

Update on assisted voluntary repatriation to Rwanda

With the approaching deadline for the completion of the Comprehensive Solutions Strategy for Rwandan Refugee Situation in **31 December 2017**, UNHCR operations are fully engaged to maximize support to the voluntary repatriation process for Rwandans in the upcoming four months.

In 2017, to date, **5,758** Rwandans voluntarily returned from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and **17** from other countries in the region. In July, a total of **1,119** Rwandans have voluntarily returned from the DRC, and **two** from the Republic of Congo and **one** from Swaziland.

A total of **4,354** Rwandan refugees are waiting for repatriation in the transit centres and assembly points in North and South Kivu due to the cholera outbreak which has led to temporary suspension of movement, as well as the limited capacity of reception centres in Rwanda.

KEY INDICATORS

1,122

Number of Rwandan returnees in **July 2017**

5,775

Number of Rwandan returnees in **2017**

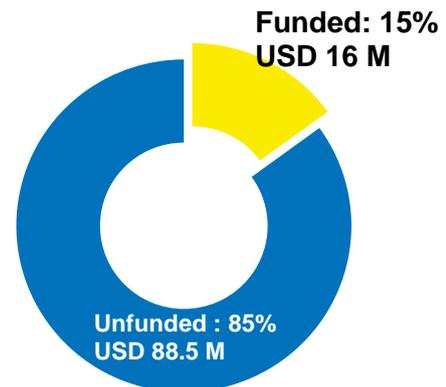
3,440,483

Number of Rwandan returnees since **1994**

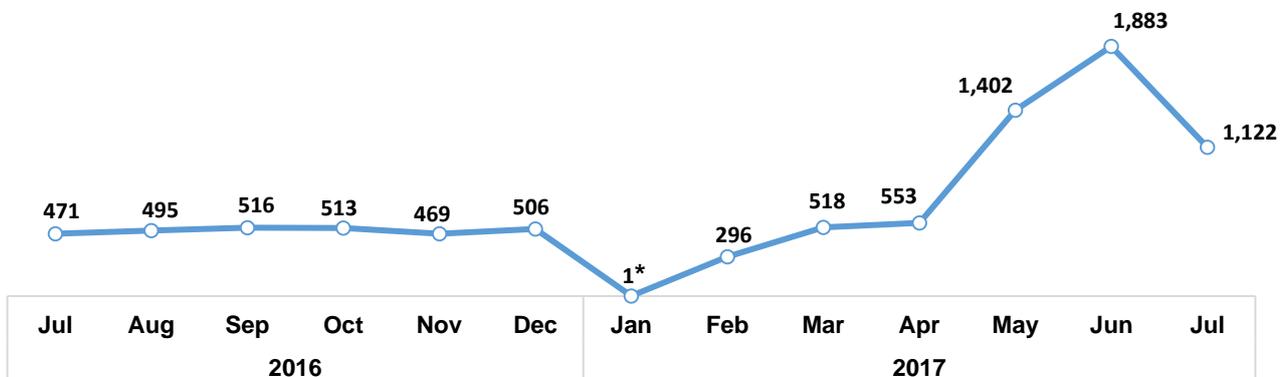
FUNDING (AS OF 31 JULY 2017)

USD 104.5 M

Total requested for the UNHCR Rwanda Operation



ARRIVAL TRENDS OF RWANDAN RETURNEES IN RWANDA | 2016 - 2017



*Note: the low number in January 2017 was due to a suspension of convoys from DRC to Rwanda due to change of procedures for assistance.

Background

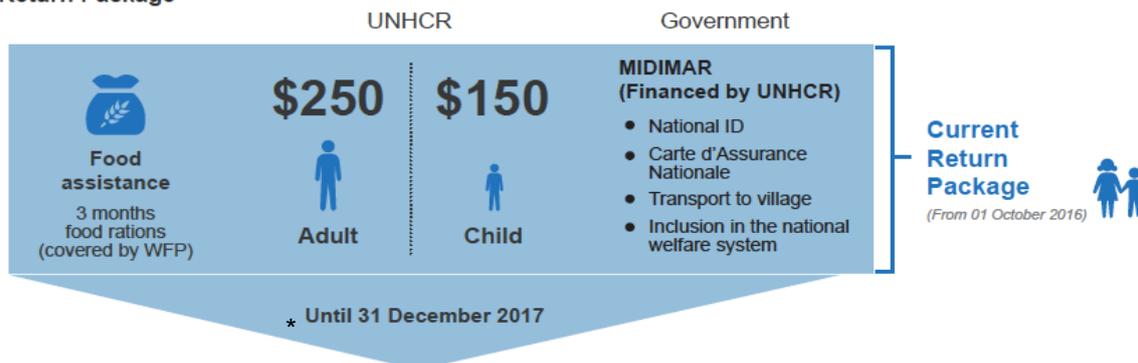
In 2009, UNHCR launched the Comprehensive Solutions Strategy (CSS) for Rwandan refugees who fled between 1959 – 31 December 1998 to resolve the Rwandan refugee situation. Subsequently, UNHCR and relevant counterparts have committed to facilitate repatriation of Rwandans from countries of asylum through 31 December 2017. The strategy has four main components: voluntary repatriation, local integration, refugee status determination (exemption) for those still in need of international protection and the cessation of refugee status. Given the specific contexts of different countries, tailored approaches for solutions have been pursued and implemented for Rwandan refugees. Governments and UNHCR continue to work together on the four components as well as alternative solutions. To date, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Malawi, Niger, Senegal, the Republic of Congo, Togo and Zambia invoked the cessation clause for Rwandan refugees who fled before 31 December 1998. More than 3.4 million Rwandan refugees have returned home since the 1994 genocide. UNHCR has continued to assist the voluntary repatriation process under the CSS from 2009 to date. There are approximately 270,000 Rwandan refugees who fall under the CSS, hosted primarily in the DRC, Republic of Congo, Zambia, Uganda and South Africa. Out of this number, approximately 245,000 are registered in the DRC (this figure was updated in 2015, and verification is ongoing). In some countries of asylum, the majority of Rwandan refugees have requested for local integration.

Voluntary Repatriation Process

Rwandan returnees are arriving predominantly from the DRC as well as from other countries of asylum such as Kenya, the Republic of Congo and Togo. Information campaigns encouraging return to Rwanda have been held in all countries hosting Rwandan refugees. In countries of asylum, UNHCR supports Governments in the verification as well as biometric registration of those who wish to return, and shares this information with UNHCR in Rwanda. From the DRC, UNHCR organizes convoys from transit centres located in North and South Kivu. Upon arrival from DRC to Rwanda, returnees are hosted at two transit centres - Kijote and Nyarushishi - where they are screened by Rwanda Immigration Department (border officials) and the Rwandan National Identity Agency (NIDA) after which the Ministry of Disaster Management and Refugee Affairs (MIDIMAR) provides an orientation session on services and the new administrative structures in Rwanda. Following identity verification by NIDA, returnees receive a return package (see below). Cash based assistance is processed through mobile money accounts through mobile phones and SIM cards provided to arriving households. The average stay of returnees in the transit centres is between eight to 10 days while registration, administrative processing and assistance is organized. Returnees arriving from other locations travel by air or by land and arrive in Kigali where they are received by UNHCR and MIDIMAR which also assist them with orientation, transportation to their districts of origin and return packages.

Verification process: For those returning from the DRC, UNHCR and partners have introduced robust mechanisms to ensure the integrity of the process and to prevent and detect fraud which include a screening and verification of returnees by several entities in both country of asylum and origin (the Rwandan/Congolese Immigration Department, the Congolese National Commission for Refugees, MIDIMAR, NIDA and UNHCR), biometric registration of returnees, as well as interviews and official proof/documentation of returnee status.

Return Package



*Note: Arrangements for activities after 1 January 2018 is under discussion

Highlights of the reporting period

Achievements

- In July, a total of **1,119** Rwandans returned voluntarily from the DRC to Rwanda and an additional **two** Rwandans returned from the Republic of Congo and one from Swaziland. This is a **40 per cent** decrease from the previous month of June, which is primarily due to the cholera outbreak (explained below).
- In 2017 so far, **5,775** Rwandans have voluntarily returned from the DRC. This includes **2,454** people received at Nyarushishi transit centre (departed from South Kivu) as well as **3,304** at Kijote transit centre (departed from North Kivu). In addition, **17** Rwandans have voluntarily returned through Kigali where the majority arrived from Kenya and the Republic of Congo.
- In Rwanda, the One UN has produced and released a sensitization video to inform prospective Rwandan returnees on the conditions in the country in order to help them make an informed choice about repatriation. In the DRC, UNHCR has organized sensitization campaigns through local/national radio to promote voluntary repatriation. Dedicated mobile numbers are also available for individuals to seek additional information on the voluntary repatriation process.

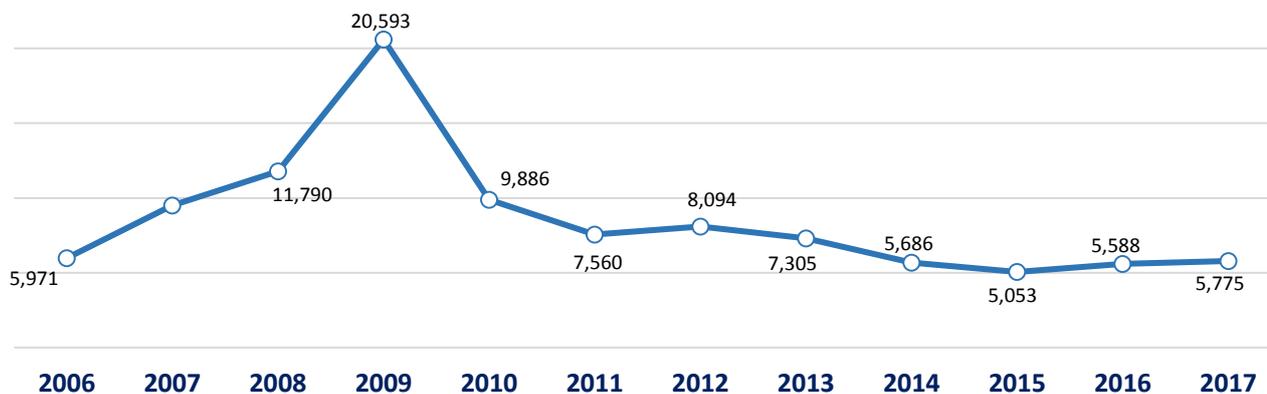
Challenges

- The discovery of a few cases of cholera amongst returnees who arrived from Goma (DRC) led to a suspension by UNHCR (on the request of Rwanda government) of movements from Goma for 26 days starting on 7 July. This decision was made to assess the situation and ensure that all the required measures were effectively put in place in the DRC for the screening and prevention of cholera. Specific measures included the distribution of additional jerry cans and soap and installation of new water points at the center as well as additional chlorination of water. Medical screening was also reinforced at the assembly points where returnees arrive before being transferred to Goma transit centre.
- While UNHCR has been steadily working to intensify efforts to facilitate the voluntary repatriation process, the main operational obstacle is the insufficient capacity of reception centres in Rwanda to steadily accommodate all those who wish to voluntarily return. As a result, as of the end of July, 4,354 Rwandan refugees are waiting for repatriation in the transit centres and assembly points in North and South Kivu and the waiting period in the assembly points and transit centers now lasts between one to four weeks instead of the regular 72 hours. The prolonged stay is exacerbated by the volatile security situation in the areas where the assembly points are established and causes increased protection risks for those waiting to return. UNHCR seeks to significantly upscale the reception capacity in Rwanda by mid-September.

In order to scale up UNHCR's ability to support additional returns expected by 31 December 2017, funding is urgently required to support the operational costs of voluntary repatriation including the expansion of the reception capacity in Rwanda.

Overview of Rwanda Voluntary Repatriation

Arrival trends of returnees in Rwanda 2006 - 2017



Main countries of asylum from which Rwandan returnees originate

Country of Asylum	2017	% of overall	2009-2017	% of overall
Democratic Republic of the Congo	5,758	99.7%	68,180	90.3%
Congo, Republic of the	11		270	0.4%
Angola			16	0.0%
Uganda			6,540	8.7%
Malawi			141	0.2%
Burundi			137	0.2%
Zambia			86	0.1%
Cameroon			45	0.1%
Others	6	0.1%	125	0.2%

Financial Information

UNHCR is very grateful for the financial support provided by donors who have contributed to our activities with unearmarked and broadly earmarked funds as well as for those who have contributed directly to the Rwanda operation.

Donors who have contributed to the operation:

- African Union
- Canada
- Educate a child Programme (EAC/ EAA)
- European Union
- International Olympic Committee
- Private Donors Rwanda
- Private Donors USA
- UNIQLO Co., Ltd
- Un Programme on HIV/AIDS
- The Global Fund
- United States of America

Special thanks to the major donors of unrestricted and regional funds in 2017

United States of America (95 M) | Sweden (76 M) | Netherlands (52 M) | Norway (41 M) | Private Donors Spain (35 M) | Japan (25 M) | Denmark (23 M) | Australia (19 M) | Private Donors Republic of Korea (17 M) | Canada (16 M) | Switzerland (15 M) | France (14 M) | Private Donors USA (13 M) | Germany (12 M) | Private Donors Italy (12 M) | Italy (10 M)

Thanks to other donors of unrestricted and regional funds in 2017

Algeria | Austria | Belgium | Bosnia and Herzegovina | Chile | Costa Rica | Estonia | Finland | Iceland | Indonesia | Ireland | Kuwait | Lithuania | Luxembourg | Malta | Mexico | Monaco | Morocco | New Zealand | Qatar | Republic of Korea | Serbia | Singapore | Sri Lanka | Thailand | Turkey | United Arab Emirates | Uruguay | Zambia | Private Donors

External / Donors Relations

CONTACTS

Elisa Furuta, Associate External Relations Officer, Geneva
furuta@unhcr.org, Tel: +41 (0) 22 739 78 97, Cell +41 (0) 79 453 3719

Alan Mouton, Associate External Relations Officer, Geneva
mouton@unhcr.org, Tel: +41 (22) 739 8830, Cell +41 (0) 79 255 95 51

Wendy Rappeport, Snr. External Relations Officer, Geneva,
rappepor@unhcr.org, Tel: +41 (0) 22 739 8993, Cell +41 (0) 79 881 91 83