emergency Management (MINEMA) for camp management, Save the Children International (SCI) for health, nutrition, SGBV and child protection, Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) for logistics, Caritas Rwanda for livelihoods, Prison Fellowship Rwanda (PFR) for community-based protection and legal support, World Vision International (WVI) for education, water, sanitation and environment, and Humanity and Inclusion (HI) for Persons with Specific Needs (PSN).
- In addition, operational partners including Inkomoko, Maison Shalom, Red Cross Rwanda, Pro Femme Twese Hamwe, Indego Africa, GIZ, Practical Action and Umutanguha microfinance provide support to refugees in the camp mainly in the livelihoods sector.
- UNHCR also works closely with other UN Agencies such as World Food Programme (WFP) for provision of food and cash assistance, UNICEF in education, UNFPA for reproductive health, and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) for sanitation, transportation, and health screening for resettlement cases.

Protection
- UNHCR and partners in Mahama refugee camp provide a range of protection services to refugees and the Rwandan host community. These include child protection case management, prevention and response of sexual and gender-based violence (GBV), community-based protection (CBP) and legal support.
- UNHCR operates a protection desk in Mahama refugee camp every weekday (Monday to Friday). This is to ensure the identification of vulnerable refugees, support protection cases, provide counselling, and refer refugees to services to respond to their needs. Most refugees who approach the protection desk enquire about resettlement opportunities, health services, and request changes to their family composition (registering of births, deaths and marriages. In July, UNHCR received 116 cases (101 refugees and 15 asylum seekers) at the protection desk, each of which received counselling and were followed up on an individual basis.
- To ensure accountability to the refugee community, UNHCR and partners also operate a range of complaint and feedback mechanisms including complaint boxes, protection hotline, protection email, and the protection desk in Mahama refugee camp. In July, almost 40 percent of queries related to support for asylum seekers recently transferred to Mahama refugee camp and 10 percent to queries on resettlement. Through the protection desk and hotline, UNHCR also follows up on appeals related to targeted assistance and looks into whether refugee households have been categorised appropriately as per the established criteria for the delivery of food assistance.
- In Mahama refugee camp, community-based child protection mechanisms are utilized to strengthen child protection throughout the camp. UNHCR staff and partners work to manage individual child protection cases providing counselling and solutions to the issues that they face. UNHCR and partners working in the protection sector have established a child protection safety network, which includes alternative care Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), child protection and GBV SOPs and a case management system, which ensures all protection activities are well
coordinated. The child protection team also work in close collaboration with the district government, the National Commission for Children (NCC), MINEMA and DGIE. Government officials are part of the best interest procedures (BIP) process (including on the BID Panel and case management conference) to find durable solutions to complicated cases on monthly basis.

- For child protection, best interest assessments (BIAs) and best interest determination (BIDs) reports are conducted in collaboration with the International Commission for Red Cross (ICRC) for cross border tracing and reunification. In addition, the Rwandan Red Cross supports with family tracing and reunification activities. UNHCR and partners also conduct meetings with unaccompanied and separated children to discuss and address issues that affect them.

- In Mahama refugee camp, a birth registration system is in place in partnership with PFR to ensure that new babies are registered with the district authorities and children grow up protected and able to enjoy their rights to essential services including health and education.

- In July, UNHCR participated in a workshop organized by a GBV girls group named Akazoza keza k'abigeme which aimed to support the community and refugee adolescents to engage in good behaviour during the school holidays and mitigate against GBV.

- As the sector lead for protection, UNHCR holds coordination meetings in the camp on regular basis. In July, the protection coordination meeting was held on 31st July and co-chaired by UNHCR and MINEMA with all the protection partners. In the meeting partners discussed key highlights of their activities, challenges, and proposed recommendations. UNHCR and MINEMA provided updates mainly on the support provided to Congolese asylum seekers who have been officially registered in Mahama camp over the last month. In addition, UNHCR chairs the CP/GBV monthly coordination meeting with partners. On 17 July 2023, UNHCR organized a case management meeting with SCI to discuss child protection related issues. The biggest challenge observed in the camp is child neglect by parents and other caretakers.

- To enhance CBP, refugee structures including peer support groups and children’s clubs are present in Mahama camp and supported by UNHCR. Through trainings, partners help refugees to identify, prevent, and address protection risks such as child neglect and family conflict within their own communities. As part of communication with the communities, UNHCR, MINEMA, PFR and other protection partners regularly conduct community awareness campaigns to sensitize the community in different issues including prevention of crime, camp rules and regulations, CP/GBV, registration and documentation.

- In Mahama refugee camp there are 14 Youth and Child Friendly Spaces (CFS) managed by SCI that enable youth and children to participate in recreational activities such as arts and crafts, reading, boardgames, online digital platforms for learning (tablets with child-friendly programs and child protection prevention messages), traditional dances and other outdoor sports such as football, basketball, and volleyball. In July, 2,422 refugees also benefited from Ideas Box services available at some community centres. As the school holidays started in July, 212 children attended a discussion centre on child rights at CFS managed by Save the Children. In addition various sports matches have been organized at the CFS throughout the month to keep children occupied throughout the holidays and empower refugee youth.

- Between 24 and 28 July, UNHCR in collaboration with Maison Shalom, SCI and MINEMA organized friendly tennis matches at CFSs for children during the school holidays. In total, 125 children (70 boys and 55 girls) participated.

- In Mahama refugee camp, UNHCR maintains accurate data of refugees living in the camp through regular registration of individuals and groups. This is achieved through working with Government authorities at the camp level. Pre-registration interview counselling is conducted by UNHCR to ensure that refugees are aware of the purpose of registration. Persons with specific needs are identified during interviews and referred to protection staff as needed. Biometric enrolment is also being carried out by UNHCR to identify individuals who may have been registered previously as well as to detect fraud during registration. Refugees receive
documentation from UNHCR at the end of the registration process which ensures access to further assistance.

- In July 2023, 153 refugees were deactivated within UNHCR’s registration system for several reasons including resettlement, voluntary repatriation, and death, while seven refugees were reactivated after going through the continuous registration panel (CRP). 117 new-born babies were also registered during the month while individuals who turned five years old were biometrically enrolled in the UNHCR’s database. 157 new proof of registration documents were re-issued to refugees due to damage and change in family composition. While the authorities also issued 132 ID cards.

- Following the relocation of asylum seekers from Nkamira Transit Centre to Mahama refugee camp on the 26 and 28 July, UNHCR has been registering their presence in Mahama refugee camp. In total, 994 asylum seekers from DRC were registered in July and the process is ongoing.

Education

- Mahama refugee camp hosts the biggest school in Rwanda - Paysannat L, which accommodates more than 20,000 children from both the refugee camp and Rwandan host community. In 2019, due to the considerable number of students and to facilitate management, the school was divided into five campuses located in the surrounding host community and within Mahama camp. Due to the vast number of students, the schools operate a double shift system for primary level where some students attend in the morning and others in the afternoon. In total 12,534 refugee children (6,156 male and 5,933 female) are enrolled in primary and attendance was 95%, while 4,598 (2,484 male and 2,114 female) are enrolled in secondary. Attendance was 94% during the academic year 2022/2023. In July 2023, UNHCR and partners supported over 1,101 refugee students in primary six (P6), senior three (S3) and S6 to sit for the national examinations.

- In addition, 4,607 (2,306 male and 2,301 female) children aged between three to five years are enrolled in Early Childhood Development Centres in the camp. In July, the attendance was 96%.

- 899 refugee students from Mahama refugee camp are also enrolled in secondary boarding schools across the country under different scholarships operated by UNHCR and partners namely ADRA, Maison Shalom, Agahozo Shalom, Impact Hope, Agahozo shalom, EduFamme and other students who are privately sponsored by their families.

- UNHCR supports university students to apply for scholarships through the Elite centre managed by Maison Shalom and the Ideas Box centre managed by Humanity and Inclusion where they access tablets, computers and connect to the internet to apply for tertiary education opportunities.

- All teachers are enrolled on the government payroll. In partnership with WFP and school management, children in early childhood development programs and primary school are provided with hot meals at Paysannat L schools. At the beginning of 2023, there was an agreement to hand over all other school feeding programmes to be implemented by the school administration and Government of Rwanda. Discussions are ongoing on how best to support the school administration once supply of LPG is officially discontinued by UNHCR to the schools. UNHCR has also constructed cooking stoves at the school kitchens to support the upcoming rollout process.

- UNHCR also supports connected learning through the Profuturo platform for upper primary students from level four to six and builds teachers’ teaching capacity in ICT. Connected learning classrooms have been constructed and are operational at the school near Mahama through this programme.

- Due to lack of facilities, no science combinations are currently being offered at the schools near Mahama refugee camp. In addition, the ECD centre comprising of ten classrooms is not operational due to lack of WASH facilities. To address the challenge of inadequate classrooms, UNHCR has completed construction of eight classrooms and construction of 28 more classrooms in Mahama camp is ongoing at PaysannatL school. 53% of the construction has been completed so far as of July.

- The children of new asylum seekers from DRC hosted in Mahama refugee camp were enrolled in curriculum orientation programmes in July held at Paysannat L school to get them up to speed
during the school holidays ahead of integrating them in the national education system when the new academic year starts in September. In total, 680 new arrivals from DRC (155 pre-primary, 341 primary, and 184 secondary) took part in the orientation programme in July.

Health and Nutrition

- Refugees have access to primary health care services from two health centres in Mahama camp. Mahama II health centre was also inaugurated as a medicalized health centre in May 2023 and can conduct minor surgeries such as caesareans. In July, 10,367 primary health consultations were delivered during the month in the camp, including 437 for Rwandans living in the host community. This included the delivery of 169 new-born babies during the month.
- Where additional treatment is needed, UNHCR facilitates and covers the costs of referrals to secondary and tertiary health care outside the camp. In July, UNHCR covered the cost of 231 refugee patients referred to local hospitals.
- Nutrition services include routine screening and management of malnutrition through supplementary feeding programs for children under five years, pregnant and lactating mothers, and those living with HIV, are provided by UNHCR and health partners.
- In Mahama refugee camp, 121 community health volunteers conduct community outreach programmes to promote positive health behaviours, promote healthy nutrition and assist case referrals to health facilities. Community health volunteers are also trained to treat common childhood illnesses in the community.
- UNHCR and partners provide regular nutrition support and assistance to refugees in Rwanda. Currently, 20 Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) and 64 Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM) cases are being assisted as part of the nutrition programme in Rwanda.
- Following the transfer of asylum systems from Nkamira to Mahama, UNHCR continues to follow up on the needs of the new arrivals in July. 31 medical cases (including those with HIV, Noncommunicable diseases, mental health) were provided with health care. UNHCR and SCI also supported 16 pregnant women to access the existing antenatal care programmes in the camp.

Food Security

- In Mahama refugee camp since June 2021, food assistance is provided by WFP through a monthly cash grant to refugees on a targeted basis. Since February 2023, the cash assistance has been increased, whereby 84% of the population classified as highly vulnerable receive the full amount of 10,000 RWF (an increase from 7,000 RWF per month), while 7.1% who are classified as moderately vulnerable receive 5,000RWF (increased from 3,500 RWF).
- Through the support of WFP, Congolese asylum seekers hosted at the departure centre in Mahama continue and pending formal registration, receive hot meals twice per day in lieu of having bank accounts where they can receive cash assistance. In addition, vulnerable refugees including children under 5 years, expectant and breastfeeding mothers, the elderly and those with several chronic illnesses are provided with supplementary feeding.

Water and Sanitation (WASH)

- Water for Mahama refugee camp is provided from the nearby Akagera River, treated at the permanent water treatment plant in the camp and distributed to the refugees through several water collection points.
- The average water supplied on a daily basis to Mahama refugee camp is 1,283.1 m³ resulting in 22 l per person per day for refugees. In July, UNHCR carried out operational maintenance of the water treatment plant and the water supply system in the camp alongside partners.
- Mahama camp has 3,398 operational stances of communal latrines which also include showers. This equates to 17.1 persons per drop hole/ per shower room (against the standard of 20 persons). 1,006 durable hand washing stands to promote hygiene practices and 125 laundry slabs were previously constructed in the camp and UNHCR conducts regular maintenance to keep operational. In addition, 03 trucks to dislodge latrines and 02 garbage collection trucks are
available to carry waste from the camp to the nearby dumping site. In July 2023, 964 m³ of sludges from 82 blocks of latrines and 168 m³ of garbage from 12 refuse pits garbage collection sites were collected and removed from the camp.

- Hygiene promotion activities are conducted through community hygiene clubs and the Community Based Environmental and Hygiene Promotion Program model which empowers the community to adopt good practices. In July 2023, UNHCR in partnership with World Vision distributed 390 L of liquid soap to public places including markets, camp entrances, gas distribution site, registration centre and departure centre.

**Shelter and Non-Food Items (NFIs)**

- Mahama refugee camp covers 160Ha of land and is the largest refugee camp in Rwanda. All refugees in the camp live in semi-permanent shelters with a total of 6,928 family shelters (a shelter is designed to accommodate two families). UNHCR supports refugee households to keep their shelter in good condition. In July, 15 shelters were rehabilitated with new roof, doors, and windows.

- Due to the continuing influx of new arrivals from DRC to Rwanda, UNHCR continues to conduct shelter mapping exercises to identify vacant shelters which can accommodate the additional asylum seekers. In July 2023, UNHCR allocated shelters to 2,181 asylum seekers from DRC in Mahama refugee camp.

- On a quarterly basis, UNHCR provides a cash grant for refugees who have a bank account to cover the cost of non-food items such as blankets, mattresses, jerry cans to collect water, kitchen equipment, soap, sanitary pads, and other hygiene items. The amount of assistance distributed varies depending on what kind of items are targeted for the quarter. Despite this, due to lack of funds, the distribution of cash assistance for NFIs has been cut since Q1 2023.

- In July 2023, 284 households (805 individuals) among the newly arrived Congolese asylum seekers in Mahama refugee camp received NFI’s such as gas cylinders and kitchen sets from UNHCR as they have not yet set up bank accounts to receive cash assistance.

**Energy & Environment**

- In 2018, the Government of Rwanda banned the use of firewood. As a result, UNHCR has provided stoves facilitating gas-powered clean cooking for about 14,953 households in Mahama camp. The implementation of gas-powered stoves is estimated to reduce household air pollution by 90 percent. UNHCR consequently distributes liquid petroleum gas (LPG) to all refugees in Mahama camp to meet their energy needs. In July 2023, 77,394Kg LPG was distributed among refugees and asylum seekers. In addition, 3,754Kg LPG was provided at the departure centre to cook hot meals for the asylum seekers from the DRC, 2,366Kg LPG was provided for school feeding and 360 gas cylinders with accessories were distributed among the new arrivals transferred from Nkamira to Mahama during the month.

- To support the productive use of energy in Mahama camp, Practical Action runs a Renewable Energy for Refugees programme. Phase II of the programme was launched in late 2022 and has so far identified entrepreneurs and 100 businesses in Mahama II and the local host community who will benefit from solarization of their energy sources. In July, the Practical Action trained 17 electricians who will support in installation of 581 solar streetlights in the camp. These technicians include refugees and nationals from the host community.

- Under the productive use of energy scheme, Practical Action has constructed footings to install 531 standalone solar streetlights in the camp.

- Refugee volunteers also support, as part of an environment project operated by World Vision International, in improving the environment of Mahama camp. They are responsible for watering and planting trees throughout the camp. In July 2023, in partnership with WVI, an average of 16,136 people were reached during the environmental protection promotion activities through the community work and household visits. 204 bamboos trees were planted at Akagera River buffer zone to protect the river from soil erosion effects and seedling preparation for 156 bamboos trees was conducted in the nursery beds by refugee volunteers.
Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion

- There are three markets in Mahama refugee camp, and refugees can also access a larger market located outside the camp with businesses run by both refugees and Rwandans. Many refugees operate small businesses at the markets providing income to support their families and increasing their self-reliance.

- Indego Africa provides entrepreneurship trainings and mentorship to women artisans in Mahama camp. Many of the handcraft products are subsequently sold to local and international markets such as through UNHCR’s Made51 scheme. In July 2023, the total sales reported to the different cooperatives working on basket weaving was 1,210,000 RWF Akeza Cooperative, 1,240,000 RWF Umuco Cooperative and 700,000 RWF Turashoboy Cooperative.

- As part of the livelihoods project which UNHCR runs in partnership with Caritas Rwanda to support refugees graduate from poverty, in July, 262 refugees and Rwandans received a cash instalment of 119,062,400 RWF to support them with establishing small businesses. In addition, as part of the same project 287 individuals opened bank accounts with Cogebank and 220 with Umutangua Microfinance. In total, 721 refugees and Rwandans living in or near Mahama refugee camp have received support as part of this project as part of two cohorts. UNHCR and Caritas continue to provide support and mentorship to all to enable their businesses to flourish. Business owners are also encouraged to save and invest their profits through Saving and Lending Community (SILC) groups. In July, 10 SILC groups made up of 200 members shared out their savings and interest which had built up since the project started equalling to 58,816,560 RWF. Each member received his saving and the interest of her/his savings for investments.

- In July, 50 beneficiaries of the Poverty Alleviation Coalition (PAC) project implemented by World Vision conducted a study tour and exchange learning with Vision Agribusiness Farm from Gicumbi district and Indatwa cooperative from Kamonyi district to learn from and connect with other small business owners in Rwanda. The 395 refugees and 150 Rwandans who are part of the PAC project in Mahama refugee camp continued to receive technical mentorship from WVI throughout the month.

Durable Solutions

- Since May 2020, 29,377 Burundian refugees have voluntarily repatriated home from Mahama refugee camp. In July, UNHCR supported a convoy of 31 families made up of 49 Burundian refugees to return to Burundi from Mahama camp.

- In July, UNHCR submitted a total of 62 cases consisting of 185 refugees for resettlement to third countries with 80 percent of the cases submitted to the USA. During the month, UNHCR also support seven medical cases for emergency resettlement due to life-saving treatment needed which is only accessible abroad. During the month, 74 refugees departed from Mahama on resettlement to the USA.