



**UNHCR**  
The UN Refugee Agency

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### **Olympic Athletes Run for Peace in Ulyankulu**

TABORA, 19 FEB 2010 - The second edition of the Ekiden Run for Peace is taking place today in the heart of Ulyankulu Settlement for Burundian refugees from 1972. Olympic athletes from Japan and Tanzania are joining 160 participants from Ulyankulu refugee settlement and surrounding villages, volunteers from Japan's Waseda University, Tanzanian Government officials, UNFPA and UNHCR staff and partners. Divided into 20 teams they will run a five-kilometre-long track through the centre of Ulyankulu to promote peace and gender equality.

In this event organized by UNHCR, in collaboration with UNFPA, Waseda University and the Embassy of Japan to Tanzania, the traditional Japanese Ekiden sport is used to foster support for solving protracted refugee situations in Africa and for the solutions strategy for Burundian refugees in the Old Settlements, and to promote sexual and reproductive health rights and gender equality in Tanzania.

As last year, when a first Ekiden Run for Peace took place in Mtabila refugee camp, Juma Ikangaa and Toshihiko Seko, two former top-athletes and rivals, are facing up against each other in this solidarity run. This time they are joined by Yuko Arimori, UNFPA Goodwill Ambassador and Olympic marathon runner from Japan. Just before the start-off of the Ekiden Run for Peace, Mr. Ikangaa addressed the public, "I am honoured to be here in Ulyankulu settlement together with my Japanese sport partners, refugees, newly naturalised and local communities. Sport is unifying us today to promote peace, solidarity with the newly naturalised and gender equality in Tanzania."

The refugees and newly naturalised in Ulyankulu, Tabora, and two other 'Old Settlements' in Rukwa are a community of successful small farmers. They fled Burundi in 1972 and have ever since lived in Ulyankulu, Mishamo and Katumba settlements. They have not only supported themselves since the early 1980s but have also produced significant food and cash-crop surpluses, contributing billions of Tanzania Shillings per year to District taxes and the economy. Over 38 years, they became gradually integrated with their hosts in Tanzania. However, their status as refugees restricted their movement within Tanzania.

But soon these 'Old Settlements' refugees will be able to move on and start their new lives as Tanzanians thanks to the decision of the Government of Tanzania to grant naturalisation to some 33,000 families who applied and qualified for Tanzanian citizenship. At the same time 53,500 refugees chose to return to Burundi and were assisted by UNHCR to do so in 2008 and 2009. The international community, in cooperation with UNHCR and partners, will support the initial phases of their final integration in the Tanzanian communities of their destination.

The 1972 refugees, thriving farmers living in self-sufficient settlement villages, differ from the refugees who fled from Burundi to Tanzania in the nineties and were mainly hosted in refugee camps in Kigoma and Kagera regions. Today the Burundian peace process has paved the way for their voluntary return. Since 2002 more than 500,000 Burundian refugees from the nineties returned to their home country. Some 35,000, for whom UNHCR and both governments actively promote return to Burundi, are still in Mtabila, the only remaining camp for Burundian refugees in Tanzania.

**UNHCR Representation in Japan Public Information**  
5-53-70 Jingumae, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo, UN House 6F  
Tel (81 3) 3499 2310 Fax (81 3) 3499 2272 [www.unhcr.or.jp](http://www.unhcr.or.jp)

