

BURUNDI SITUATION

UNHCR REGIONAL UPDATE

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KEY FIGURES

112,462

Number of Burundian refugees who have sought asylum in neighboring countries since the beginning of April 2015

76,520

Refugees in Tanzania (17 May)

26,759

Refugees in Rwanda (17 May)

9,183

Refugees in DRC (14 May)

PRIORITIES

- Relocation of refugees to safety from border areas
- Preparation of refugee sites allocated by governments of host countries
- Life-saving emergency protection and assistance interventions including in the sectors of registration, shelter, domestic items, food, water, sanitation, hygiene, health.
- Identification and protection of children including family tracing, family reunification and alternative care arrangements for unaccompanied and separated children.
- Prepositioning of relief items for anticipated mass outflows into neighboring countries

Highlights

- Tanzanian authorities announced the outbreak of cholera among Burundian asylum seekers in the local media. Eight deaths occurred in Kagunga Village, while nine were at Kigoma Regional Hospital, according to health officials in Kigoma and UNHCR.
- The UNHCR Representative confirmed that the deaths indeed were due to cholera and that all persons with acute watery diarrhea will now be treated as if they have cholera. Efforts to cut the chain of transmission are being made – with sanitization of the boats after every trip and other measures, as well as isolation of the sick in a specific part of Nyarugusu camp.
- The sale of ready-to-eat food by open air vendors in Kagunga has been banned by the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- The pilot "long walk to further safety" was launched with 36 Burundian asylum seekers (all men) successfully taking parting part yesterday, as part of the joint-Government/IOM/UNHCR strategy to evacuate asylum seekers from Kagunga.
 - The eight-hour walk was facilitated by IOM in collaboration with UNHCR. UNHCR, WFP and IOM provided water, dates and biscuits during and after the journey.
 - The Regional Commissioner provided security to escort the asylum seekers throughout the journey from Kagunga to Mikigo Village. The Government mobilized personnel to clear the path of brush, rocks and snakes.
 - The Regional Commissioner of Kigoma, UNHCR and IOM received the asylum seekers.
 - The group was transported to the Manyovu Transit Facility where they spent the night. In the morning, they were registered by UNHCR and taken to Nyarugusu refugee camp.
 - Using a participatory approach, UNHCR will use six volunteers from the group to assist with community mobilization for other asylum seekers in Kagunga to undertake a similar journey. It is expected that 10,000 asylum seekers may opt to use this alternate route as a means to leave Kagunga. UNHCR continues to evacuate using the two ships available.



As asylum seekers disembark from the boat, they are registered by UNHCR. [UNHCR/T.Monboe]

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Operational Context

- UN Heads of Agencies met on 18 May to share updates on the current Burundian refugee situation and the response undertaken to date. The main concern raised by the meeting was the cholera outbreak and the need to ensure that urgent resources are made available to respond and to address the current congestion on Kagunga peninsula which affects food distribution and poses serious health concerns. Sectoral coordination arrangements were strengthened and some adjustments made to the sector level lead responsibility:
 - WASH will be a stand-alone sector under the lead of UNICEF
 - Non-Food items are to be combined with Shelter and Infrastructure under the lead of UNHCR.
 - UNHCR will hand over land transportation of refugees to Nyarugusu to IOM. For the time being, UNHCR will retain the boat transportation until the end of May.
- A CERF proposal has been submitted and agencies are finalizing their input to the regional refugee response plan, to be launched on the 22 May.

Protection

- The first protection coordination group was held in Dar-es-Salaam on 18 May. Actors already undertaking protection activities in the field as well as new stakeholders intending to join the response were present. Key protection issues arising in various locations in the North West of Tanzania were outlined. It was agreed to use this forum to share the various assessments already taking place. During the week, UNHCR will also coordinate the mapping of all the actors, their activities and resources, in order to avoid duplication and identify gaps.

Health

- As of 17 May, there were 1,057 cases of acute watery diarrhea reported in Kagunga, Lake Tanganyika Stadium and Nyarugusu camp. However, these figures are to be taken with caution due to the high probability of double/triple counting because of relocation operations. The spread of the diseases appears to be on the rise – affecting more people as well as encroaching other geographical areas. In terms of mortality, 15 refugees have so far died.
- Efforts to identify the causative organism have increased. Results from a reference laboratory confirmed traces of Cholera in 20 cases.
- On 17 May UNHCR transported medicine to Kigoma on a special flight from Dar es Salaam to. Meanwhile, discussions with the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare have led to the release of medical supplies to Kigoma from the Government's Medical Stores Department. As of 18 May, adequate supplies of drugs, supplies and decontamination material were received.
- Sick people continue to be transferred from Kagunga to Lake Tanganyika Stadium. Moving patients from outbreak epicenter is the only option given the lack of a viable health care delivery system in Kagunga.
- UNHCR has contracted a local company which has started to decontaminate ships, buses and vehicles ferrying refugees and patients, and continues to monitor the situation closely.

Water and Sanitation

- As of 17 May, UNHCR and partners started supplying chlorinated water to health post in Kagunga and to the asylum seekers. About 15 tanks each with 10 cubic meter capacity are required to ensure adequate water.
- On 18 May, UNHCR dispatched 2,000 bottles of water (1.5 litre each) to Kagunga in a bid to explore the feasibility of distributing safe drinking water in order to alleviate the use of contaminated lake water. All efforts will be made to ensure that the bottles are not used to scoop water from the Lake or thrown into the lake
- Hand washing facilities and hygiene promotion have been intensified in Kagunga, on ships and Lake Tanganyika Stadium.