

Burundi

May 2024

In May 2024, **3,059 Burundian refugees from 927 households were voluntarily repatriated** mainly from Tanzania to their home country of Burundi. **Among the returnees' children accounted for more than half with 1863 repatriated.**

Additionally, **354 refugees** from 97 households **were transferred from Cishemere asylum-seeker transit center** in Cibitoke Province **to the first refugee site** in Giharo in Rutana Province.

Furthermore, **1,938 individuals from 728 households affected by El Nino floods were voluntarily relocated with safety by UNHCR** from the Gatumba flooded area to Mubimbi site in Bujumbura.

Operational Context

As of May 2024, the security situation in Burundi remained relatively calm though some incidents were reported in various provinces. In Bujumbura, however, the situation was marked by the explosion of grenades in public places resulting in injuries and the deaths of 3 persons. Additionally, UNHCR declared a Level 1 Emergency for Burundi due to the impact of El-Nino phenomenon, which posed significant threats, including fatalities and the destruction of infrastructure, homes, and crops. Landslides blocked roads causing delays in the delivery of UNHCR programs. Access to some refugee camps was difficult and forcing staff to take detours to reach the camps.



After 3 years' suspension of activities at the Nyabitare Transit Center, UNHCR, ONPRA together with BPRM and partners welcomed the 1st convoy of Burundian refugees to the center on May 14th @UNHCR/Burundi

Update On Achievements



PROTECTION

Achievements and Impact

- **A total of 768 refugees** including urban refugees (462) and 306 refugees living in camps **received their refugee identity cards** distributed by UNHCR and ONPRA (Office National de Protection des Réfugiés et Apatrides – the government partner). These identity cards officially recognize the identity and status of each refugee within the host country, granting them access to rights, protection, services, and opportunities.
- **In May, 425 persons of Congolese nationality were granted refugees status** during sessions of the *Advisory Commission for Foreigners and Refugees* (CCER) together with ONPRA and UNHCR. As of 31st May, 821 asylum seekers obtained refugee status in Burundi.
- In May, 9 refugees were arrested and detained for lack of exit permits from refugee camps. All 9 cases were released following UNHCR's advocacy. UNHCR and its partner continue to advocate for refugees living in camps to be exempted of exit permits from camps to be to enjoy their right to free movement.
- **As of May 31st, 1,938 individuals from 728 households affected by El Niño floods were voluntarily relocated with dignity by UNHCR** from the Gatumba flood zone to the Mubimbi site in Bujumbura.
- On May 23rd, a campaign was launched at the Mubimbi site to issue national identity cards to internally displaced persons (IDPs) affected by the El Niño floods. As a result, **200 IDPs who had registered as needing national IDs received their cards**. This initiative was a joint effort between UNHCR, the National Independent Commission for Human Rights (CNIDH), and other members of the Protection Sector, such as Social Action for Development (SAD). Both CNIDH and UNHCR emphasized the importance of obtaining a national ID.
- As part of the El Nino emergency response, in May, **UNHCR and its financial partner provided monetary assistance to 149 urban refugee households** who were severely affected by the floods in Bujumbura and Rumonge area.



- In addition, UNHCR and the National Independent Commission for Human Rights (CNIDH) distributed loincloths and children's clothing to 150 vulnerable women affected by El Nino at the relocation Mubimbi site.
- **354 refugees from 97 households were relocated from the Cishemere asylum-seeker transit center in Cibitoke Province to the new Giharo refugee site** in Rutana Province. As of May 31st, 1,696 individuals, comprising both asylum seekers and refugees, remain at the Cishemere transit center, awaiting transfer to one of the five refugee camps or the Giharo site in Rutana Province.
- In May, UNHCR and its partners conducted prevention and response activities to combat gender-based violence (GBV). Partners such as the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and Save the Children **identified and documented 87 GBV incidents**, including 25 cases of rape. Of these, 60 cases involved refugee survivors, and 27 cases involved returnees. Rape survivors were referred to Health Net TPO, the medical partner, for care and psychosocial support. The majority of GBV survivors were women, with 69 incidents (79% of the total) reported by females, one by a male, and 17 incidents involving girls. Additionally, 47 older cases, including rape, physical assault, psychological violence, and denial of resources, were monitored in the Kinama and Musasa refugee camps. Most GBV incidents (58%) were perpetrated by intimate partners or former partners, while 22% were committed by community members. Cases involving physical and psychological violence, and forced marriages, were referred to the police and camp administration. UNHCR and its partners continue to assist survivors facing threats from known perpetrators by exploring options such as relocation to safe havens, ensuring their safety and well-being.
- **In the ongoing fight against GBV, UNHCR and its partners conducted several sensitization workshops in May, reaching a total of 1,317 individuals.** These workshops aimed to raise awareness on various GBV-related topics and the available services, with participants including women (34%), men (31%), girls (27%), and boys (8%). In refugee camps, additional sessions focused on educating girls about the menstrual cycle, sexual exploitation, and harassment. Sensitization sessions for mixed couples (refugees and host community members) were also held, addressing peaceful cohabitation and the consequences of physical and emotional violence.
- As part of child protection, UNHCR and its partner Save the Children carried out various activities including home visits to children with special needs in the camps of Kavumu, Bwagiriza, Nyakanda and Kinama. These visits led to the drafting of **33 Best Interest Determination cases that were presented for examination to the Panel; 19 cases concerning resettlement and 14 cases concerning care, all of which were**



approved. In addition, 64 children (20 girls and 44 boys) received various assistance during the month of May including psychosocial support, access to documents, shelter, legal assistance, identification and implementation of temporary alternative care, family tracing and reunification. **13 cases of family reunification were successfully carried out in refugee camps.**

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- There were **2,822 cases of special needs were identified** in Kinama and Musasa camps, most of them are women, with 2,044 women with special needs.
- **60 asylum-seeking children were identified at the Cishemere Transit Center as needing family tracing.** Cases were referred to ICRC for the initiation of family tracing in Burundi.



EDUCATION

Achievements and Impact

- **201 primary school students** from the Nyagisozi Primary school in Kirundo **province received school kits** from UNHCR and its partner JRS, consisting mainly of books, exercise books, pens, backpacks. The distribution was carried out as part of support for the reintegration of repatriated children into school in Burundi. The activity will be expanded at the start of the school year.
- From May 3rd to 4th UNHCR took part in a workshop organized in Gitega on the stabilization of programs and activities around the strategy of including refugees and improving returnees' access to the Burundian education system. In addition, a 4-day training course was organized for 14 teachers (10F and 04G) from pre-schools in refugee camps, with the support of the Ngozi provincial director of education. Recommendations were made aimed at facilitating the inclusion in the Burundian education system. There was also the facilitation of 5-day vocational training courses in didactics for 61 students in 4th grade (23 girls and 38 boys).

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Although, UNHCR and its partner JRS carried out an identification of young refugees who graduated from secondary school and university, with the aim of identifying potential candidates for tertiary education and facilitating the preparation of advocacy with sponsors, **the major challenge faced by most refugee graduates is the lack of documentation required to access tertiary education.**

**HEALTH****Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps**

- In May, **a resurgence of malaria was observed in refugee camps**, with cases rising from 533 in April to 768 in May. Nyakanda Refugee Camp was the most affected. Awareness campaigns on the use of mosquito nets are ongoing, but there remains a significant need for enhanced malaria protection.
- One of the main challenges identified by refugees is the **limited health assistance available to urban refugees, particularly in cases of illness**.

**SHELTER AND NFIS****Achievements and Impact**

- Construction works at the Nyabitare Refugee Transit Center in Ruyigi Province, including three sheds for temporary accommodation, a registration room, a refectory, and a kitchen, were completed.
- **The construction of six new classrooms and an eight-door latrine block was finalized** by UNHCR's construction partner in the Kinama Refugee Camp, Muyinga Province. These new facilities will provide refugee children with better learning conditions.
- As part of a reintegration project, **200 beneficiaries, including 179 returnees and 21 members of the host community, received shelter kits** in the localities of Buhinyuza (70), Butihinda (42), Gashoho (28), Munagano (20), and Mwakiro (40) in Muyinga Province.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- In May, 225 shelters in need of rehabilitation or construction were identified in refugee camps, including 85 shelters in Kavumu, 40 in Nyankanda, and 100 in Bwagiriza. **The operation faces growing demands for adequate shelter due to the increasing number of refugees**.

**DURABLE SOLUTIONS****Achievements and Impact**

- In May, **3,059 Burundian refugees from 927 households were voluntarily repatriated** to their home country. Among them were 1,863 children, including 31 unaccompanied minors, 17 GBV survivors, and 43 individuals with specific needs. All returnees were welcomed safely and with dignity by Burundian authorities, UNHCR, and its partners at transit centers, including the Nyabitare

Transit Center in Ruyigi Province, which reopened after three years. **The returnees received certificates of recognition for their repatriation status** from the government partner, the Direction Générale du Rapatriement, de la Réintégration et de la Réinsertion (DGRRR).



Returnees received a return package in the form of cash assistance for everyone, regardless of age, to help meet various needs in their areas of return. An additional amount per person was also provided for **secondary transport** to reach their communes. **Core relief item kits**, including travel bags, buckets, jerry cans, sanitary supplies, and clothing, were distributed. Additionally, **WFP provided food assistance**, including maize, peas, oil, and salt, sufficient to cover three months. Most returnees chose to return to Ruyigi and Cankuzo provinces.

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