

PRESS RELEASE, WINGS OF HOPE FOR AFRICA FOUNDATION

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HEADLINE: United Nations Refugee Agency's appeal for Burundi sparks help from Calgary charity

A largely ignored refugee crisis in East Africa is spurring a Calgary-based charity to launch a fundraising campaign. Wings of Hope for Africa Foundation wants to raise at least \$15,000 to help people from Burundi who have fled to Southern Rwanda.

According to The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), more than 250,000 people have fled Burundi since 2015. Political unrest concerning President Pierre Nkurunziza's bid for a successful, third term sparked violence, forcing thousands of fearful Burundians to flee to neighbouring countries of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Tanzania and as far away as Uganda and Zambia.

More than 46,000 Burundian refugees are living in Mahama Camp, the largest camp in Rwanda which opened in April 2015. As of March, refugees are continuing to arrive since the situation in Burundi remains tense and unpredictable. With dollars raised, Wings of Hope for Africa will buy a variety of much needed essentials — soap, sanitary napkins, food and blankets— to disperse within the Mahama Camp.

Wings of Hope for Africa Foundation's campaign started on March 15 and will continue until July 1. A volunteer team from Calgary — Wings of Hope president and co-founder Aline Nzeyimana, Jordan Gahiza, and volunteer photographer Amber Hartnett will arrive in Rwanda July 6 where they will work with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to deliver the supplies. It's expected these items will help 100 families for about a month.

"Albertans should help Burundian refugees because we are all human beings," said Nzeyimana. "I believe that no one plans or wishes to be a refugee. It is a distressing and hard condition for people to live in. We should support each other in this kind of emergency situation."

The UNHCR requested US\$175.1 million for the humanitarian response in the region, but so far has only received US\$7.7 million, or four per cent. It's making an urgent appeal to humanitarian agencies worldwide, to help with the gap to mobilize additional resources for support, either by money donations or in-kind support. With only a fraction funded, there are major problems with refugees' access to education, healthcare, livelihoods, counselling and more.

Burundi is one of the poorest countries of the world and is known as the world's "world's hungriest nation" (article <http://qz.com/508774/burundis-political-crisis-is-making-one-of-the-poorest-countries-on-earth-even-worse-off>). The World Happiness Report 2016 Update, released on March 16, ranked Burundi as the world's least happy nation.

Wings of Hope for Africa, a registered Canadian charity based in Calgary, is dedicated to emergency relief, education, sponsoring children in need, and developing self-sufficiency programs like community gardens in order to end poverty in Burundi. Since its creation in September 2011, Wings of Hope has successfully completed more than 30 projects, ranging

from promoting education to income generation, healthcare, and disaster relief.

Nzeyimana grew up in Burundi, coming to Canada in 2005 as a refugee. She has lived in Calgary since 2007 and added that she appreciates how Canadians welcome newcomers. After becoming a mother, she decided to form Wings of Hope for Africa.

“It was born out of compassion for children and families in need,” said Nzeyimana.

Donations to the project are welcome through the charity’s website at www.wingsofhopeforafrica.ca/donate

For more information, email info@wingsofhopeforafrica.ca, or call 403-815-0037.

For an interview regarding the project, contact Founder Aline Nzeyimana, at 403-815-0037.

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