

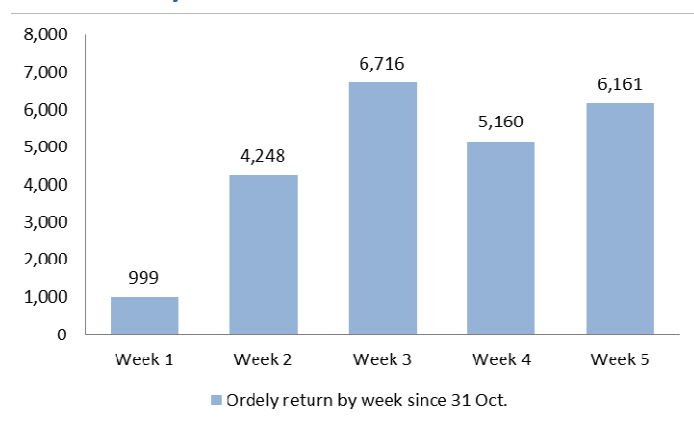
UNHCR Tanzania - Situation Report

Mtabila Camp closure

November 26 - December 02, 2012

Key figures

2012 Orderly Return



Orderly return during reporting period (26/11-02/12): 6,161

Cumulative orderly return since 31 October: 23,284

Cumulative volrep and orderly return in 2012: 24,589

Numbers of Burundian former refugees (BFRs) as of 02 December

| | |
|------------------------|---------------|
| BFRs in Mtabila Camp | 12,038 |
| BFRs in Nyarugusu Camp | 1,540 |
| TOTAL | 13,578 |

Returnees' profile, as of 30 Nov.

- 51% are men and 49% are women
- 59% are between 0 and 17 years old
- 24,1 % of returnees are vulnerable persons, mainly women at risk, unaccompanied or separated children and people with serious medical conditions.
- 64 families claimed to be landless while 49 cases of land disputes were registered.

Operational highlights

1. A modest start for first movements from Zone A

Over the past week, the exercise moved to the last zone remaining in the camp – Zone A. A short survey revealed that a significant number of former refugees who previously resided in other zones of the camp had relocated themselves to Zone A as the operation progressed. These persons and their families were also permitted to join the convoys without any problems. A total of 6,161 former refugees were repatriated, bringing the number of returns since the operation started to 23,284.



Former refugees from Zone A move to the Departure Centre

The size of convoys was smaller than the usual average at the beginning of the week due to the bi-weekly food distribution which took place on Monday. It is also believed that incorrect rumours were circulating prior to the visit of the Deputy Minister of Home Affairs on Wednesday 28th that he would convey a message from the President of the United Republic of Tanzania indicating flexibility on the closure of Mtabila camp. This misperception was corrected through mass information campaigns.

Throughout the week, the Departure Centre continued to be used to facilitate quick departures for the following morning. However, given that Zone A is immediately adjacent to the Departure Centre, some former refugees boarded the buses directly from their own streets on the days of convoy movements. From Tuesday onwards, two convoys a day were organized: the first group departed from the Departure Centre while the second group, generally smaller, departed directly from Zone A. As a measure to avoid people shifting from one scheduled street in Zone A area to another, former refugees were informed that no specific section of Zone A was scheduled for orderly return and that rather the whole zone was open for returns.



2. Security incidents handled within established 'Red Lines'

On Friday 30 November, convoy preparations were temporarily disrupted by a series of security incidents, which were rapidly resolved in a very professional manner, within the established 'Red Lines' parameters for orderly return. There were no injuries among the former refugees, police officers, humanitarian agencies or Government counterparts.

In the first incidence , while police officers and immigration officials were going about business as usual in Zone A, facilitating boarding and loading of the buses, they were surrounded by a group of young male former refugees hurling stones and making threatening statements. Following a request for support, police reinforcements arrived immediately and teargas was successfully used to disperse the crowd and to extract the police officers who had been surrounded. A second incident took place shortly thereafter in which approximately 100 young male former refugees marched to the Departure Centre in an aggressive fashion and briefly disrupted convoy preparations. Police promptly dispersed the group (without tear gas in this instance) and boarding and loading subsequently resumed, allowing the second part of the convoy to depart as planned. In a separate incident, one IRC staff member was assaulted by a former refugee in Zone A while conducting mass information but fortunately did not sustain major injuries.

Finally, a former refugee on board one of the buses threatened to attack the bus driver with a knife near the military (JKT) check point just outside the camp, where the already loaded buses had parked in preparation for the departure of the convoy. Due to the disturbances within the camp earlier in the day, the police who normally travel on the buses had been temporarily redeployed to the camp. JKT personnel called by IOM escorts confiscated the knife and the former refugee was allowed to continue with his journey to Burundi with the usual police escort in place on the bus.

In all cases, the police, supported by Immigration and Refugee Services Department personnel, handled the situations competently, conducting themselves with commendable restraint and averting the development of a more serious security situation.

3. Preparations to wind down assistance and community services

General Food Distribution (GFD) took place for residents of Zone A and the remaining residents of Zones B and D, on Monday 26 and Tuesday 27 November. This food distribution is expected to be the final one in Mtabila camp. Taking into consideration the high numbers of former refugees from other zones now residing in Zone A and the time that it will take to clear the zone, a decision was made to also distribute a final ration to former residents of the recently closed Zones B and D on an exceptional basis. Former refugees were advised that this was the final ration that would be available in Tanzania and that all are expected to join the orderly return convoys over the coming days.

WFP completed the second delivery of food to Burundi. 180 metric tons were dispatched, bringing the total delivered to date to 400 metric tons.

With regards to medical services, UNHCR and TRCS have devised a phase out programme whereby cases of inpatients will be reviewed. Those requiring referrals will be documented and assisted to access services in Burundi while those who cannot return immediately will be documented. Their family members will be assisted to remain at the Departure Centre until return is possible. In addition, UNHCR has requested food for the former refugees from Zones AA, AB and C who have family members admitted in the hospital.

4. Mass information also focuses on personal security

Complementing the usual messages for orderly movements and cautions to prevent family separation, mass information campaigns are also now heavily focused on personal security. Information advising former refugees from straying to the already closed zones is being intensively circulated for personal safety reasons. Following Friday's incidents, former refugees were reassured that they would be assisted to return to Burundi if they continue cooperating with the established orderly return procedures. They were also reminded of the need to respect the rule of law in Tanzania, failing which they could face consequences, including arrest and/or immediate removal from Tanzania.

All humanitarian staff participating in the operation are being reminded to be extremely vigilant and security conscious at all times when in Mtabila camp. As a preventive measure, there will be increased police presence in the Departure Centre and adjacent Food Distribution Centre to ensure the security of staff, former refugees and property. Likewise, all agencies' movements into Zone A will now be accompanied by police and police patrols in the camp will be increased.



Persons with Special Needs are provided with continued support e.g. separate buses, wheelchairs, and distribution of non-food items

5. Monitoring visits

The Deputy Minister for Home Affairs, Hon. Pereira A. Silima, accompanied by the District Commissioner of Kasulu and various regional/district Immigration, Police, Prisons and Refugee Services Department officials, visited Mtabila Camp on 28 November. The delegation observed orderly return formalities, visited the newly closed zones and proceeded to escort the day's convoy to Mabanda Transit Centre in Burundi. The Deputy Minister was impressed by the collaboration and coordination between his officials and humanitarian agencies and expressed wishes for the exercise to conclude smoothly.

As part of the on-going observation visits by development partners, the Canadian High Commission conducted a mission to Mtabila Camp from 26 to 27 November. The delegation members observed pre-departure formalities of orderly return and escorted the convoy to Mabanda in Burundi. Five weeks into the return operation, this brings to four the number of observer missions by development partners. Prior to this last mission from Canada, the U.K. High Commission and DFID, the U.S. Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration and ECHO successively participated. Representatives from the Embassies of Belgium and Finland are expected to travel to Mtabila next week.



The Deputy Minister for Home Affairs (center in dark suit) experiences convoy delays due to bad road conditions



The Canadian High Commission delegation visits vacated huts in Zone AA

Achievements



Continued support to vulnerable people

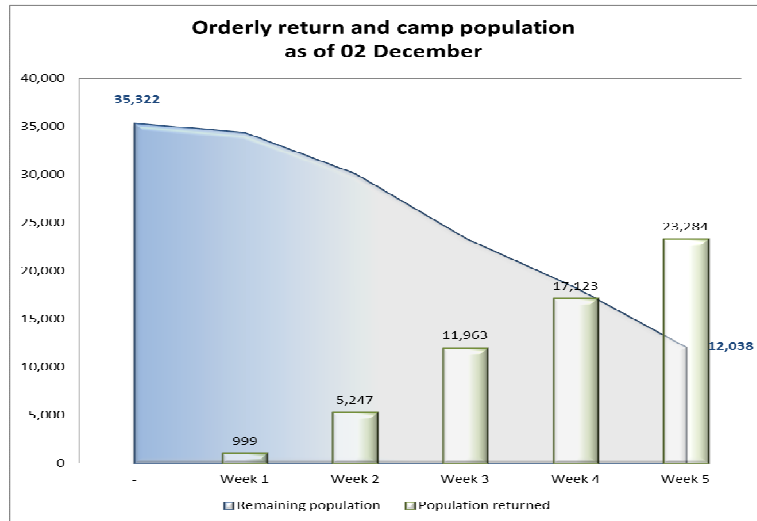
As at 30 November, 24.1% of the returnees were identified as Persons with Special Needs (PSNs). The PSNs include pregnant women, mentally and physically challenged people, chronically ill, unaccompanied elderly and single parents. Identification for these individuals continued to be part of the orderly return process and separate buses were allocated for them and their dependents in each convoy.

Since the beginning of the orderly return exercise, IRC has been providing non-food items (NFIs) including sanitary materials, blankets, sandals, safari bags, empty sacks and used clothes to the most vulnerable children and adults with special needs. So far, a total of 1,582 former refugees (921 females and 661 males) were provided with NFI assistance.

8-months pregnant Celina is calmly waiting to give birth to her fifth child. She will be assisted to return only when both her baby and herself are fit for travelling.

Close to 70% of estimated Mtabila population returned safely

Since the orderly return operation started five weeks ago, close to 70% of the estimated initial population of Mtabila has already returned to Burundi in safety and dignity, thanks to the excellent collaboration between Government and humanitarian partners. It is expected that the exercise will be completed smoothly before the scheduled date for official camp closure on 31st of December.



Challenges

1. Removal of agitators and reinforced security measures

The analysis of the security incidents that took place on Friday, revealed that the majority of the former refugee population in both Zone A and at the Departure Centre did not demonstrate sympathy towards the agitators. The resistance clearly originated from a smaller group of former refugees who have relocated themselves from Zones AB and AA to Zone A, and not from the original residents of Zone A. MHA is currently reviewing how to ensure the quick removal of these individuals in the event they continue to want to disrupt ongoing orderly returns. All partners agreed that they should be handled separately and not be part of the regular convoys.



Police create a corridor to prevent agitated youths from disrupting orderly return on 30 November

2. Disrupted tagging of vulnerable people

Temporary tag shortages early in the week and security incidents of Friday compromised the systematic tagging process of vulnerable people. IRC and UNHCR requested IOM escort staff on board buses to assist in tagging the children upon reception of additional material. IRC committed to ensure that all efforts would be made to avoid further disruptions.

3. Inappropriate use of the Departure Centre

Over the past week, it was observed that a small number of former refugees who reported to the Departure Centre did not actually depart the following day and instead discreetly went back to Zone A. Consequently, IRC reinforced entry and exit modalities at the centre to prevent its use by former refugees who have not yet decided to return. Mass information campaigns also advised former refugees that the Departure Center is meant to serve those returning and not for the sake of overnighting and feeding.

4. Road, fleet and weather conditions

On various occasions, heavy rains continued to hamper the movement of former refugees – either from their zone to the Departure Centre, or on the way to Burundi when the convoys got stuck due to impassible sections of the Kasulu-Manyovu road. In some instances, the convoys were delayed up to 4 hours. Aside from logistical issues, these delays also have financial implications.

The continuous use of the same buses and 40 tons trucks with limited time for routine services constitutes another challenge.



While road conditions remain a huge challenge, UNHCR, IOM and their partners continue to work jointly to ensure the safe return of all former refugees.

UNHCR Representational Office

Dar es Salaam, 03/12/2012