

Support to UNHCR and WFP country operations in Rwanda

June 2023

What is the Joint Hub?

The [UNHCR-WFP Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub \(Joint Hub\)](#) provides strategic and technical support to UNHCR and WFP at the global, regional and country level, to inform protective, people-centred and needs-based solutions for refugees and other forcibly displaced people.

The Joint Hub works to foster collaborative action between the two agencies, along with governments and development actors, through a shared vision and responsibility, in order to strengthen inclusion and support an ethical transition from humanitarian assistance.

This brief presents details of the Joint Hub's work in practice, focusing on support to UNHCR and WFP operations in Rwanda and the joint provision of assistance and solutions for refugees.

Overview of country context

Rwanda has been welcoming refugees for over two decades and **hosts approximately 127,000 refugees** (August 2022, UNHCR), 90% of whom live in six refugee camps. Rwanda is a protracted refugee context: refugees are mainly from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the majority of whom have lived in Rwanda for 24 years, and from Burundi, where some recent voluntary repatriations have taken place.

The Government of Rwanda has a progressive refugee protection framework where refugees have freedom of movement and the right to work. The government has also promoted the financial inclusion of refugees through their National Financial Inclusion Strategy.

Shifting to needs-based assistance

For many years, UNHCR and WFP have provided assistance for food and basic needs to all refugees living in camps in Rwanda. Both agencies, as well as the Government, have come to recognize that although there are still high levels of vulnerability, **not all refugees in Rwanda are equally vulnerable** and in need of long-term humanitarian assistance. Severe funding shortfalls for WFP food assistance - with 60% food ration cuts implemented in February and March 2021 - also contributed to an accelerated timeline for prioritised assistance.

Since May 2021, a needs-based and protection-sensitive approach is in place, identifying and supporting the most vulnerable refugee households with humanitarian assistance, while less vulnerable refugees with higher capacities no longer receive basic assistance.

Support provided by the Joint Hub

UNHCR and WFP country offices **jointly requested support** from the Joint Hub to assist them with analysis and setting up a targeting approach for basic needs assistance.

From 2020 to 2022, the Joint Hub provided support **remotely and during missions** to Rwanda, as well as **deploying a staff member** who was based in Rwanda for 18 months coordinating the joint response. Throughout the period of support, the Joint Hub sought to build the capacity of staff in country, to continue the work of joint assessment, analysis and implementation of a targeted approach, following the completion of the Joint Hub's support.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

In collaboration with country offices, the Joint Hub supported the development of a **needs-based targeting strategy, data analysis and programme design**, in line with the global UNHCR-WFP [Targeting Principles](#) and [Joint Guidance on Targeting of Assistance to Meet Basic Needs](#).

The Joint Hub guided the development of **data collection tools** and a **framework for analysis**. Three UNHCR-WFP Joint Post-Distribution Monitoring (JPDM) exercises were undertaken, the results of which provided a comprehensive overview of household needs and vulnerability in camps. The first exercise provided a baseline to inform the targeting strategy, and the second and third exercises enabled a comparative analysis of the targeting impact and effectiveness and changes of key outcome indicators over time.

Refugee households were grouped into three vulnerability categories: highly vulnerable, moderately vulnerable and least vulnerable. A profiling exercise identified the key characteristics of each group, to inform the definition of eligibility criteria for food assistance. Based on this robust analysis, the Joint Hub led the **design of the targeting approach** and supported **implementation and monitoring** of outcomes, as well as the development of tools to address **inclusion and exclusion errors**.

Targeting approach for assistance for refugees in Rwanda

For refugees in Rwanda, the targeting approach combines **geographical, categorical and community-based targeting** methods. To be eligible to receive food assistance, refugees must be registered in camps and meet certain categorical eligibility criteria (socio-demographic and/or protection-related). As refugees are registered in proGres, the criteria are applied to the registration database in order to identify and select households that are eligible to receive assistance. At household level, eligibility criteria include the following:

Socio-demographic:

- Households that have a high number of dependents (dependency ratio ≥ 2)
- Single headed household with children below 5 years
- Single female headed household
- Household head with no education
- Household with 8 or more members
- Household with 2 or more female children aged 0-17 years
- Single people studying (up to age 25)

Protection-sensitive:

- Household with 1 or more disabled or chronically sick members
- Household with member at risk based on UNHCR classification (e.g. unaccompanied minor, older person living alone etc.)

Working capacity:

- Presence of adult men in working age (18-59 years) able to work

VULNERABILITY GROUPS AND ASSISTANCE PACKAGES

HIGHLY VULNERABLE 100% FOOD ASSISTANCE

- One or more members falling under protection criteria or,
- Two or more socio-demographic criteria, or
- One socio-demographic criteria but without any adult male member aged 18-59 years able to work.

MODERATELY VULNERABLE 50% FOOD ASSISTANCE

- One socio-demographic criteria and no other criteria with adult male working capacity in the household, or
- Households not meeting any of the above criteria, but without any adult male members aged 18-59 years able to work.

LEAST VULNERABLE NO FOOD ASSISTANCE

- Households that do not meet any of the eligibility criteria and have one or more male members aged 18-59 years who are able to work.

ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED PEOPLE

Community participation and engagement was instrumental throughout the targeting process in Rwanda. A wide range of refugees were consulted to ensure that the proposed eligibility criteria reflected vulnerability as defined by the refugees themselves, as well as to identify any additional protection risks linked to the targeting exercise. Forty-one **community consultations** were carried out in all six refugee camps and **feedback was incorporated** to inform the final eligibility criteria, which was **validated collaboratively** by the Joint Hub, UNHCR and WFP country teams and MINEMA.

Support from the Joint Hub ensured that **protection was mainstreamed** throughout all aspects of the targeting process:

- The **vulnerability analysis** considered protection needs and reliance on high-risk coping strategies that expose refugees to protection risks.
- A detailed **risk assessment** of the targeting strategy identified potential protection risks and put in place appropriate mitigation measures.
- **Community consultations** validated the eligibility criteria and approach and captured protection concerns.
- Eligibility criteria were included to ensure the approach is **protection-sensitive** and **inclusive of people with specific protection needs**.
- **Appeals and feedback mechanisms** allowed beneficiaries to appeal decisions on their eligibility for assistance, update their data, and provide complaints and feedback.
- **Joint monitoring** includes both qualitative and quantitative modules to assess whether there is increased exposure to protection risks.

SUPPORTING PARTNERSHIP AND NEW WAYS OF WORKING

The Joint Hub aims to be an honest broker for country offices, able to **support partnership to achieve a shared vision**. Throughout the targeting process all activities were conducted jointly, and achieved within a very short timeframe, despite contextual challenges, including COVID-19.

Throughout the targeting process there was **close coordination and partnership with the Government of Rwanda**, ensuring government buy-in, guidance, and support.

As a result of Joint Hub support, UNHCR and WFP country offices have both made significant changes to their ways of working. Together they set up the **Rwanda Targeting Governance Group**, with the aim of assisting senior management in overseeing the implementation and monitoring of the joint targeting approach. The approach contributed to increased dialogue and joint activities, as well as staff undertaking a range of new activities and incorporating new tools and processes in their daily work. The Joint Hub also supported the two agencies through an in-depth [Lessons Learning exercise](#), reflecting on collaboration over the previous 18 months to identify what worked well and how to improve joint approaches in the future.

Programmatic outcomes of collaborative action:

- An **evidence-based shift** from delivery of assistance based on refugee status to **needs-based targeting** for food assistance for refugees in camp settings, based on three categories of vulnerability.
- A **more efficient use of resources**, with the provision of a full food assistance package for refugees with the highest vulnerability.
- **Protection mainstreamed and prioritised** throughout the targeting process, with time and resources invested in community engagement, the successful management of risks, and

appeals mechanism establishment as well as complaint and feedback management. This included the avoidance of security incidents, which had been identified as a significant risk.

Outcomes for refugees

UNHCR and WFP continually monitor the situation of refugees in Rwanda. Despite the impact of COVID-19, an economic crisis, and significant funding constraints leading to the reduction of transfer values, the proportion of highly vulnerable refugee households has remained stable (60%) and **no substantive deterioration in refugee vulnerability levels has been observed** since the implementation of the targeting approach one year prior ([UNHCR-WFP Joint Post Distribution Monitoring, April/May 2022](#)).

While the percentage of households adopting crisis coping has decreased substantively, there are still 14% of the households who had to resort to emergency coping to meet essential needs. It is **necessary to continue to monitor the situation of households that no longer receive humanitarian assistance**, and may be affected by future shocks, and to provide them with other forms of support to improve their self-reliance when appropriate.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Joint Hub (2021) [Rwanda joint post distribution monitoring and needs assessment](#)

Joint Hub (2022) [Community consultations to inform targeting and prioritisation](#)

UNHCR and WFP (March 2021) [Joint post distribution and needs assessment for refugees in Rwanda](#)

UNHCR and WFP (September 2021) [Rwanda joint UNHCR/WFP post distribution monitoring](#)

UNHCR and WFP (2022) [Moving to Needs-Based Assistance Delivery for Refugees](#)

UNHCR and WFP (2022) [Lessons on UNHCR-WFP Collaboration in Rwanda, July 2020 – December 2021](#)

UNHCR and WFP (2023) Third UNHCR/WFP Joint Post Distribution Monitoring for Refugees in Rwanda, April/May 2022 ([Full Report](#) and [Brief](#))

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