

HIGHLIGHTS (4 Jun 2021)

- The rising water levels of Lake Tanganyika have severely affected three communes in Rumonge province
- Underfunding of the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) 2021 negatively impacting response efforts
- Over 4,800 people have tested positive for COVID-19 since the beginning of the pandemic



A young girl is about to fill a bucket with stagnant flood water caused by rising waters in Lake Tanganyika. © OCHA Burundi/A.Ndayiragije

KEY FIGURES

12.6M

Population

2.3M

People in need of humanitarian assistance

1.06M

People targeted for assistance in 2021

580K

People assisted in 2020 (65.5%)

2M

Food insecure people (2021)

109K

Internally displaced persons (March 2021)

4,861

COVID-19 cases (as of 2 June)

6

COVID-19 related deaths (as of 2 June)

FUNDING (2021)

\$194.7M

Required

\$29.9M

Received



15%

Progress

FTS: <https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/1039/summary>

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BACKGROUND (4 Jun 2021)

The rising water levels of Lake Tanganyika have severely affected three communes in Rumonge province

Since the beginning of the rainy season in March 2021, the waters of Lake Tanganyika have been rising steadily, flooding many neighborhoods in the coastal provinces and causing significant property damage and population displacement.

The most affected provinces include Bujumbura, Bujumbura Mairie, Makamba, and Rumonge, located on the shores of Lake Tanganyika. Rumonge province has been especially hard hit. Three of its five communes, namely Bugarama, Muhuta and the town of Rumonge (Kanyenkoko district), have suffered considerable damage as a result of the overflowing waters of Lake Tanganyika. Nearly 68 hectares of farmland have been flooded in the town of Rumonge and in Bugarama. Access to some properties by the lake is also blocked by stagnant water. Some infrastructures, such as the port of Rumonge and the isolation and referral center for suspect COVID-19 cases, are only a few meters away from the water. Murembwe River in Kanyenkoko has also overflowed and spilled into palm plantations.

Significant damage reported

According to the Provincial Platform's assessments, 2,217 households have been affected, including 1,666 people who have been displaced. Over 1,600 houses were damaged in the urban area of Rumonge, particularly in the neighborhoods of Teba, Kanyenkoko and Nkayamba, but also in the villages of Magara I, Magara II, Cashi, and Muhuta. Approximately 32 displaced households in this area are staying in a warehouse commonly referred to as CEMINA. The remaining households live with host families. Some households in Bugarama and Muhuta are staying with families in the flood-prone communes of Kabezi and Rutumo, while others are refusing to leave the flooded areas despite repeated appeals from the administration to do so due to fears of not being able to survive elsewhere.

The floods are taking place in an already challenging context, marked by the socio-economic effects of COVID-19 and an increased number of locally transmitted cases. Movement of people between neighborhoods following the floods could accelerate the spread of the disease. Displaced families living in sites may also find themselves in crowded spaces where COVID-19 preventive measures may be difficult to follow.

This situation is also undermining the livelihoods of already vulnerable populations, who used to get their living from fishing in the lake. Commercial activities at the port of Rumonge, which provided employment for the population as well as revenue for the province, have also been slowed down. This could further exacerbate vulnerabilities and drive new people into need.

There are also concerns that agricultural households located near the lake will not be able to harvest in June and will depend on assistance until the next harvest in the beginning of 2022. The flood affected areas remain at risk of resurgence of cholera and malaria and there is an urgent need for indoor spraying, increased access to water and sanitation, and epidemiological surveillance. In addition, there are concerns over possible aggressions by aquatic animals, due to the rising water levels. In addition, parts of the road linking Rumonge to Nyanza lac (Makamba province) have been destroyed, which has interrupted the transport of goods and persons on this route linking Bujumbura and Makamba province, which is bordering Tanzania.

Humanitarian response hampered by the lack of supplies

The humanitarian response in Rumonge remains timid due to resource limitations. At the same time, the number of affected people has risen due to continued inclement weather. Significant financial resources will be required to respond to the needs of the affected people. To date, the response has included, the provision of food (corn and oil) and cash transfers for 234 households. The shelter and non-food items (NFI) sectors have also provided kits containing kitchen items, as well as three mats, two blankets, three mosquito nets, two jerry cans (of 10 and 20 liters), two buckets of 20 liters each, and 24 pieces of soap. UNICEF has also distributed school kits to 630 affected children in Rumonge, although originally the kits



Two children playing in the stagnant flood waters caused by the rising waters of Lake Tanganyika in Bugarama commune, Rumonge province © A.Ndayiragije/OCHA 2021

were intended to only cover the needs of 200 children. The Psychosocial and Mental Health Workers Platform (Plateforme des intervenants en Psychosocial et en Santé Mentale - PPSM) in Rumonge has also distributed 153kg, 119 outfits and 90 sweaters for children under 5, as well as 41 garments for women.

The administration has put in place additional emergency response activities, such as raising awareness among the population living on the shores of the lake to encourage them to move to less exposed locations. It is also working to provide a relocation site for those who have lost their homes such as the Makombe site, which covers an area of 84.4 ares and can host up to 1,000 people. However, the conditions on the site remain precarious due to the poor condition of tents and latrines, as well as issues around water supply that do not allow for good hygiene conditions.

To cope with rising waters and floods that are expected to keep occurring in the coming years due to the effects of climate change, there is an urgent need for partners, including the local authorities, to consider more sustainable solutions, such as building water retention systems in the watersheds to limit the amount of waste carried by erosion into Lake Tanganyika. One of the reasons for the rising water levels of the lake could be linked to the alluvial deposits and the large quantities of soil coming from the hills into the lake. This phenomenon is exacerbated by the overexploitation of natural resources in the watersheds of Lake Tanganyika, causing soil erosion leading to landslides during heavy rainfall. Should the bottom of the basin fill with waste, the lake water will inevitably rise and overflow onto land. Aquatic species will also be threatened by this phenomenon. Another hypothesis is that the water in the lake can no longer drain away because of the overflow of the lake's outlet, Lukuga River in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The waters continued to rise until the end of the rainy season in mid-May, and with full groundwater tables, it will take time for the water to infiltrate into the soils of flooded areas.

BACKGROUND (4 Jun 2021)

Underfunding of the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) 2021 negatively impacting response efforts

As of 4 June 2021, only 15.3 per cent of the funds required by the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) 2021 have been received out of a total of US\$195 million requested by humanitarian actors. The lack of funding has direct consequences on the planned assistance and impacts negatively the living conditions of the most vulnerable populations. According to the 2021 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO), published in March 2021, 2.3 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance and protection in Burundi in 2021. Of these, 1.06 million people have acute needs related to their physical and mental wellbeing and are targeted by the HRP.

The 2020 Periodic Monitoring Report (PMR) indicates that in 2020, humanitarian partners provided life-saving assistance to 524,708 people (65.5 per cent of the HRP 2020 target). The 2020 HRP was funded at 45.2 per cent. In addition to that, funding was received outside of the plan for humanitarian programming, which contributed to the overall achievements of the response.

In the food security sector, approximately 410,750 people in need of food assistance received food and/or unconditional cash assistance and 53,030 families benefited from agricultural inputs for livelihoods rehabilitation. Despite funding shortfalls (69% of US\$32.4 million required), the sector reached 95 per cent of the target population. This is due to cutting of rations, which has implications on the quality of the response. People who were supposed to receive three rounds of assistance (as planned by the HRP) ended up receiving only two. "If underfunding continues this year, 737,000 people are at risk of shifting from moderate to severe food insecurity during the current 2021A agricultural season," humanitarian agencies warn. This could further jeopardize the resilience of the population.

With regard to education, out of the 67,000 people targeted in 2020, the sector was able to assist 39,476 school-age girls and boys between the ages of 3 and 16 (or 59 per cent of the target). As a result of natural disasters in 2020, 750 classrooms require rehabilitation or reconstruction, and only 94 classrooms were rehabilitated and equipped.

In 2021, the lack of funding could have negative impacts on vulnerable people, particularly for those affected by natural disasters such as the rising waters of Lake Tanganyika, as well as on the returnees from Tanzania, Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo and the communities hosting them. Funding shortfalls could also jeopardize the assistance given for Congolese refugees living in camps in the eastern part of the country.

According to the HRP published in March 2021, if humanitarian actors do not respond this year:

- Over 177,000 people, including victims of natural disasters and returnees, will not have access to emergency shelter, safe and dignified housing, and non-food items;
- Without sufficient access to clean water and hygiene and sanitation facilities, the survival and living conditions of over 541,000 vulnerable people, including IDPs and returnees, will be severely affected;
- Over 151,000 girls and boys could have their right to access education undermined;
- Approximately 204,000 acutely malnourished girls and boys and 66,000 acutely malnourished pregnant and breastfeeding women, including returnees and IDPs, will not have access to GAM services and 260,000 children will not benefit from malnutrition screening and prevention services;
- Over 298,000 people, including IDPs, returnees, and host communities, will not have access to services for the protection of their rights;
- Over 269,000 people will be deprived of health care services, increasing the risk of the spread of diseases with epidemic potential;
- Food security for 737,000 vulnerable people, including IDPs and returnees, will be negatively affected.

BACKGROUND (4 Jun 2021)

Over 4,800 people have tested positive for COVID-19 since the beginning of the pandemic

From 30 March 2020 (when the first positive case was tested) to 1 June 2021, Burundi has recorded 4,844 positive cases of COVID-19. Since January 2021, the number of cases has significantly increased. Since the beginning of 2021, 4,018 cases (83 per cent of total cases) have been reported (5 months), while 826 cases (17 per cent) were reported from March to December 2020 (9 months). The increased number of positive cases since January 2021 is also related to increased level of testing, with an average weekly rate of 9 tests per 10,000 people in 2021, compared to 2 tests per 10,000 people in 2020.

Additionally, the number of locally transmitted cases in 2021 has increased by over eight times since the end of 2020, with 494 locally transmitted cases recorded at the end of December 2020 and 4,055 cases at the end of May 2021. This confirms the circulation of Covid-19 within the population. Due to this epidemiological evolution recorded since January 2021, the WHO Regional Office for Africa has reclassified Burundi from the category of countries with “community transmission of low incidence” to the category of countries with “community transmission of moderate incidence.”. In January 2021, Burundi has decided to carry out another mass testing campaign at three sites, namely at the Kamenge district hospital, Ruziba district hospital and at the “Bon accueil” center in Bwiza. Other COVID-19 prevention measures include the closure of land and sea borders except for the movement of goods, as well as the mandatory wearing of masks for public transport users. In April, quarantine for travelers entering Burundi was reduced from seven to four days, with mandatory testing upon arrival at the airport and on the third day of quarantine.

Faced with the increased number of Covid-19 cases, Burundi adopted a new six-month national response plan for COVID-19 on 13 April 2021, with a total budget of US\$66,597,418, updated on the basis of the results of the intra-action review organized in March 2021 by the Ministry of Public Health (MSPLS), in collaboration with its COVID-19 response partners. Significant budgets are required for logistics response (\$16 million), disease prevention and control (\$9 million), surveillance (\$4.5 million), risk communication and community engagement (\$4 million), and laboratory (\$3 million) activities. Underfunding remains a key constrain for the Covid-19 public health response.

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official recognition or acceptance by the United Nations.

<https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/burundi>

<https://www.unocha.org/burundi>

<https://www.hpc.tools/plan/721>

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