

INFORMATION BULLETIN



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération Internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

BURUNDI: REFUGEES FROM THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

5 July 2004

The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 181 countries.

In Brief

This Information Bulletin (no. 01/2004) is being issued for information only. The Federation is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

- *In Burundi: Anselme Katiyunuruza, Acting Secretary General, Burundi Red Cross, Bujumbura; Email croixrougeburundi2000@yahoo.fr; Phone 257.21.62.46, Fax 257.21.11.01*
- *In Kenya: Steve Penny, Federation Disaster Management Coordinator, Email ifrcke78@ifrc.org; Phone 254.20.283.51.17, Fax 254.20.271.84.15*
- *In Geneva: Josse Gillijns, Federation Regional Officer for Eastern Africa, Africa Dept; Email josse.gillijns@ifrc.org; Phone 41.22.730.42.24; Fax 41.22.733.03.95*

All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for a full description of the national society profile, please access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

The Situation

An estimated 25,000 to 31,000 refugees are reported to have crossed over into Burundi since 9 June 2004. The refugees were fleeing violence following heavy fighting between government forces and rebel soldiers who had captured the eastern border town of Bukavu. Although the government has regained control of the town, the refugees are still camping at three sites in Karurama, Rugombo (both in Cibitoke province) and Gatumba in Bujumbura rural. Another 5,000 people are reportedly camped in Rwanda while thousands more are internally displaced in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

The refugee caseloads are mainly from the three ethnic groups of Bafurero, Banyamulenge and Bashi. Local authorities expressed concerns over possible tension among these ethnic groups; to date, no major incidents have occurred. In line with concerns not to establish refugee sites close to the DRC border, the Burundi government has proposed new sites in Cankuzo and Rutana. A team from UNHCR was deployed to assess the suitability of these sites and will present their findings upon return.

The Government of Burundi has been holding coordination meetings with UN agencies, the [Burundi Red Cross](#), and various NGOs to evaluate the situation. UNHCR have appealed with health sector partners, particularly from

Burundi: Refugees from the DRC; Information Bulletin no. 1/2004

organizations which already have a presence on the ground. MSF is operational in health and MSF-Belgium and International Rescue Committee (IRC) have conducted a rapid assessment of health-nutrition and water and sanitation (WatSan) needs.

A programme to identify unaccompanied minors - being run by the ICRC, UNHCR and other partners - has identified approximately 300 minors based on information provided by the refugees.

WFP has delivered a 15-day ration of food to refugees in the three camps. CARE International has also distributed some food items and BP5 nutritional supplement. Catholic Relief Services (CRS) provided non-food items to 900 families. UNICEF has provided some firewood; however, there is no agency to distribute them.

To date, 35 cases of diarrhoea, six deaths, and four cholera cases have been reported. MSF-France is managing the patients. There is an acute water shortage in the camps; REGIDESO is providing 150 cubic meters of water daily, but even this is proving to be insufficient, especially for washing. This poses the threat of more cholera outbreaks. Additional WatSan needs are being coordinated by the IRC and the Austrian Relief Programme with support from UNICEF. Shelter is being addressed by GTZ that is constructing hangars to hold six and 12 families respectively. The road from the capital Bujumbura to Cibitoke is asphalt. The area is covered by both fixed and mobile telephone networks.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Staff from Burundi Red Cross conducted their first assessment in the centres of Gatumba and Cibitoke on 14 June, which led to a request for Federation support in assessing the situation for possible Red Cross interventions. A Federation assessment team deployed on 22 June identified a total caseload of 33,631 refugees:

- Karurama site - 7,815 refugees or 1,563 families mainly Banyamulenge;
- Rugombo site - 23,441 refugees or 6,725 families (both Bashi and Bafurero);
- Gatumba site - 2,375 refugees or 475 families.

The influx has led to overcrowding, particularly in Gatumba commune that has a local population of 51,000.

The national society has been linking closely with UNHCR and is attending daily inter-agency meetings as well as sector meetings for WatSan with OCHA¹. With the support of ICRC, volunteers from the Burundi Red Cross volunteers have taken on the responsibility for the regular (bi-weekly) disinfection of three refugee sites (Karurama, Rugombo and Gatumba), as well as the town of Cibitoke.

Close discussions with UNICEF has led to a request for the Red Cross to also take on further responsibilities in the areas of health and sanitation education as well as water monitoring including quality control. A full report of the Federation assessment team will be available at the Federation Regional Delegation in Nairobi this week.

Burundi Red Cross is working closely with UNHCR and has also been invited to attend daily inter-agency meetings with OCHA. A thorough screening to collect more accurate information is underway. The Federation Regional Delegation in Nairobi is maintaining close coordination with both ICRC Rwanda and ICRC Burundi.

It is recommended that the national society continues its interventions with regard to site disinfecting; this recommendation takes into consideration the outstanding needs, a request for support from UNHCR, and the capacity of the Burundi Red Cross. The schedule should be agreed with ICRC on health education and sensitization (to improve the capacity of UNCHR team in the field) and WatSan, particularly with regard to water monitoring, maintenance of water systems and site hygiene.

Burundi Red Cross has a network of volunteers in 14 out of 17 provinces which cover Burundi. The national society does not have any stocks; however, it has seven vehicles, three of which are in good condition but may need minor repairs.

[Click here to return to the title page or contact information.](#)

¹ OCHA – (UN) Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs