SITUATION OVERVIEW

In 2018, 3,831 new refugees from Burundi sought safety in Uganda, citing threats and abuses by members of the Imbonerakure militia, killings and enforced disappearances of family members as well as gang rape, torture and illegal detention as reasons for fleeing their country. Some specifically reported general insecurity, intimidation and abuses related to Burundi’s Constitutional Referendum, held on 17 May 2018.

In order to address growing concerns about the accuracy and reliability of refugee data used for fundraising, programming and assistance, the Government of Uganda and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) jointly launched in March a biometric verification of all refugees, with 1.15 million refugees identified as present in the country by October 2018 – compared to 1.4 million recorded in the previous Government refugee information management system (RIMS).

With ongoing influxes from neighbouring countries, the refugee population in Uganda continued to grow, with 1,190,922 individuals biometrically registered as refugees and asylum seekers as of 31 December 2018. Among them were 34,981 refugees from Burundi. Over 78 per cent reside in Uganda’s western settlement of Nakivale, with smaller numbers in Kampala (10 per cent), Kyaka II settlement (7.2 per cent), and Oruchinga settlement (4.2 per cent). No Burundian refugees have expressed an intention to return home.

Since the government revoked the prima facie status for Burundian asylum seekers in May 2017, the Refugee Eligibility Committee (REC), an inter-ministerial body, began conducting Refugee Status Determination (RSD) interviews. Processing delays created a backlog of RSD cases, with 4,256 Burundians awaiting RSD interviews at the end of 2018.

In line with the 2006 Refugee Act, Burundian refugees benefit from access to documentation and national services, freedom of movement, and right to work and establish businesses.

In the settlements, Burundian refugees received monthly food rations, household items and access to multi-sectoral services. They are allocated a plot of land for housing and farming. In urban areas, the most vulnerable receive targeted assistance from partners.

Building on existing complaint mechanisms, in October 2018 partners launched an inter-agency Feedback, Referral and Resolution Mechanism (FRRM) to improve two-way communication with refugees and enhance accountability to affected populations.

In line with the Grand Bargain’s commitment to improve joint and impartial needs assessments, an inter-agency multi-sector needs assessment of refugee and host communities was carried out from March to July in 12 refugee-hosting districts and 30 refugee settlements. The findings, reviewed by a joint analysis taskforce, were extensively
used to inform the 2019-2020 RRP.

With only 22 per cent of funding received in 2018, RRP partners continued to face enormous challenges in stabilising existing programmes and meeting minimum standards of service provision, let alone investing in long-term and more sustainable interventions. Notably, severe underfunding compromised the quality of child protection, education and water and sanitation services and limited the capacity to fully support prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), environmental protection, support resilience of host communities, and permanent community infrastructure.

**Protection**

- **3,831** new Burundian refugee arrivals granted access to the territory in 2018, with no case of refoulment
- **100%** of identified Burundian refugee children with specific needs received individual case management and follow up in 2018
- **4,256** Burundian asylum seekers were pending Refugee Status Determination by December 2018

Partners provided asylum seekers from Burundi with reception assistance at border collection points and transit centres, and relocation to refugee settlements, mainly Nakivale. During the reporting period, some 4,778 Burundians filed an asylum application with the Government of Uganda. The REC adjudicated 522 applications by December 2018 and granted refugee status to 504 Burundian asylum seekers. Some 18 Burundians received a negative decision at first instance and 4,256 others were awaiting RSD interviews with REC as of December 2018.

In order to improve the quality and reliability of refugee data, UNHCR and the Government signed a memorandum of understanding in July 2018, enabling the use of enhanced biometric systems such as Biometric Identity Management System (BIMS) and ProGres version 4 to verify refugees. The latter system was made available to the Government as their main biometric refugee registration tool, contributing to effective individual case management and delivery of protection services and humanitarian aid (including targeted assistance for persons with specific needs) and the pursuit of durable solutions. Unaccompanied children in foster care were provided with direct support and follow-up services.

Through protection desks, community structures such as SGBV activists, and women’s centres, RRP partners identified 90 SGBV survivors between January and December 2018, with incidents occurring in both the country of origin and the country of asylum. Physical assault was the most reported incident, followed by rape and emotional abuse. All survivors were provided with psychosocial counseling, along with other multi-sectoral support based on needs and survivors’ consent, such as legal aid, livelihood support and medical assistance, security and safe shelter.

An inter-agency Feedback, Referral and Resolution Mechanism (FRRM) was launched in October to strengthen two-way communication with refugees and accountability to affected populations. By the end of the year, the FRRM had been rolled out in six settlements and Kampala. Some 580 Burundians called the FRRM helpline by December, with most seeking assistance and information on protection issues, health and nutrition, legal aid and resettlement. Nearly all of the calls came from Burundian refugees in Nakivale.

In June, the National Refugee Protection Working Group was launched in Kampala with a view to strengthening coordination and delivery of protection services across the country. By December, an inter-agency taskforce had been also established to discuss and pursue peaceful coexistence between refugees and their hosts and among refugee communities.

Limited funding and the constant need to reprioritize activities continued to undermine the ability of partners to adequately support prevention and response to SGBV as well as the quality of child protection services. Limited resources could be allocated to support Government RSD processing, leading to a backlog in the number of asylum seekers awaiting REC interviews. The full deployment of ProGres version 4 for registration and case
By year-end 2018, the number of protection staff in the settlement remained insufficient to effectively respond to the needs of the refugees, with the child-to-caseworker ratio as high as 100:1 – far beyond the international standard of 25:1. In 2018, partners were able to support only a limited number of foster parents in the Burundi refugee response, increasing the risk of neglect, abuse and exploitation for children in unassisted foster care. Initiatives for adolescent and youth remained very limited in 2018, exposing these groups to risks of abuse and exploitation, and potentially leading them to petty criminality and dangerous behaviour.

Burundian refugees continued to face significant challenges in accessing justice, especially in remote areas where the presence of the judiciary and police is limited or non-existent. Of the 900 refugees in need of legal assistance and legal remedies, only 600 individuals could be supported in 2018. Resources were not available to construct additional safe houses for refugees facing security threats, including SGBV survivors.

In most settlements, the capacity and number of police officers continued to remain inadequate to effectively respond to the physical security needs of refugee and host communities. The small number of female police officers represented a barrier for female refugees to come forward and report SGBV incidents. Mental Health and Psychosocial Support for refugees remained largely under-resourced.

In Uganda, refugee children have access to universal primary education, pre-primary and secondary education, vocational skills and tertiary institutions.

In September 2018, the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) and key education partners jointly launched the Education Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities in Uganda (ERP), a four-year plan (2018-2021) aiming at providing access to and quality of education for more than 567,000 refugee and host community children in Uganda.

In 2018, partners supported teaching and learning in 55 primary and secondary schools, including through the construction of 29 semi-permanent and/or permanent classrooms, provision of scholastic materials and remuneration for over 369 primary and secondary school teachers. Top-ups to salaries of Head Teachers in government schools hosting a high number of refugee students were also paid, as well as payment to refugee teachers working as Classroom Assistants.

In coordination with the MoES, partners developed guidelines for the roll out of Accelerated Education, ensuring that overage and out-of-school children from the refugee and host communities have the opportunity to reconnect to learning and ultimately sit for the Primary Leaving Examination (PLE). Due to chronic and severe underfunding, huge gaps remain in terms of classrooms, lack of qualified teachers, furniture, scholastic materials and language orientation programmes. Secondary education remained largely under-resourced, continuing to expose adolescents to risks of forced marriages, early pregnancies and survival sex.

Distance from learning facilities and difficulties to adapt to English as a medium of instruction continued to remain amongst the key challenges affecting school enrollment and attendance of Burundian children.
Furthermore, efforts to increase enrolment at secondary school and in quality vocational skills training were limited due to a funding shortfall. Only eight per cent enrolment at secondary school level was achieved compared to the target of 14 per cent. The number of scholarships for the Nakivale Vocational Training Centre had to be halved from 400 to 200 in 2018 due to underfunding.

The vast majority of Burundian refugees continue to remain heavily dependent on food and nutrition assistance, with few being able to provide for themselves using the land given by the Ugandan government or host communities. In 2018, some 27,046 refugees received food assistance through in-kind distribution and cash transfers.

In conjunction with the verification exercise, new food assistance collection procedures were developed in 2018 to improve accountability and service delivery to refugees, using newly gathered refugee biometric biodata to carry out food distributions to individual households. Under these new procedures, which entail the use of biometrics to verify the identity of beneficiaries at food distribution points, all verified refugees receive a 100 per cent ration regardless of their length of stay in the settlement, including new arrivals. An end-to-end review of the new food assistance collection procedures and related Standard Operating Procedures, planned for early 2019, will help institute a food assistance distribution system that is accountable, efficient and cost-effective.

While delivery of general food assistance remained relatively consistent in 2018, programmes aimed at ensuring sustainable self-reliance and food security among refugees are underfunded. Therefore, the majority of refugees have continued to depend on general food assistance to meet their daily food and nutrition needs.

RRP partners continued to support the national health care system as well as health facilities and referral services in and around settlements hosting Burundi refugees, helping maintain the crude mortality rate and under five mortality rate at 0.1 death every 1,000 people per month – below the non-emergency standard of 1 death every 1,000 people per month.
Specifically, six health facilities received assistance from RRP partners, including through the provision of medicines and payment of salary for 215 health workers and four doctors. This contributed to equal access to primary health care and referrals to tertiary institutions, with 184,691 consultations for refugees (including Burundian and Congolese refugees) between January and December 2018 – of which 25 per cent benefitted the host community.

Due to cholera and Ebola outbreaks in the DRC in 2018, RRP partners deployed resources to strengthen screening measures at entry points and expand traditional and community-based disease surveillance systems. As a prevention and surveillance measure, standard operating procedures were put in place to guide reception, transportation and settlement of refugees from Ebola-affected areas, in addition to modified registration guidelines. Partners set up isolation units in all transit and reception centres to manage suspected Ebola cases and joined the National and District-level Task Force on Ebola, helping 10 refugee-hosting districts develop Ebola preparedness plans, including those hosting Burundian refugees.

Partners continued to deliver comprehensive HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment services, with some 1,367 refugees with HIV/AIDS receiving antiretroviral therapy by year-end 2018 in Nakivale, including Burundian refugees.

The prevalence of Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) remained within the acceptable standard of below five per cent in settlements hosting refugees from Burundi. Anemia among children aged 6-59 months and non-pregnant women aged 15-49 years was reported as “medium” at 25 per cent and 30 per cent respectively, according to WHO classification.

In 2018, efforts continued to improve integration of humanitarian health services into the government health care system. The development of the Uganda National Integrated Health Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities (2019-2024), which began in 2018, will be launched in early 2019 seeking to bridge humanitarian and development programming, based on the Uganda Health Sector’s medium term strategic directions.

Periodic stock out of medicines and medical supplies in the settlements were the major challenges affecting health service delivery in settlements hosting Burundian refugees.

In coordination with the Government of Uganda, RRP partners helped refugee access land for agricultural production, including through rental from the host communities. According to the joint inter-agency Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment (MSNA), 70 per cent of refugees in Uganda reported access to land, of which all but 11 per cent were able to cultivate thanks to productive assets and cash assistance, among others. The remainder cited lack of seeds and tools as constraints.

The capitalization of the Moral Brotherhood and Neighbourhood (MOBAN) SACCO contributed to inject more liquidity into the community, enabling the establishment of small-scale enterprises in Nakivale.

Several studies were commissioned or undertaken in 2018 to gather socio-economic data of refugees and help develop longer-term strategies for refugee self-reliance.
An assessment on affordable and accessible remittances for forcibly displaced persons and host communities in Uganda, by United Nations Capital Development Funds, UNHCR and Bankable Frontier Associates (published in June 2018), found that the provision of digital remittance services to refugees has a potential provided that humanitarian and development partners work together to remove the barriers refugees face in accessing remittances. This includes distance to money transfer operator outlets, problem with legal identification and business case misconceptions about refugees.

In April 2018, Grameen Credit Agricole Foundation in partnership with UNHCR and the Swedish Development Agency carried out an assessment of financial needs of refugees in Uganda and the business case for serving them. At least two microfinance institutions (VisionFund and BRAC) have demonstrated interest in providing micro-loans to refugees.

In 2018, a national coordination Working Group on Environment and Energy was constituted to provide partners with a forum for strategic and programmatic discussions.

Partners continued to address environmental restoration by supporting environmental awareness campaigns, tree-marking for protection, tree nursery development, tree planting and maintenance, and green livelihoods such as apiary among other activities. Efforts were also made to increase access to sustainable energy, especially through skill training for construction of energy-saving stoves and briquette production.

In its annual Joint Sector Review in October 2018, the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development undertook to develop a comprehensive Energy Response Plan for the refugee response in the near future.

Due to underfunding, investments in refugee livelihood and environmental protection remained inadequate to address the increasing needs in this sector. With little livelihood assets or other means of income generation, refugees face enormous challenges in meeting their basic household needs, with no safety nets real opportunities to transition from dependence on humanitarian assistance to self-reliance.

Forest resource management and water catchment restoration remain largely unfunded. At least 20 replacement trees per refugee are needed every year to contribute to afforestation and reforestation. Access to energy-saving technologies, training in sustainable construction and agroforestry practices need to be scaled out now to reduce ongoing rates of degradation. Without adequate and sustained funding, interventions will continue to have little impact to meet the demands and the landscape will continue to degrade, setting the scene for depleted water resources, ongoing exposure to SGBV, scarcity and conflict within refugee and host communities.

In 2018, some 3,831 new arrivals were provided with communal temporary shelter in transit facilities. After relocation to Nakivale, asylum seekers were accommodated at Kabazana reception centre, where they received some minimum NFIs while awaiting RSD interviews with the REC.

The Government of Uganda through OPM allocated plots of land to all recognised refugees while partners provided household and emergency shelter kits, comprising items such as sleeping mats, blankets, water cans, plastic buckets, mosquito nets, hygiene items, plastic sheets, wooden poles and construction tools. However, only 20 per cent of the entire Burundian refugee population had access to adequate NFIs as of December 2018. The joint inter-agency MSNA revealed that 10 per cent of the 99 Burundian refugee households interviewed reported to have zero access to buckets, cooking pots, sleeping mats and torches.
Several transit sites were built or expanded between January and December to reduce congestion, better organize the provision of humanitarian assistance and to scale up emergency preparedness measures. This included the construction of permanent latrines and the installation of energy-saving stoves, a rainwater harvesting system and a new gate at Nyakabande transit centre (Kisoro district). Four new communal accommodation shelters were built at Kabazana Reception Centre in Nakivale.

A new rub hall for food and NFI storage was installed in Nakivale settlement to help bring humanitarian assistance closer to Burundian refugees.

The Refugee Settlement Land Taskforce (RSLT), comprising of representatives from the Office of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development (MLHUD), CRRF Secretariat and UNHCR was established in July 2018 to improve and monitor land use planning, management and administration in Uganda’s refugee settlements.

RSLT’s key tasks are finalizing and approving the Settlement Planning and Shelter Guidelines, as well as developing detailed physical plans and cadastral maps for all refugee settlements. In late November, the RSLT began the ‘Functional Emergency Planning’ phase for Nakivale: surveying and digitised planning of plots for a potential mass influx of new arrivals. Before the end of 2018, the joint MLHUD and OPM team had demarcated some 1,310 household shelter plots around existing village centres in certain settlement zones.

Approximately 570 Burundian households with specific needs were eligible for shelter support in 2018, given the lack of physical capacity or external support to construct their own homes. However, due to limited funding and human resources capacity, only 4 per cent were reached in 2018, with the construction of 17 new semi-permanent shelters in Nakivale, and significant repairs to four existing shelters in Oruchinga.

In southwestern and western Uganda, partners rehabilitated a total of 73 km of existing settlement roads, of which 22 km was to ensure safer relocation of new refugee arrivals from Nyakabande Transit Centre to receiving settlements.

With no sector-earmarked funding for the Burundian response in 2018 and no active operational partners in this sector, UNHCR’s ability to direct already meagre resources specifically to these refugees remained limited. As a result, over 500 extremely vulnerable families hosting PSNs could not be provided with shelter support, potentially compromising their physical protection and health.

While existing settlements need to be re-organized to maximize efficient use of the land available by clustering shelter plots in villages and separately zoning fertile land for livelihoods, inclusive of boundary planting wherever feasible and appropriate, resources remained limited for longer-term settlement planning. Underfunding also continued to compromise the plan to transition from temporary to semi-permanent and permanent structures, including schools, health post, institutions and recreational facilities.

Lack of resources also continued to force partners to use spot gravelling for the urgent construction and repair of roads in and around Nakivale settlement, which means the areas left without gravel become impassable during the wet season and villages are at risk of being cut off from humanitarian assistance.
In 2018, partners mainly focused on reducing reliance on water trucking, while continuing to work towards the inclusion of WASH services into government systems. A new water scheme was commissioned and implemented in settlements hosting Burundian refugees, contributing to reduce the overall delivery of water through water trucking to two per cent, compared to four per cent in December 2017. Furthermore, the unit cost of trucking water decreased by four times as a result of shorter distances between water sources and settlement areas and improved monitoring of trucking ‘value chain’ after development and institutionalization of standard operating procedures.

Supply of safe drinking water in settlements hosting Burundian refugees stood at 18.1 liter per person per day (l/p/d) as of 31 December 2018. With the support of the University of Neuchatel, a new methodology was developed for identifying potential drilling points for production boreholes – which helped increase the average yield of successful boreholes by over 400 per cent (from 4.5 m3/hr to 19 m3/hr). In Nakivale, six high yielding production boreholes were successfully drilled. Furthermore, a detailed hydraulic design for a water supply distribution masterplan was completed, covering two major sub-zones of Nakivale settlement.

In 2018, access to family latrines increased to 48 per cent, compared to 46 per cent in December 2017 as a result of intense community engagement and hygiene promotion, creating demand and adoption of positive hygiene behavior across the settlements. In 2018, partners constructed 44 family latrines, installed 44 hand-washing facilities and engaged 27 hygiene promoters for awareness-raising campaigns in settlements hosting refugees from Burundi.

Considerable progress was made in 2018 towards integration of WASH interventions with the services and approaches of the Ministry of Water and Environment (MoWE).

WASH partners have established direct linkages with relevant departments within MoWE, leading to collaborations in joint planning, project design, implementation, activity monitoring and resource mobilization for refugee-hosting districts. Furthermore, the MoWE in coordination with RRP partners initiated the development of a comprehensive Water and Environment Response plan for refugee and host communities, in addition to an operation and maintenance framework for water schemes serving refugees and their hosts.

Critical funding gaps continued to undermine the stabilization and optimization of existing water schemes and the plan to phase out water tracking. Notably, the water supply master plan for Nakivale could not be fully implemented, in particular the establishment of pumping and distribution infrastructure. Costly water trucking continued to ensure that the refugees received a minimum of 15 litres per person per day. Despite improvements in sanitation coverage, the lack of adequate resources has negatively impacted on the ability of partners to reach the desired household latrine coverage standard of above 80 per cent.

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CRRF

The Government of Uganda formally launched the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) in March 2017, embracing existing initiatives, mechanisms and policies seeking to address the needs of refugee and host communities in Uganda. The long-term goal is sustainability of Uganda's refugee settlement response model and socio-economic inclusion of refugees into national and local development plans.

The Settlement Transformative Agenda (STA), and its incorporation into the National Development Plan (NDP II, 2016-2021) paved the way for the CRRF and created entry points for line ministries and development actors into Uganda’s refugee response, significantly helping to consolidate and evolve the previous model toward comprehensive, inclusive approaches for refugees into Uganda’s development agenda.

By January 2018, national arrangements were firmly established to this end. The CRRF Steering Group, co-led by OPM and the Ministry of Local Government since mid-2018, ensures government ownership of the CRRF and optimizes coordination both at central and local level within the existing legal frameworks. For the first time in Uganda, Permanent Secretaries of key line ministries were represented at the high-level Steering Group, which is responsible for coordinating and activating leadership amongst key line ministries as well as mobilizing resources from non-traditional actors in the refugee response to support the transition and integration of humanitarian-based services into Uganda's national service delivery system.

The CRRF Steering Group includes also Government Departments and Agencies, Local Governments, development and humanitarian donors, representatives of UN Agencies, national and international NGOs, the private sector and international financial institutions. One distinguishing feature of the CRRF Steering Group is the participation of affected communities, with five host population representatives and two others from the refugee community.

The CRRF Secretariat was also constituted and capacitated by February 2018. It serves as the technical body of the CRRF Steering Group, providing the daily technical assistance to line ministries to articulate coordinated plans within Uganda’s existing development sector working groups. It drafted and published Uganda’s CRRF Road Map to guide its stakeholders toward expected results in 2018, based on a set of indicators. The Road Map highlights the following priority focus areas: adaptation and standardization of refugee response and protection; access to quality education for refugee and host communities; water delivery and infrastructure; environment and energy; health care; and livelihoods, resilience and self-reliance.

To bridge the gaps between Uganda’s NDP II and full refugee inclusion into NDP III, the Ministry of Education and Sports, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Water and Environment initiated sector response plans to include refugees into the current (development) national sector plans. A first of its kind in the world, the Education Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities, as an addendum to the education sector strategy for Uganda under NDP II, was launched in September 2018, creating entry points for development donors, consolidating humanitarian actors into one government plan and providing a legal basis for district local governments to plan and budget for educational service delivery for all in their area of coverage. At the end of 2018, Ministry of Health leveraged the CRRF to complete the Uganda National Integrated Health Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities, seeking to integrate humanitarian health services into the government health care system. This plan is due for release in early 2019.

With the impetus of CRRF, these government sector plans enable Uganda to clearly highlight where the international community may usefully channel support for a comprehensive and people-centred response in its refugee-hosting districts in the long run, and provide more space and capacity to humanitarian actors to meet critical life-saving imperatives.
In order to better align the refugee response with longer term government planning and management of social service delivery, the Ministry of Local Government (MoLG) joined the Inter-Agency Coordination Group (IACG) as a co-chair alongside OPM Department of Refugees and UNHCR, at both central and district level. Sector coordination also underwent review in late 2018, with three NGOs and four UN agencies joining as a sector co-chair.

RRP PARTNERS*

- Africa Humanitarian Action
- African Initiatives for Relief and Development
- Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development
- American Refugee Committee
- Care and Assistance for Forced Migrants
- Danish Refugee Council
- Finnish Refugee Council
- Food and Agriculture Organization
- Food for the Hungry
- Humanitarian Initiative Just Relief Aid
- IMPACT
- International Committee of the Red Cross
- IsraAid
- Medical Teams International
- Norwegian Refugee Council
- Nsamizi Training Institute of Social Development
- Reproductive Health Uganda
- Samaritan’s Purse
- Save the Children International
- Tutapona Trauma Rehabilitation
- Uganda Red Cross Society
- United Nations Children’s Fund
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
- United Nations Populations Fund
- Windle International Uganda
- World Food Programme
- World Health Organization

* Including those not appealing for funds through the RRRP

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