Operational Context

A small, landlocked country with a population of 12.1 million people growing at 2.6 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 (33 percent according to the 2019-2020 Rwanda Demographic and Health Survey). 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.

Moreover, according to UNHCR data, as of December 2020 Rwanda hosts 144,662 refugees, primarily from the Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi. Many refugees have been in the country for decades 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.

In Numbers

254,768 mt of food assistance distributed

USD 1m cash-based transfers

USD 15.2 m six months net funding requirements representing 60 percent of total requirements for the next six months (January-June 2021).

176,193 people assisted

In December 2020

Operational Updates

Refugee Assistance:

- In December, WFP provided food assistance to 134,664 people, including 74,437 DRC refugees, 60,227 Burundian refugees, and 200 returnees hosted in Kijote transit center.
- WFP continued to provide school meals to 32,998 children in upper primary and secondary grades, including 7,106 children from the host community attending the same school as refugee children. Lower primary schools remain closed: the Government plans to resume classes in January.
- The voluntary repatriation for Burundian refugees continued. As of December 2020, 7,579 refugees were repatriated by the Ministry of Emergency Management (MINEMA) and UNHCR. WFP continued to support repatriating refugees with hot meals in transit centers before departure and with high energy biscuits on the journey to their home country.

Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF):

- WFP provided school meals to 35,423 Rwandan children in upper primary schools to support return to school when schools reopen. In order to ensure that lower primary school students continue reading ahead of the schools reopening on 18 January 2021, door-to-door book lending continued, reaching more than 33,000 children. To encourage safe and regular handwashing practices in schools and adaptation to COVID-19 prevention measures, WFP and partners, constructed five new permanent handwashing stations in five schools located in Rutsiro District, totalling 28 permanent handwashing stations constructed since the start of the pandemic.

Resilience and Social Protection:

- WFP and the Government officially launched the multi-year “Sustainable Market Alliance and Assets creation for Resilient Communication and Gender Transformation (SMART)” resilience project funded by KOICA. The project focuses on building community resilience and sustainable food security.
- WFP in collaboration, with the World Bank, finalized, in late 2020, a baseline data collection as part of an impact evaluation exercise of the SMART project. This evaluation aims at determining the project’s contribution to the national evidence base around livelihoods, agricultural and social protection programming.

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Photo caption: A refugee in Gihembe camp describes what peace and food security means to her, as WFP received the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize award. Photo: WFP/John Paul Sesonga.
Smallholder Agricultural Market Support:

WFP and its cooperating partners continue to support farmers in crop maintenance such as pest management and control to ensure good harvest for the main season 2021A (September 2020-January 2021). More than 84,000 smallholder farmers (49% women) are supported through cooperatives the Eastern, Southwest and Northern Provinces.

Monitoring

Market monitoring inside and around refugee camps

- Regular food price monitoring in and around refugee camps indicated that the average price of a basic food basket (including beans, maize, salt and vegetable oil) in December 2020 was USD 8.72, 1 percent lower than in November 2020 and 13 percent higher than the WFP transfer value. Prices in December 2020 were 15 percent lower than in December 2019 but 60 percent higher than December 2018.

- Prices for dry beans decreased across all refugee camps by 13 percent on average compared to November 2020, as fresh harvests became available from season 2021A (September 2020-January 2021). Prices for other key staples such as local maize flour and rice from Pakistan experienced a slightly increasing trend of about 2 percent on average. With the upcoming seasonal harvests, prices are expected to decrease in January 2021.

HIV stigma in refugee camps

WFP, as a co-convenor of “HIV in emergencies” under the UN-AIDS division of labour, led a survey on HIV-related stigma and discrimination in all refugee camps. Though the level of stigma was overall found to be low, it was higher than the level of stigma experienced by Rwandans living with HIV. Internalised stigma or self-stigmatisation is the biggest driver of stigma among refugees living with HIV. The findings also showed that people aged 18-24 years, secondary school students and unmarried people living with HIV were the groups mostly affected by HIV-related stigma and discrimination.

Success Story

On 10 December, WFP accepted the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize “for its efforts to combat hunger, for its contribution to bettering conditions for peace in conflict-affected areas, and for acting as a driving force in efforts to prevent the use of hunger as a weapon of war and conflict.” Hear from the people WFP serves, our partners and field staff in Gihembe refugee camp, on what the prize means for achieving a world without hunger here.