



UNOG Bi-weekly press briefing Appeal For Funding For Refugees in Eastern Africa WFP - UNHCR 03 March 2021

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Shotlist

1. Exterior wide shot, United Nations flag flying.
2. Wide shot, press briefing room, UN Palais
3. **SOUNDBITE (English) — Tomson Phiri, Spokesperson for the World Food Programme (WFP):**
“Critical funding shortages have forced cuts of up to 60 percent, compromising long-standing efforts to achieve food security in camps. East Africa hosts one of the largest displaced populations of any region in the world, with some 4.4 million refugees and 8.1 million internally displaced people as of end-2020”.
4. Medium shot, spokesperson at podium in press briefing room
5. **SOUNDBITE (English) — Tomson Phiri, Spokesperson for the World Food Programme (WFP):**
“The most dramatic cut is in Rwanda, where starting from this March, refugees will have their rations cut by 60% meaning that refugees will only receive 40 percent of the recommended minimum daily kilocalories. As our refugee programme in Rwanda is completely cash transfers, we can quickly reverse this situation but only if we can receive additional funding”.
6. Wide shot, spokesperson at podium in press briefing room
7. **SOUNDBITE (English) — Tomson Phiri, Spokesperson for the World Food Programme (WFP):**
“The assistance that we provide is a basic meal. It’s just enough for people to survive, and having to reduce on already what is not enough, is something that breaks our heart, but we are forced to do it in order to spread widely the food that is available”.

8. Close up, zoom meeting on laptop
9. **SOUNDBITE (English) — Tomson Phiri, Spokesperson for the World Food Programme (WFP):**
“When food is in short supply, protection concerns including sexual and gender-based violence increases in the camps and this can also serve to significantly escalate tensions even within hosting areas. If WFP is forced to continue cutting rations, this could prompt refugee communities to move within host countries or even across borders as they become more desperate to meet their basic needs”.
10. Medium shot, journalist in press briefing room
11. **SOUNDBITE (English) — Boris Cheshirkov, Spokesperson for the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR):** **“These cuts will have dramatic consequences and without the funds, thousands of refugees, many of them being children will not have enough to eat. Already the cuts in food rations and cash are forcing people to skip or reduce meals and sell up their belongings and the risks are growing including with child labour and domestic violence”.**
12. Medium shot, journalists in press briefing room
13. Wide shot, press briefing room
14. Wide shot, spokespeople at podium
15. Medium shot, monitor in press briefing room with WFP spokesperson

Story

“Having to reduce on what is not enough, is something that breaks our heart”, says the World Food programme (WFP) on cutting its food rations across East Africa

The World Food Programme (WFP) and the UNHCR, the U.N. Refugee Agency, appealed today for US\$266 million to end food ration cuts for over 3 million refugees in East Africa. During the last months, WFP has been forced to implement ration cuts for refugees in Uganda (40%), Kenya (40%), South Sudan (30%), Djibouti (23%) and Ethiopia (16%).

Speaking to journalists at a news briefing today at the United Nations, Tomson Phiri, WFP’s spokesperson said that **“critical funding shortages have forced cuts of up to 60 percent, compromising long-standing efforts to achieve food security in camps”**. He adds that **“East Africa hosts one of the largest displaced populations of any region in the world, with some 4.4 million refugees and 8.1 million internally displaced people as of end-2020”**.

This is not the first time that WFP had to cut rations in east Africa. Food rations in Uganda had been already reduced due to funding constraints.

The impact of the funding shortfalls on refugee families is compounded by COVID-19 lockdowns and measures to contain the pandemic’s spread, which had already reduced the availability of food in markets in refugee camps and wrecked many refugees’ hopes of helping to support their families through casual labour and small businesses.

According to Tomson Phiri, **“the most dramatic cut is in Rwanda, where starting from this March, refugees will have their rations cut by 60% meaning that refugees will only receive 40 percent of the recommended minimum daily kilocalories”**.

However, Phiri notes that **“as our refugee programme in Rwanda is completely cash transfers, we can quickly reverse this situation but only if we can receive additional funding”**.

WFP reported that people arrive in very bad shape in camps and that they are seeing a spike in malnutrition rates. The concern is that malnutrition becomes even more difficult to treat, particular among the most vulnerable ones, children and women. WFP fears that refugees will continue to struggle, as its spokesperson pointed out.

“The assistance that we provide is a basic meal”, he said. “It’s just enough for people to survive, and having to reduce on already what is not enough, is something that breaks our heart, but we are forced to do it in order to spread widely the food that is available”.

Refugees rely on humanitarian assistance to survive and when food rations are reduced, it does get more difficult for them. Ration cuts have extremely serious implications that go beyond food and nutrition security. **“When food is in short supply, protection concerns including sexual and gender-based violence increases in the camps and this can also serve to significantly escalate tensions even within hosting areas”**, Tomson Phiri said. **“If WFP is forced to continue cutting rations, this could prompt refugee communities to move within host countries or even across borders as they become more desperate to meet their basic needs”**.

Mr. Phiri was supported by his colleague, Boris Cheshirkov, Spokesperson for the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) who confirmed that **“these cuts will have dramatic consequences and without the funds, thousands of refugees, many of them being children will not have enough to eat”**.

Cheshirkov added that **“already the cuts in food rations and cash are forcing people to skip or reduce meals and sell up their belongings and the risks are growing including with child labour and domestic violence”**.