



Burundi

Flash Update # 2

DRC Refugees

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UNICEF Burundi | Conflict upsurge in Eastern DR Congo – Refugee influx into Burundi

Highlights

Burundi is facing a massive refugee influx from South Kivu, DRC, with **90,790 asylum seekers identified between 6 and 31 December 2025**. Relocation operations have concentrated the majority of refugees at **Busuma settlement**, Ruyigi Commune, which is now hosting numbers far beyond its infrastructural capacities.

The situation is particularly alarming given the poor accommodation conditions and the very cold climatic conditions at the site. Inadequate shelter, limited access to warm clothing and water significantly increase the risks of **hypothermia, respiratory infections, malnutrition and protection concerns**, especially for **children, pregnant women and older persons**.

This emergency is unfolding in an **already overstretched humanitarian context**, compounded by the continued response to **over 36,000** refugees who arrived in February 2025, the expected return of more than 100,000 Burundian refugees from Tanzania, and the lingering impacts of recent floods on host communities and basic services.

In response to this convergence of crises, **UNICEF Burundi** is scaling up life-saving interventions across **WASH, Health, Nutrition, Child Protection and Education**, and underscores the **urgent need to strengthen winterization support and essential services**, in close coordination with the Government and partners.

Situation Overview & Humanitarian Needs update

Refugee arrivals from eastern DRC continue along Lake Tanganyika, with an average of **around 100 new arrivals per day** (UNHCR, Coordination meeting). The **Busuma site** now hosts over **67,000 refugees**, the majority being women and children. The **Cishemere** transit site continues to host approximately **7,000** people, while **Rumonge**, partially decongested, still accommodates around **4,000** refugees, in a context of severely overstretched reception capacity and limited access to basic services.

Health services in Busuma are critically overstretched, with a single mobile clinic providing up to **1,500–2,000** consultations per day, mainly for malaria and acute watery diarrhea. A **cholera outbreak** is ongoing, with reported cases and deaths amid limited diagnostic capacity, inpatient beds and referral options. Priority needs include scaling up mobile clinics, essential medical supplies, ambulance services and disease surveillance.

Nutrition risks remain critical for **children under five** and **pregnant and breastfeeding women**, driven by food insecurity and limited-service coverage. Admissions for **severe acute malnutrition** are increasing, while the absence of supplies for **moderate acute malnutrition treatment** heightens the risk of rapid deterioration. Mass screening and urgent mobilisation of nutrition supplies are required.

Access to **WASH** services is extremely inadequate, with water availability estimated at approximately **1.6 liters per person per day** in Busuma, far below humanitarian standards. Insufficient sanitation facilities and ongoing open defecation significantly increase the risk of waterborne diseases, including cholera. Urgent priorities include expanding water production and storage, constructing latrines, and distributing soap and hygiene kits.

Protection concerns are high, with a **large number of unaccompanied and separated children** and heightened risks of violence, exploitation and abuse. Psychosocial support, case management and child-friendly spaces remain largely insufficient, while access to education is severely constrained due to the absence of learning spaces within the site and overcrowded surrounding schools.

Refugee households face **extreme vulnerability**, with very limited access to food, essential items and livelihoods. Delays in household registration constrain the rollout of **cash assistance**, while **RCCE and accountability mechanisms** remain insufficient to address the cholera outbreak and rising community tensions.

Preliminary Funding Requirement

The financial requirements under the UNICEF Burundi Response Plan for this crisis amount to USD 5,632,066. Support from UNICEF Headquarters, through a USD 1 million EPF allocation, has contributed to reducing immediate funding gaps; however, USD 4,320,486 remains unfunded. In addition, Burundi has benefited from CERF emergency funding, with USD 750,000 allocated to the WASH sector, which will help partially address critical needs. UNICEF expresses its appreciation to all donors for their timely support, while underscoring that without additional financial resources, the humanitarian situation—particularly for children and women—risks further deterioration and escalation.

Area of intervention	Funding requirements (US\$) ¹	Funds available (US\$)	Total Funding Gap (US\$)
Wash	\$1,423,967	\$500,300	\$923,667
Child Protection	\$960,000	\$316,800	\$643,200
Health	\$902,400	\$225,000	\$677,400
Nutrition	\$481,379	\$107,000	\$374,379
Education	\$320,000	\$55,000	\$265,000
Social Protection	\$960,000	32,000	\$928,000
Inclusion, SBC, PSEA & AAP	\$584,320	\$75,480	\$508,840
Total	\$5,632,066	\$1,311,580*	\$4,320,486

**including \$1,000,000 EPF loan*

Strategic priorities – Inter Agency Coordination

UNICEF Burundi, as the sector lead for WASH, Education, co-lead for Nutrition, and lead for the sub-group Child Protection is collaborating with the Government and humanitarian partners to implement inter-agency strategic priorities in response to the refugee influx. The main objectives are as follows:

Protection: ensure a safe and differentiated environment for all population groups, with a focus on children and other vulnerable populations (women and girls at risk, unaccompanied/separated children, older persons, persons with disabilities, GBV survivors). This includes border monitoring and household registration to identify and support those most at risk.

Life-saving assistance: provide safe water, emergency latrines and shelters, hot meals, and health/nutrition screening to the most vulnerable, in line with UNICEF-led WASH and Nutrition interventions.

Decongestion & site development: reduce overcrowding in Ndava, Cishemere, Makombe, and Musenyi through orderly relocations, while operationalizing Bweru/Busuma as a permanent reception site, ensuring minimum standards in WASH, health, and child-friendly spaces.

Coordination & resource mobilization: support ONPRA and DGRRR leadership, strengthen information management and monitoring tools (5W, common statistics, sitreps), and intensify advocacy with donors to rapidly fund priority response activities, ensuring effective inter-agency coordination across all sectors.

¹ UNICEF Burundi Response Plan for significant influx of refugees from the DRC, December 2025 – March 2026

UNICEF's Response – Sectoral Overview

Placed at Emergency Level 1 (L1), UNICEF Burundi has kept the functioning of its emergency management team on high alert, and is coordinating closely with the Government of Burundi, UN agencies and NGOs to plan for the response and ensure inter-agency alignment. Immediate actions include:

Wash:

UNICEF has deployed **4 emergency water bladders** (10,000 and 5,000 liters) which two have been installed in Busuma, and **60 latrines** (20 in Ndava, 20 in Gatumba and 20 in Busuma). . UNICEF is also preparing the deployment of **additional water systems and latrines, and the distribution of hygiene kits** for the most affected families. A rapid analysis was conducted at the transit site and the port of Rumonge on 17 December to identify essential WASH needs . **Cholera prevention and response** activities are coordinated with health partners, with **CATI teams** are ready for rapid deployment if needed.

Child Protection and GBViE:

UNICEF initiated **identification and referral of unaccompanied and separated children** (UASC). Child-friendly spaces and **psychosocial support** are provided via the distribution of 11 tarpaulins (8 at Kansega and 3 at Gatumba) and 3 socio-recreational kits (2 at Kansega and 1 to Gatumba) to partner NGOs. . Currently, the bulk of the efforts is concentrated in **Busuma**, where partners **Save the Children** and **Spring Communities** are operational. The former is in charge of **case management**, including **temporary foster family placement** for those most in need, while the latter focuses on **mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)** through **Child-Friendly Spaces (CFS)**. Additionally, they will handle the **prevention of violence, exploitation, and abuse** within the site by establishing and building the capacity of **community-based child protection mechanisms**.

Health & Nutrition

As of December 29, 2025, the epidemiological situation of cholera indicated 26 new cases, with 12 active cases at the Busuma site. UNICEF has provided four tents for Cholera Treatment Centers, along with 200 cartons of Ringer's Lactate and 7,500 doses of antibiotics. Logistical support, including tables and chairs, has been supplied for the vaccination campaign, which has immunized over 2,700 children. In collaboration with the government and WHO, a joint assessment is underway to establish an additional mobile clinic on site.

In nutrition, UNICEF has delivered essential therapeutic supplies—including RUTF, F75, F100, and anthropometric equipment such as height boards and MUAC tapes—for the management of Severe Acute Malnutrition. An integrated nutrition package is under development. The agency is also finalizing a plan with a partner to roll out mass screening, train community volunteers and provide a technical support.

Support continues to focus on strengthening the emergency response and enhancing inter-sectoral coordination in the field.

Education:

UNICEF is working to ensure safe and protective learning environments for school-aged children, currently estimated at around 30,000 at the main refugee site in Busuma. Under the coordination of the MoE, the response will include the setting up **temporary learning spaces with WASH facilities in surrounding schools, the rehabilitation of existing classrooms, the provision of learning materials, and teacher training** on psychosocial support, inclusive education and remedial classes. Efforts also focus on strengthening child protection and gender-sensitive approaches and promoting continuity of learning through catch-up classes, in close collaboration with ONPRA and UNHCR to identify and enroll children in need of schooling.

SBC/RCCE:

UNICEF, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health Emergency Operations Centre and the Burundi Red Cross, is implementing risk communication and community engagement activities. In addition to radio broadcasts on key preventive messages related to cholera and Mpox, 3,860 posters (on Mpox, Viral haemorrhagic fever and accountability to affected people) have been distributed in Busuma refugee camp. UNICEF and the Burundi Red Cross are also operationalizing a community information and disease prevention kiosk to promote protective behaviors against cholera and strengthen event-based surveillance for early disease detection.

Human Interest Stories and External Media

Links to publications on UNICEF's emergency response and multisectoral actions for Congolese refugees in Burundi:

1. Inclusive sanitation Infrastructure to strengthen refugees' dignity in Musenyi.
https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1L83M9UbUx/https://x.com/UNICEF_Burundi/status/1999932306224763209
 - [\(19\) UNICEF Burundi - Grâce à l'appui de UNICEF , avec le soutien... | Facebook](#)
 - [Musenyi strengthens health and WASH systems with UNICEF support | UNICEF Burundi](#)
2. High-Level joint visit to the Buganda transit refugee Site
[\(19\) UNICEF Burundi - UNICEF Burundi a pris part à une visite conjointe... | Facebook](#)
3. UNICEF Burundi coordinates and acts to protect refugee children
 - [\(19\) UNICEF Burundi - Au-delà de la mise en œuvre des activités de... | Facebook](#)
 - [Two brothers gain protection and hope thanks to a foster family in Musenyi. | UNICEF Burundi](#)
4. UNICEF mobilizes water, sanitation, and child-friendly spaces for refugees in Gatumba
[In Gatumba, UNICEF is at the frontline of the humanitarian response for Congolese refugees | UNICEF Burundi](#)
5. Mobility and protection kits to improve the daily lives of children with disabilities in Musenyi
[\(19\) UNICEF Burundi - UNICEF Burundi poursuit son engagement en faveur... | Facebook](#)
6. Mobile clinics, cholera response, and essential care: UNICEF Burundi serving communities in crisis: [\(19\) UNICEF Burundi - Dans les contextes de conflit, de catastrophes... | Facebook](#)
7. UNICEF Burundi strengthens WASH coordination to protect communities in Emergencies
[\(19\) UNICEF Burundi - Face aux situations d'urgence en cours, UNICEF... | Facebook](#)
8. Humanitarian Emergency in Busuma: UNICEF's multisectoral assessment highlights the critical situation of Congolese Refugees
[\(19\) UNICEF Burundi - 🚨 Urgence humanitaire à #Busuma où vivent déjà... | Facebook](#)
https://www.facebook.com/UNICEFBurundi/?locale=fr_FRhttps://x.com/UNICEF_Burundi/status/2000621991099838789

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