Operational Context

A small, landlocked country with a population of 11.8 million people growing at 2.4 percent annually, Rwanda is one of the most densely populated countries in Africa. Since the 1994 genocide, the Government of Rwanda has recorded significant achievements in poverty reduction, gender equality, environmental sustainability, education and public health, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.

However, 38.2 percent of the population continues to live below the poverty line and almost one fifth is food insecure. Levels of stunting among young children remain very high, at 35 percent. Agriculture is the backbone of the economy, with 89 percent of rural households practising small-scale farming. Poor rainfall, drought, floods and the limited amount of land that is suitable for agriculture, alongside pests and diseases, continue to pose risks to food security.

The situation is further aggravated by the presence of over 149,600 Congolese and Burundian refugees (as of February 2019). Many refugees have been in the country for decades, with limited prospects for repatriation in the immediate future, and rely almost completely on WFP food assistance. The “forgotten crises” in neighbouring countries, where protracted volatility is exacerbated by political instability, may lead to the further arrival of refugees in the coming years.

Operational Updates

- The Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA), conducted in 2018 was published in March 2019. This survey provides an in-depth picture of the food security situation in Rwanda. The 2018 report indicates a slight decrease of chronic malnutrition among children under five years of age from 37 to 35 percent, between 2015 and 2018.

- Over 227,900 food and nutrition insecure people were reached with WFP food assistance in March. These include over 144,800 Burundian and Congolese refugees and asylum seekers in six camps and 83,100 Rwandan school going children in the most food insecure areas.

- WFP transferred US$ 980,000 through cash-based transfers to refugees in six camps, allowing them to purchase food of their choice from local markets and shops; thus, promoting socio-economic inclusion and boosting the local economy.

- About 772 mt of food commodities were distributed for refugees and school going children in March. Over 75 percent of food commodity requirements for WFP’s assistance in Rwanda is purchased locally, including from smallholder farmers.

- The Ebola virus continues to spread in North-Kivu in DR Congo, and Rwanda remains at ‘high’ risk. WFP continues to provide assistance for national preparedness led by the Ministry of Health.

- WFP continues to support farmers by strengthening the value chain capacity of 52,000 members of 160 smallholder farmers’ cooperatives across Rwanda. WFP assists the farmers to enhance their governance, enabling them to reduce their post-harvest losses, facilitating their access to financial services and improving their food productivity.
Monitoring

- The 2018 Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA) indicates a slight decrease of chronic malnutrition among children under five years of age and indicates that 81.3 percent of all households (about 2,034,942 households) are food secure and have an acceptable diet and use a low share of their budget to cover food needs. Among these, 38.6 percent (966,160 households) are considered marginally food secure, meaning that they are at high risk of becoming food insecure. In total, 18.7 percent (468,062 households) are food insecure: out of these, 1.7 percent (42,551 households) are severely food insecure. Moreover, only 17% of households have an acceptable diet.

Challenges

- WFP has recently received contributions from the Government of USA (USAID/Food for Peace), the Government of Japan, the European Commission and the Government of Canada to support refugees. However, the funding situation remains a concern, specifically for assistance to refugees for the second half of 2019.

- WFP needs US$ 3.2 million in the next six months (April–September 2019) in order to implement its activities in Rwanda as planned. Of these, US$ 2.9 million are urgently needed to ensure continuous food assistance to refugees for the next six months.

- If no additional resources are received soon, WFP will be forced to reduce refugee’s food rations in the second half of 2019, which may affect the most vulnerable people, including children and breastfeeding mothers.

Donors

USAID, UN CERF, ECHO, UK, Japan, Belgium, Canada, USDA, Republic of Korea, MasterCard, DEVCO, Switzerland and UN Common Funds and Agencies (excl. UN CERF).