

STANDBY TERMS OF REFERENCE



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A. ASSIGNMENT DETAILS:

Standby Modality: in-country, remote, hybrid	<i>In-country</i>
Country and duty station	Burundi, Bujumbura
Title and Level:	MHPSS Specialist (P3/P4)
Type of Crisis:	Emergency Response to Influx of Congolese Refugees in Burundi (Refugees) and to return of Burundian refugees from Tanzania
Emergency experience required	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Please specify: Experience in MHPSS required, especially in refugee/ returnee/ mixed migration response No <input type="checkbox"/>
Duration of assignment:	03 months
Supervisor Name and Email:	Name : Kristien Van Buyten Email : kvanbuyten@unicef.org

B. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT:

The recent conflict in the provinces of North and South Kivu of the DRC has led to a severe humanitarian crisis, affecting neighbouring countries, particularly Burundi. The military offensive in DRC of M23 intensified in the first months of 2025, causing mass displacement and human rights abuses with tens of thousands of people fleeing to Burundi. A new offensive by M23 in December 2025, including the takeover of the city of Uvira, led to an additional arrival of over 90,000 people from DRC.

As of February 2026, according to UNHCR data, there are over 110,000 refugees from DRC in Burundi. Close to 20,000 Congolese refugees are hosted at the Musenyi refugee site, and approximately 70,000 refugees are hosted at the Busuma refugee site, with some thousands more in other reception and transit centers and in urban areas.

Additionally, Tanzania currently hosts approximately 144,000 Burundian refugees and asylum seekers. As of late 2025, an estimated 101,700 Burundian refugees remained in Nduta and Nyarugusu camps, including nearly 60,000 children and at least 900 unaccompanied and separated children (UASC). Since October 2025, voluntary repatriation from Tanzania to Burundi has been significantly accelerated, with 9,815 refugees returning between October 2025 and mid-January 2026. Current trends indicate that around 3,000 returnees per week is now

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operationally feasible, with indications that 10,000–13,000 returns per month are likely if movements continue uninterrupted.

Both refugee populations from DRC and Burundian returnees experience high levels of distress and require mental health and psychosocial support. A MHPSS needs assessment conducted between July and September 2025 with regards to the DRC refugee situation in Burundi, by a MHPSS Specialist from the MHPSS Surge Mechanism, hosted by UNHCR Burundi, showed widespread emotional distress among refugees with high levels of anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress, insomnia, and psychosomatic symptoms; but less than half of those in distress sought professional help. Additionally, the assessment showed that many frontline workers lack training in basic psychosocial skills and do not know referral pathways. Children make up 53% of the refugee population; child protection actors in Musenyi and Busuma refugee sites have reported high levels of psychosocial distress among children and their parents.

A joint mission conducted on 10 February 2026 to the Busuma refugee site by the Direction of Child Protection of the Ministry of Justice and UNICEF, as lead and co-lead of the Taskforce on Child Protection in Humanitarian Situations, confirmed the need to strengthen the provision of MHPSS to children and caregivers, including as an effective way to prevent violence against children. The ministry of Justice recommended stakeholders extend and strengthen the existing offer, notably through child-friendly spaces, group counseling and community outreach.

C. TERMS OF REFERENCE (Please note a set of already populated [Terms of Reference](#) for key profile areas used in UNICEF are available for your use. You may use these and adapt to your needs accordingly).

1. ROLE PURPOSE:

The 2025 interagency MHPSS needs assessment conducted in support of the DRC refugee response in Burundi highlighted widespread emotional distress among refugees, significant gaps in basic psychosocial skills among frontline actors, and the need to strengthen the integration of MHPSS across sectors. Key recommendations included enhanced integration of MHPSS into humanitarian aid; supporting and creating community-based initiatives; and improving access to psychological support in community settings. Building on these findings and recommendations and on subsequent field discussions with national and humanitarian partners, this deployment aims to support improved quality, consistency and integration of MHPSS interventions across the refugee response, with a particular focus on the provision of MHPSS to children, parents and caregivers.

This deployment forms part of the interagency MHPSS surge mechanism. The MHPSS Specialist will be hosted by and within the UNICEF Burundi Country Office. Whereas the role will be fully embedded within UNICEF, reporting to a UNICEF staff member (Chief Child Protection), with no supervisory responsibilities and no reporting lines outside UNICEF, the role will however support interagency efforts by providing technical guidance, harmonization of approaches, and capacity building for partners engaged in the DRC refugee response. He/ she will be working closely with sector leads, including for Protection, GBV, Child Protection and Education. The MHPSS

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Specialist will also benefit from technical support provided through UNICEF global/regional technical capacity.

2. **MAJOR DUTIES AND KEY RESPONSIBILITIES:** *(The scope of the activities listed below may vary, depending on the length of the assignment and phase of the crisis. Please adapt the standard TOR if necessary).*

Technical guidance and standard-setting

- Provide strategic and technical guidance to sector leads and sectoral groups to ensure the provision of MHPSS across different sectors, with a particular focus the integration of MHPSS messages for parents and caregivers
- Support partners to agree on, adapt and implement a core package of quality MHPSS activities within Child-Friendly Spaces, drawing on existing guidance and tools, and ensuring inclusion of children living with disabilities and caregiver engagement.

Capacity building, Awareness-raising and Advocacy:

- Adapt and prepare brief, context-appropriate training content and tools on basic MHPSS skills for frontline and community actors, drawing on existing guidance and tailored to the Burundi refugee response context.
- Deliver these through targeted training sessions and field-based mentoring, accompaniment and supportive supervision for Child Protection, GBV and community actors, strengthening their ability to support children, parents and caregivers in community and child-friendly space settings, and to link MHPSS support with existing protection follow-up and community support options based on what is available locally.
- Contribute to identifying priority MHPSS needs and gaps and support simple awareness-raising and advocacy efforts through relevant humanitarian, media and communication outlets, as appropriate.
- Support partners to apply consistent, practical MHPSS approaches and key messages across activities and sites, including inclusive approaches for children with disabilities and support to caregivers.

3. MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

- Advanced university degree in social work, international relations, law, child psychology, or relevant field.
- A minimum of 5- 8 years of experience related to MHPSS in humanitarian situations.
- Experience working closely with UN agencies and in interagency roles would be a strong advantage.
- A proven track record in capacity building and technical support is a requirement.
- Fluency in French is a requirement (verbal and written). Fluency in English desirable.
- Communication - Ability to express complex technical concepts effectively, both verbally and in writing; effectively presenting thoughts and ideas in a clear, concise, and readily understood manner. Listens to and acknowledges others' perspectives and views.

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- Builds, maintains, and leverages a diverse network of contacts and strategic partnerships with UN Agencies, NGOs, and intergovernmental organisations.
- Collaboration - Cooperates and works effectively with others in the pursuit of common goals respecting different gender, culture, opinions, values, perspectives, ideas, skills, expertise, knowledge, and experiences.
- Judgement - Able to make effective, realistic, and impactful decisions based on limited information and time, logical inferences, experiences, and the consideration of implications, alternatives, and consequences.
- Flexibility - Works effectively on multiple assignments simultaneously in an emergency setting and adapts to changing demands and circumstances; adaptable and ready to travel with little or short notice.
- Managing stress - Performs effectively in unstable, uncertain, or potentially dangerous environments while maintaining physical and mental health.