



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

The Ugandan Government is responsible for Refugee Status Determination (RSD). UNHCR works with the Refugee Department within the Office of the Prime Minister and other partners to build and enhance the capacity of national RSD procedures.

Key Figures of the month

1,462	# of new asylum seekers registered at the Refugee Desk
3,694	# of new asylum seekers from DRC registered in settlements
4,683	# of new asylum seekers from South Sudan registered in settlements
365	# of new asylum seekers from Burundi registered in Nakivale settlement

Key Achievement of 2019

4,591	# of asylum applications adjudicated by the REC
4,424	# of asylum applications granted
96%	% of recognition rate in the first instance
14	# of asylum appeals reviewed by the RAB
7	# of appeals set aside by the RAB

NOTE:

As of writing, DRC nationals (*who enter Uganda via designated border points*) and South Sudanese are granted refugee status on prima facie basis in accordance with Section 25 of the Refugees Act.

UNHCR Monthly Protection Update Refugee Status Determination (RSD)

March 2019



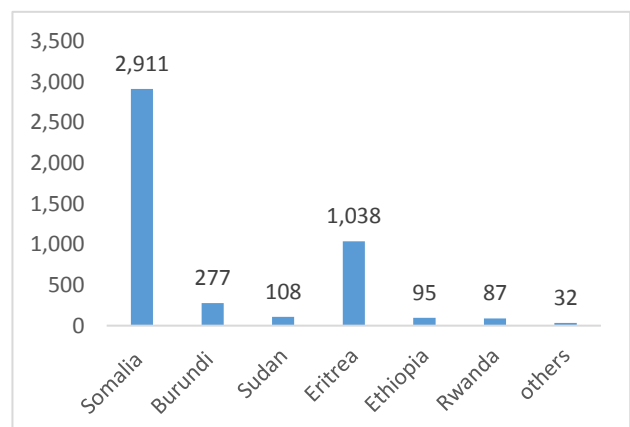
1st REC session in Nakivale settlement

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Monthly Trend of Asylum Seekers

- During the reporting period, a total of 1,462 new asylum seekers were registered at the Refugee Desk in Kampala including 1,044 Somalis and 226 Eritreans. The figure is slightly increased as compared to February 2019.
- 3,694 new arrivals from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) were recorded in south west and mid-west of the country, which shows lower number than previous month. The majority of them fled from ongoing tension and violence in North Kivu and Ituri Provinces including fresh clashes between Lendu, Alurs and Bagegere tribes.
- 4,683 new arrivals from South Sudan were reported in Arua, Adjumani and Lawmo districts. Reasons for their displacement include violence, insecurity, human rights violations, as well as lack of access to humanitarian assistance and basis service.
- 365 Burundian asylum seekers were newly registered in Nakivale settlement owing to continuous insecurity and the request for family reunification.

Country of origin of asylum seekers registered at Refugee Desk in Kampala in January - March 2019



Status Determination

- The **Refugee Eligibility Committee (REC)**, during the session of 12-15 March in Nakivale settlement, adjudicated 1,513 asylum applications, largely concerning nationals of DRC and Burundi. 97% of applicants were granted refugee status.
- The **REC**, during the session of 25-29 March in Jinja, adjudicated 3,008 asylum applications, largely concerning nationals of Somalia, DRC and Eritrea. 96% of applicants were granted refugee status.
- The **Refugee Appeals Board (RAB)**, during the session on 21 March, reviewed four asylum appeals (three Eritrean cases and one DRC case). The RAB set aside one REC's decision, confirmed one REC's decision and decided to hold a hearing of two cases.

Capacity development:

- UNHCR organized a seminar with OPM Refugee Status Interview Officers (RSIOs) on 22 March during which the topic of asylum interview skills and techniques was discussed. This new initiative aims at providing an opportunity for RSIOs to improve their RSD-related knowledge and skills on a monthly basis.

Strategy

UNHCR supports the Ugandan authorities with the assumption of responsibility for individual refugee status determination with the following objectives:

- To strengthen the capacity of the government to deliver a fair, credible and efficient refugee status determination
- To advocate for improvement of the national legislation and related by-laws on asylum in line with applicable international and regional standards
- To actively engage with the government to ensure access to asylum in face of mixed flows of refugees and migrants.

Challenges

- **Limited capacity to process asylum claims:** As of March 2019, there are 30,436 asylum seekers across the country, out of which over 60% represents applications filed in Kampala. The analysis of backlog is ongoing, which will help develop a strategy for its reduction.
- **Lack of adequate space for initial screening:** The poor physical condition of the Refugee Desk hampers an initial screening of asylum seekers in Kampala effectively. The current set-up does not equip for proper file management but also significantly compromises the principle of confidentiality and privacy.
- **Insufficient quality of RSD interview/decision-making:** A combination of several factors such as limited number of interview officers and interpreters (in light of the current caseload), inadequate quality of interpretation service and limited capacity to handle complex cases undermines the quality of RSD decisions.
- **Gaps in law, and gaps between law and practice of asylum procedure:** The review process of the Refugees Act and its Regulations has been ongoing since 2015. Coupled with lack of proper application of certain provisions, there are several deficits such as limited authority of Refugee Appeals Board, lack of clear definition in certain terms as well as absence of the clear provision regulating the reception/admission procedure for asylum seekers in Kampala.
- **Increasing mixed migration flows:** The government has increasingly faced difficulties in recognizing the situation of refugees and refugees within migratory movements, which results in tightening an access to asylum procedure.

Contact: Yusuke Hara (hara@unhcr.org)