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Information bulletin: Burundi Pre Election violence and Population Movement in Rwanda

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Date of issue: 2 May, 2015	
Date of disaster: 29 April 2015	Point of contact (name and title): Anselme Katiyunguruza, Secretary General Burundi Red Cross Society, Apollinaire Karamaga; Secretary General Rwanda Red Cross Society
Host National Societies: Burundi Red Cross Society and Rwanda Red Cross Society	
Number of people affected: Burundi 10,000; Rwanda 20,853	
N° of National Societies currently involved in the operation (if available and relevant): International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, International Committee of the Red Cross, Burundi Red Cross Society, Rwanda Red Cross Society, Danish Red Cross Society, Netherlands Red Cross, Belgian Red Cross-CF, Belgian Red Cross-FL, Norwegian Red Cross, Finnish Red Cross, Spanish Red Cross.	
N° of other partner organizations involved in the operation (if available and relevant): UNHCR, WFP, UNICEF OCHA IOM, ADRA, Care international, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Ministry of Health, Plan Rwanda and World Vision (with local NGOs).	

This bulletin is being issued for information only and reflects the current situation and details available at this time.

The situation

Following an escalation in pre-election violence, Burundi Red Cross responded to the situation by establishing First Aid posts in 3 locations in Bujumbura to help those injured during demonstrations. These First Aid posts are treating a number of people on-site and transporting those seriously injured to nearby hospitals.

Despite the fact that Burundi Red Cross has an extensive elections contingency plan supported by Movement partners, the early onset of demonstrations has meant that many preparedness activities have been put on hold to allow the National Society to respond to the current needs.

Burundi endured a brutal 13-year civil war that claimed the life of over 300,000 people, between 1993 and 2005. It ended with the signing of peace accords and the current president of Burundi was elected. Burundi is also a country vulnerable to multiple risks (e.g. conflicts, natural disasters, epidemics, food insecurity and malnutrition).

On 27th April 2015 the Rwanda Red Cross estimated that 21,000 people had crossed the border into Rwanda to seek for refuge over the past weeks. The daily arrival figure has reached on average 3,000 people in the past five days. These refugees are being hosted in four transit camps as per the Rwanda Red Cross recent reports. UNHCR estimate an increase to 50,000 refugees in coming weeks.

The refugees are surviving with minimal supplies in the two transit centres of Gashora-Bugesera and Muyira-Nyanza. The influx of refugees is in the Eastern & Southern provinces of Rwanda, but they have also recently increased in Western province, in the district of Rusizi bordering the Cibitoke district of Burundi.

IFRC regional office is supporting Burundi and Rwanda Red Cross Societies to respond to the humanitarian needs and to ensure close collaboration and coordination between the two National Societies.

Burundi

Confrontations between the protesters and the police started on Sunday 26th April in three communes of Bujumbura: Musaga (south area), Nyakabiga (central area) and Cibitoke commune (north area).

In the South area of Bujumbura, the Burundian Red Cross (BRCS) has a First Aid post covering Kinindo, Musaga and Kanyosha communes. In the North area, the BRCS First Aid post is based at Ngaragara training center covering the communes of Ngagara, Kamenge, Kinama, Cibitoke and Buterere communes. In the Central area, the First Aid post is based at the headquarters of the BRCS covering Bwiz, Buyenzi, Nyakabiga and Rohero communes.

Rwanda

As of 28 April 15, Burundi refugee influx continued to increase in both transit/reception centres of Gashora-Bugesera and Muyira-Nyanza. The number of children admitted in the camp continues to increase, as compared to adults who themselves chose to stay behind to take care of their properties. The highest number of refugees is in the Eastern and Southern provinces, but currently they have increased in western province, districts of Rusizi that border's kibitoki district of Burundi.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC), Eastern Africa and Indian Ocean Island Regional office (EAIOI) has been supporting the Burundi Red Cross in developing an Elections Contingency Plan. This has been a joint exercise which involved the ICRC in-country office, Disaster Management, Humanitarian Diplomacy, WASH, Health, Communication and Beneficiary Communication departments of the Burundi Red Cross. The IFRC EAIOI office is also keeping in close contact with Rwanda Red Cross to monitor the situation. Both the Burundi Red Cross and the Rwanda Red Cross are preparing to request for two separate DREFs.

The Burundi Red Cross Elections Contingency Plan was officially launched on the 22nd January 2015 in Bujumbura, and discussed with RC and non RC movement partners. The IFRC then supported the BRCS in coordination and fundraising activities for the preparedness plan. The IFRC is keeping close contact with the BRCS and its partners.

The implementation of the preparedness plan, which targets the eight most at risk provinces, started in January 2015. Their approach consists of two main aspects:

1. Preparing the response with a number of staff and volunteers' trainings (in WASH, Psychological support, dead body management, First Aid, safer access, stock management, etc), and prepositioning in Watsan, Health and Relief sectors.
2. Reducing risks of violence by sensitizing parliamentarians and ministers' representatives, local authorities, religious and opinion leaders on the fundamental principles of the RC movement, the culture of non-violence and the auxiliary role of the RC. Youth groups and teachers are also being sensitized on violence prevention using YABC approach. Lastly the entire population accessing radios is sensitized on the same topics on a daily basis with radio spots, radio drama and live radio shows.

The partners who are currently supporting the implementation of the preparedness plan are: ICRC Burundi and Geneva offices, IFRC EAIOI Regional Office and IFRC Geneva, Belgian Red Cross / Community Flanders, Belgian Red Cross / Francophone Community, Finnish Red Cross, Netherlands Red Cross, Norwegian Red Cross and Spanish Red Cross.

The Rwandan Red Cross Society' volunteers in both transit camps have continued to support registration process at entry points at the border, to distribute food and non-food items, to work on hygiene community sensitization, distribution of tents, identification of the most vulnerable that need special care, support family tracing and First Aid services.

The Government of Rwanda has allocated hectares of land in the Mahama sector of Kirehe District in the eastern province for a new refugee camp to host up to 20,000 individuals. Camp Coordination and management of all camp issues is being handled by the Ministry of Disaster Management and refugee Affair (MIDIMAR) with UNCHR, as well as camp site identification and relocation of the communities for the camping of the refugee. The Rwandan Red Cross Society is in discussions with the government to determine what future role the National Society should play to best support the government.

Current needs and gaps

Burundi

As of the 27th April, all preparedness activities were put on hold as the BRCS team shifted to the first phase of response activities including setting up of First Aid posts. Potential partners from within and outside the RC Movement will be informed as soon as the response plan is fully activated.

The objective of the contingency plan was to provide humanitarian assistance for up to 4000 victims in the eight most at risk provinces (Bujumbura mairie, Bujumbura rural, Bubanza, Bururi, Makamba, Muyinga, Cibitoke and Kirundo) for a period of at least seven months. Burundi Red Cross will continue to monitor the situation across the country and will update its response plan based on the needs of those affected.

Rwanda

With over 20,853 Burundian refugees in the Rwandan transit camps, there are increasing and urgent needs. Focus will mainly be on Food security and Livelihoods; Shelter and NFIs; Water, Sanitation and Hygiene; Health; Protection; Logistics; Camp Coordination and Camp Management; Nutrition and education. With hundreds of new arrivals daily, these needs become more dire by the day.

Family tracing is a major need for many of the refugees who have been separated from their family members. Of the 20,853 refugees recorded, most are children under 18, many of whom would be with only one or neither of their parents.

The majority of the Burundian refugees fled across the border with minimal possessions. This means there is a great need for both food and non-food items within the transit centres, including shelters.

Furthermore the under-resourced transit centers and dense living conditions, hygiene promotion and access to clean water are also urgently needed in order to minimize water-borne diseases

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

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How we work

All IFRC assistance seeks to adhere to the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) in Disaster Relief and the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (Sphere) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The IFRC's vision is to inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by National Societies, with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

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The IFRC's work is guided by Strategy 2020 which puts forward three strategic aims:

1. Save lives, protect livelihoods, and strengthen recovery from disaster and crises.
2. Enable healthy and safe living.
3. Promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace.