
DRAFT

CONCEPT PAPER ON CASH GRANTS FOR RETURNING REFUGEES TO BURUNDI



A UNHCR Burundi and Tanzania Joint Programme
May 2007

I. Background

UNHCR currently assists some 156,317¹ Burundians refugees based in Kagera and Kigoma regions of northwestern Tanzania. Most of the assisted Burundian refugees fled in 1993, following the assassination of the first democratically-elected Hutu president, Melchior Ndadaye, and the start of civil strife. The Burundian refugees are living in seven refugee camps located in northwestern Tanzania near the Burundian border. The majority of the Burundian refugees originate from the provinces of Muyinga, Ruyigi and Makamba. With the exception of several hundred Tutsis, Twa and ethnically mixed families, almost all of the refugees are Hutus. The majority of refugees are farmers, while a small number are professionals. As indicated in the table below, the demographic distribution of Burundian refugees in the seven camps is such that 55.83 percent of the total population is between 0 and 17 years whereas 42.48 percent is between 18 and 59 years and only 1.69 percent is over 60 years of age.

Demographic Data of Burundian Refugees in the Camps as of April 2007

Burundian Refugees in Kigoma and Kagera Regions						
Age groups (yrs)	Number of Males	% of total population	Number of Females	% of total population	Total Population	% of total population
0-4	14,286	9.14	14,080	9.01	28,366	18.15
5 – 17	29,613	18.94	29,288	18.74	58,901	37.68
18-59	33,676	21.54	32,730	20.94	66,406	42.48
≥ 60	1,454	0.93	1,189	0.76	2,643	1.69
Total:	79,029	50.56	77,278	49.44	156,317	100.00
Camps:	Mtabila, Kanembwa, Nduta, and Lukole ²					

II. Present situation in the areas of return in Burundi

The peace process, which started with the signing of the Arusha peace agreement in 2000, has been followed by steady steps towards the consolidation of peace, namely: the global cease-fire agreement in 2003, the 2005 elections, a democratically elected Government installed in August 2005, and more recently, the cease-fire agreement signed by the FNL – the last belligerent party to adhere to the peace process – in September 2006.

Burundi consistently ranks among the most vulnerable countries in the world. In the UN's Development Index Burundi ranks 169 out of 177 countries. Living conditions remain very difficult, with most of the population having limited access to poor health, education, water and sanitary services. The birth rate is 6.3-6.8 percent. An estimated 49 percent of the population is under the age of 15. Life expectancy at birth is between 40.9 and 42 years. At least 68 percent of its population lives under the poverty line whereas the total expenditure on health is only 3.6 percent of Burundi's GDP³. Some 10 percent of the urban population is infected with HIV/AIDS and Burundi has extremely limited resources for tackling the pandemic effectively.

¹ Population figure as of April 2007

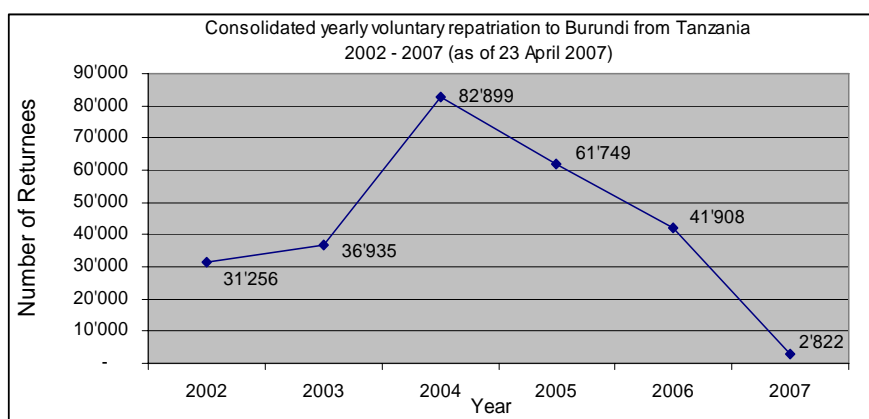
² As per the camp consolidation plan for 2007, Muyovosi and Mtendeli will be closed by the end of May 2007.

³ CAP 2006, Burundi basic statistics and demographics, p.3

Most of the population is dependent on agriculture but years of political and security crisis have forced many farmers to abandon their fields. According to the World Food Programme (WFP), over 16 percent of the population is vulnerable and entirely dependent on food aid, while some 68 percent of Burundians live in a situation of food insecurity and cannot meet their needs if there is poor harvest.

III. Repatriation situation of Burundian refugees in Tanzania

Since the start of UNHCR's facilitation of return from Tanzania to Burundi in 2002, the yearly repatriation figure has been on the rise until 2004, with the highest return figures of 82,899 (2004), as shown by the graph below. However, from 2004 onwards, the repatriation has been taking place at a decreasing rate. Although there is a degree of seasonality in returns, April 2007 marked the lowest number of returns since the start of the voluntary return operation in March 2002 when only 265 refugees returned to Burundi.



Pursuant to the promotion of voluntary repatriation to Burundi launched in June 2006, UNHCR is ensuring that Burundian refugees who came to Tanzania for protection do not stay only to benefit from assistance and services in the camps. UNHCR's programmes for Burundian refugees have been down sized and focus exclusively on fundamental protection activities and maintaining the minimum standards in core life-sustaining and rights-based sectors i.e. food, shelter, water and sanitation, health and nutrition and primary education. The approach has been adopted to make sure the level and type of assistance does not constitute a pull factor for refugees to stay in the camps.

IV. Rationale for Cash Grants

There is growing concern on the part of the Tanzanian authorities and the donor community about the slow repatriation pace, despite measures undertaken for the promotion of voluntary repatriation and the reduction of assistance in the Burundian refugee camps in Tanzania. Although the security situation in Burundi is improving steadily the limited absorption capacity, food insecurity and serious problems regarding access to land and basic services are still perceived by refugees as major obstacles to return.

Sustainable peace in Burundi will not be measured solely by the numbers of returned refugees and displaced populations rather, more importantly, by the success of the reintegration process. Bearing this in mind, UNHCR offices in Tanzania and Burundi have joined with partners and donors to consider measures that may further promote the sustainability of return. The use of cash grants, in addition to the return package of food and non-food items, is one such measure, which as a temporary time-bound incentive could make a difference in the current transition context of economic recovery.

a. Present Assistance in Burundi

The assistance provided to Burundian returnees on arrival consists of a non-food items package and a three months of food rations (recently increased to four months food rations for the months of April to June 2007). The three-month food return package provided by the WFP is based on rations of 530 grams per person per day (cereals, pulses, oil and salt) providing an average of 1,940 kcal per day. **The cost of the three-month food package is estimated at USD 39 per person.**

Refugees arriving from Tanzania are forced to share or sell part of the food ration to support host families, and to cover transport and basic services. Based on recent survey findings⁴, it has been confirmed that the three-month ration package only last, on average two months.

The cost of the following non-food items package is estimated at USD 17 to 20 per person:

Non-food Items	Family of five persons
Blankets	5
Sleeping mats	5
Soap	20
Plastic sheeting (5 x 4)	2
Jerry cans	3
Plastic bucket (10 litres)	3
Travel bag	3
Kitchen set	1
Mosquito nets	2
Variable non-food items	Per person
Sanitary material (m2) - Women >10 years	6
Wrappers - Women > 10 years	1
Hoes / farming tools (>12 years)	1

In addition, FAO and UNICEF provide seeds and school materials based on the availability of stocks. UNFPA provides male and female preservatives.

All returnees benefit from UNHCR's protection returnee monitoring and from the assistance provided by the partners through legal clinics. A limited number of families of returnees and displaced persons among the most vulnerable benefit from shelter construction kits.

b. Why Cash Grants

A recent study conducted by the WFP in collaboration with the University of Burundi⁵ found that in a country where livelihood strategy is based almost exclusively on agriculture, coping mechanisms require a mixture of food and cash. Food production is not enough as the only means of subsistence. In the context of Burundi, the need for cash is more acute during the planting season to acquire seeds and fertilizer while at the same time covering other expenses such as school fees. Although not well developed, labour market opportunities must compensate for shortcomings in production and therefore, the need for cash.

As mentioned above, the initial food return package lasts on average two months. During that period, returnees are still attempting to access land and shelter, while being confronted with other needs that they can only meet by further sharing or selling part of their return package, both food and non-food items.

⁴ Enquete d'évaluation de la réintégration durable des rapatriés Burundais. ISTEEBU/PAM/UNHCR. March 2007

⁵ Rural Livelihood and Labour Markets in Burundi. WFP / University of Burundi. April 2007

UNHCR is proposing cash grant programme hoping it will provide a sense of security to the refugees returning to Burundi in the initial unpredictable reintegration period by offering them a cushion against the foreseeable and other unexpected expenses which could further influence their decision to return.

Cash grants would allow returnees to:

- Ensure that the much needed non-food items would not be sold;
- Cover emergency medical needs, when the period of three-month free access to health care proves to be unavailable;
- Purchase needed clothing;
- Purchase additional school material, including uniforms for children
- Cover payment of school fees for secondary school to avoid non-acceptance at schools, despite the gratuity measure for the first two years;
- Buy/rent a piece of farming land;
- Buy seeds, fertilizer and additional agricultural inputs;
- Buy complementary food;
- Extend the stay of returnees with host families, if necessary.

V. Calculation and Duration of Cash Grants

a. Calculations of Cash Grants

The total cost of the food and non-food items in the return package amounts to some USD 56 dollars per person. The cash grants would be provided in addition to the current package at a rate of USD 50 per person. The amount proposed is based on a calculation that accounts for the proportion of the return package that is shared or sold, the cost of transport from the communes to final destinations (collines) and the basic services returnees will have to pay for including the renting/purchase of shelter and land. Cash grants also represent a safety net for bridging the gap until returnee households are able to develop their own livelihood sources.

Cash grants for voluntarily repatriating Burundian refugees from Tanzania and other asylum countries June - December 2007				
Planning figure of returnees in 2007	Number of returnees as at 23 April 07	Potential number of persons yet to be repatriated in 2007	Cash grant (USD)	Grand total Cash grant (USD)
60,000	2,709	57,291	50	2,864,550
5,000	90	4,910	50	245,500
65,000	2,799	62,201		3,110,050

The additional amount of cash grants, together with the return package, brings the total level of assistance to the returnees to about 50 percent of the cost involved in assisting a refugee in Tanzania which is roughly USD 210 per refugee per year (2006). **The amount required to implement cash grants for returnees amounts to an additional USD 3.1 million.**

b. Duration of Cash Grant

The cash grant programme will be carried out during a limited timeframe. It is hoped that the programme is initiated to coincide with the “high return season” which starts in June following the end of the school term and harvest. The refugees would be informed that the cash grants programme will be limited and the grants distributed on a “first come/first served basis”. This would avoid refugees further delaying their return decisions. Depending on donor contributions, the cash grant launch date is planned for 20 June “World Refugee Day”.

VI. Implementation Modalities

a. Tanzania

The cash grant programme is potentially very attractive to “recyclers”. Measures would be established in Tanzania to avoid recyclers by setting up an effective monitoring and evaluation systems. UNHCR Tanzania is already implementing finger printing for refugees in the camps. All returning refugees would be fingerprinted as they leave departure centres in Tanzania. A special signature manifest, containing the photos and finger print status for all family members would be added to the final manifest and voluntary repatriation forms (VRFs). The fingerprint database would be instrumental in detecting potential recyclers.

b. Burundi

All returnee forms on the Burundian side will be harmonized cross border to avoid duplication and inconveniencing the returnees by being repeatedly asking the same information. Each returnee household will receive a voucher at the transit centre indicating the amount of the total cash grant for the family. The vouchers issued at the transit centre will be time bound i.e. the vouchers could be cashed within a certain time limit so as to avoid the misuse of the vouchers. The funds will be accessible through an arrangement made with the network of local cooperatives (COPEC) in return areas. To the extent possible, women will be designated as administrators of the cash grant. A copy of the special manifest with the photo of the administrator would be used as identity control for each voucher holder. Amounts could be retrieved in instalments. As an alternative each household would be provided with the cash to cover the cost of transport from the commune to their colline (approx. USD 5 to 10) and the remainder as a voucher. Families would then not have to sell their food and non-food items to pay for transport.

c. Monitoring and Evaluation plan in Tanzania and Burundi

The implementation of the cash grants would be closely monitored with the assistance of the National Federation of Cooperatives of Burundi (FENACOBU) and monitors from the Ligue Iteka that operate in all the communes of return. A joint evaluation plan will use the data from the ISTEERU study as a baseline. Upon assessment of the first six months of implementation, and if conditions have proven to be conducive to sustainable return, the cash grant scheme would be recommended for limited period of extension. On the Tanzanian side potential recyclers would be monitored through the checking of finger printing records and VRFs.

VII. Conclusion

Sustainable peace in Burundi will not be measured solely by the numbers of returned refugees and relocation of displaced populations but, more importantly, on the success of the reintegration process. It is felt that Burundi is still in a transition process and that donors should not yet turn completely to developmental sources of funds while basic humanitarian needs linked to community recovery in Burundi are yet to be addressed. Contributions for the cash grant programme are solicited in addition to the current assistance programme in Burundi.