

# RWANDA COUNTRY REFUGEE RESPONSE PLAN

January 2020-December 2021



**Cover photograph:**

Young Somali refugee couple, Abdulbasit and Zainab, sit with their two-month-old daughter Hadia on their first day at the Gashora Emergency Transit Centre (ETM) in Rwanda following their evacuation from Libya. Hadia was born in detention. Thanks to the ETM their family was united, and they are now free and safe in Rwanda while solutions are being sought. © UNHCR/Tobin Jones

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## 2020-2021 PLANNED RESPONSE

# 157,930

PROJECTED REFUGEE  
POPULATION BY 2020

# US\$ 163 M

REQUIREMENTS FOR 2020

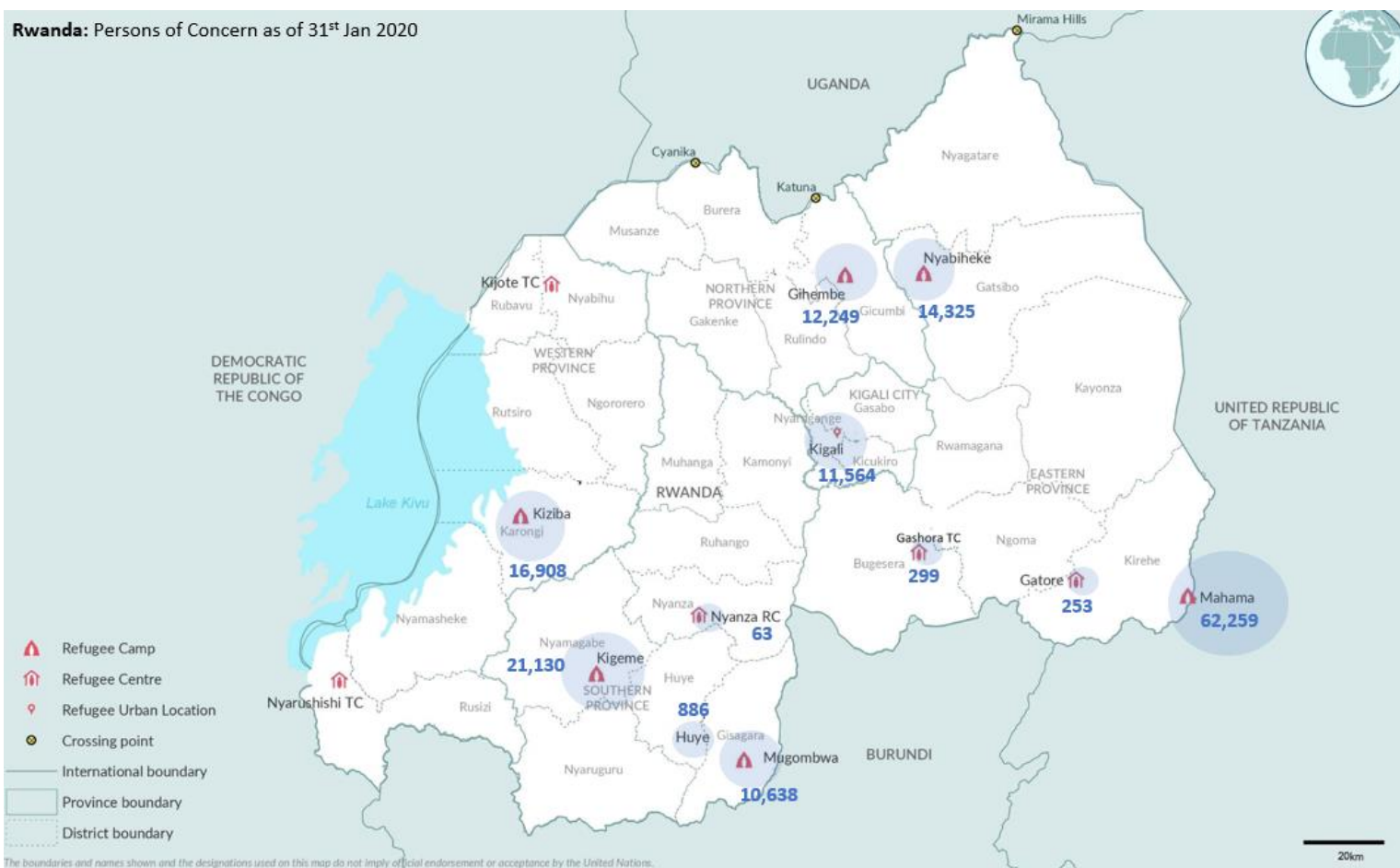
# 16

PARTNERS  
INVOLVED

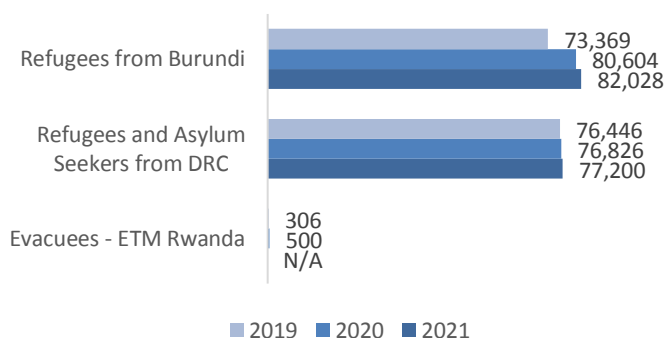
3,000 ESTIMATED RWANDAN RETURNEES IN 2020

125,000 ASSISTED HOST POPULATION

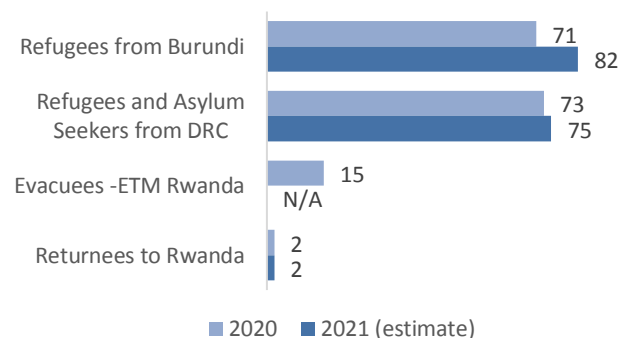
Rwanda: Persons of Concern as of 31<sup>st</sup> Jan 2020



## Refugee Population Trends



## Requirements for 2020-2021 | In millions\$





# Background and Achievements

## Overview

Rwanda has been welcoming refugees for over two decades. Following the verification exercise that began in 2018, five camps and all urban areas have been covered. By the end of 2019, the verification exercise was ongoing in Mahama camp. As of 31 December 2019, there are 148,848 refugees individually registered and 1,107 registered at group level in reception centres. Refugees are made of two main groups: 76,266 individuals from the Democratic Republic of Congo (50.9%) living in a protracted situation (up to 23 years);

and 73,332 individuals from Burundi (48.9%) who began fleeing to Rwanda in April 2015 following election-related insecurity.

**For the Congolese situation**, the verification exercise was completed in all the Congolese refugee camps in Rwanda. From the exercise, some 13,000 Congolese refugees expressed the desire to voluntarily return to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Since the beginning of 2018, attempts have been made to organize a Tripartite meeting between the Governments of Rwanda (GoR) and the DRC. However, to-date, this meeting has not taken place though UNHCR continues to advocate for such meeting. In the meantime, an increasing bilateral cooperation between both countries is noticed, including to strengthen security in bordering areas. On 17 April 2019, technical discussions were initiated with the organization of a technical Level Coordination Meeting in Rubavu District of Rwanda on the Voluntary Repatriation Operation for Congolese and Rwandan refugees in Rubavu District, Rwanda. The meeting was attended by delegations from the Government of Rwanda (MINEMA) and the government of DRC (CNR). The meeting agreed on several action points including facilitating go and see visits and the review of the current return process. Go & See visits have been proposed at Goma level. However, such activity to be coordinated at Kinshasa level is currently on hold. While options were under consideration, the Ebola outbreaks and recent fights in the eastern regions of DRC have affected the positive steps towards the voluntary repatriation. Although Rwanda has embarked on the GCR (Global Compact for Refugees) and adopted the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), which emphasize on the socio and economic inclusion of refugees in national systems, the resettlement of Congolese refugees to third country from Rwanda, mostly from the oldest camps – Kiziba, Gihembe and Nyabiheke, remain the only viable durable solution available. However, following the recent USA presidential determination, the solution will no longer be an option in 2020 with the expected reduction of the resettlement quota. Given this information, the planning figure for the Congolese refugee population in Rwanda for 2020 is estimated to some 76,826 individuals.

**For the Burundian situation**, in 2019, 2,685 new Burundian refugees fled into Rwanda, with an average of 214 new arrivals per month. While this represents a

smaller influx as compared to at the onset of the Burundian refugee crisis, these new arrivals nevertheless require immediate support to ensure adequate level of protection and basic humanitarian assistance. About 71.7 per cent of the Burundian refugees registered in Rwanda, are women and children and 85 per cent of the Burundian refugee population (62,003) are accommodated in Mahama camp. As of November 2019, UNHCR look forward to the requisite conditions for safe and dignified repatriation of refugees back to Burundi. While an average 200 to 300 spontaneous returns per month is registered, information from the Burundian community in Rwanda on intentions of return indicates that they do not feel it is safe to go back to Burundi, considering the prevailing political and security situation. This information should be confirmed during the ongoing verification exercise which will be completed in early 2020 in Mahama camp.

By the end of 2020, it is anticipated that the Burundian population will amount to approximately 80,000 refugees. Meanwhile, Mahama camp, which hosts Burundian refugees, is overcrowded and the facilities overstretched. UNHCR has initiated a revision of the interagency contingency plan to prepare for potential influx of Burundian refugees into Rwanda (in case of secondary movement of those averting the return programme of Burundian refugees from Tanzania or new arrivals fleeing in anticipation of possible violence related to the presidential elections to be held in Burundi in May 2020).

**Emergency Transit Mechanism (EMT):** In addition to the inter-agency Regional Response Plans for both Congolese and Burundi situations, UNHCR has recently started to support the evacuation of refugees and asylum seekers from Libya to Rwanda as part of an Emergency Transit Mechanism (EMT). This follows the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the GoR, the African Union (AU) and UNHCR on 10 September 2019. Since the signature of the MoU, Rwanda has received three flights in 2019 supporting the evacuation of 306 refugees and asylum-seekers. The 306 people of concern are from 5 nationalities - 245 from Eritrea (80%), 37 from Somalia (12%), 17 from Sudan (5.5%), six from Ethiopia (2%) and one from South Sudan (0.3). The average age of the evacuee population is 19 years old and 50 per cent of them are unaccompanied minors. Women and children make the 80 per cent of the population. Prior to evacuation from Libya, more than half of them were in detention centers, and others in UNHCR Gathering and Departure Facilities and few in urban areas. Thanks to the generosity of the Rwandan Government and the Rwandan people, the evacuees from Libya can enjoy a good protection environment in Rwanda and get access to basic humanitarian assistance services in Gashora Transit Center while durable solutions are being sought. Like other refugees hosted in Rwanda, the evacuees from Libya have the right to safe refuge, including

freedom of movement and livelihood opportunities. Seven were resettled to Sweden in December 2019.

**Rwandan returnees:** Between 1994 and now around 3.5 million Rwandan have repatriated, mainly from the DRC. From January to December 2019, some 2,086 Rwandan have voluntarily repatriated through Kijote and Nyarushishi Transit Centers (including 509 in December 2019 alone). Returnee monitoring missions were conducted in Rubavu and Rusizi Districts and about 2,527 voluntary returnees were reached. Border monitoring/cross-border meetings took place in parallel to the management of the Transit Centers and the provision of basic humanitarian assistance services. These include reception, registration, provision of health insurance, cash and food assistance, Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) services as well as transportation assistance to their areas of return.

## Operating environment

Rwanda has a National Asylum Law which complies with international standards and refugees are included in the national birth registration system, which decrease the risks of statelessness.

The Government of Rwanda (GoR), through MINEMA, leads the refugee response in the country with UNHCR and partners providing direct operational support, capacity development and technical advice to the local authorities.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MINAFFET), Directorate of Immigration/Emigration (DGIE), the National Identification Agency (NIDA) and the National Refugee Committee are also involved in the refugee response.

The Rwandan context offers an enabling environment for innovative responses and approaches for refugees based on its national systems and structures. In the framework of Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), there have been some key achievements toward the social and economic inclusion of refugees and their integration in national system, particularly in the areas of health and education. All refugees in urban settings and all refugee students in boarding schools have access to the national health insurance. In parallel, the Government is leading a process of Strategic Planning for refugees' inclusion. The Government's integration scope is so far limited within the four commitments: promoting refugee access to documentation, refugee economic inclusion and refugee integration in national system in the areas of Education and Health. One year after the historic adoption of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), the the Global Refugee Forum (GRF) took place in December 2019 in Geneva offering a critical opportunity to build momentum on the implementation of the Compact and strengthen collective responses to refugee situations. The Forum was a unique occasion for States and others to come together and announce bold, new measures to ease pressure on host countries, boost refugee self-reliance, and search for solutions. The GRF provided an opportunity for the Government

of Rwanda (GoR) to showcase its own achievements and to mobilise support from a wide range of stakeholders towards its national refugee response. Building on these achievements the GoR presented renewed pledges in the areas of health, education, documentation and refugees' socio-economic inclusion as well as one new commitment in the area of energy and environment.

## Achievements and gaps

In 2019, efforts were made to strengthen the protection environment and advocate for services such as registration and documentation and prevention of refoulement. As a result of these efforts, the asylum space was preserved, and refugees enjoyed a favourable protection environment. All refugees were individually registered, and 6,422 birth certificates issued. Basic rights were respected with most refugees recognized on a prima facie basis during major refugee influxes. Refugees who are registered in camp locations need to inform the authorities for out of camp movements and should carry with them Refugee Identity Documents (IDs) or proof of registration alongside a letter authorizing their absence from the camp. In this connection, there remains a need for legal assistance and detention monitoring for those refugees who are not complying with the rules as well as for advocacy for a greater freedom of movement of camp-based refugees. Care arrangements for unaccompanied children, family reunification, friendly spaces for children and youth at risk remain limited. Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) has been of major protection concern for refugee women and children even though over 40 per cent of the refugee community is active in SGBV prevention and survivor protection activities.

In 2019, UNHCR and its partners experienced challenges to mobilize enough funding to cover the basic needs of refugees and maintain the necessary level of life-saving assistance including in the areas of food and nutrition, healthcare, shelter and non-food items, water and sanitation services, education and targeted support for refugees with specific needs.

Even though, 91 per cent of the refugee population residing in camps received cash-based interventions (CBI) in lieu of food and non-food items, WFP faced recurrent challenges to maintain the food assistance pipeline. Thanks to joint fundraising efforts with UNHCR and to the support of the GoR, all refugees in need of food assistance in camps received full food rations. The findings of the 2019 Joint Assessment Mission (JAM) showed that more than 80 per cent of refugee income comes from WFP food assistance. In the area of nutrition, a Standardised Expanded Nutrition Survey (SENS) conducted in May 2019 shows that nutrition rates in all six camps were within standards (2.7% GAM). However, unweighted stunting prevalence and anaemia prevalence among children aged 6 to 59 months in all the 6 camps.

Health partners provided health services to those in need with prioritized attention to the most vulnerable

including children and the elderly. Primary health services were provided by humanitarian actors inside the camps through health centres accessible also by the local host communities, while refugees with serious medical conditions were referred to local health facilities for secondary and tertiary health care. Thanks to the great collaboration of all health partners, by the end of 2019, mortality rates were within standards (Crude mortality rate 0.14 death/1000/month for Congolese and 0.27 deaths/1,000/month for Burundians - 0.5 %/ 1000 /month Under-5 mortality rate in the Burundian population against 0.2% for Congolese refugees). Over 90 per cent of deliveries were attended by trained health professionals. However, family planning prevalence remained low (37%). With the ongoing Ebola virus disease outbreak in North Kivu and Ituri Provinces of DRC, the risk of spill over to Rwanda and other neighbouring countries constituted a risk. Strengthening the epidemic preparedness and response at the different transit/reception centres and camps, including medical screening, appropriate health staff trainings, prepositioning of equipment and supplies and community surveillance was critical.

Thanks to campaigns promoting schooling, a total of 24,690 Burundian refugee students from Mahama camp (5,381 in Early Childhood Development – ECD / 14,544 in primary and 4,765 in secondary) and 28,018 Congolese refugee students were attending school alongside host community students (5,189 in ECD, 15,123 in primary cycle, and 7,706 in secondary cycle). Around 90 per cent of primary and secondary school aged refugee children had access to formal education in the national education system and were included, for the first time in 2019, in the national education statistics. In addition, some 290 refugee students had access to tertiary education. In 2019, the capacity of local schools was expanded through the construction of additional classrooms and the provision of school equipment and materials. School feeding programme provided good learning environment, contributing to the attendance, concentration in classes and retention thus contributing the performance of the school children. In addition, new teachers were hired and received training. However, most of school classes remained overcrowded with over 90 students per classroom in Paysannat L school near Mahama with also increased needs for school materials and equipments.

Shelter, water, sanitation and hygiene activities were carried out in all six refugee camps. However, the funding gap has had a devastating impact that entailed radical reprioritization of support. Among others, partners were unable to adequately maintain WASH facilities or expand existing structures. As resources have been decreasing in recent years minimum standards are often not met. Despite the existing ban on plastic in Rwanda, UNHCR does not have enough funding to support the transformation of all shelters roof from plastic to iron sheets. In the camps hosting Congolese refugees (Gihembe, Kigeme, Kiziba, Mugombwa and Nyabiheke ) over 1,700 shelters remain to be transformed and in 2019 only 41 per cent of female-headed households were living in adequate

dwelling. In addition, the topography of the land and soil erosion in these camps are among those factors which are putting refugees in the camps at risks of natural hazards. The funding level of the humanitarian response did not allow to address environmental degradation, including landslides. Most of the shelters in the camps hosting Congolese are very old and camps are congested with no proper access roads or fire break points. At the end of 2019, the average supply of potable water in refugee camps was 20 litres/person/day in Mahama camp against 16 l/pers/day in the Congolese camps. Supply of water is way below the minimum standard in Gihembe (10 l/pers/day), in Nyabiheke (15.4 l/pers/day), and in Kigeme (16 l/pers/day) camps. There remained also challenges with the maintenance and the dislodging of existing latrine blocks in all camps.

In 2019, in compliance with the national law on the ban of firewood, all camps shifted to clean cooking energies. By the end of the year, 48.5 per cent of the refugee population switched to Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) solution and the remaining 50.8 per cent received cash assistance to purchase biomass (pellets or briquettes) made of sawdust. In addition, some 3,186 trees were planted in Mahama camp to preserve the environment. However, there was a limited number of suppliers providing clean cooking solutions and some resistance from the community to adopt new cooking fuel.

The National Asylum Law provides refugees with the right to work, freedom of movement and to access documentation. Refugees can own property and engage contracts, including land-leases. In 2016, the GoR announced four commitments including for the promotion of economic opportunities for refugees to decrease reliance on humanitarian assistance. The fundamental right to work combined with a relatively enabling environment provides refugees with the opportunity to contribute economically to their host society. However, despite the favourable legal environment challenges remained for refugees to become productive members of Rwandan society including non-legal barriers; e.g. employer's attitude and limited awareness about refugees' right to work, insufficient access to financial services for refugee entrepreneurs etc. By the end of 2019, only 16,975 refugees were engaged in income generating activities. Even though limited, however, UNHCR continued to prioritize this sector which not only remains part of the GoR commitment presented at the GRF but also has shown in 2019 concrete steps towards refugee socio-economic inclusion. As part of the Misizi Marshland project, funded by the IKEA Foundation, UNHCR in collaboration with WFP, FAO, MINEMA and the GoR improved the food security, the social cohesion and the income of 1,427 farmers through the development of 55ha marshland availed by the Gisagara district. UNHCR, in conjunction with the partners, has identified more lands with the authorities for the replication of this project in other districts hosting refugees. In parallel, UNHCR is working with the GoR on the revision of the joint strategy on the socio-economic inclusion of refugees 2017/2022.

## Beneficiary Population

	Population as of end of December 2019	Planned Population as of end of 2020	Planned Population as of end of 2021
<b>Assisted Refugee Population</b>			
Refugees from Burundi	73,369	80,604	82,028
Refugees and Asylum Seekers from DRC	76,446	76,826	77,200
Evacuees - ETM Rwanda	306	500	N/A
<b>Total</b>	<b>150,121</b>	<b>157,930</b>	<b>159,228</b>
<b>Rwandan returnees</b>	<b>2,085</b>	<b>3,000</b>	<b>3,000</b>
<b>Assisted Host Population</b>	<b>125,000</b>	<b>125,000</b>	<b>125,000</b>

### Planning assumptions for the Burundi situation

- 500 average new arrivals per month in 2020 (Increase in arrival trends due to tense political climate) and 200 in 2021;
- 1,500 spontaneous returns in 2020 (Less people would return during an election year) and 4000 in 2021;
- 4 per cent natural population growth;
- 200 resettlement departures for protection referrals per year.

### Planning assumptions for the Congolese situation

- Very few new arrivals. A figure of 30 indicated based on 2019 trend of 22 new arrivals received through DRC and DRC.

### Planning assumptions for the ETM Rwanda

- The MoU signed with the GoR and the AU for the creation of the ETM has stated that the ETM in Rwanda can accommodate 500 persons at any given time. However, it is planned that with the departure of some of the evacuees for durable solutions, 1,500 persons will be evacuated from Libya by the end of 2020 (3 waves of 500 pers. each).

### Planning assumptions for Rwandan returnees

- 3,000 returnees per year;
- Significant delays in screening process may continue to be experienced.

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