

The World Food Programme (WFP) is facing a sharp financial squeeze in Rwanda, leaving more than 180,000 camp-based refugees and returnees on half-rations as aid teams scramble to plug an immediate \$10.7 million funding shortfall.

According to the agency's latest operational update, WFP Country Director Andrea Bagnoli and his team managed to assist roughly 185,800 people across the country using 319 metric tons of food and over \$509,000 in cash transfers. But with total operational needs sitting at \$12 million through December, the agency is operating with only half the money it needs.

Because money is so tight, direct food assistance for refugees, asylum seekers, and returning Rwandan nationals remains capped at just 50 percent of their standard entitlement. The ongoing cuts come at a difficult time, as living costs rise and camp populations struggle to meet basic household needs.

Speaking on the urgent need to keep humanitarian supply lines open, Philippe Habinshuti, Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Emergency Management, emphasized that emergency support cannot be allowed to collapse completely.

"Sustaining food and nutrition assistance for vulnerable refugee families is essential to preserving human dignity," Habinshuti said. "We are working closely with our international partners to prevent a complete break in the food pipeline."

To reduce long-term reliance on emergency handouts, WFP, MINEMA, and UNHCR official Aissatou Ndiaye have spearheaded a joint socio-economic profiling project covering 28,000 refugee households. By collecting detailed data across five main camps, officials hope to identify families who can be safely transitioned off direct food aid and into national social protection programs and local job markets.

Despite the emergency funding pressures, WFP leadership is continuing to invest in projects designed to help young people build independent livelihoods in the agricultural sector.

During a recent visit to review field operations in Rwanda, Rania Dagash-Kamara, WFP Assistant Executive Director for Partnerships and Innovation, joined local teams to inspect the progress of the *Shora Neza* initiative. The program, run in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation, connects young entrepreneurs to commercial, climate-resilient farming supply chains.

“Building resilient food systems requires investing directly in young people,” Dagash-Kamara noted after meeting with local farmers. *“By linking youth to real market opportunities, we are helping families move away from emergency relief and toward real economic independence.”*

Alongside youth programs, WFP worked with Minister of Health Dr. Sabin Nsanzimana and roughly 200 public and private sector leaders to finalize Rwanda’s national Food Fortification Policy, aimed at making nutrient-rich foods more widely available across local markets.

For now, however, the immediate focus for Bagnoli and his team remains securing the \$10.7 million needed to keep basic food flowing to refugee families through the end of the year.