

Mahama Refugee Camp, Rwanda

31 October 2022

55,240 refugees live in Mahama refugee camp located in Kirehe District in the Eastern Province of Rwanda.

The camp was established in **2015**. **160 hectares** of land were allocated to host refugees. MINEMA administers the camp and is responsible for security and protection of the refugees in coordination with UNHCR.

50.7% of the camp's population is younger than 18 years old.



Refugee youth take part in the inter-camp sports tournament which took place in Mahama refugee camp at the beginning of October

POPULATION OF CONCERN



Source: © UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency

59 UNHCR STAFF BASED IN KIREHE SUB OFFICE COVER THE NEEDS OF REFUGEES IN MAHAMA REFUGEE CAMP

Main Activities

Camp Coordination and Camp Management

- UNHCR and Rwandan Ministry of Emergency Management (MINEMA) manage the through regular coordination meetings and multi-function monitoring conducted on a quarterly basis. MINEMA staff including the camp manager, his deputy as well as immigration staff and the police work closely with UNHCR on a daily basis.
- Mahama camp is divided into two sites Mahama I and II in the same geographic area for coordination purposes and proper allocation of services to refugees, asylum seekers and others of concern. In addition, the camp is divided into 18 villages.
- UNHCR works with nine implementing partners in Mahama camp; The Ministry of Emergency Management (MINEMA) for camp management, ALIGHT for health, nutrition, and protection (SGBV), Save the Children International (SCI) for health, nutrition, and child protection, Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) for logistics and education, CARITAS for livelihoods, Prison Fellowship Rwanda (PFR) for community-based protection, Legal Aid Forum (LAF) for legal support, World Vision International (WV) for WASH and environment and Humanity and Inclusion (HI) for Persons with Specific Needs (PSN).
- In addition, operational partners including Inkomoko, Maison Shalom, Red Cross Rwanda, Pro Femme, Indego, GIZ and Umutanguha microfinance provide support for refugees in the camp mainly in the livelihood sector.
- UNHCR also works closely with other UN Agencies such as World Food Programme (WFP) for provision of food and cash assistance, UNICEF in education, UNFPA for reproductive health, and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) for sanitation, transportation, and health screening for resettlement cases.

Protection

- UNHCR and partners in Mahama camp provide a range of protection services to refugees and the Rwandan host community. These include child protection, prevention and response of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), community-based protection (CBP) and legal support. As the sector lead for protection, child protection and SGBV, UNHCR regularly holds coordination meetings for case management. For child protection, best interest assessments (BIAs) and best interests determination (BIDs) reports are conducted in collaboration with the International Commission for Red Cross (ICRC) for cross border tracing and reunification, while the Rwandan Red Cross supports with family tracing and reunification activities. SCI also holds town hall meetings with unaccompanied and separated children to discuss and address different challenges which affect them.
- Within Mahama, UNHCR and partners working in the protection sector have established a child protection safety network that ensures all protection activities are well coordinated. The child protection team also work in close collaboration with the district government, the National Commission for Children (NCC), MINEMA and DGIE.
- Birth Registration: a registration system is in place in partnership with Legal Aid Forum to ensure that new babies are registered with district authorities and children grow up protected and able to enjoy their rights to essential services including health and education.
- To enhance CBP, refugee structures, including, peer support groups and children's clubs, are present in Mahama camp and supported by UNHCR. Through trainings,

partners help refugees to identify, prevent, and address protection risks such as child neglect and family conflict within their own communities. There is a total of 141 refugee child protection groups dedicated to child protection in Mahama managed by SCI.

- In Mahama refugee camp there are 14 Youth and Child Friendly Spaces managed by SCI that enable youth and children to participate in recreational activities such as arts and crafts, reading, boardgames, online digital platforms for learning (tablets with child-friendly programs and child protection prevention messages), traditional dances and other outdoor sports such as football and basketball and volleyball.

Registration and Documentation

- In Mahama Camp, UNHCR maintains accurate data of refugees living in the camp through regular registration of individuals and groups. This is done through working with Government authorities at the camp level. Pre-registration interview counselling is conducted by UNHCR to ensure that refugees are aware of the purpose of registration. Persons with specific needs are identified during interviews and referred to protection staff as needed. Biometric enrolment is also being carried out by UNHCR in order to prevent recyclers as well as to detect fraud during registration. Refugees receive documentation from UNHCR at the end of the registration process which ensures access to further assistance.
- In October, 225 Newborn babies were registered in the UNHCR data base. In addition, 248 individuals were deactivated in the system for different reasons including resettlement, voluntary repatriations as well as death. 11 individuals were also reactivated in the database during the biometric capturing activity jointly organized by Government and UNHCR while 22 individuals were newly biometrically enrolled in the data base during this time. UNHCR also issued 274 new Proof of Registration documents to refugees due to damage and changes in family composition.

Education

- Mahama refugee camp hosts the biggest school in Rwanda. Paysannat L school accommodates more than 20,000 children from both the refugee camp and Rwandan host community. In 2019, due to the large number of students and to facilitate management, the schools was divided into five campuses located both in the surrounding host community and within Mahama camp. Due to the large number of students, the schools operate a double shift system in place for primary level where some students attend in the morning and others in the afternoon. In total 11,964 refugee children (6,031 boys, 5,933 girls) are enrolled in primary, while 4,593 (2,457 boys, 2,136 girls) attend secondary.
- In addition, 1,559 children attend home based Early Childhood Development, and 4,585 children aged between 3 to 5 years are enrolled in Early Childhood Development Centers in the camp.
- 899 refugee students from Mahama refugee camp are enrolled in secondary boarding schools across the country under different scholarships operated by UNHCR and partners ADRA, Maison Shalom, Agahozo Shalom and Impact Hope.
- 984 students (543 male, 441 female) are enrolled also in universities across Rwanda. UNHCR supports university students to apply for scholarships through the Elite centre managed by Masion Shalom and the Ideas Box centre managed by Humanity and Inclusion where they can access tablets, computers and connect to the internet in order to apply for tertiary education opportunities.

- UNHCR provides scholastic materials to all students in coordination with ADRA. An additional package is also provided to those attending boarding schools comprising of hygiene kits, clothes and shoes to support their stay outside the camp. UNHCR also pays salaries for refugee teachers who are integrated in the public school system. In partnership with WFP, children are provided with hot meals at Paysannat L schools. UNHCR also supports connected learning through the Profuturo platform for upper primary students from level 4 – 6 and build teachers' teaching capacity in ICT.

Health and nutrition

- Refugees have access to primary health care services from two health centres in Mahama camp. On average, 11,000 consultations are provided every month. Where additional treatment is needed, UNHCR facilitates and covers the costs of referrals to secondary and tertiary health care outside the camp. Pregnant women with complications have access to Emergency Obstetric Care within Mahama II health centre. 97% of deliveries are attended to by skilled health workers.
- Primary health care services provided in Mahama camp health centres include outpatient consultations, immunization for under five children and pregnant women, reproductive health, and HIV care services (including voluntary counselling and testing, prevention of maternal to child transmission and treatment care for people living with HIV), mental health care, malaria prevention and treatment basic and laboratory investigations. The most prevalent diseases include respiratory tract infections, skin diseases and watery diarrhoea.
- Nutrition services include routine screening and management of malnutrition through supplementary feeding programs for children under five years, pregnant and lactating mothers and those living with HIV are delivered by UNHCR and health partners.
- In Mahama refugee camp 120 community health volunteers conduct community outreach programs to promote positive health behaviours, promote healthy nutrition and assist case referrals to health facilities. Community health volunteers are also trained to treat common childhood illnesses in the community.

Food Security and Non-Food Items

- In Mahama refugee camp food assistance is provided by WFP through a monthly cash grant to refugees. Since June 2021, assistance has been delivered on a targeted basis whereby 83% of the population classified as highly vulnerable receive the full amount of 7,000 RWF per month while 8% who are classified as moderately vulnerable receive 3,500 RWF.
- A few refugee families, however, who do not yet have bank accounts or face issues withdrawing their monthly food assistance receive food in-kind such as maize, beans, cooking oil and salt.
- On a quarterly basis, UNHCR provides a cash grant for refugees who have a bank account to cover the cost of non-food items such as blankets, mattresses, jerry cans to collect water, kitchen equipment, soap, sanitary pads and other hygiene items. The amount of assistance distributed varies depending on what items are targeted for the quarter.

Water and Sanitation (WASH)

- Water for Mahama refugee camp is obtained from the nearby Akagera River, treated at the permanent water treatment plant in the camp and distributed to the refugees through several water collection points. The available water supply is 23.8 litres per person per day which is well above the recommended minimum standard of 20 litres per person per

day (daily average of clean water supplied to Mahama Camp: 1,381.2 m³ and 138.2 m³ to the host community).

- Mahama camp has 3,447 stances of communal latrines which also include showers. This equates to 16.8 persons per drop hole/ per shower room (against the standard of 20 persons). 1,006 durable hand washing stands to promote hygiene practices and 125 laundry slabs have been built in the camp. 3 trucks to dislodge latrines and 2 garbage emptying trucks are available to take waste from the camp to the nearby dumping site. 1,562 m³ were desludged from 194 blocks of latrine and 616 m³ of waste was removed from the camp in October.
- In Mahama camp hygiene promotion sessions are regularly conducted throughout the camp by a group of 127 refugee hygiene promoters. Through these activities including CBEHPP (Community Based Environmental and Hygiene Promotion Program), refugee communities are encouraged to adopt more hygienic practices.

Shelter

- Mahama refugee camp covers 160Ha of land. All refugees in the camp live in semi-permanent shelters with a total of 6,928 family shelters (A shelter is designed to accommodate 2 families). UNHCR supports refugee households to keep their shelter in good condition. In October, 329 families repaired their homes through distribution of repair kits (329 shelters repaired). In addition, ensuring that people with disabilities have easy access to their homes is a priority. In October, 60 shelters were improved (enlarging the entrances ramps and doors) by UNHCR.
- In Mahama camp, UNHCR is currently constructing eight classrooms with 95% of the works currently completed. In addition, the site for construction of a further 28 classrooms have been identified jointly with MINEMA and engineers from the local district.

Energy & Environment (Croix)

- In October 2022, UNHCR distributed 18,467 cylinders of LPG gas equivalent to 110,802 kilograms to 18,467 refugee households in Mahama refugee camp. LPG gas is a clean cooking fuel which contributes to the protection of environment around the camp by preventing deforestation.
- UNHCR and World Vision International work to raise awareness of environmentally practices among the refugee community. Between 03 - 31 October 2022, 17,145 refugees have been reached through such activities resulting in a positive environmental impact through planting trees and constructing drainages.
- In October 2022, refugee volunteers in coordination with World Vision and UNHCR made 1,106 holes for tree planting while 15,000 plants in nursery bed and 328 planted trees were sprayed with insecticide to prevent white flies.

Livelihoods and Economic inclusion

- Mahama refugee camp contains three markets and refugees can also access a larger market located outside the camp run by both refugees and Rwandans. Many refugees operate small businesses at the markets providing income to support their families and increase self-reliance.
- Refugees in Mahama camp are provided with opportunities for self-reliance and supported to engage in livelihood opportunities. In October 2022, UNHCR supported 603 refugees engaged in saving groups to access small business loans.

- In October, with the support of GIZ, 600 refugee students were enrolled in Technical, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training (TVET) schools, while 35 students who graduated from the technical schools received tool kits and start-up capital from World Vision.
- UNHCR works with a range of partners and financial institutions in Mahama camp who provide financial literacy training to refugee communities in order to subsequently benefit from loans. Umutanguha Microfinance, for example, provided financial literacy training to 220 refugees in October 2022. GIZ trained 30 refugee entrepreneurs on business expansion in a 5 days' workshop, while 1,190 individuals (352 refugees and 838 Rwandan nationals) received cash flow and inventory management training organised and conducted by Inkomoko. In addition, in October, Indego Africa have trained 40 refugee women on basic business skills and basket weaving which is an ongoing activity.

Durable Solutions

- Since May 2020, 29,234 Burundian refugees have repatriated home from Mahama refugee camp. In October 2022, UNHCR assisted 128 refugees to return home, bringing the total to 575 Burundian refugees from Mahama camp in 2022. A total of 313 individuals have also registered their intention to return and are pending repatriation. For the Congolese refugee population returning home is currently not a possibility owing to the protracted unfavourable political and security dynamics prompted by continued armed fighting in Eastern DRC.
- 147 individuals were submitted to various resettlement countries in the month of October giving a cumulative submission total of 1,654 individuals for Mahama in 2022. An additional 134 cases of 483 individuals have been identified for resettlement pre-screening and processing in preceding months.
- 29 individuals departed to resettlement countries in the month of October. Inclusive of this, the departure tally from Mahama reached 761 from January to October 2022, with 431 departing to the USA, and the remaining to other countries.

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