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NEWS

Burundian refugees at Mahama camp get new health facility

Expectant refugee mothers at Mahama Refugee Camp will no longer have to endure the torment of giving birth in tents without proper care, thanks to a new health facility. The camp in Eastern Province hosts more than 50,000 Burundian refugees, who sighed with relief at the inauguration of the facility that is also expected to improve general health services for the refugees

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A nurse (R) briefs the officials from L-R; Health state minister Patrick Ndimubanzi (L), Mukantabana, Azam and Barks-Ruggles. / Michel Nkurunziza.

EXPECTANT refugee mothers at Mahama Refugee Camp will no longer have to endure the torment of giving birth in tents without proper care, thanks to a new health facility.

The camp in Eastern Province hosts more than 50,000 Burundian refugees, who sighed with relief at the inauguration of the facility that is also expected to improve general health services for the refugees

The health facility, worth more than Rwf410 million and equipped with a maternity room/labour ward, medical isolation centre and a laboratory, was constructed through collaboration of different international organisations and the Government of Rwanda.

Speaking at the inauguration, Seraphine Mukantabana, the minister for disaster management and refugee affairs, said: "Since the time the camp opened in 2015, mothers have been delivering in tents, which was embarrassing. We are happy that now mothers will be secure in these well-equipped rooms. Rwanda is committed to working with our partners for continued positive change for refugees across the country."

Before cutting the ribbon. / Michel Nkurunziza

When the camp opened, the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), in partnership with the American Refugee Committee (ARC), set up a makeshift health centre in the camp, but the structure had been dilapidated after a year and half.

"We have been facing delays in long queues waiting for medical services, sometimes expectant mothers could be transferred to other health centres because the number of patients was overwhelming," Consolee Ngendakumana, a refugee mother, said.

Yvonne Ndacyayisaba, another refugee, said many mothers would be compelled to share a bed but now hopes the issue will be be resolved.

The camp is divided into two administrative units; Mahama I and II.

UNFPA assistant country representative Agnes Ntibanyurwa said they are also providing much needed equipment to support the health facilities where they injected in $85,000.

She pledged continued support in terms of facilitating education on reproductive health to adolescents in the camp to check incidents of early pregnancies, education about sexual violence, family planning education, HIV prevention and GV, among others.

Dr Patrick Ndimubanzi, MOH state minister and MIDIMAR minister Seraphine Mukantabana inaugurating health. / Michel Nkurunziza

Health services for refuges are covered 100 per cent by donors.

UNHCR) country representative Saber Azam said the health response in Mahama Refugee Camp was well coordinated and that key humanitarian standards were respected.

"Thanks to the generous support of donors, UNHCR had a budget of $47.1 million for its Rwanda operation in 2016 and our health response could not have been possible without the dedicated support of key donors," he said.

Azam also urged parents to send children to school, adding that there are currently opportunities for them to get scholarship at the varsity level.

Save the children staff speaks as Ruggles, Azam, Mukantabana, state minister at MOH Patrick Ndimubanzi follows. / Michel Nkurunziza

Minister Mukantabana told the camp supervisors to conduct rapid assessment to discern parents whose children have dropped out of school so that strict measures are taken.

"We cannot tolerate parents who don't send children to school. We are also planning other forms of support to youthful refugees who might be too old for certain school level they last attended although those who wish can still go to school irrespective of their age," she said.

At least 112 classrooms have been constructed near the camp to help the refugees access to education.

She added that more is still to be done, including electricity supply in the camp.

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