

# Kigeme Refugee Camp, Rwanda

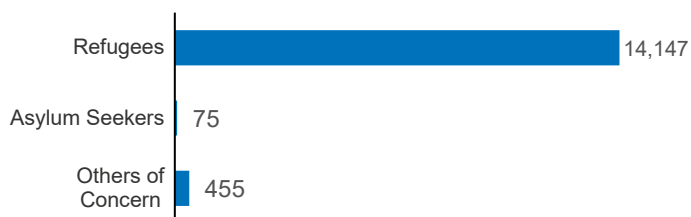
March 2024

**14,677 refugees and asylum seekers** live in Kigeme refugee camp which is in Nyamagabe District in the Southern Province of Rwanda. All refugees are Congolese.

The camp was set up in **2012**. **34 hectares** of land were given to host refugees. The Government of Rwanda through MINEMA administers the camp and handles security and protection of the refugees in coordination with UNHCR.

**50.30 per cent** of the camp's population is younger than 18 years old.

## POPULATION OF CONCERN



**UNHCR STAFF BASED IN THE HUYE FIELD OFFICE COVER THE NEEDS OF REFUGEES IN MUGOMBWA REFUGEE CAMP**



The World Bank Rwanda Country Director, UNHCR Rwanda Representative, MINEMA Permanent Secretary and wider delegation from the World Bank carry out a mission to Nyamagabe district and Kigeme Refugee Camp as part of the Jyambere project mid-term review.

## CONTACTS

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# Main Activities

## Camp Coordination and Camp Management

- Kigeme 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 Police. The camp is divided into 7 quarters and each quartier consists of an average of 3 villages. In total, Kigeme camp consists of 18 villages.
- The camp has a refugee executive committee which consists of eight members (four male and four female) led by a Camp President and a Deputy President. The executive committee is elected by community members for two years. Many religions exist in Kigeme camp, but most of the population are Christian (Adventist).
- Each village has a village leader who is elected by the village members and each quartier has also a quartier leader elected by the community. Village and quartier leaders play a key role in communicating issues facing the refugee community with UNHCR and partners.
- UNHCR works with 11 implementing and operational partners in Kigeme camp including: Prison Fellowship Rwanda (PFR), Humanity & Inclusion (HI), Plan International (PI), World Vision International (WVI), Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), and Save The Children which are implementing partners and GIZ, Alight, African Humanitarian Agency (AHA), Inkomoko, World Food Program (WFP) which are the operational partners.
- Kigeme refugee camp is contending with environmental degradation, attributable to its distinct climatic and geophysical characteristics. Limited land hinders the construction of shelter and the installation of facilities chosen for sports and recreational activities. The camp is particularly at risk of land/mudslides, which are increasing due to soil erosion and heightened rainfall intensity. Subsequently, there is a necessity to increase tree planting and develop a solid drainage network.
- UNHCR's office in Huye is part of the Nyamagabe Joint Action Development Forum (JADF) which ties in many aspects of the Global Compact for Refugees (GCR) to improve lives for both refugees and host communities (Rwanda). Jointly, UNHCR and Nyamagabe district have implemented several projects including in Mushishito marshland.

## Protection

- UNHCR's office in Huye delivers protection assistance and humanitarian support to all Congolese refugees living in Kigeme camp. UNHCR works with authorities and humanitarian actors to ensure the rights of refugees are upheld. This includes monitoring to identify protection risks and responding through organizing Continuous Registration Panel (CRP) sessions, home visits, providing legal assistance, advocating about prevention and response to gender-based violence (GBV), as well as raising awareness on child protection issues.
- In Kigeme camp, UNHCR and partners coordinate to ensure child protection prevention and response. UNHCR and Plan International Rwanda (PIR) have set up a "Community Engagement Approach" building the ability of refugee community mobilizers and strengthening existing community-based protection mechanisms to prevent and report the abuses, neglect, and exploitation of children. In March, four new child protection cases were received and provided with appropriate assistance. Additionally, four Best Interest Assessments (BIA) involving child protection cases and Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC) were initiated.
- The community engagement approach also extends to prevention of GBV. Through the establishment of GBV committees, girls' committees, and anti-GBV clubs, as well as the

recruitment of community mobilizers, UNHCR is encouraging the refugee community to take responsibility for reporting GBV cases. The most prevalent types of GBV for adults include psychological abuse, physical assault, and denial of access to resources and opportunities. In partnership with Plan International Rwanda, UNHCR refers GBV survivors to health care, psychosocial support and legal counselling where needed. Additionally, Plan International ensures safe shelter for survivors if needed.

- UNHCR implements complaint and feedback mechanism through community-based protection partner (Prison Fellowship Rwanda (PFR)) to ensure accountability to refugees. UNHCR also runs a regular protection desk, individual counselling, hotlines, home visits, and mass meetings with the refugee community to receive complaint and provide timely feedback.
- UNHCR maintains accurate data of refugees living in Kigeme refugee camp through regular registration of individuals and groups. Refugees are registered individually and by household (biometric registration) and given a “Proof of Registration” by UNHCR which subsequently supports refugees to access national identity documents. UNHCR also works closely with the Rwandan Government through MINEMA and National Identification Agency (NIDA) to ease the issuance of new refugee ID cards to individuals aged 16 years old and above living in Kigeme camp. Periodic campaigns take place to distribute new ID cards and replace the expired ones.

## Education

- In Kigeme refugee camp, most refugee children are enrolled and integrated within Rwandan national schools found nearby the camp. In Kigeme, 741 children currently attend the Early Childhood Development Programme (ECD) programme (nursery), 2,802 students attend primary school, and 1,591 students are enrolled in secondary education.
- Some students, especially high performers, are sent to schools of excellence (boarding). Within the 2023-2024 academic year, 179 refugee students registered in Kigeme are in schools of excellence and UNHCR supports the attendance of 13 children with disabilities from Kigeme to specialized schools. UNHCR supports education for refugees in Kigeme refugee camp in partnership with World Vision Rwanda.
- UNHCR’s support to refugee education includes paying tuition fees for students in schools of excellence and special needs education, providing scholastic supplies, didactic materials, school uniforms, and other types of school requirement fees.

## Health and Nutrition

- One health centre is present in Kigeme refugee camp and is managed by UNHCR’s health partner, Save the Children International (SCI). The health centre provides a range of primary health care services that include laboratory tests, antenatal and post-natal care, and sexual and reproductive health care. The Ministry of Health also supports the health centre with medical equipment.
- UNHCR and SCI help the referral of refugees in need of secondary health care to Kigeme Hospital and tertiary referrals to other specialized hospitals, such as University Teaching Hospital of Butare (CHUB), University Teaching Hospital of Kigali and others. A referral committee is in place in Kigali to make these decisions based on the available budget to support lifesaving and emergency healthcare.
- Vaccination of children under 5 years old including measles and other mandatory child vaccinations are provided by SCI in Kigeme refugee camp. 99 children under 5 years were vaccinated in March 2024. This brings the total vaccinated children in the camp to 337 in 2024.

- As part of its public health services, SCI work with 34 community health workers who give information and conduct health education activities in Kigeme refugee camp.
- To ensure the health and wellbeing of the refugee population, UNHCR alongside WFP supplies a variety of nutrition interventions in Kigeme camp. These include supplementary feeding, outpatient program for severe malnutrition, anaemia reduction, HIV and TB treatment, nutrition support for pregnant and lactating women, and children from 6 to 23 months. Overall, 659 individuals have had access to nutrition programme by end of March 2024.

### Food Security

- Since September 2017, WFP has used cash-based transfers for food assistance in Kigeme refugee camp. To ease the cash assistance distribution, UNHCR helps refugee households to set up a bank account. Cash assistance for food is distributed on targeted basis whereby as of March 2024, 13,748 refugees (93.45%) are placed in the highly vulnerable category and receive 100 per cent of the food assistance value currently RWF 8,500; 578 people (3.93%) are classified as moderately vulnerable and receive 50 per cent of the food assistance value currently RWF 4,250; and 386 refugees (2.62%) are in the least vulnerable group and do not receive any food assistance.
- Since October 2022, refugees' children attending primary and secondary schools nearby Kigeme camp are integrated within the national school feeding program. In this regard, WFP tops up the Rwandan Government's contribution for refugee children's food in school. The Government is supplying 90 per cent and WFP tops up 10 per cent for refugee students.

### Water and Sanitation

- Kigeme refugee camp is entirely reliant on water supplied by the national system through Water and Sanitation Corporation (WASAC), a governmental institution in charge of water distribution. Currently, the average water use in the camp is 16.4 litres per person per day.
- In terms of water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities, Kigeme camp has 34 water points with 200 water taps, 34 latrine blocks with 434 drop holes (30 of which are friendly to PWD), 43 shower blocks with 344 functional shower stances, and 7 garbage collection points.
- In terms of hygiene promotion, UNHCR works with 18 refugee hygiene promoters in Kigeme camp to deliver messages about best hygiene practices. Each promoter contacts an average of 817 people per month. In addition, an average of 320 litres of liquid soap are supplied and used each month for handwashing and general cleaning of sanitation facilities.
- In Kigeme refugee camp, each month, an average of 120 m<sup>3</sup> of solid waste were delivered to a dumping site, while an average of 280 m<sup>3</sup> of liquid waste were dislodged from dischargeable latrines.

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

- Since the establishment of Kigeme refugee camp in 2012, UNHCR has constructed 1,560 semi-permanent shelters across seven quarters subdivided into 19 villages. Over time, more than 1,000 shelters in high-risk zones have also been demolished and refugees have been moved to Mahama refugee camp due to environmental degradation.
- Since January 2024, UNHCR has constructed a total of 47 terraces, including 32 in March, to protect shelters in Kigeme camp as mitigation measure for environmental degradation.
- In Kigeme camp, initially shelter surface was 12 m<sup>2</sup> although some shelters have since been extended to take into consideration differing needs of refugee families giving the average

of 21 m<sup>2</sup> per shelter. Since January 2024, UNHCR has rehabilitated/repared 45 shelters, including 10 in March, while 1 shelter was demolished and reconstructed in the camp.

- To help refugees buy non-food items, UNHCR distributes cash assistance to refugees living in Kigeme refugee camp on a regular basis. To ease this process, UNHCR works with Equity Bank who facilitate bank accounts for refugees in the camp through which they receive cash assistance from UNHCR, WFP and other partners. Due to a lack of funding, cash assistance for NFI's has ceased since March 2023.

### Energy and Environment

- In Kigeme refugee camp, all refugee households used to receive cash assistance for cooking energy from UNHCR on monthly basis. The amount of assistance was calculated based on family size and the firewood quantity consumption at a cost of 1 kg for 200 RWF. On average, UNHCR disbursed RWF 19,419,984 per month for cooking energy in Kigeme camp. Since June 2023, however, cash assistance for energy has been cut due to a lack of funds.
- To support the use of sustainable sources of energy and reduce deforestation, UNHCR and partners, Practical Action, URUMURI Energy Group and EcoGreen Solutions, provide refugees in Kigeme camp with cooking stoves and pellets. Since January 2024, 1,462 households in the camp are recorded as using improved cooking stoves.
- To reduce deforestation, UNHCR supplied fuel briquettes, an alternative to firewood, for cooking food at ECD schools. 125 kgs of briquettes are used daily. The process is managed by WVI.
- In Kigeme refugee camp, 1,165 households have access to solar home systems for lighting that were installed by UNHCR and its partners. The communal facilities and offices in the camp are lit by 84 streetlights (75 in camp and 9 in the host community) and powered by other renewable energy sources and electricity from the national grid.
- An environmental club of 20 members (14 refugees and 6 from host community) contributes to environmental protection in Kigeme refugee camp. As of March 2024, 39,222 trees were planted in Kigeme refugee camp in partnership with WVI and the refugee environmental club. A tree nursery bed has also been established by partners and as of March 2024 is currently producing 252 *Alnus*, 535 *Grevillea* and 55 *Avocados* tree seedlings.

### Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion

- Since 2021, with the support from the Danish government, UNHCR, MINEMA and Nyamagabe District are jointly implementing a climate-smart agriculture project to enhance livelihoods of refugees and their host communities. 59 hectares of land were availed by Nyamagabe District in Mushishito Marshland to 500 refugees and 1,069 Rwandans. UNHCR supports refugee and Rwandan farmers in their agricultural endeavours on the marshland through supplying seeds, fertilizers, and other agricultural inputs. Regular harvests enable farmers to make an income and improve their household food security.
- In Kigeme refugee camp, since December 2021, UNHCR works with WVI through Poverty Alleviation Project (PAC) to support refugee livelihoods. In total, 303 refugees have been supported by the project. This includes 266 refugees who received a cash grant of approximately \$800 per person for businesses (agriculture and non-agriculture businesses) and 37 refugee youth who received a start-up grant after the completion of nine months technical and vocational education and training (TVET).
- To support refugee livelihoods, Indego Africa with UNHCR's support trained 44 refugee women to weave handmade baskets and eased their access to national and international markets to sell their products. These women now form basket-weaving cooperatives where they earn an income to support their families.

### Durable Solutions

- UNHCR continues to find and process cases from Kigeme camp for resettlement mainly due to medical reasons.
- Legal and policy provisions exist to ease the local integration of refugees throughout Rwanda, including in Kigeme camp. Despite this, requests to locally integrate are few and the majority occur due to marriage between refugees and Rwandan nationals. UNHCR is still available to support refugees pursue naturalisation through legal pathways.
- Refugees in Kigeme camp primarily originate from Eastern DRC. Due to ongoing security concerns in their area of origin, UNHCR is neither promoting nor easing voluntary repatriation now.