



HIGH-LEVEL ROUNDTABLE ON RETURN AND REINTEGRATION OF BURUNDI REFUGEES

KEY OUTCOMES DOCUMENT

Overview

The Government of Burundi and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) organized a high-level roundtable in Bujumbura on 2 November 2022 to shore up support for the return and reintegration of Burundi refugees. This event was generously sponsored by the European Union. Burundi Minister of Interior, H.E. Mr. Martin Niteretse, and UNHCR's Deputy High Commissioner, Kelly T. Clements, participated in this strategic exchange, along with representatives from multiple sectoral ministries and sub-national authorities, diplomatic representatives, including ambassadors, and representatives from countries of asylum hosting Burundi refugees. There were also representatives from the World Bank Group (WBG), the African Development Bank (AfDB), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the East African Community (EAC), bilateral development partners, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and returnee associations. A total of 182 persons participated in this event.

This joint outcome document will be presented at UNHCR's High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges, to be held in Geneva on 7-8 December 2022, to highlight ways in which development cooperation can be strengthened to advance protection and durable solutions, especially the socioeconomic inclusion for returnees and their communities.

Burundi Context

Since April 2015, more than 400,000 people fled Burundi as refugees to neighboring countries and others further afield, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. Working under Tripartite arrangements with the Government of Burundi and countries of asylum, UNHCR has repatriated since September 2017 over 200,000 Burundian refugees. An estimated 56% of the returnees are children. While returning refugees have been welcomed home, they face a variety of challenges in achieving sustainable reintegration.

In line with the Global Compact for Refugees (GCR), the Government of Burundi and UNHCR are working with national and local government, intergovernmental organizations, humanitarian and development and peacebuilding partners to improve conditions for sustainable return while pursuing comprehensive solutions for Burundian refugees and returnees. This includes scaling activities to build the self-reliance of returnees and enhance livelihoods in return and host areas.

The Burundian refugee situation warrants sustained advocacy for additional resources to seize opportunities for solutions, as it remains the lowest funded of any situation globally. Leveraging the technical and financial support of development cooperation actors, including multilateral development banks, bilateral development organizations and private sector actors, is more critical than ever before.

Key Outcomes

1. INSTITUTIONAL COORDINATION

- 1.1. Reinforce the inter-sectoral ministerial coordination on reintegration, under the leadership of the Prime Minister.

- 1.2. Strengthen, under the leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator's Office, the sustainability of normative frameworks and strategies. Consider transforming the Joint Refugee Return and Reintegration Plan (JRRRP) into a multi-year and more inclusive multi-actor national strategy on return and reintegration with a stronger coordination function.

2. FINANCING MECHANISMS

- 2.1. Ensure the systematic inclusion of returnees in national development programs to effectively respond to the needs across different sectors (health, education, nutrition etc.).
- 2.2. Explore the feasibility of accessing new financial instruments, such as the World Bank's Prevention and Resilience Allocation in Burundi and influence the design of the portfolio to ensure returnees and their communities are included.
- 2.3. Bilateral development partners to finance dedicated projects in return areas that are inclusive of all communities and build on community planning and prioritization and identify opportunities to deliberately include returnees and high return areas in broader bilateral development programmes.
- 2.4. Incentivize private sector engagement and digital finance in reintegration efforts.
- 2.5. Explore the feasibility of establishing a dedicated sub-window on reintegration under the existing Burundi Multi Partner Trust Fund, in line with the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. In doing so, reach out to non-resident donors to attract additional interest in Burundi. This trust fund could support a number of interventions including:
 - Projects to support social cohesion efforts and address protection vulnerabilities
 - Projects to support individuals/households to find solutions on their own (e.g., access to financing for businesspeople or cooperatives).

3. REGIONAL APPROACHES

- 3.1. Develop a Regional Roadmap for Comprehensive Solutions for Burundian Refugees, elaborating a common work plan and resources required, for the gradual and phased approach to promotion of returns to Burundi.
- 3.2. Facilitate dialogue between sector ministries in Burundi and counterparts in countries of asylum to remove barriers to sustainable reintegration (e.g., documentation, education and vocational training certification equivalence).
- 3.3. Continue to provide information in countries of asylum on the situation in Burundi and the return process (e.g., facilitate go-and-see and come-and-tell missions).