The DRC Refugee Influx: Over 65,000 refugees cross to Uganda

65,773
New arrivals since Jan 2018

275,677
DRC Refugees in Uganda

670
Cross to Uganda everyday

2,662
Unaccompanied Minors

More inside...

National Council meeting 2018

Rev. Tom Okello at a glance

Response to Blood Crisis in the country

NSSF HASH Run
Dear Readers,

The Humanitarian is here again. It is a quarterly News Letter Publication of this National Society. Thank you for your commitment to read and follow new developments happening at Uganda Red Cross.

A lot of positive change taking place and strategic partnerships sealed to support the growing refugee operations in Northern Uganda (West Nile) and the DRC refugee influx in Western Uganda. Uganda Red Cross continues to be a partner of choice in saving lives and promoting human dignity. We alleviate the suffering of people through emergency response that aims at saving lives of people.

I therefore invite you to read the details and appreciate the tremendous work done by staff and volunteers and how their efforts contribute to the well-being of the vulnerable people we serve in the communities.

I hope you enjoy this first issue of the year 2018 and feel free to share any feedback with us through the contacts provided the back of this publication.

Irene Nakasiita
Cordinator Public Relations & Communications

Uganda Red Cross Volunteers disseminating information on health and cholera prevention in Kyangwali settlement in western Uganda recently
Dear friends of Uganda Red Cross,

I am delighted to share my first message with you in this year 2018. I want to thank all stakeholders for your kind support towards the work Uganda Red Cross does in Uganda.

I encourage you to take the time to read the important information enclosed regarding our work, changes in the National Society and most importantly, the tremendous work done to respond to emergencies.

The Uganda Red Cross change process since 2015 has repositioned the National Society to fulfill its mandate. I am glad to say that we are back on our feet and ready to serve Humanity than never before.

I want to repeat the words I used while addressing the recent National Council meeting that sat on 2nd February 2018 at our Headquarters offices here in Rubaga; those who don’t learn from their history are bad students of the future. We went through a hard time as an institution, but today I speak with confidence that the tough times are gone! We are ready to do business.

I speak of the change in the governance and management, change of our strategic plan, revised policies and frameworks that we now use to implement activities in the field, changes in our branch structures and all this is aimed at improving on service delivery and risk management.

This is a well-functioning National Society that can be tested and proven. I again thank partners that have trusted us and continue to work closely with us as together serve the vulnerable through response to disasters, Health and Social Services as well as giving hope to the vulnerable through the provision of humanitarian response services.

I invite you to appreciate the information shared and keep yourself updated on the latest as we continue to grow from strength to strength in terms of the quality services and programs we provide.

Thank you for your time and enjoy this edition.

Robert Kwesiga
SECRETARY GENERAL

Those who don’t learn from their history are bad students of the future. We went through a hard time as an institution, but today I speak with confidence that the tough times are gone! We are ready to do business.”

Mr. Robert Kwesiga the Secretary General
Uganda Red Cross Society
“It is with much joy that I happily accept to serve as President of Uganda Red Cross Society with God’s grace and with cooperation of the members of the National Council and the Central Governing Board”. Said Rtd Bishop Tom Okello upon being voted in office as President of the Uganda Red Cross Society for the second time.

Following the National council meeting held on 2nd February 2017, members resolved that the position of President is maintained as part of the amended Uganda Red Cross Society Constitution. The Central Governing Board meeting at its sitting on 21st July 2017 approved the Nomination Guidelines for the position of President for Uganda Red Cross Society. These were circulated and shared with all branches to appreciate.

On July 28th 2018, communication was sent out to all Branch Governing Board Chairpersons through the respective branch offices, requesting them to consult and submit their nominated candidates for the position of President by September 2017. The period for receiving the nominated names was further extended to November 2017 to allow response from all Branches.

From the branch submissions, the favored candidate was the Rtd. Bishop Tom Okello who is also a Volunteer at Lira Branch and former Branch Governing Board Chairman.

On January 29th 2018, Rtd. Bishop Tom Okello happily responded and accepted the nomination to serve as President of Uganda Red Cross Society with God’s grace and with cooperation of the members of the National Council and the Central Governing Board.

The recent National Council Meeting which sat on 2nd February 2018, Bishop was inaugurated in office and starts his service with immediate effect.

Members of the National Council attending this years National Council meeting held on February 2nd 2018 at the Red Cross headquters in Rubaga. Inset is Rtd Bishop Tom Okello, the President of the Council
Retired Bishop Tom Okello has dedicated over 18 years of his life, serving Uganda Red Cross in different capacities. He started his journey with the Red Cross in 1999 when he was elected Branch Governing Board Chairman, Lira branch up to 2008 when his term of office expired. He was appointed President – Uganda Red Cross and served from 2011 – 2016. During his time of service, he has demonstrated strong leadership skills, with a high sense of integrity and impartiality.

As the chairman branch governing board, Bishop assumed office at the time of the LRA and managed the insurgency. These were difficult times but endured and sustained the branch.

The branch didn’t have an office then, but because of his hard work, the branch got an office and a warehouse which they still use up to today.

He is also passionate about the sustainability of branches. During his speech in the 2016 National Council meeting, he encouraged URCS management and board to work tirelessly to bring the branches to a level where they could sustain themselves. This justifies his love for branch growth and self-sustainability.

Through the thin and thick moments, the National Society has gone through since 2013, Bishop Tom remained a strong pillar and gave wise counsel, direction and above all, has seen the National Society to greater glory. During the 2013 crisis, he remained the sober voice and a stabilizing factor for the National Society. He presided over the situation, and created sanity amidst tough circumstances.

Being a religious leader, Bishop has demonstrated the true values of Jesus Christ and his love / commitment to the Church. “He is a good shepherd willing to die for the sheep”. He has used his faith to carry out such a tough assignment despite the challenging times. He devoted his life to serve Uganda Red Cross through the 18 years of his service.

In February 2017, Bishop Tom Okello received The Henry Dunant Award in recognition for his stout and dedicated heart of service to Humanity through the Uganda Red Cross Society. This is the most prestigious Award and one of the best ways Uganda Red Cross could ever express gratitude towards such a leader of all seasons.
Uganda Red Cross has embarked on a campaign to recruit voluntary blood donors through its volunteer base and membership structures. Uganda currently suffers a blood shortage that has left many hospitals stranded with patients that require blood transfusion. The month of January was an alarming period for most hospitals that registered many accident causalities during the festive Christmas season, as well as other sick people that need emergency blood transfusion.

As the situation worsened, various media houses were awash with stories about the dire shortage of blood in hospitals, at the Nakasero blood bank and the other regional blood banks and collection centers across the country.

Uganda Red Cross Society in partnership with the Uganda Blood Transfusion Service embarked on a mobilization campaign to recruit voluntary blood donors.

“We are doing a country wide blood mobilization, a strategy that will see us bridging this blood shortage. We encourage all able people to donate blood. Uganda Red Cross has many members and volunteers. We want them to also donate and lead by example and that’s the new approach we are taking. We believe others will follow.” Sarah Mutegombwa, Health Manager – Blood Donor Recruitment at Uganda Red Cross Society.

The Uganda Red Cross members and volunteers were then joined by other corporate companies like NSSF, Kabaka Foundation (CBS FMs & BBS Terefa), Capital FM, Movit Uganda, Indian Association in Uganda, Pakistan Association in Uganda, URA among others. The companies mobilized their own staff, clients, good will ambassadors and donated blood.

Robert Kwegyira, Uganda Red Cross Secretary General appreciated the blood donors and encouraged others to voluntarily donate blood.

Mutegombwa mentioned that since the blood drive started in January this year, about 25,731 units of blood have so far been collected. She however appealed to Ugandans to continue donating since blood is continuously needed.

“This is not enough and we will continue calling upon others to join as voluntary blood donors. I want to thank the companies that have supported this drive, the blood donors who have voluntarily donated to save the lives of the people in hospitals that need blood.” Mutegombwa added.

Blood saves lives and improves health, but many patients due for transfusion sometimes do not have timely access to safe blood because it is not always readily available. Many people have reluctantly donated, making it hard for the blood bank and other blood collection centers to operate as expected.

Providing safe and adequate blood is part of Uganda’s National Health Care package. According to the WHO standards, Uganda annually needs 1% of its total population to donate blood.
Meet Arjun Prasad-The 160+ times blood donor!

Arjun Prasad Mainali is a US citizen of Nepalese origin. On the 11th of Feb he flew into Uganda to take part in a blood donation drive organised by the Nepalese Association, Indian Association and Uganda Red Cross Society at Acacia mall in Kampala.

On this day Arjun donated for the 161st time. He encouraged everyone to follow suit by borrowing a leaf from his book.

“I am so proud of my generosity and I urge people all over the world to do the same because every drop of blood saves a life”

In 2014 alone, Prasad donated blood plasma 14 times and this encouraged him to form the Blood Donors of America group, an association that has encouraged over 15,000 people to regularly donate blood in New York.
Effects of inter-communal violence between Lendu and Hema ethnic groups that broke out in Ituri region of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and attacks by Mai-Mai militia in North Kivu that started in December 2017, resulted into mass displacement and population movement of people from the DRC to Uganda. Uganda has since opened boarders and started receiving refugees through the lake Albert in Sebagoro (Hoima district), South Western border points in Ishasa & Butogota (Kanungu district), Nteko & Bunagana (Kisoro district) and lately Kanara (Ntoroko district) as well as the West Nile region unofficial border points through Zombo district.

Since December 18th 2017, Uganda has received 67,003 refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo (UNHCR Updates, March 28th, 2018). Uganda receives about 5,260 refugees per day which has proved an overwhelming influx to contain at such a time. This crisis has severely stretched the capacity of Uganda’s refugee centers and constrained the country in terms of providing social services, food, health, education, water and sanitation services among others to the refugees considering that already Uganda has been receiving refugees from South Sudan.

Uganda Red Cross through its mandate joined the UNHCR and Government of Uganda to support the refugee influx especially to the most vulnerable.

“We work closely with government local structures to receive and register refugees at some entry points, (conducting first level registration, crowd control) we are implementing Sanitation, Hygiene and Health promotion activities in the camps, Psychosocial support and Community Engagement and Accountability initiatives through the IFRC Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF). We also provide tracing services to restore broken family links and give chance for separated family members to reunite and live together happily.” Robert Kwesiga, Uganda Red Cross Secretary General.
Uganda Red Cross does quite a number of other activities in these camps and these include:

- Uganda Red Cross supports refugees from Democratic Republic of Congo
- Distribution of water purification tablets to enable refugees drink safe water for their good health
- Distribution of Nonfood relief items like bars of laundry soaps to the neediest homes
- Construction of 15 communal latrines and excavation of 45 pits out of 60 targeted (3 Marembo C and 57 Mombasa)
- Disinfection of 18 blocks of 6 stances of communal latrines constructed by Action Africa Help (AAH) in Marembo C;
- Installation of 50 handwashing facilities with a 60 litres capacity for communal latrines within the settlement and at public places such as the Reception centers and food distribution points
- Identification and mobilization of focal persons (Volunteers) as care takers of installed handwashing facilities;
- Provision of 0.05% chlorine solution for all 50 handwashing facilities to prevent and control infections
- Cleaning of communal latrines using chlorine and Effective Micro Organism (EMO) provided by UNICEF
- Social mobilization for proper hygiene and sanitation practices at individual and community levels. This is done through ensuring that families have utensils’ drying racks, house hold rubbish pits, and bath shelters among others.
- Mobilization of households to put up latrines
- Provision of basic emotional support to refugees that require such services

Currently, as numbers continue to grow, Uganda Red Cross Volunteers are deployed to continue supporting the response. There is a team of committed and well trained Volunteers that work tirelessly to give hope and restore dignity of the refugees.

“We have worked under emergencies for a very long time. This is a strength we have and have continued to build the capacity of our staff and volunteers to handle unique cases where nobody else can. Talk of meeting the sphere standards, Uganda Red Cross exceeds the limit. In this response, we can handle all Water sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) components at individual and community level, reception management, NFI distribution, Restoration of Family Links (Protection), Shelter construction, Psychosocial support among other immediate support that refugees require.” Kwesiga added.

As the refugees come from Democratic Republic of Congo, some mix with the locals and get absorbed especially those with contacts in communities, whereas majority are hosted in the settlements.

According to the UNHCR, women are children comprise of 75% of the total arrivals. Uganda now projects to receive about 60,000 refugees from the DRC this year (2018). Any support to humanitarian actors goes a long way in making a difference in the lives of the refugees being received.
Uganda Red Cross team cleans Imvepi market, rewards outstanding model homes during the West Nile Sanitation week launch

Uganda Red Cross West Nile Refugee Response team of hygiene promoters on the 26th March 2018 launched the sanitation week across the 36 villages of Imvepi refugee settlement. This was organised in collaboration with other partners that included the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), UNHCR, OXFAM, Unicef Uganda, Danish Refugees Council (DRC), among others. The purpose of the Sanitation Week is to intensify and increase knowledge on proper Hygiene and Sanitation management in the refugee hosting communities for promotion of good health.

During the week, Uganda Red Cross Volunteers joined the rest of the partners and participated in a march, walking to songs carrying messages of good hygiene and sanitation at a personal and community levels.

The Red Cross Volunteers organised a number of activities to launch and kick start the hygiene and sanitation week. Some of the activities included a thorough clean-up of the Imvepi market which was in a bad hygiene state. Hand washing facilities were installed, people were reminded to always wash their hands with soap and clean water, given personal hygiene tips and encouraged to keep the market clean.

“Our Volunteers have offered to clean up this market and also demonstrate how one can keep themselves clean and maintain their environment safe to avoid the spread of diseases like cholera that normally break out when the sanitation and hygiene of a place / individual is poor. We are doing this for the wellbeing of our beneficiaries in this refugee settlement.” Said John Paul Owiny, Uganda Red Cross WASH Engineer, and lead coordinator of Hygiene promotion activities in this settlement.

During the sanitation week, Red Cross assessed households’ hygiene and sanitation standards to recognise model homes that have been living to the good set standards promoted by the Uganda Red Volunteers during the years. “Ever since the settlement was opened in July 2016, we have been sensitising refugees and host communities on how to manage their sanitation and hygiene. We have done several interventions to this regard, including digging latrines and giving out latrine construction materials, doom slabs, soap, water purification tabs, jerricans for keeping safe and clean water, bringing clean and safe water nearer to them among other things. Today we want to see those that learn and put in practice what we teach them so that we recognise them and also ask them to be role models to their neighbours in spirit of promoting good health”. Owiny added.

Over 39 villages were assesses and the best homes were given soap, drinking water cans, jerricans, scrubbing brushes, buckets, and other hygiene tools away of recognising them.

This community engagement is believed to be a major source of morale and encouragement for the community to improve their hygiene and sanitation in the settlement.

Uganda Red Cross Volunteers are still deployed in the settlement to continue with the campaign of promoting good hygiene and sanitation through sensitization and mobilizing the community to work together in collecting rubbish and burning it. With help of mega phones, URCS Volunteers continue to disseminate information, mobilise the refugees to properly manage waste in the market, clean water sources, clean their water storage cans, manage their home surroundings, wash their clothes, eat from clean utensils, dig garbage pits, construct latrines, and comprehensively live a safe and clean life for their survival.

The community welcomed the campaign and promised to improve by keeping up the spirit in order to promote proper hygiene and sanitation in the market and across Imvepi settlement.
Uganda Red Cross society on Friday 23rd March 2013 signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Everton FC and other partners to support the South Sudan refugee operations in West Nile. The partners involved in the MOU included Everton in Community, the charity arm of the top flight English premier league side Everton FC, Onduparaka FC, a local football club based in West Nile, Health Education England, University of Northampton, among others. These agreed to support the refugee community in West Nile by use of sports to meet the communities’ psychosocial needs.

“Majority of the refugees are women and young people who have lost their relatives and separated from their parents. They are psychologically tortured. Playing soccer helps to address their mental and psychological needs” said Mr. Robert Kwaresiga the Secretary General Uganda Red Cross at the signing.

Since the influx started in July 2016, humanitarian efforts have been directed towards this emergency response to ensure people have access to basic needs like water, shelter and food as well as urgent medical care. The humanitarian response is now moving to a phase of long term sustainable health care and livelihood support. The focus is to support the young people to rebuild their lives, and it is believed that football will see to this.

“I believe this MOU we’ve signed today is a start of a journey which has such profound impact within West Nile and also potential repercussions across the rest of the globe. I am amazed and privileged to be signing an MOU with the global historical leaders of refugee responders- the Red Cross. There is nothing that can overstate the impact they have had in terms of humanitarian aid” said Ged Byrne, the Director global engagement Health Education UK.

Everton FC is an English premiership team and it hosts Everton in Community which uses sport to enhance the wellbeing of local and the vulnerable global community through the use of a comprehensive variety of sporting and social opportunities provided on a local, national and international scale.

“As a premier league club, we take matters of social conscious quite seriously since we are built on society as a club and referred to as a ‘peoples club’. We just want to use football principally to identify the needs around the globe within refugee communities. We are honored to be on this MOU signing with such esteemed colleagues and we are excited and looking forward to it.” said Jonathan Garside, the Health and wellbeing manager Everton FC.

Uganda Red Cross will therefore provide the link between these partners and the refugee community by connecting the already ongoing professional psychosocial approach to the sport and yield much better results. Onduparaka FC being a local West Nile based football will give an opportunity to the refugee youths to play football with their club as part of fulfilling the expectations spelt out in this memorandum of Understanding.
Uganda Red Cross society was hailed for its participation and excellent services provided at the NSSF 7 Hills Run that took place on the 25th March 2018. The run was organized by National Social Security Fund (NSSF) in partnership with Kampala Capital City Authority (KCAA) and Kampala Hash House Harriers.

Uganda Red Cross over 50 years is known for its emergency response skills and the competence built over time attracts many corporate companies to hire the commercial ambulance and First Aid Services. Uganda Red Cross deployed over 50 highly trained and skilled first aiders and 3 fully equipped Ambulances to attend to all the runners who needed emergency health services.

“First Aid is an emergency response activity which is one of core competences. We were here as early as 5:30am, ready to offer life-saving interventions to whoever requires attention. We deployed a team of highly trained and skilled first aiders, doctors and nurses and our major role was to ensure that support the injured, give immediate first aid and refer any complicated cases to the Hospitals during and after the run. We received great feedback and we have done our best to support everyone who needed our service.” said Irene Nakasiita who coordinated the event.

The run attracted over 1,500 people from different corporate agencies and their contributions were directed towards improving government aided primary schools under the management of Kampala Capital City Authority.

According to Jonathan Adengo, the Corporate Social Responsibility Manager for Corporate Image, one of the event partner organizers, it would have been really hard for them to have a successful marathon / run without the Red Cross.

“Red Cross always does great work during such functions. I know they also manage the MTN Marathon, which is one of the biggest runs organized in Uganda. They have always done a commendable job and from what I have seen and heard, we would have never managed without their hand in this.

The Kampala Hash Seven Hills Run marked its 3rd anniversary and Uganda Red Cross has been with the organizers, offering emergency health services since the run’s first edition in 2016.

Other participants appreciated the services offered especially the muscle soothing touch after the run.

“My was feeling terrible after covering the 21kms but to my relief, the Red Cross tent was waiting for me. I had some good massage and I really appreciate the professionalism and skill. I participated in the Kilimanjaro run last month but I guarantee you the first aid here beats what I got in Tanzania by all standards.” said Harriet Nangobi, a Hash Runner at the marathon.

We can’t thank them enough. Adengo added.

Story continues on Page 12
According to Twaha Ayub, a Red Cross senior first aider at the event, the team braved the Sunday morning heavy drizzle and worked without rest till the end of the marathon.

“We attended to about 600 people in our tent and we are glad there were no major complications expect for a few bruises. The team mainly handled muscle pains, muscle strains and some cases of headache. We offered professional massage and body stretches and every one left happy.” Ayub said

This year’s run attracted quite a number of notables who included Prince Charles Wasajja the prince of Buganda, Vision Group’s Chief Executive Officer Robert Kabushenga, NSSF Managing Director Richard Byarugaba, Sportsmen, artists among others.

On the same day, Uganda Red Cross also offered first aid services at the Makerere University run which had over 5,000 participants. The team at Makerere was equally applauded for the great job done after giving lifesaving services to the runners.

“We had over 400 people flooding our tent and we are glad to have handled each one of them. We have a team of skilled professional first aiders on ground who have been working since dawn. We also had a blood donation drive which yielded over 106 units of blood. We shot two birds with one stone.” said Abbas Bogere, the Red Cross Branch Manager, Kampala East- the team that managed the Makerere University run.

“We were here as early as 5:30am, ready to offer lifesaving interventions to whoever requires attention”

IRENE NAKASIITA
Red Cross Volunteers demonstrating aviation rescue at Entebbe International Airport

A Red Cross Volunteer helping a minor off the car during one of our recent Restoration of family Links activations

Our Volunteers and staff work in the most severe conditions that even maim their bodies but this doesn’t deter them from serving humanity
A Red Cross Volunteer inspecting for casualties at a recent fire outbreak in Kampala

We have provided water in all refugees settlements and our staff and volunteers occasionally demonstrate to refugees how to use these facilities

Uganda Red Cross Ambulances were with the NSSF HASH Runners all the way through the 21km marathon
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