OVERVIEW

• Uganda continues to be a safe haven to many refugees in the region and is currently hosting an estimated 1,411,794 refugees including from South Sudan (1,045,236), DRC (251,730) Somalia (37,193), Burundi (40,620) and other countries (37,015). In this edition of the UN Uganda Bulletin, we bring you stories on how refugees are coping in their new environment, what UN Uganda and partners are doing for refugees and their hosts and why each person’s contribution matters to the Uganda refugee response.

• Over 6,900 refugees in Orichinga have received new attestation forms and ration cards following the successfully concluded biometric verification conducted by the Government of Uganda and the United Nations.

• A cholera outbreak continues to affect three sub-counties, Kyangwali, Kabwoya and Buseruka in Hoima District. The situation has improved as a result of efforts by the Ministry of Health with support from WHO.

• Between 13 and 15 March, 2,243 new refugees entered Uganda from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), bringing the number of new arrivals since 1 January 2018 to 59,084 of which 61% are children.

• Women from host communities and refugee women are benefitting from the “Cash for Work” Programme in Uganda. After thirty (30) days’ work, participants receive 434,691 Uganda shillings, an equivalent of US$120.

• Feature story: John and family are hopeful even after displacement from DRC.

• Star Times handed over 100 blankets and a satellite TV to the Office of the Prime Minister at Kagoma Youth Centre in Kyangwali, Hoima as contribution towards psychosocial support for refugees.

• UNAIDS Executive Director, Michel Sidibé, was awarded the Most Excellent Order of the Pearl of Africa by President Museveni in recognition of his contribution to the national AIDS response in Uganda, in Africa, and globally.
GOVERNMENT OF UGANDA AND UN SYSTEM CONCLUDE VERIFICATION OF REFUGEES IN ORUCHINGA

By UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR Uganda)

The Government of Uganda and UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, have successfully concluded the first phase of a countrywide biometric verification exercise that was conducted in Oruchinga, in Isingiro District in Uganda’s South-West region on 1 March 2018.

During the week-long exercise, UNHCR captured fingerprints, iris scans and photos of 6,972 refugees in Oruchinga refugee settlement. Every refugee family who was verified biometrically has now received a proof of verification form and new ration card. The World Food Programme (WFP) then distributed food to a total of 6,710 refugees from...
6 to 8 March at the settlement after biometrically verifying their identities.

Following the request from the Prime Minister of Uganda, Rt. Hon Dr. Ruhakana Rugunda for the biometric verification of refugees, UNHCR mobilized significant human and financial resources to support the government’s efforts to verify the refugee population using UNHCR’s biometric system. WFP also mobilized resources in order to set up infrastructure for the verification exercise and get teams and equipment to the site to set up a new food collection process and biometrically verify those who receive assistance.

Douglas Asiimwe, the Officer in Charge of Refugee Protection in the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) extended his appreciation to the teams for the successful completion of refugee verification in Oruchinga. He said, “Enhanced biometric verification system that captures iris and ten fingerprints will strengthen credibility and accuracy of the existing refugee data which will ensure that refugees are accurately reflected in the registration system.”

UNHCR Representative in Uganda, Bornwell Kantande said that, “Using biometric identification and verification systems for large scale humanitarian operations is extremely important. It allows us to check that a refugee is not registered more than once and it will also ensure that humanitarian resources and services are being provided to refugees in efficient manner.”

WFP Uganda Country Director, El Khidir Daloum added: “WFP looks forward to working closely with the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) and UNHCR over the coming months to make this exercise a success and deliver assistance efficiently to the people we serve. This biometric system will ensure we are giving the right people the right assistance.”

As the verification exercise moves to bigger refugee settlements, enhanced collaboration among all actors, including OPM, WFP, UNHCR and other partners, will be crucial to ensure the smooth transition from verification to the delivery of vital aid and assistance.

The verification exercise is scheduled to be completed by September 2018 – including introduction of biometric checks at 180 food distribution sites, managed by WFP - which will ensure that assistance is going to those who need it most.

This is UNHCR’s biggest-ever verification exercise in Africa. The biometric teams proceeded to Nakivale, where the verification started on Wednesday 14, March.
WHO RESPONSE TO THE CHOLERA OUTBREAK

By Edmond Mwebembezi World Health Organisation

As of 6 March 2018, a total of 1,469 cases with 35 deaths (Case Fatality Rate 2.4 %) had been recorded in the on-going cholera outbreak that was officially declared by the Ministry of Health (MoH) on 23rd February 2018 in Hoima District. On 6 March 2018, there were 25 new admissions, 42 patients were discharged and 31 remain admitted at the hospital.

Three sub-counties in the district including Kyangwali, Kabwoya and Buseruka are affected by the outbreak. Hoima Regional Referral Hospital has been receiving self-referred cases and those linked to the epicentre of the outbreak in the past days. The total so far treated at the hospital are 18 cases including one death.

Together with partners, the UN System in Uganda through WHO is supporting the MoH and Hoima District authorities to control the outbreak. A multidisciplinary coordination system led by the district and supported by UN agencies and partners have been set up in the field.

WHO has supported the Ministry of Health and the district to monitor the quality of field response and to solve specific problems in order to stop the quick spread of cholera transmission in communities. This has involved mapping donors and their responsibilities, reviewing and updating stock levels of supplies and ensuring that the right technical people are deployed in the right areas of work. WHO also supported hotspot mapping of outbreak sites and provided guidance on allocation of response teams to address risk factors in these areas. They also provided five hired vehicles to the government to reach remote locations that are reporting cases.

WHO is also supporting treatment of patients at the two Cholera Treatment Centres (CTCs) set up at Kasonga and Sebagoro HC IIIIs and has provided orientation to 15 health workers (8 nurses, 6 clinical officers and 1 Medical Officer) on cholera treatment procedures and infection control protocols. Two experienced medical officers were hired to provide clinical supervision at the CTCs.
A WHO Official sensitises newly arrived refugees at Sebagaro landing site on prevention of children

The District Health Team, Village Health Teams, Red Cross volunteers and WHO are working to actively search for cases especially in Kyangwali Refugee Settlement, Nkondo Parish, and Kaiso Village in Toonya Parish. This is going hand-in-hand with contact tracing and testing using Rapid Diagnostic Tests. All identified contacts are given chemoprophylaxis under direct observation as per WHO guidelines. Social mobilization to churches, schools and trading centres has also been undertaken including the distribution of Information Education and Communication kits in Kiswahili, English and French languages supplied by UNICEF. This is reinforced by individual and community engagement sessions, dialogues as well as radio programmes and announcements in the local language.

Three WHO technical officers are currently in Hoima to oversee the response and provide onsite technical guidance to the district, partners and UN agencies staff. The officers have completed a risk analysis of the potential causes of the outbreak and shared it with other UN agencies based on the division of labour under the humanitarian response arrangement. Other on-going control measures supported by WHO include the distribution of Aqua tablets using VHTs, local leaders and Red Cross volunteers as well as household sanitation.
campaigns. Particular attention has been paid to regular hand washing, proper and consistent use of latrines and water purification using Aqua tablets.

61% OF CONGOLESE REFUGEES CROSSING INTO UGANDA ARE CHILDREN

By Catherine Ntabadde Makumbi, Communication Specialist UNICEF Uganda

Jack, 34, and his family from the Democratic Republic of Congo have had sleepless nights for the past two months. Upon arrival in Ntoroko in Western Uganda on February 11th, 2018, Jack, his wife and five children were relieved to finally have a good night sleep.

“We have been on alert for the past two months without sleeping. When the fighting intensified, we ran for safety. Do you know how it feels to spend months without any sleep? When we arrived at the Catholic Church in Ntoroko-Uganda, we were excited that we can sleep. Even though it is on the floor, we have not enjoyed this kind of sleep for some time,” Jack Kabagambe explains with a smile.

The family did not carry any extra clothing, food or household items. “I saw people running and I decided to run with my family to the bush. We later walked for about 3kms to get a motorcycle that took us towards the lake. Some of our relatives ran towards Bunia,” adds Jack. At the church, over 1,000 refugees were registered during the weekend of February 10th. Seated in groups outside the church, the refugees ponder their next move while some receive treatment inside the church.

Jack is not alone! He is among the 59,084 Congolese refugees that have crossed into Uganda since January 2018 with an average of 869 refugees arriving every day. 61% of the Congolese refugees in Uganda are children below 18 years. The refugees are fleeing renewed attacks by Mai-Mai militia in North Kivu as well as intertribal violence, arbitrary killings, rape, abductions and looting in Ituri. According to the Office of the Prime Minister and UNHCR, the total number of refugees from DRC who call Uganda home is 275,677.

Seated with his wife and children aged 14, 10, 8, 4 and 2 at Ntoroko Catholic Church which is acting as the transit centre, Jack revealed that riding on a boat to cross into Uganda was the only option to safety and running away from death. Each person was charged US$6.4 on the boat, hence Jack had to pay the equivalent of US$45 for his family. On that day, the boat
carried about 70 Congolese refugees. Riding a boat was a first-time experience for all of them. Jack is grateful that his family is safe. His appeal to the government of Uganda, friends and well-wishers is to help his family rebuild a shelter, access food, healthcare, clothing and for his children to continue with their learning.

In Ntoroko and other entry points into Uganda, UNICEF is supporting the district governments/local authorities and other agencies with the delivery of basic services to fulfil the rights of all affected children both amongst host communities and new arrivals. Specifically, support is provided for immunization and nutrition screening at transit sites, reception centres and settlements where the refugees have been transferred. In addition, UNICEF is working with the Uganda Red Cross Society to promote positive hygiene behaviour, provision of clean water and appropriate sanitation. Together with Save the Children, UNICEF facilitates the safety of children especially the most vulnerable and engages with host districts to support early learning for children.

Mughuma Joan, the Assistant Chief Administrative Officer Ntoroko District has confirmed that all new arrivals are screened for malnutrition and other health conditions such as cholera, polio and hemorrhagic fevers in addition to undertaking general medical checkups. “We are deworming the children and providing Vitamin A supplementation. For women of
reproductive age, we provide a tetanus dose,“ she explained after a district and partners planning meeting.

In Kisoro District, Erike Barangirana, 26, crossed into Uganda with his wife, children aged 10 years and 10 months via Nteko border point. They walked for three days before reaching Uganda. “They are killing people from there. People are running. We had to escape and run without anything else apart from these clothes we are wearing. We managed to rest on the way but my daughter (10-year-old) is very tired,” Erike who arrived on the 16th February 2017 reveals. Erike and hundreds of others who cross via Nteko and Bunagana border points daily are transported by UNHCR to Nyakabande Transit Centre. The distance between Nteko and Nyakabande, is 60kms. A pregnant woman, Goretti, who arrived on the 16 February looked exhausted. She had spent days without food or anything to drink. The provision of energy biscuits from WFP upon arrival triggered a smile on her face. All new arrivals receive energy biscuits.

“Nobody comes with anything. When they arrive at the transit centre, they enjoy sound nights. Some of them can sleep for two days without waking up. This is because majority of them have been staying in the bush with no sleep,” Esau Bahikayo, the Camp Commandant of Nyakabande Transit Centre narrates. He adds that the biggest number of women are widows.

At Nteko, most of the arrivals were women and hundreds of unaccompanied children. A few refugees especially women were seen carrying limited luggage while most crossed empty handed.

Philips Limlim, UNICEF’s Chief of Mbarara and Central Region Field Office appreciated the expedited efforts by Ntoroko and Kisoro district local governments in responding to the influx. In Ntoroko, he noted the need to plan for new arrivals who had self-settled and were now integrated with their relatives.

Congolese refugees arriving through various points in Western Uganda are transferred by UNHCR to Kyangwali Refugee Settlement in Hoima district and Kyaka II Refugee Settlement in Kyeggewa District.
‘CASH FOR WORK’ PROGRAMME GIVES HOPE TO REFUGEE WOMEN AND THEIR HOSTS IN UGANDA

By Natsuki Matsumoto, UNDP Uganda

“I knew what I wanted to do, but did not know how to make it happen,” Margaret Poni, a refugee from South Sudan says as she prepares samosas – a fried snack made with flour and filled with beans and onions, which is popular in both Uganda and South Sudan. Margaret (pictured right) who lives in Bidibidi Settlement, Yumbe district located in the West Nile sub region of Northern Uganda is one of the 1.4 million South Sudanese refugees currently living in Uganda after fleeing from the war in South Sudan.

The samosas she is preparing are for sale to fellow refugees in the settlements as well as locals who live close to the settlement in Bidibidi. She prepares samosas twice a day and sells each at a hundred Ugandan Shillings (UGX 100) earning UGX 14,000 at the end of each day. She started her samosa business in December 2017 after taking part in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) supported ‘Cash for Work’ Programme.

Launched in April 2017, the programme supports refugees and host communities by providing temporary employment opportunities. It is implemented in partnership with Save the Children Uganda with support from the Japanese Government. The “Cash for Work” Programme activities include road maintenance, tree planting, garbage pit digging, garbage collection and cleaning.

These activities were selected through consultations with representatives of both refugee and host communities, local authorities, and other stakeholders in consideration of the needs on the ground. After thirty (30) days’ work, participants receive 434,691 Uganda shillings, an equivalent of US $120.

More here
JOHN AND FAMILY ARE HOPEFUL EVEN AFTER DISPLACEMENT FROM DRC

By Irene Nabisere, Emergency Officer, UNICEF Uganda

It is 7:00am and refugees from DRC are about to enjoy their first meal of the day - breakfast, out of three meals provided at Nyakabande Transit Centre in Kisoro, Western Uganda. Byamungu John is seated with his family waiting for his wife to return with sugar for the family to have their porridge. John is the sole bread winner for the family of twelve that includes his wife, sister in law and nine children. Byamungu was working to fend for his family until the fighting in North Kivu, DRC intensified. “We would hear gunshots and reports of people being kidnapped and killed,’ says Byamungu. This forced Byamungu and his family to start their journey for refuge in Uganda.

John and family wait for sugar before eating their porridge at Nyakabade Transit center in Kisoro @UNICEF/Ntabadde

On 4 February 2018, they carried a few belongings and walked from their home in Moba
Village which is 7kms away from Moba Port. From Moba Port, they took a boat to Uvira and got public transport to Bukavu which is 150kms apart. They walked 600kms from Bukavu to Goma where they found a truck that offered them a ride to Bunagana border arriving at the transit centre on 15 February. Byamungu lost his professional documents amidst the different means of transport.

Byamungu was happy with the treatment he received alongside his family at the Uganda immigration office. “The team was welcoming and we got transport to Nyakabande Transit Centre by UNHCR. Uganda refugee policy is very impressive. We were able to forget about our worries for a moment,” says Byamungu. At the transit centre, shelter for men is different from that for women and this was not good news for John but he was happy he did not have to worry about attacks at night. “I wish my children could continue learning,” explains Byamungu in a heartbroken tone.

Nyakabande transit centre is located in Kisoro District. When logistics are available, refugees stay at least two to three nights before they are transferred to Kyaka II Refugee Settlement in Kyegegwa District which is estimated to be a seven-hour drive (415 kms) from Kisoro, southwest Uganda. Currently, 14,399 refugees have been relocated to Kyaka II since the beginning of January 2018. 61 percent of DRC refugees are children. The DRC refugee population is predominantly women and children.

UNICEF is supporting screening for malnutrition and appropriate care, measles vaccination for children, Vitamin A and deworming at transit centres. UNICEF with its partner Save the Children are providing psychosocial support through the establishment of integrated child friendly spaces at Nyakabande. This helps to protect children from physical harm and psychosocial distress and ensure they can continue learning and developing skills even in emergency settings. Children access structured play, recreation, leisure and learning activities, it is also a venue to identify vulnerable and at risk children to facilitate their referral for immediate support. As of end January 2018, 1,478 children had benefited from child friendly space activities at the transit center; of these, 381 children were below six years old.

Susan Birungi Nyakoojo, Emergency Officer at UNICEF Mbarara Zonal Office said that the child friendly space is the first interface for children at the reception centre. They engage in play, story-telling and learning which helps them to forget about prior traumatic experiences from home. This in turn gives them an opportunity to grow as children.

According to UNHCR, Uganda is home to 275,677 refugees from DRC. Nearly 60,000 have arrived in the country since January 2018. UNICEF’s 2018 funding appeal to respond to DRC refugees is over US$ 10,600,000 with a funding gap of 89 percent. If funding is availed, UNICEF will be able to respond to Nutrition, WASH, Health, Child Protection and Education needs among Congolese refugees. It will help to improve emergency preparedness and response capacities, including the ability of the Government of Uganda to respond to the ongoing influx of refugees and disease outbreaks in refugee hosting districts.
PRIVATE SECTOR JOINS GOVERNMENT AND DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS IN THE REFUGEE RESPONSE

By Monica Aturinda UN Resident Coordinators Office (RCO)

On 9th March, StarTimes, a leading digital pay television operator in Uganda handed over 100 blankets and a satellite TV to a representative of the Office of the Prime Minister, and to the Uganda AIDS Commission at Kagoma Youth Centre in Kyangwali, Hoima as contribution towards psychosocial support for the refugees.

The UN Resident Coordinator Ms. Rosa Malango, on behalf of the UN System in Uganda commended private sector especially StarTimes for their generous contribution towards the refugee response in Uganda and called on more support to ensure that refugees and their hosts are well taken care of. She said this during her visit to Hoima District with the UNAIDS Executive Director Mr. Michel Sidibé. “The contribution from the private sector responds to one of the five points in the Presidential Fast - Track Initiative on ensuring financial sustainability for the HIV response in Uganda,” said Ms. Malango.

UNAIDS and StarTimes Uganda signed a memorandum of understanding in June 2017 to raise awareness on HIV prevention among the adolescents and young people with a specific target on men. Through this cooperation, UNAIDS and StarTimes Uganda have partnered in resource mobilization, advocacy, publicity and awareness raising for HIV prevention initiatives.
In June 2017, Mr. Sidibé launched the one-dollar initiative (ODI) led by the private sector in collaboration with ILO and UNAIDS. This initiative is an innovative financing mechanism that is established to supplement existing resources for the HIV and AIDS response in Uganda, as one of the strategies towards attaining SDG 3 on ending HIV and AIDS by 2030. “The private sector can help transform the way we deliver services and help reach people with advocacy and promotional messages,” said Mr. Sidibé during the ODI launch.

SDG 3 – GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

PRESIDENT MUSEVENI HONOURS UNAIDS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND LAUNCHES THE PRESIDENTIAL FAST-TRACK HIV SITUATION ROOM

By Carol Magambo UNAIDS Uganda

At the invitation of H.E President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, the UNAIDS Executive Director, Michel Sidibé was in Uganda to receive the award of the Most Excellent Order of the Pearl of Africa from the President on 8th March 2018. The award ceremony took place during the International Women’s Day celebration, in Mityana. Mr. Sidibé was recognized for his contribution to the national AIDS response in Uganda, in Africa, and globally.

The Most Excellent Order of the Pearl of Africa is the highest civilian award conferred by the President to any high-profile person and is usually reserved for Heads of State and Government. Mr. Sidibé was honoured with the award for championing the 90-90-90 concept and showing that countries can aim high and break the back of the HIV epidemic.

Progress is already visible in Uganda, where 60% of people living with HIV are already on treatment and viral load suppressed. Mr. Sidibé has campaigned passionately to lower prices of ARVs and is a tireless campaigner against stigma and discrimination.

During the event, Mr Sidibé witnessed the launch of the Presidential Fast-Track HIV Situation Room. Under the leadership of President Museveni, Uganda has continued to demonstrate progress in its response to AIDS.

After the successful launch of the Presidential Track Initiative to End AIDS in Uganda by 2030 in June 2017, the President has once again demonstrated his commitment through the launch of the HIV Situation Room.
The Presidential Fast-Track HIV Situation Room is a data visualisation platform drawing from multiple data sources to produce powerful analytical outputs to facilitate timely action, provide real time data for monitoring the implementation of the Presidential Fast Track Initiative to End AIDS in Uganda. It also aims to inform decision making and track progress on the attainment of the 90-90-90.

In his solidarity with the most vulnerable, Mr. Sidibe travelled to Hoima to witness the plight of refugees in the district. He paid a courtesy call to the King of Bunyoro, Omukama Rukirabasaija Agutamba Solomon Gafabusa Iguru. He commended the King’s kindness and the host communities in co-habiting peacefully with the refugees. He also recognised the important role of cultural leaders in mobilizing their people, especially men, for service uptake. He encouraged the King to constantly monitor and address existence of any harmful practices that may be impeding the fight against HIV, in line with the Presidential Fast-Track Initiative on Ending HIV and AIDS in Uganda.

The UNAIDS Executive Director proceeded to Kyangwali Refugee Settlement in Hoima, to support the refugee response. Since December 2017, over 50,000 refugees have crossed Lake Albert into Hoima, fleeing violence from eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. Mr.
Sidibé thanked the Government of Uganda for its progressive refugee policy that welcomes the refugees and integrates them into the country and allows them free movement. He called on stakeholders providing services to refugees and host communities to ensure that refugees living with HIV are quickly identified and linked to care services to avoid treatment interruption that may lead to resistance and subsequently morbidity and mortality.

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