

Rwanda on Wednesday received 406 Rwandans who returned from eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, including many women and children and some adults who had lived there for more than 30 years.

The returnees, from 125 families, crossed into Rwanda through the La Corniche border post in Rubavu district. They were received by district officials and representatives of the U.N. refugee agency, UNHCR, before being taken to the temporary Nyarushishi center in Rusizi district.

At Nyarushishi, they will receive assistance to obtain necessary documents and other support to help them rebuild their lives and settle back into Rwanda.

Some of the returnees said they had grown tired of living under the threat of armed groups operating in eastern Congo. They said the groups subjected them to severe abuse while authorities failed to take action.

Rubavu district Mayor Mulindwa Prosper said the Rwandan government remains concerned about citizens still living in the forests of Congo, particularly those held by armed groups.

He told the returnees that they would not be starting their lives from scratch and would receive government assistance to rebuild.

“You have entered your promised country. Help bring back your fellow Rwandans who remain in the forests of Congo so their children can go to school,” Mulindwa said.

He urged them to encourage other Rwandans still in Congo to return, saying the government would continue supporting them under its social welfare policies.

Mulindwa also said the returnees would be connected to government programs designed to help them improve their livelihoods and move out of poverty, including Girinka, a livestock program that provides cows to eligible households.

The latest arrivals follow the return of 302 other Rwandans from Congo on Aug. 5. Of those, 285 crossed through La Corniche, while 17 entered through the Rusizi I border crossing, which links Rusizi district with the city of Bukavu.

For the latest returnees, Wednesday’s arrival marked the beginning of their resettlement in Rwanda after years, and in some cases decades, spent in eastern

Congo.