



# Humanitarian Assistance for Refugees in Western Tanzania: Transporting Refugees to Safety



April 2015 to April 2016



## Foreword

In April 2015, political instability sparked civil unrest in Burundi. One year later, the situation remains precarious with over 260,000 refugees having fled to neighbouring countries. Tanzania is host to over 140,000 refugees displaced as a result of the political situation in Burundi. As the sector lead agency for the safe and dignified transportation of refugees within the United Nations Country Management Team response, IOM has transported these individuals to one of three camps in Western Tanzania, Nyarugusu, Nduta or Mtendeli, in accordance with Tanzania's encampment policy. IOM will continue to work in close partnership with the Government of Tanzania, UNHCR, other UN agencies and humanitarian stakeholders to provide much-needed assistance to Burundian refugees in Western Tanzania.

*- Dr Qasim Sufi, Chief of Mission, IOM Tanzania*

## Donors

IOM Tanzania is grateful to its donors, notably the United Kingdom's Department for International Development, the European Union and its Humanitarian Fund (ECHO), the UN Central Emergency Fund and the Norwegian Government through the UN One Fund, for their continued strong support.

## Statistics

| Month              | Land transport to.. |              |             |                 | Water transport from | Relocation from Nyarugusu to... |             |
|--------------------|---------------------|--------------|-------------|-----------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|-------------|
|                    | Nyarugusu           | Nduta        | Mtendeli    | Transit Centres | Ports                | Nduta                           | Mtendeli    |
| <b><u>2015</u></b> |                     |              |             |                 |                      |                                 |             |
| April              | 0                   | 0            | 0           | 0               | 0                    | 0                               | 0           |
| May                | 23681               | 0            | 0           | 0               | 15994                | 0                               | 0           |
| June               | 15176               | 0            | 0           | 0               | 2553                 | 0                               | 0           |
| July               | 9191                | 0            | 0           | 0               | 1889                 | 0                               | 0           |
| August             | 6468                | 0            | 0           | 847             | 514                  | 0                               | 0           |
| September          | 8330                | 0            | 0           | 1453            | 350                  | 0                               | 0           |
| October            | 3039                | 8087         | 0           | 1967            | 0                    | 6882                            | 0           |
| November           | 0                   | 6673         | 0           | 979             | 0                    | 6292                            | 0           |
| December           | 0                   | 7027         | 0           | 1351            | 0                    | 3405                            | 0           |
| <b><u>2016</u></b> |                     |              |             |                 |                      |                                 |             |
| January            | 222                 | 4979         | 2342        | 1431            | 0                    | 0                               | 1520        |
| February           | 237                 | 4939         | 2995        | 904             | 0                    | 712                             | 2995        |
| March              | 176                 | 3244         |             | 750             | 0                    | 867                             | 0           |
|                    | <b>66520</b>        | <b>34949</b> | <b>5337</b> | <b>9682</b>     | <b>21300</b>         | <b>18158</b>                    | <b>4515</b> |

**Total: 139,161 transported by land, 21,300 transported by water**



## A Step by Step of IOM's Work:

### **As Sector Lead for the Safe and Dignified Transportation of Refugees**



1. Refugees are transported from the places where they enter Tanzania to transit camps. Here, newly arrived Burundian refugees are waiting at a transit camp.



2. At the transit camps, refugees are registered. The picture above shows a Burundian refugee being registered at Ngara Transit Centre for transport to Nduta Refugee Camp



3. After registration, fit to travel checks are conducted to ensure that refugees are healthy enough to travel. The picture above shows fit to travel checks being conducted at Manyovu Transit Centre for transport to Nyarugusu Refugee Camp.



4. After registration and fit to travel checks, any luggage being carried by refugees is tagged and loaded for transport. This picture above shows luggage tagging at the Ngara Transit Centre for transport to Nduta Refugee Camp.



5. Once boarded, each bus is escorted by an IOM staff member all the way to the camp.



6. Upon arrival at each camp, refugees are referred to partners for required services. Light vehicles can accompany the convoy if needed.



## Stories from the Field



I fear for my safety in my country. I took nothing with me when I ran away - I have been wearing the same clothes for the last 3 weeks. It is my first time here. Once I reach Nyarugusu, I want to rest. It has been a long and tiring 3 weeks.



I arrived here with my husband and gave birth to my twins in Kagunga Village. Next to me (in the white hairnet) is a friend who I met on the bus. It is her first time in here and she is pregnant with her second child.



I walked here, over the mountains, with my three daughters, we are very tired. I was afraid to leave Burundi because I didn't know anything else, it was my country. But I left for the safety of my children. They were studying in Burundi and I really hope that they can continue to study here.



For my older son and I, this is our second time in Tanzania. We previously lived in four refugee camps. My husband died of malaria in Mtabila. When the camp closed in 2012, we returned to Burundi. Now here we are again. We crossed the mountains for 2 days and 2 nights before reaching Kagunga.



I don't know where my family is. I am going to Nyarugusu as a first guess to find them. Nobody was able to tell me why my parents left or where they left to. Even if they are not in Nyarugusu, I will have to stay here in Tanzania because there is nothing left for me.



I left Mtabila Camp in 2004, after living there for ten years. I am here to join my wife and two children, who are already living in Nyarugusu. I brought two important items with me, my solar panel (which I use for my business, which charges mobile phones) and flour, because I am a baker.



## Transportation Services and Medical Assistance in the Burundi Refugee Response—Looking Back and Thinking Ahead

### April 2015

On 26 April 2015, mass protests took place in Burundi in response to President Nkurunziza's announcement of a third term bid for office. Fearful for their safety, many Burundians fled to neighbouring countries such as Rwanda, DRC and Tanzania and as far as Zambia and Uganda.

### May 2015

The situation was declared an Level 2 emergency by UNHCR on 11 May 2015. A Regional Refugee Coordinator was appointed to formulate the response and a Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRRP) was launched in May 2015 to ensure a coordinated response to the protection and assistance needs of the Burundian refugees in the region. UNHCR led the interagency delivery of protection and assistance in Tanzania in close coordination with the Government and the office of the UN Resident Coordinator.

IOM Tanzania, as lead agency of the sector "transportation of persons", organized buses, boats and light vehicles to pick up refugees from arrival points along the border and take them to safety at Nyarugusu Refugee Camp. Staff were deployed on vehicles at entry collection points to ensure that safety procedures were observed and priority was given to vulnerable refugees such as pregnant women, the elderly and unaccompanied children.

*Burundian refugees stranded in Kagunga Village in Western Tanzania © IOM*



During the mass influx into Tanzania, an estimated 35,000 people were stranded in the border village of Kagunga in Western Tanzania within a very short period of time. Humanitarian access to Kagunga was only possible by boat from the Tanzanian side of Lake Tanganyika. Overcrowding in Kagunga left many at risk with no access to health facilities, limited shelter and no coping capacity. The urgent need for decongestion became critical when a cholera outbreak was reported in May 2015, resulting in over thirty deaths.

During this period IOM, in coordination with regional authorities and UN partners, piloted an evacuation programme on foot. On 16 May 2015, IOM staff, together with Tanzanian security forces, departed from Mkigo on foot at 9pm and cleared a trail to Kagunga over the next nine hours. Once the team reached Kagunga, they recruited 36 Burundian refugees (all males over the age of 18) to volunteer to try the trail. On 17 May 2015, the group left Kagunga on foot and reached Mkigo after six hours. "The spirit of the group was high during the walk and it is a viable complement to the water transport, with logistical planning, to decongest Kagunga," said Son Ha, the head of IOM Tanzania's sub office in Kigoma.

Once in Mkigo, the refugees were transported the 55km stretch to Nyarugusu by road. Almost 900 refugees reached Mkigo using the walking trail in the month of May.

*Burundian refugees using the walking trail accompanied by IOM staff and Tanzania security forces © IOM*



Aside from the walking trail, two boats (the MV Liemba and the MV Malagarasi) travelling the 60km stretch from Kagunga to Kigoma would carry 600 people on a daily basis. This number rose to 1,500 per day as people continued to flee political violence. Whilst awaiting transfer to Nyarugusu, which is about 170 km from Kigoma, refugees stayed in makeshift shelters in Lake Tanganyika Stadium. Often, shelters could not be built fast enough to accommodate the inflow of refugees from Lake Tanganyika Stadium and other transit centres, which in turn created a bottleneck in Kigoma. The UN and its NGO partners worked around the clock with the Tanzanian authorities to mitigate these challenges and decongest Kagunga and Lake Tanganyika Stadium.

*IOM staff assisting boat arrivals © IOM*



## June 2015

The influx peaked in June ahead of elections expected to be held in July 2015. As time went on, the number of crossing points used by Burundian refugees into Tanzania also increased. In late June, two IOM staff participated in an Entry Points Joint Assessment Mission with representatives from Oxfam, UNHCR and the Government. The four day mission started on 29 June and provided much needed information on the terrain and facilities available at the various entry points in the Kigoma and Kagera regions. The team was able to see how generous many communities were in receiving and assisting those in need of asylum. Village authorities were also glad to see agency representatives listening to their concerns which were mostly regarding the limited resources in the village being used to help new arrivals. The entry points would sometimes take a day of travel to reach on rough terrain and were difficult to incorporate into existing transport routes for onward movement to Nyarugusu. The distance also made it difficult for IOM's medical team to reach the refugees and perform the routine fit to travel checks.



*Burundian refugees at the Manyovu Transit Centre (left) and Lake Tanganyika Stadium (right) © IOM*



Reports from immigration officers and village authorities also indicated that refugees crossed borders at night to avoid detection by the Burundian authorities, which made arranging staff escorts and medical personnel even more challenging. The continued arrivals raised fears that Nyarugusu would be filled beyond capacity in a short period of time.

*Burundian refugees being transported by land (left) and water (right) © IOM*



Once the cholera outbreak was contained, IOM continued to actively disinfect buses following every passenger drop at Nyarugusu and continued to set up handwashing stations at the embarkation points. IOM worked with BBC Media Action in Tanzania to develop key messages for refugees on issues such as hygiene and access to services. These messages were played on long bus rides to the refugee camp.

*Bus movement to Nyarugusu Refugee Camp © IOM*





## July 2015

Elections were held on 21 July 2015 in Burundi and Pierre Nkurunziza secured a third presidential term. Kagunga Village and Lake Tanganyika Stadium were decongested to a manageable level. However, Nyarugusu was now filled past its capacity, with a population of over 150,000 residing in a camp intended for a population of 50,000. As a result of the congestion, tensions rose among the camp's residents and there were concerns that the confined spaces would result in disease transmission. With limited access to water, sanitation, shelter or medical facilities to support the large population, it was expected that health conditions would worsen. The international community and the Government of Tanzania prioritized the location of new refugee camps, to reduce congestion and to maintain peace and stability in the camp.

*Burundian refugees being transported and registered by IOM © IOM*



## August to September 2015

The situation in Burundi remained very volatile despite the conclusion of the electoral process with the contested re-election of President Nkurunziza. IOM faced challenges during this period due to dwindling financial resources, consistent movements along deteriorated roads and security issues. Isolated incidents of banditry also resulted in convoys being escorted by security and travelling during the night was forbidden. IOM deployed a movement support team comprising of operation escorts, a hygiene promoter and medical personnel to the isolated town of Kibondo to assist with the increase in arrivals in the Kibondo district. The team continued to be based in Kibondo to ensure timely follow up and transportation arrangement for the arrivals.

*Registration at Ngara Transit Centre © IOM*



*Staff at the Kigoma sub office © IOM*





## October to December 2015

The Burundi RRRP was against revised to list requirements to deal with the protracted crisis in 2016. Relocation of refugees previously hosted at the overcrowded Nyarugusu camp to Nduta Refugee Camp began on 5 October 2015. The process entailed heavy challenges as the transportation of refugees took place during rainy season, which further complicated the delivery of assistance. Rain turned winding dirt roads with gentle inclines into a daunting climb for IOM's drivers. On several occasions, the vehicles got stuck in mud, which resulted in IOM staff having to walk to the nearest village for assistance. The time spent on the road also increased with the opening of Nduta. To address the seasonal challenges and longer time on the road, staff set out for entry points earlier and where necessary, staff were stationed near the pickup points to respond to arrivals faster. During this period, IOM also collaborated with UK NGO ShelterBox to provide tents to refugees in Nduta camp. The tents provided shelter to 1000 families and the ShelterBox team trained IOM staff on pitching and maintenance of tents.

*Recipients of a Shelter Box tent at Nduta Refugee Camp © IOM*

*Bus movement during muddy weather © IOM*



## January to February 2016

Relocation to Mtendeli Refugee Camp began in January but was put on hold due to insufficient water being available to residents of the camp. IOM Tanzania had the honour of welcoming a delegation headed by the Deputy Minister for Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship of Canada to its offices on 26 January 2016. The visit in Dar es Salaam was followed by a field mission to Kigoma where the delegation met with colleagues from IOM, UNHCR and other UN and NGO partners. They were joined by the Ambassadors of Denmark, Norway, Sweden and the High Commissioners of Canada and the UK.

## March 2016

On 2 March 2016, under the auspices of the Belgian, French and Swiss Embassies in Tanzania, a roundtable on education and Francophonie was held in Kigoma. The Francophone delegation was comprised of French speaking leaders and associations in Tanzania. They were joined by UNHCR, UNICEF and IOM, who presented issues of migration and policy responses in Western Tanzania at the meeting.

Minister Nick Hurd, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at DFID recently visited the Kigoma region from 22 to 23 March 2016. He met with the Regional Commissioner and immigration officials in Kigoma, visited Burundian refugees at a transit camp and in the Nyarugusu Refugee Camp, and spoke to representatives from various aid organisations at the UNHCR Kasulu office. Together with the representative of IOM Tanzania, the Minister also met a delegation of Burundian citizens who were residing in Tanzania without permits and benefited from a DFID-funded regularization campaign implemented by IOM in partnership with the Tanzanian Immigration Services Department.



As of March 2016, two permanent medical staff members have been working in Ngara district, to enhance inter-agency coordination in the response to the influx of Burundian refugees entering Tanzania in the Northern area of Tanzania. Heavy rains which result in muddy roads are expected to ease, which will assist transportation activities from entry points to transit and refugee camps to be executed smoothly.

*Official visits of UK Minister Nick Hurd (left) and the Canadian delegation (right) © IOM*



## **April 2016**

One year after the beginning of the political tensions in Burundi, refugees continue to come into Tanzania, which now hosts the largest number of Burundian refugees in the region. Relocations from Nyarugusu to Mtendeli Refugee Camp resumed but the camp cannot be used at full capacity of 55,000 until land and water issues are resolved. It is imperative that these issues are resolved because Nduta Refugee Camp has now filled to capacity at 55,000.

IOM Tanzania extends its thanks to all its staff, partners, donors and the Government of Tanzania in the role played by all the manage the Burundi crisis in 2015 and 2016.