

KEY FIGURES

Some 12,000

individuals have fled following the onset of the fresh conflict, between Saturday and today (26 Oct 2022).


Over 5,000

Individuals fled into Uganda on Saturday afternoon (22 Oct 2022).


 Some **5,350** individuals are in Nyakabande Transit Centre.

 Some **6,500** individuals are occupying Bunagana primary school and Bunagana market.


New arrivals coming through the Bunagana border point. Photo ©Daily Monitor/Robert Muhereza

OVERVIEW

Women, girls, men, and boys started to arrive across the border from the DRC in Uganda on Saturday 22 October 2022. This is now the third major influx since November 2021. It is estimated that between 13H00 and 19H30 more than 5,000 individuals fled into Uganda from DRC through Bunagana Border point. It is reported that there was a resumption of hostilities between M23 and FARDC forces 16 KM from Bunagana border, triggering an influx. As of today, it is estimated that some 12,000 individuals have fled, and it is expected that this influx will continue through Bunagana border point but also Kibaya and Kanombe porous borders in Kisoro District.

UNHCR is supporting the government of Uganda to receive asylum seekers that have entered the country in overwhelming numbers. The timing of this influx could not be worse as UNHCR and partners are facing severe funding constraints. The closure of the holding area is also ongoing. There are many crises in the country that require immediate intervention, including continuous arrivals into West Nile from South Sudan, the Ebola outbreak and flooding.

The Office of the Prime Minister has received and is currently registering 5,356 asylum seekers at the Nyakabande Transit center, which has the capacity to accommodate only 825 individuals. There are approximately 6,500 new arrivals who are also occupying Bunagana Primary School and Bunagana market in Kisoro, waiting for the situation to stabilize so they can return home.

The numbers are as overwhelming as they were during the March 2022 influx, coupled with an Ebola outbreak which poses as a huge challenge.

The host community is unable to provide sufficient support to the new arrivals. The health facility in Bunagana is overcrowded, not only by the host community but also by new arrivals seeking medical care. The drugs in the facilities have drastically reduced. The primary school is closed to students. Basic sanitation is already compromised. This will impact the water quality in the area.

The Government and UNHCR are concerned by the situation. We are moving fast to have all these individuals screened and registered so that they are sent to settlements where they can get proper protection and access to lifesaving assistance.

RESPONSE

The response by OPM, UNHCR and partners has been immediate. Initially, 2,000 individuals were transported to Nyakabande Transit Centre while approximately 3,000 individuals were escorted at around 21H00 on Saturday night from the border point to Bunagana Primary school to spend the night. The recommendation to take the new arrivals to the nearby facility was reached during an emergency District Security meeting held at Bunagana border point. Transportation of the remaining new arrivals to Nyakabande Transit Centre is now ongoing. Registration is being fast tracked and trucks are being sought to ensure movement of new arrivals to Nakivale. The availability of core relief items is limited.

Advocacy is ongoing to conduct security screening at the border to speed up the transfer of asylum seekers to the settlements. Monitoring at all border points has been strengthened to ensure effective screening of new arrival. Efforts are being made to prevent Ebola and COVID-19 through handwashing with soap and social distancing. The number of new arrivals and limited funding for key items like soap and transportation is making protecting new arrivals from these health challenges an issue.

Relocating asylum seekers to settlements is the priority for OPM and UNHCR. The transit center is overstretched as the population there is way beyond capacity. At the same time, the progress of the relocation is good. The number at the holding area has reduced to less than 2,000 individuals. At the transit center, we are working to ensure that new arrivals are relocated within the shortest time possible.

GAPS

The fresh influx comes at a time when UNHCR and partners are faced with multiple crises. Urgent support is required to ensure adequate core relief items, availability of transportation to relocate new arrivals and that support is provided to all sectors in the receiving settlements. The services available to the new arrivals and the existing refugee population in the settlements are grossly inadequate. The Uganda Country Refugee Response remains grossly underfunded at 22% and 11% against the Emergency Appeal.

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