



International Organization for Migration (IOM)
The UN Migration Agency



United Nations
CERF Central
Emergency
Response
Fund

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PRESS RELEASE

Congolese fleeing violence supported to travel safely

SEBAGORO, UGANDA – 18 JULY 2018: In response to the large number of refugees fleeing into Uganda from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, IOM, the UN Migration Agency, has handed over life-saving and rescue equipment to the Marine Police Force of Uganda.

This donation, first announced in March, was made possible by the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund (UN-CERF) through IOM Uganda's Rapid Response project for Congolese refugees.

The handover ceremony took place at the Sebagoro landing site in Kikuube District, on Wednesday 18 July 2018. It was attended by representatives from the refugee community, host community, local leaders, as well as IOM Uganda Chief of Mission, Ali Abdi, and the Deputy Commandant of the Marine Police, ACP Micheal Walwanga.

The equipment consisted of the final batch of 315 life jackets (in addition to 85 that were handed over this year in March), seven very high frequency radios, 50 light-emitting diode torches and 100 pairs of lead batteries that will be used to support search-and-rescue operations on Lake Albert.

More than 81,000 Congolese refugees have fled to Uganda from the Democratic Republic of the Congo since the beginning of 2018, according to the UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR. At the height of the crisis, Uganda received over 7,000 refugees each week.

Nearly half of the new arrivals are crossing into Uganda on the choppy waters of Lake Albert – the seventh largest lake in Africa – without protective gear, aboard unstable and overcrowded fishing boats. Sandwiched between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda, with an area of approximately 2,160 square miles (5,600 square kilometers) and a length of 100 miles (160 kilometers), Lake Albert is cradled in the center of the African continent.

Engineer James Apora, the Commandant of the Marine Police, said: "This donation is timely because the country is receiving a wave of refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo via Lake Albert. This equipment shall benefit both the refugees and the Ugandan communities operating along the Albertine belt."

Speaking at the handover ceremony, IOM Uganda Chief of Mission, Ali Abdi, thanked the Ugandan central and local governments as well as the local community for welcoming refugees fleeing for their lives, and for supporting IOM's work.

Abdi especially thanked the project donors, UN-CERF, for assisting the most vulnerable refugees and migrants across the world.

Abdi said: "This project has supported emergency water, sanitation and hygiene services for the new influx of refugees in Kyangwali through provision of aquatabs to improve safety of water; we have provided hygiene kits to refugees; carried out comprehensive hygiene promotion to help arrest a cholera outbreak; supported construction of 3,000 household latrines and institutional sanitation facilities such as latrines, incinerators, and a solid waste facility."

Since the onset of the crisis, IOM has worked closely with UNHCR, the Office of the Prime Minister and partners to evacuate refugees stranded in Lake Albert, train immigration officers on humanitarian border management, and provide life-saving humanitarian relief including medical assistance, food, water, and psycho-social support.

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