

BURUNDI, RWANDA, TANZANIA,

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1997

**UGANDA & ZAIRE: RWANDAN AND
BURUNDIAN REFUGEES***emergency appeal no. 19/96**situation report no. 02**period covered: 1 October - 31 December 1996****Summary***

The Red Cross Societies of Zaire, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda aided by the International Federation, had to contend with three months of arduous, confusing and often incomprehensible happenings during the reporting period. Camps once known as "the largest refugee camps in the world" simply ceased to exist, as their inhabitants fled for their lives due to fighting, or made the long, difficult march back home. By the end of the year, some 1.3 million Rwandans were back in their home communes, facing a difficult future in a country still beset by ethnic tensions. Eastern Zaire, previously populated by hundreds of thousands of refugees had become a conflict zone from which scores of thousands fled westwards into dense bush, resurfacing weeks later, in a weary condition, unable or unwilling to get back to Rwanda. Many thousands of Burundian refugees still live in Federation-run camps in Rwanda and Tanzania, avoiding conflict in their strife-torn country.

The context

This situation report aims to summarise the response of the International Federation and its member National Societies to the rapidly-changing and often chaotic events caused by conflict and enormous population movements during the last three months of 1996 in the Great Lakes region of Africa.

Latest events

Long-standing disputes over nationality and land rights in Eastern Kivu, Zaire triggered a conflict between the so-called Banyamulenge rebels and the Zairean army at the start of October. In a series of advances, the rebels, joined by a variety of other groups, took control of a vast sector of Zairean territory - by the end of the year the coalition AFDL

forces (Alliance des Forces Democratiques pour la Liberation du Congo-Zaire) ruled over a 100 kilometre-wide belt extending from Fizi in the south to Bunia in the north.

The area was since mid 1994 home to over a million Rwandan and Burundian refugees. Fighting and insecurity led aid agencies to first reduce and then stop the assistance in the areas of Uvira, Bukavu and Goma. Massive population movements started, with over a quarter of a million people leaving the Uvira camps in the direction of Bukavu. Humanitarian agencies were also forced out by the fighting, and 110,000 refugees and IDPs were effectively lost in the jungle for several weeks.

November and December 1996 saw the mass return to Rwanda of refugees from the camps in Zaire and Tanzania in two large and unexpected waves. The first movement, of 650,000 refugees from Kivu put enormous strain on the coping capacities of local communities and aid agencies. Energetically driven by the government of Rwanda, the return of the refugees to their home communes was completed in three weeks. The repatriation of 480,000 from Tanzania, announced with some notice, found aid agencies better prepared. By the end of the year, over 1,300,000 people had come back to Rwanda, creating a wide set of opportunities for and threats to the reconstruction of Rwandan society.

The almost constant influx of Burundian refugees into Tanzania saw some peaks during the last three months of the year, coinciding with waves of violence inside the troubled Central African country. At the same time the Kivu crisis spilled over to Tanzania, with tens of thousands of Zairean and Burundian refugees crossing lake Tanganyika into Kigoma.

In Uganda, the Federation and Uganda Red Cross Society were running a smooth operation for a relatively limited number of Rwandan refugees in the camps of Orukinga and Nakivale up to mid-November, when hostilities between Zaire-backed rebels and Ugandan troops flared in the south-west of the country. This led to the displacement of tens of thousands of civilians in and around Kasese. Insecurity continued for the following weeks, with clashes spreading across the border into Zaire. Meanwhile, thousands of refugees poured into Uganda from the same area of eastern Zaire, fleeing clashes between Banyamulenge rebels and the Zairean army.

The area around Mbarara was affected at the beginning of December when Rwandan refugees, refusing to repatriate from Tanzania, started crossing into Uganda. At the end of the month, about 3,500 were being cared for by the Federation and Uganda Red Cross.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Tanzania

The repatriation exercise lasted for 16 days. Red Cross action during that time consisted of the immediate establishment of way stations where first aid and other basic health services were offered. In addition, a water production plant was established close to the border from which 1.7 million litres were transported by Red Cross tankers to OXFAM water points.

During the first week of December, Tanzania Red Cross and the Federation were asked to take over camp management and health activities in the Moyovosi camp for Burundian refugees, in the Kigoma region. Extra efforts were required during the month, as a

number of camp management procedures had to be put into place from scratch. Also, a malaria epidemic was taking a severe toll.

While activities in the Lukole camps continued throughout the reporting period, including camp management, preventive and curative health care and the distribution of approximately 400 MT of food per month, assistance in Benaco came to an abrupt halt when the camp emptied due to repatriation. During the last three months of 1996, food distributions included 4,714 MT of maize grain, 1,410 MT of beans, 143.1 MT of CSB and 266 MT of vegetable oil. Non food aid mainly consisted of soap, 54.8 MT of which were distributed in Benaco. The Referral Hospital gave 2,768 consultations to OPD patients and 1,184 patients were admitted as in-patients.

Zaire

Operations in Goma and Bukavu, where the Federation and Zairian Red Cross were distributing an average of almost 5,000 MT of food per month, came to a sudden end in October because of the Kivu conflict. Before the end of the month both sub-Delegations had to be evacuated, leaving the National Society to the grim task of collecting the bodies of conflict victims. In mid-November, the ICRC resumed some of its activities.

Burundi

Since the end of August, with the departure of virtually all Rwandan refugees from Burundi, activities have been reoriented towards assistance to the most vulnerable groups (unaccompanied children, pregnant women, widows, single-headed families, elderly, handicapped) in the areas where the situation permits the Burundi Red Cross to operate (Bujumbura ville, Ngozi, Kayanza, Kirundo and Muyinga). The target population is estimated at 80,000, scattered in 65 temporary shelters in 34 communes. Vulnerable groups have received timely distributions of non-food items (blankets, plastic sheeting and soap).

In addition, the Federation and Burundi Red Cross are engaged in the following activities:

- ◆ assistance to approximately 1,500 Rwandan refugees and Burundian returnees settled in the camps of Magara and Rukuramigabo;
- ◆ social programmes and distribution of warm meals to 100 street children in Ngozi;
- ◆ non-food assistance to various institutions (orphanages, handicapped centres);
- ◆ distribution of food and firewood to 400 Zairean refugees at Gihanga camp, near Bujumbura;
- ◆ camp management and food/non-food distributions for the Gatumba transit camp, hosting Burundian returnees from Zaire (15,000 at peak in November, around 1,500 by the end of the year);
- ◆ camp management and food/non-food distributions in the small settlement of Maramwa, which recently saw the influx of a few hundred displaced in a serious state of malnutrition.

Rwanda

At the beginning of October, the Rwanda Delegation started reinforcing itself in anticipation of forthcoming needs. The logistics, health and relief departments were strengthened, two sub-Delegations were set up and both the vehicle fleet and the telecommunications system were upgraded thanks to various donations. At the onset of the emergency, the Japanese, German and Danish Red Cross responded with the deployment of emergency Response Units. Thanks to the generous contribution of the Swedish government, an air bridge (over 30 rotations) was established with the Operations Support Unit in Nairobi to deliver needed commodities to Kigali.

During the actual repatriation, the Rwanda Red Cross with the assistance of the Federation set up tens of assistance points, including first aid, water and emergency food distribution (over 10 MT of high protein biscuits). Special sites were built overnight to host the most vulnerable, operated for 72 to 96 hours, then dismantled and re-built in other locations to follow the immense flow of people.

As soon as the returnees started to arrive in their communes, food and non-food distributions were started to facilitate their re-insertion:

	Beneficiaries	Maize (MT)	Peas (MT)	Oil (MT)	Salt (MT)
Gisenyi	43,892	324.5	97.3	16.2	0
Ruhengeri	19,130	229.5	68.90	11.5	0
Kigali rural	22,581	277	78.2	13.69	2.8
Kigali ville	3,736	46.4	13.9	2.7	0.7
Mutara	6,296	78.6	22.6	0	0.2

	Beneficiaries	Soap	Jerry cans	Mats	Blankets	Hoes
Kigali rural	7,352	7,554	3,228	0.00	4,477	4,547
Kigali ville	1,813	1,082	618	628	870	637
Mutara	1,700	0	1,700	0	0	0

Uganda

Over the reporting period, The Federation/Uganda Red Cross distributed 369.3 MT of food and a variety of non-food items, including 770 blankets, 3,690 pieces of plastic sheeting and 408 jerry cans, to the camps of Orukinga and Nakivale. Orukinga dispensary, serving both refugees and local population, gave 9,169 consultations; while 4,811 consultations were given in Nakivale.

Distributions in the Kisoro/Matanda area included over 196 MT of food, 2,793 pieces of plastic sheeting, 4,723 jerry cans and 2,248 kitchen sets.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

An exhausting three months period for refugees, IDPs and humanitarians alike. The future is still uncertain, with the Great Lakes region subject to ongoing and deepening

unrest. As this situation report was being compiled, the declaration of war by Zaire against rebel forces in the east of the country, coupled with the murder of three Spanish aid workers in Ruhengeri, Rwanda, cast renewed shadows on hopes for regional stability and access to the most vulnerable. The International Federation is appealing for CHF 54.3 million to care for one million beneficiaries in 1997.

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