

CRISIS IMPACT OVERVIEW

- More than 2,600 refugees and asylum seekers from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) entered Tanzania between 5–14 March to flee from the escalation of clashes between the March 23 Movement (M23) and the Congolese army in Kivu region (The EastAfrican 16/03/2023; The Citizen 15/03/2023; Monitor 16/03/2023). As at 28 February, there were nearly 246,900 refugees and asylum seekers in Tanzania primarily from the DRC and Burundi, of whom 129,000 (more than 50%) were staying in Nyarugusu camp in Kigoma region (UNHCR accessed 26/03/2023).
- Refugees and asylum seekers from the DRC have been entering Tanzania in groups of 300–600 in March, higher than 160 in November 2022 and 150 in December. Most are women, children, and members of the elderly. The majority enter Tanzania through Lake Tanganyika using canoes. There are reports of some hiding in the villages or sneaking in Nyarugusu refugee camp without being identified and registered by the Tanzanian authorities (The EastAfrican 16/03/2023; Monitor 16/03/2023; Daily News 14/03/2023; DW 22/03/2023).
- More refugees and asylum seekers are projected to cross from the DRC to Tanzania because of the expected continuation of clashes in eastern DRC (UNHCR 17/02/2023; Daily News 19/03/2023). There have been no humanitarian access constraints reported so far, but some government regulations, such as the 1998 Refugee Act and the 2003 Refugee Policy, as well as possible insecurity along the Tanzania-DRC border will likely hamper humanitarian operations (UNHCR 17/02/2023; The Citizen 15/03/2023). The immediate needs reported are food, WASH, shelter, and healthcare (Daily News 19/03/2023).
- The arrival of more refugees and asylum seekers will increase an already unserviceable level of needs. The strict encampment policy that limits the movement of refugees outside the camp, combined with the chronic underfunding that humanitarian organisations are facing, already threaten their operations and aid delivery (UNHCR 14/02/2023).

Anticipated scope and scale

There is potential for significant further influxes of refugees from the DRC into Tanzania given continued instability in eastern DRC, mainly in North and South Kivu (UNHCR 17/02/2023; Daily News 19/03/2023). The M23 and the Congolese army have not agreed on a ceasefire, and they are not responding to the UN's call for talks (VOA 17/03/2023).

Refugees and asylum seekers attempting to cross illegally or lacking proper documentation will likely be unable to enter Tanzania or face the risk of being returned to the DRC. Tanzania's laws prohibit people from entering the country without crossing the designated border posts and presenting needed documentation, as reiterated by the Kigoma region commissioner in a media statement. He asked Tanzanian citizens to abide by this law considering the arrival of more refugees (The Citizen 15/03/2023; Reuters 31/01/2017).

Humanitarian constraints

Governmental laws, such as the 1998 Refugee Act and the 2003 Refugee Policy, restrict the work of NGOs and humanitarian organisations. These rules impose regulations on humanitarian operations and limit their ability to provide aid to refugees and asylum seekers (ICNL accessed 26/03/2023; UNHCR 17/02/2023; The Citizen 15/03/2023). Potential insecurity along the Tanzania-DRC border also usually hampers humanitarian operations.

Refugees and asylum seekers from the DRC also face challenges in entering Tanzania and accessing asylum procedures because of the same government regulations regarding receiving refugees (the 1998 Refugee Act and the 2003 Refugee Policy) and because of the closure of border entry points given potential insecurity in the Tanzania-DRC border areas (UNHCR 17/02/2023; The Citizen 15/03/2023).

CRISIS IMPACTS

Food

The newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers need food assistance (Daily News 19/03/2023). They likely have limited access to livelihood opportunities to help them access food because of the encampment policy applied in the Nyarugusu refugee camp in Kigoma, leaving them highly dependent on humanitarian assistance. The response to food needs in the camp is already insufficient, with food rations only covering 80% of people's daily calorie requirements. With more refugees arriving, needs for food assistance will likely increase. Food availability in the camp also suffers from economic shocks, such as the impact of the Russian invasion of Ukraine on supply chains and food prices (UNHCR 17/02/2023; WFP 30/06/2022).

WASH

The refugees and asylum seekers from the DRC need clean water (Daily News 19/03/2023). WASH needs are already high in the camp because of overcrowding and shortages of funds and resources. There are shortages of latrines across the camp. As at October 2022, the latrine coverage ratio for Congolese refugees was 6.5 person per latrine. In Nyarugusu and Nduta camps, about 20% of households do not have a latrine, leading to open defecation practices and the risk of disease outbreaks (UNHCR 31/10/2022). This will likely increase following an influx of refugees from the DRC.

Shelter

Shelter is among the needs reported for the estimated 500 refugee households from the DRC recently received in Nyarugusu refugee camp in Kigoma. The camp is known to be one of the largest refugee camps in the world, with a population of nearly 130,000 refugees and asylum seekers, three times its original capacity. Many of this population already live in overcrowded and inadequate conditions, with limited access to basic services. The new arrivals (an estimated 500 families) and the potential arrival of further refugees will aggravate this shortage of shelter, as shelter will be an immediate need for all (Daily News 19/03/2023; Better Shelter 2018; UNFPA 02/03/2023).

Health

Part of the response is a current drive from the Tanzanian authorities and humanitarian responders to identify health needs and high-risk groups, such as pregnant and lactating women, children under five, newborns less than 42 days old, post-natal women with less than 42 days post-delivery, elders 65 years old and above, gender-based violence cases, and patients with acute watery diarrhoea (Daily News 19/03/2023). The healthcare system will likely

be stretched, as Tanzania is dealing with its first ever outbreak of the Marburg virus disease declared on 21 March in Kagera region (north of Kigoma region). Eight cases, including five deaths, have been reported (WHO 24/03/2023; BBC 24/03/2023). Kigoma is also among the regions identified as a high-risk area for an Ebola outbreak (IFRC 23/03/2023).

DRIVERS OF THE CRISIS

Conflict in the DRC

An escalation of a longstanding conflict between the M23 and the Congolese army, which displaced in February 2023 alone at least 300,000 people to Rutshuru and Masisi territories in North Kivu province, is driving the crisis. Displaced people comprise mostly women and children, and they are staying in open areas. Needs across all sectors are reported, including psychosocial support and protection services. The UN has proposed a ceasefire to start on 6 March, but neither party to the conflict has committed to it (UNHCR 10/03/2023; UN 06/03/2023).

The total number of displaced people in the DRC reached 5.8 million as at December 2022, and the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance was 26.4 million people as at February 2023 (USAID 10/03/2023). There were 1.1 million refugees and asylum seekers from the DRC across Africa, mostly in Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda as at the end of February (UNHCR accessed 26/03/2023).

COMPOUNDING/AGGRAVATING FACTORS

Disease outbreaks

Overcrowding in the camps, combined with limited latrine availability, increases the risk of disease outbreaks, such as measles, cholera, and malaria. It also increases the burden on the healthcare response. Kigoma province is already identified as a high-risk area for an Ebola outbreak, which has already happened in neighbouring Uganda. The likelihood of an Ebola outbreak is increasing because of the geographical closeness and strong social and economic ties between the Tanzania and Uganda (IFRC 23/03/2023). At the same time, Tanzania is experiencing its first ever Marburg virus disease outbreak, declared on 21 March in Kagera region, located north of Kigoma, where the Nyarugusu refugee camp is (WHO 24/03/2023; BBC 24/03/2023). This also increases the risk of the Marburg virus spreading between refugees, increasing healthcare needs. The Marburg virus transmits between people through direct and indirect contact (CDC accessed 26/03/2023).

Strain on resources

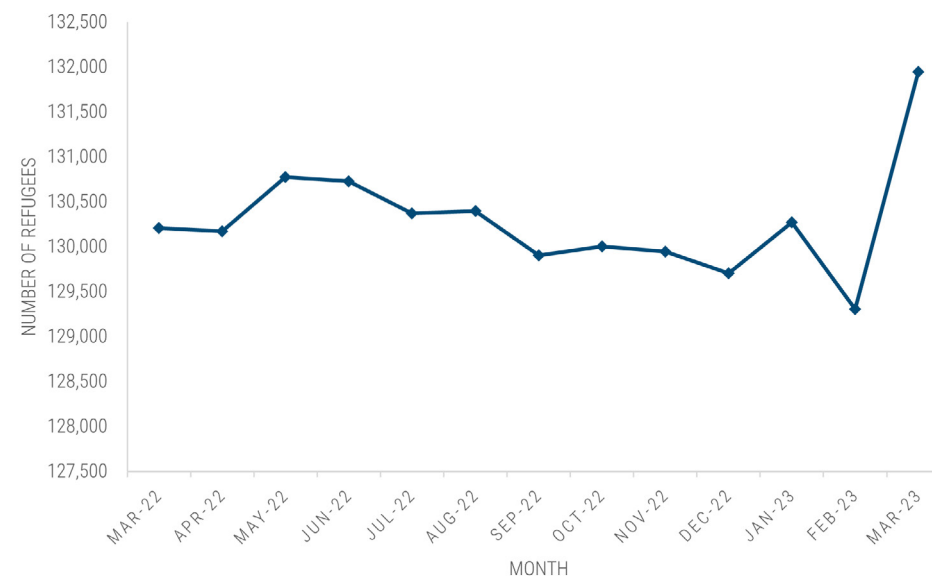
Nyarugusu refugee camp is already overcrowded, hosting three times its original capacity. With an influx of refugees from the DRC, there is likely to be shortages of shelters and an increased demand for water and food. The encampment policy restricts the movement of refugees and limits their access to employment, preventing them from earning money. This leaves refugees highly dependent on humanitarian assistance, while humanitarian operations in the camps face fund shortages (UNHCR 17/02/2023; The Citizen 15/03/2023). The recent influx of refugees from the DRC will likely increase competition over water and food sources, leading to increased security concerns and some potential sporadic disputes. This competition will increase if significant numbers of new refugees continue to arrive.

FUNDING AND RESPONSE CAPACITY

As at 29 December 2022, the fund requirement to respond to the humanitarian needs in Tanzania was only 38% covered, leaving a 62% gap (of nearly USD 71 million). Providing aid for refugees and asylum seekers in Tanzania has been affected by chronic underfunding, worsened by the global COVID-19 pandemic that diverted resources away from humanitarian operations. Funds have also been redirected to respond to crises resulting from the Russian invasion of Ukraine that started on 24 February 2022 and the impact of the Kahramanmaras earthquakes that hit Türkiye and Syria on 6 February 2023 (UNHCR 17/02/2023; UNHCR accessed 26/03/2023).

Underfunding in Tanzania has led humanitarian responders to prioritise which activities are more essential to carry out and allocate their limited resources accordingly, as well as scale down programmes across sectors (UNHCR 17/02/2023).

NUMBER OF REFUGEES IN NYARUGUSU CAMP BETWEEN MARCH 2022 AND MARCH 2023



Source: ACAPS using data from UNHCR (21/03/2023); Daily News (19/03/2023)

Disclaimer: the number of refugees in March is estimated based on the number of refugees in February 2023 (129,304) plus the 2,643 new refugees and asylum seekers from the DRC who entered Tanzania in March. Not all refugees and asylum seekers will likely settle in Nyarugusu camp. Some might be taken to Nduta camp.