



## Voluntary Repatriation and Reintegration of Burundian Refugees Plan 2020

### 2020

#### Funding Required

\$23,000,000

#### Target Beneficiaries

111,500

#### **IOM Vision**

IOM, in coordination with key stakeholders and partners, aims to provide safe, voluntary and dignified repatriation and reintegration support to Burundian returnees from the United Republic of Tanzania and the Republic of Rwanda.

#### **Context Analysis**

As of 30 September 2020, the United Republic of Tanzania hosted 155,667 Burundian refugees who arrived in the country in several waves since 2015 and as of 31 July 2020, the Republic of Rwanda hosts 71,973. Combined these two countries host 70 percent of all Burundian refugees in the Great Lakes region ([UNHCR](#)).

Since 2017, with the situation in Burundi seemingly stabilizing, the trend began to reverse and since then, the governments of Burundi, the United Republic of Tanzania, the Republic of Rwanda, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees have engaged in tripartite agreements on the Voluntary Repatriation of Burundian Refugees back home.

The number of Burundian refugees seeking voluntary repatriation assistance to their country of

origin has increased dramatically since May 2020, following national elections. Since July 2020, more than 10,000 of the 12,500 who have been provided voluntary repatriation assistance returned following those elections.

In the Republic of Rwanda, for example, at the end of July 2020, a group of refugees petitioned the new Burundian president to facilitate their return. Following official meetings in August, it was agreed to work under the existing 2005 Tripartite Agreement to respond to refugee requests. From 27 August to mid-September 2020, nearly 1,000 individuals have returned from the Republic of Rwanda, with approximately 8,000 expected to return between September and December 2020.

Moving forward, UNHCR anticipates that nearly 20,000 refugees will return between September and December 2020, based on recent return registration trends. The return and reintegration of tens of thousands of people present challenges typical of largescale returns, as vulnerability abounds and resources are scarce, contributing to an atmosphere of resentment and laying the foundation for potential tensions at the community level.

Based on IOM's Flow Monitoring Point (FMP) data collected in August 2020, the identified communes of high return are in the provinces of Ruyigi (communes of Gisuru and Kinyinya), in the province of Rutana (communes of Giharo, Bukemba and Mpinga-Kayove), in the province of Makamba (commune of Kayogoro) and in the province of Muyinga (commune of Giteranyi). These are among the poorest and chronically food and nutrition insecure provinces of Burundi, lacking social and economic infrastructure for a sustainable reintegration of refugee returnees. The population of these communes are mostly engaged in agricultural activities and other cross border activities with the republic of Tanzania.

UNHCR's protection monitoring report from 31 May 2020 indicates that only 33 percent of returnees could access housing they owned before fleeing, and approximately 38 percent found their homes occupied by community members or relatives. This has left returnees with the need to find shelter, or share an existing house with host-families, leading to overcrowded living spaces and increasing potential for conflict. The arrival of tens of thousands of Burundians will no doubt tax already limited resources and service delivery at the local level. Indeed, in most areas of return, the availability of basic shelter and services are already strained. Natural disasters, including more severe flooding triggered by more intense seasonal rains, has further worsened this situation: in April 2020, torrential rains flooded nearly 7,000 homes and displaced nearly 40,000 people in Bujumbura province, according to IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM). Thus, vulnerability is high and resources are scarce. Significant support focused on socioeconomic development, community cohesion and stabilization activities, will be required to support sustainable and peaceful reintegration.

## **Coordination**

IOM, in coordination with UNHCR, has been responsible for the safe voluntary repatriation of Burundian refugees, mostly from the United Republic of Tanzania. By the end of 2019, for example, IOM, in conjunction with UNHCR, assisted 79,920 Burundians to return to their country of origin.

While humanitarian partners are not promoting repatriation to Burundi, this opportunity is made available to those who voluntarily wish to return and is seen as a durable solution to the

refugee situation in the region. Such returns are achieved in accordance with protection concerns and procedures, considering the specific refugee status of the beneficiaries. In 2020, 50,000 Burundians were expected to be repatriated, according to the Burundian Joint Refugee Return and Reintegration Response Plan. However, these numbers do not take into account the recent interest in voluntary repatriation by Burundian refugees, following the May 2020 elections.

## **IOM Capacity**

### **IOM Tanzania**

Since 2015, IOM in the United Republic of Tanzania has been undertaking movement assistance for Burundian refugees. Starting in May 2015, IOM began transporting new arrivals and providing them with safe transport from border crossing points to refugee camps. With the situation evolving in 2017, IOM began providing safe and dignified transportation to Burundian refugees who registered their willingness to return with UNHCR. In 2019, IOM provided return transportation for 20,930 Burundian refugees.

### **IOM Rwanda**

IOM Rwanda works to find long-term sustainable solutions for individuals who have spent years living in refugee camps. The Migration Operations Unit directs, oversees, and coordinates IOM Rwanda resettlement work by facilitating pre-departure formalities for refugees and migrants travelling overseas under various resettlement programmes. Functions and responsibilities include pre-screenings, adjudication, facilitating medical assessments, fitness to travel checks, pre-departure cultural orientation for migrants and refugees and movement assistance. IOM Rwanda also works with the government to provide humanitarian assistance to migrants, particularly those who find themselves in difficult migratory circumstances. Beginning in August 2020, IOM Rwanda has begun engaging with UNHCR and its partners to mobilize these capacities in support of voluntary repatriation of Burundian refugees to their country of origin.

### **IOM Burundi**

IOM has been present in Burundi since 2010 and has been a key partner in supporting the Government of Burundi in providing a wide range of activities for the sustainable reintegration of Burundian refugees, IDPs, host communities and other vulnerable migrants. IOM Burundi has successfully implemented similar activities and has a solid presence in the designated areas of high refugee return.

Due to the influx of Burundians returning to the country after years spent abroad, already limited resources are being stretched even thinner to accommodate the needs of Burundi's growing population. Therefore, IOM is working in collaboration with UNHCR and other UN agencies to respond to the rising needs of returnees. As borders with the United Republic of Tanzania are heavily frequented by returnees, IOM is providing administrative and sensitization training for border officials, as well as improving border point infrastructure so as to support safe, orderly and humane migration. Since January 2018, IOM has been providing shelter and reintegration assistance to vulnerable migrants in their communes of return. IOM's reintegration activities are improving the ability of host communities to absorb large numbers of returnees by

creating platforms for dialogue, strengthening existing basic service infrastructure, and providing opportunities for short-term employment and job training. These activities have been of paramount importance for improving social cohesion and preventing socio-economic conflict.

Objective

**Save lives and respond to needs through humanitarian assistance and protection**

\$8,200,000

**Funding Required**

31,000

**Target Beneficiaries**

Returnees that returned through voluntary repatriation, spontaneous returnees, host communities, and internally displaced persons. IOM intends to assist at least 1 out of 5 returnees.

## **Shelter, Settlements and Non-Food Items**

### **Funding Required**

\$4,800,000

IOM, as co-lead of the NFI/Shelter sector in Burundi, coordinates this response with other partners, and the support given follows the standards approved by the sector, namely providing secure shelters to the most vulnerable households, promoting the use of multipurpose cash and purchasing shelter items in-country. Each month, 290 households will receive shelter assistance (rental support or shelter repair kits) and 60 among them will receive sanitation support, based on a needs assessment conducted in the commune of return. This strategy was chosen based upon data from UNHCR's Protection Monitoring Report, which determined that shelter was considered the primary need for returning refugees. In the first quarter of 2020, the returnees of Rutana, Ruyigi, Cankuzo, Muyinga and Kirundo will be targeted.

## **Movement Assistance**

### **Funding Required**

\$1,800,000

IOM Tanzania

There are three refugee camps in the Kigoma region of the United Republic of Tanzania. The camps are Mtendeli, Nduta and Nyarugusu. Repatriation as a durable solution to the refugee situation in the United Republic of Tanzania and those voluntarily registering to return have been and will continue to be assisted with transportation services.

Mtendeli and Nyarugusu refugee camps are approximately 45 kilometers and 75 kilometers from Nduta camp, respectively. To bring refugees to the designated departure points in two of

the three camps (Nduta and Nyarugusu), IOM transports those residing in the other camps. Subsequently, safe, orderly and dignified movement assistance to transit centers in Burundi is provided following a three-day, pre-departure logistical preparation window in the United Republic of Tanzania, as described above.

IOM Tanzania can operate at a rate of up to two convoy movements per week of 1,000 refugees each. Thus, IOM aims to be resourced and prepared for any eventuality – including the possibility that up to 2,000 refugees per week could be in need of repatriation assistance.

The confirmation of the first case of COVID-19 in the United Republic of Tanzania on 14 March 2020 has caused a profound change in the country. The Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children has taken steps to limit the spread of the disease. In spite of COVID-19, the VolRep operations continue, with additional health measures in place in line with the protocols in the United Republic of Tanzania, the Republic of Burundi and IOM. COVID-19 is a challenge for VolRep as it entails exposure to large groups of people. Therefore, IOM has put in place maximum precautionary measures since mid-March 2020 and will continue to do so under this project. These include sensitizing VolRep beneficiaries to wash their hands, cough etiquette, physical distancing and, of course, strengthening all other hygienic measures to minimize potential risks of the spread of the disease among refugees and UN staff. Additionally, masks and hand sanitizers will be provided, and physical distancing enforced.

IOM has, and will continue to, deploy additional nurses at VolRep departure centers to ensure that everyone (i.e. refugees, IOM, UNHCR, government staff, and anyone who enters the departure centers) has their temperature checked through non-contact thermometers and wear personal protective equipment. IOM will also provide beneficiaries with face masks and hand sanitizers upon departure. Over the course of the journey, temperature and symptoms check will take place as well. Individuals showing symptoms will be treated as an alert and immediately isolated and reported to health authorities for a secondary screening. IOM will also support the health authorities with contact tracing if an individual is confirmed positive with COVID-19.

## IOM Rwanda

The Republic of Rwanda currently hosts over 70,094 Burundian refugees, with the majority residing in Mahama camp in eastern Rwanda, and mainly from Kirundo province in the Republic of Burundi. Since August, 1,500 refugees have been repatriated from the Republic of Rwanda, in groups of 500 individuals, so as not to exceed the reception capacity of Songore Transit Centre in Burundi as well as to align with agreed-to COVID-19 prevention measures. All returnees received information on return assistance and modalities have been put in place for individuals to register their interest in return. For those who did sign up to return, voluntariness assessment interviews were conducted by UNHCR staff.

For 2020, 8,000 Burundian refugees have been targeted for return, between September and December 2020. For 2021, IOM, in close coordination with UNHCR and its partners, will explore the potential to return additional refugees who expressed a desire to return home. However, it should be noted, this number may increase or decrease, based on expressed and documented desires of Burundian refugees remaining in Rwanda, as well as their ability to decline repatriation anytime during the VolRep process.

In partnership with UNCHR, the government of the Republic of Rwanda, the Republic of Burundi and other key partners, IOM appeals for funding to be able to sustain VolRep of Burundian refugees hosted in the Republic of Rwanda who have registered with UNHCR their desire to return to their country of origin. The Tripartite Commission has repeatedly agreed that voluntary repatriations should continue. Indeed, despite the challenges of the global COVID-19 pandemic, the voluntary repatriation of Burundian refugees remains a top priority for both governments.

There are six refugee camps in Rwanda and most are quite a distance from the designated departure point (Mahama refugee camp at the border with the United Republic of Tanzania). IOM will provide transport services for refugees residing in other camps to the departure point. Subsequently, transportation assistance to transit centers in Burundi will be provided following a three-day, pre-departure logistical preparation window, with movements conducted via bus.

## **Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Humanitarian Response**

### **Funding Required**

\$1,600,000

In Burundi, upon arrival, health and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) support to returnees will be provided to ensure continuity of care and necessary referrals. The capacity of relevant mental health and psychosocial services in the communes of return will be provided to the most vulnerable returnees and host communities by working with the government, civil society and key health partners in the provinces. Building upon previous experience, IOM aims to continue the support towards peaceful coexistence and social cohesion in communities that have to absorb the most returnees, including Ruyigi, Rutana, Muyinga Cankuzo and Makamba. Activities will include direct mental health and psychosocial support through individual and group counseling, psychoeducation, and clinical psychological consultations.

Objective

**Address the drivers and longer term impacts of crises and displacement through investments in recovery and crisis prevention**

\$14,800,000

84,000

**Funding Required**

**Target Beneficiaries**

Returning refugees, host communities and government counterparts.

## **Restoring Housing, Land and Property Rights**

### **Funding Required**

\$1,300,000

As many returning refugees are compelled to reside with family or friends upon their arrival in Burundi, tensions stemming from a lack of resources, including land and shelter, can arise.

IOM will therefore support the durable reintegration of returnees through enhancing their access to land.

IOM will build on its Communicating with Communities (CwC) programming and provide sensitization training on the rights and processes to access land according to the national legislation, with returnees, host communities and local authorities. These trainings will aim at reducing existing conflicts around housing, land and property (HLP) and will be followed by public validations of land titles at the community level.

At the community level, IOM will aim at strengthening knowledge on HLP, Right to Land and administrative procedures to access land, especially in the case of female-headed households who are subject to further marginalization, especially when they have not been part of a formalized marriage. This will help reduce the tensions and levels of conflict linked to housing, land and property within the return areas, and reduce risks of gender-based violence (GBV) linked to HLP.

At the communal level, i.e. Ruyigi, Rutana, Muyinga, Cankuzo and Makamba, programming aims to strengthen the capacities of the local administration to address and communicate HLP issues, to help ensure the long-term continuation of the land formalization and validation process. This will help reduce tensions, levels of conflict, and GBV risks linked to HLP, and will focus on capacity building through sensitization and training sessions (including the development of education and communication material) for the existing Communal Land Service personnel. These trainings will highlight ways of efficiently mapping land plots at the commune level (delivery of IT equipment and training on relevant software, such as Geographic Information System (GIS) and land demarcation, can be considered accordingly).

Where the Communal Land Service does not exist, the IOM team and its partners will facilitate the (re)establishment of a temporary Peace Committee to help reduce the level of conflict. This Peace Committee will benefit from similar trainings delivered to the Communal Land Services, strengthening their understanding and capacity to operate within the scope of the current existing Burundi legislation. The Peace Committee will be identified in coordination with the local authorities and community to ensure it will include both female and male members of the displaced and host community, as well as local administrations. In addition, the IOM team and partners will continuously (until the end of the project) advocate and sensitize local authorities on the importance of setting up a Communal Land Service that will permanently replace the temporary Peace Committees.

It is to note that IOM is the co-lead of the HLP ad-hoc working group in Burundi since November 2019 and is one of the main actors in-country in this field.

## **Durable Solutions**

### **Funding Required**

\$2,500,000

IOM contributes to the sustainable reintegration of repatriated refugees through inclusive approaches responding to locally identified needs of returnees and local communities. To

ensure that social cohesion is reinforced during the reintegration of Burundian returnees in local communities, IOM will provide essential services in communities to improve social and economic conditions. This will be done through social cohesion activities, community dialogues, livelihood support, vocational training and quick impact projects (QIPs) in coordination with other reintegration activities as outlined in the Joint Refugee Return and Reintegration Response Plan.

This action would target refugee returnees along with host community members to engage in awareness sessions along with the social cohesion dialogues. These sessions will provide a dignified welcoming platform to ask questions or express concerns related to the integration/reintegration process. In addition, information will be provided on the legal requirements of the reintegration process as well as housing, health, education and potential livelihood opportunities available.

These dialogues will also provide the opportunity for both groups to jointly identify QIPs that would improve the community's infrastructural capacity to absorb the returnees in local communities (for example, rehabilitation of schools, bridges, water points, and so on). These sessions will include data collection that will inform the needs analysis for the QIPs, as well as the needs for individualized counseling and specific reintegration assistance for the most vulnerable. The QIPs will provide an opportunity for community members and returnees to receive skills building and training through cash-for-work. This action will specifically focus on the most vulnerable provinces of return, including Cankuzo, Kirundo, Makamba, Muyinga, Rutana and Ruyigi. Given the geographical, security and humanitarian challenges along the border and in anticipation of receiving a large number of returnees from Tanzania in 2019, IOM, as the leading organization for border management, will provide support to the Government of Burundi to cope with the upsurge in border movements and cross-border flows, with a specific focus on the most vulnerable provinces of return, including Cankuzo, Kirundo, Makamba, Muyinga, Rutana and Ruyigi.

## **Community stabilization**

### **Funding Required**

\$9,000,000

Social tensions have been observed in Ruyigi, Makamba, Kirundo, Rutana, Muyinga and Cankuzo, primarily related to a scarcity of resources (land for agriculture, food, shelter), unlawful occupations, gender-based violence (GBV), banditry and/or homes being destroyed by natural disasters. Indeed, the influx of returnees and displaced persons has had a major impact on already vulnerable local communities, creating tensions that have led to several incidents. Local authorities face difficulties in ensuring land access rights for registered returnees upon their arrival, due to a lack of available land and institutional capacity to sensitize the population on land regulation. Supplementary support is needed to ensure that returnees have adequate and safe shelter and are sustainably reintegrated, without creating undue strain on already fragile host communities. The provinces of Makamba, Ruyigi, Muyinga, Cankuzo and Rutana are also among the provinces with the highest number of IDPs, victims of natural disasters and food insecurity (Humanitarian Response Plan 2019).

With community stabilization activities, IOM seeks to support governments, states and

communities undergoing significant socioeconomic and political changes during and following a crisis, in order to (re)establish stability and security, prevent further forced migration, restore trust among community members, vulnerable populations and local authorities, and lay the foundations for durable solutions, lasting peace and sustainable development. Programming areas may include but are not limited to: the restoration of basic rights, inclusive access to and the provision of essential services, promotion of social cohesion, rubble removal and reconstruction, capacitating state and local governance, promoting non-violent political processes, civic education, social policy development, and supporting inclusive economic recovery.

## **Health System Strengthening**

### **Funding Required**

\$2,000,000

IOM aims at supporting the Government of Burundi in improving its health system so as to better withstand the large-scale returns of Burundian refugees in Ruyigi, Rutana, Muyinga, Cankuzo and Makamba communes. Most of the areas of return have very poor health and other community infrastructure, hence there is the need for upgrade to better respond to the socio-economic/health shocks that may be caused by the huge return of refugees and other IDPs. Activities will include public health risk reduction, capacity building and health system strengthening. Efforts will be linked to the IOM Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) - Regional Emergency Health Response Plan 2020-2022 (which also aligns with new COVID-19 prevention efforts), under which both Burundi and the United Republic of Tanzania have included objectives on enhancing cross-border collaboration in relation to the crisis.

In addition, IOM Burundi has been designated lead agency for the Points of Entry (PoEs) and Cross border Coordination pillar, under the COVID-19 Strategic Response Plan and the National Contingency Plan for COVID-19, following its position as the lead agency for cross border coordination and PoE for Ebola preparedness and response. Since the onset of the pandemic, IOM has been working with the Burundi Government and the humanitarian community to respond to the complex challenges created by COVID-19. IOM is currently providing an array of assistance to strengthen public health surveillance at border areas, including developing standard operating procedures (SOPs) for early detection, notification and suspected case management; monitoring cross-border population flows; training health and border officials and providing health and non-health equipment and materials at PoEs; and, assessing protection needs at the borders and organizing risk communication and community engagement initiatives targeting cross border communities through training community health workers to conduct community event-based surveillance and surveillance of diseases with epidemic potential. The challenges now is to strengthen health facilities located in the catchment of points of entry, to enable them to manage suspected cases identified by community health workers (CHWs) by training and supporting them with equipment to manage diseases with epidemic potential. Focal points from health facilities will be designated to train and refresh CHWs to identify and refer any suspected cases of diseases with epidemic potential.

As per the structure of Burundi's health system, each health district has a referral hospital that will be strengthened to perform COVID-19 testing using Genexpert (RT-PCR). Hospitals will be supported with machines and other lab-related materials to perform tests. Lab personnel will be

trained on infection prevention and control and handling of infectious body fluids.

## **OPERATIONAL PRESENCE**

<b>4</b> <b>International staff and affiliated work force</b>	<b>55</b> <b>National staff and affiliated work force</b>	<b>12</b> <b>IOM Field Offices</b>
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