

# ***Zambia : Refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)***

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## ***Information Bulletin N° 01***

### ***The Disaster***

Attempting to flee increased conflict which erupted in early March in the southwest area of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), over 4,000 refugees have crossed into northern Zambia and are dispersed along the border area surrounding Kaputa, Zambia's most northerly town located near the DRC border. The influx is expected to continue. The majority of the new arrivals are located at a reception centre at a partially built school in the town, but many others are surviving in the open countryside with no shelter or facilities. The heavy rains typical during this time of the year has made the conditions more difficult. The refugees are currently being assisted by Government authorities, UNHCR, and Red Cross volunteers. Following discussions with the Government concerning the relocation of the refugees, two more permanent sites near Kasama and Mporokoso have been identified. A decision on which site to use will be taken soon. Some of the new arrivals are members of the military or police and have been disarmed by Zambia security forces. Two separate camps will therefore be established, one for civilians and one for disarmed military or police.

### ***Red Cross/Red Crescent Action***

In cooperation with the Government and UNHCR (which is the lead agency for refugees), the Zambia Red Cross staff and volunteers based in the Kaputo area are monitoring and assisting with the influx. UNHCR have asked the Zambia Red Cross to provide assistance in assessing the suitability of the refugee camp sites. In accordance with the contingency plan established by UNHCR and other agencies, the Zambia Red Cross have been selected to assume responsibility for refugee camp management. USD 5,000 were transferred to the Zambia Red Cross to enable them to mobilise and deploy their Headquarters team, and an allocation of CHF 30,000 has been released from the DREF in order to cover the initial costs of these activities. However, those latter funds would be reimbursed by UNHCR.

A Zambia Red Cross Headquarters emergency team consisting of four senior staff are due to arrive in the area on 12 March, followed soon after by a Federation WatSan Programme Officer arriving from Harare. The Federation, through the WatSan Programme Officer, will provide technical assistance in coordinating activities and in assessing the needs at the new camp or camps which are planned to be opened. A member of the Angola-based Regional WatSan Disaster Response Team is also scheduled to be deployed to the area next week to provide additional technical support. In addition, the disaster preparedness training conducted at the end of 1998 and early 1999 for the Zambia Red Cross staff and volunteers (with support from the Federation Regional Delegation) will prove extremely useful for this refugee situation.

## *Needs*

Initial reports indicate the need for plastic sheets for shelter, medical supplies, and water and sanitation materials. The more detailed needs assessment will determine actual needs.

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