

ZAMBIA: Refugee Influx

11 June 1999

**appeal no. 11/99; Revised programme length from March 1999 - March 2000
situation report no. 1
period covered: March - May, 1999**

The refugee assistance operation initially encountered several operational constraints in the start-up process, but effective discussions between the Zambia Red Cross Society (ZRCS), the Federation, and UNHCR (the lead agency) resulted in increased collaboration and co-operation, and improved service delivery particularly in the areas of camp management and sectoral assistance. Despite the low donor response to the Appeal, the Federation's support to the ZRCS and this operation has proved key in assessing the areas which needed improvements, and undertaking the measures necessary to increasing the capacity of the ZRCS. The revised programme length is from March 1999 - March 2000 (12 months).

The context

The fighting that began in August 1998 between forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and rebel groups escalated between November 1998 to March 1999, resulting in significant internal population movements as well as forcing some 25,000 civilians to cross borders to neighbouring countries in search of protection and assistance.

The first wave of 16,000 refugees have been assisted at the Kaputa Transit Camp with basic health care, water and sanitation facilities, food and non food support (plastic sheeting, limited number of jerrycans, cooking utensils and blankets for infants).

The transfer of Congolese refugees from Kaputa to Mporokoso-Mwange started on April 17. To date, 11,499 have now temporarily settled in Mwange-Mporokoso. Another 7,000-9,000 refugees settled in the local community of Lamba Chombwe.

The arrival of the Congolese refugees into Kaputa and Chienge has been encouraged by a number of factors, including strong ethnic links, cultural proximity, and intermingling between the people of the two countries living along the border areas.

The Zambia Red Cross Society (ZRCS) has been responding to the emergency situation since the refugees started arriving at a rate of 200 in March 1999. As the operation became more complex, the ZRCS requested the support of the International Federation to assist in improving service delivery both at the transit camp of Kaputa and the Mwange Settlement Scheme in Mporokoso.

Latest events

There have been some changes within the refugee leadership, but very little is known about the impact. In a recent development, an unidentified armed group crossed in to a Zambian village (Lamba Chombwe) on June 3, 1999, reportedly injuring two Zambian border guards and burned down houses. The tense security situation around Pweto town, with a population of approximately 200,000 remains unchanged.

The political and military situation in the DRC also remains unpredictable, and as a result the political, economic and social situation in the DRC is uncertain, and with the ongoing dialogue between the allied forces (Zimbabwe, Namibia, Angola) and Rwanda/Uganda that may give a better impetus to the re-scheduled Lusaka peace talks that would take place by the end of this month.

Considering the political and economic situation compounded by military uncertainties inside DRC and the geopolitical situation in the sub-Region, it has been a shared view to have a contingency plan for the worst scenario should Pweto or Lubumbashi fall under rebel attacks.

Situation in Kaputa and Mporokosso w

Kaputa district is situated at the northern end of the country (bordering the DRC) about 1,250 km's from the capital Lusaka. A transit camp had been settled and located at the periphery of Kaputa town. The town population is estimated at 4,000. The refugee influx has had a tremendous impact on the local infrastructure, particularly in the area of basic health services, water supply and local environmental issues. Several NGOs have been involved in various sectors: MSF-H, for the health dispensary, Irish Aid for the water supply, and the ZRCS/IFRC for warehousing, food and non food support, environmental health care such as sanitation, hygiene and overall responsibility for camp management. Cholera has posed a major health threat, especially in Lombwe Chomba and Muchenja (14 kms from Kaputa town), where the local population is greatly out-numbered by refugees. There have been 346 reported cases between 15 May and 22 May (275 Congolese and 71 Zambians), with 6 deaths.

The Kaputa transit camp is now completely empty except for 25 refugees who have reported to have stayed in Kaputa due to medical reasons.

Mporokoso is also situated in the northern part of the country, 1,150 km's from the capital. The population in the district is estimated at 90,000, of which about 8,000 live in Mporokoso town. There is one government hospital, staffed with an inadequate health personnel to service the town and district population. There is also one clinic in Kalabwe staffed by a clinical officer, two nurses and several paramedical staff.

Mwange Settlement Scheme is located 34 km's from Mporokoso town. Water is provided by a spring source. The physical plan of the settlement scheme is designed to accommodate approximately 6,000 houses (4 meters x 5 meters) or up to 30,000 persons.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

The ZRCS, with its network of 53 district branches, was requested by UNHCR and the Government to be a major operating partner both for Kaputa transit camp and Mporokoso-Mwange Settlement Scheme. At the outset, the volunteers from the Local Chapter and a pool of Senior staff from the national headquarters and provincial branches attempted to provide the necessary management services, but the ZRCS has been facing serious management constraints since last year. There has been a high turnover of staff, with many new replacements who require further Red Cross training and experience. Due to the lack of capacity and expertise in relief operations, the National Society has faced significant problems in managing the operation. This situation has placed the National Society in a difficult position, and prompted the Federation to provide additional support to meet the humanitarian challenge.

Since mid-March the Federation has temporarily assigned two regional delegates who were later joined in mid-April by a third delegate assigned to assist the National Society in fulfilling its commitment for the Kaputa transit camp and Mwange settlement scheme in Mporokoso. Since mid-May, the Federation through the Regional Delegation has made significant efforts to improve the situation. The relief team currently consists of three qualified Federation delegates, composed of one Relief Coordinator based in Lusaka, two relief delegates based in Mporokoso, and one Regional Water sanitation delegate based in Mporokoso.

Operational achievements w

Kaputa Camp, which can accommodate up to 15,000 refugees, was set up by the Red Cross in close collaboration with UNHCR. Local authorities have allocated plots of land to families. The ZRCS has provided plastic sheeting, limited quantities of kitchen utensils, and blankets for infants and lactating mothers as well as to elderly and the handicapped.

Hygiene/Environment w

One tablet of soap per person and 389 trench latrine with double compartments have been built and made available to refugees. The ZRCS volunteers provided weekly spraying, disinfectants, and chlorine at hazardous points and set up garbage pits.

The ZRCS/Federation have also collaborated with Irish Aid in a water supply operation, consisting of pumping from the water source to provide clean water at 14 water distribution points, including direct drawing of water from water-trucks. The ZRCS also provided volunteers to work in collaboration with MSF in the dispensary and health promotion areas which the ZRCS and Federation jointly assumed in early May.

Food and non-food item distribution w

A weekly food basket with standard daily rations provided by WFP consisting of maize-flour, oil, peas, and salt for a beneficiary caseload of 19,055 people was distributed. The ZRCS has carried out an initial limited distribution of plastic sheeting, kitchen utensils, soap, and blankets for vulnerable refugees, particularly infants and lactating mothers as well as elderly and the handicapped.

	Food and non-food distribution report as at 31 May 1999.				
	Maize Meal (MT)	Salt (MT)	Cooking Oil (Litres)	Beans (MT)	Soap (Pieces)
Estimates	35	778	9,339	9,336	11,118
Actual	33	1,000	2,322	11,200	11,678

Refugee resettlement w

The ZRCS/Federation assisted UNHCR with the transfer of refugees from Kaputa to Mwange; first aid staff was fully involved in all activities from clearing the designated land to setting up water and sanitation facilities, reception, allocating plots, distributing food, and non food items

Health Care and Warehousing w

Close collaboration is maintained with MSF-H in the health and water and sanitation sectors, with Irish Aid/Oxfam and UNHCR assisting in the refugee community to establish leadership structure.

Outstanding needs

The response to the Appeal has been weak, and support (particularly cash) is required. Mporokoso, Mwange Settlement Scheme is located in an isolated setting, far from Lusaka and the other major towns of Mansa and Kasama in the northern districts. While there has been a significant improvement in the consultation, co-operation and co-ordination mechanism in respect to service delivery, the Zambia Red

Cross and the Federation need to continue improving the process of providing effective and efficient services to the refugee community. The Mwangi Settlement Scheme is 34 kms from Mporokoso town. With the road system causing logistical constraints, the possibility of improving service delivery is much more dependant on the logistics and communication capacity.

There is an urgent need for a Finance Administrator delegate to be based in Lusaka, as well as one additional relief delegate to strengthen the team in Kaputa-Mporokoso.

Support is required to address the significant capacity building needs of the operation. Communications also remain one of the significant constraints of the operation, with one HF Radio at the Red Cross office in Mporokoso and another one at the Meeting Centre in Mwangi Camp urgently required.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

Following recent discussions between the Regional Delegation and UNHCR's regional headquarters, effective working relations have now been put in place. Improvements in terms of warehousing, timely food and non food distribution, and transparent reporting of the ZRCS/Federation operation have contributed to establishing a good working relationship with the agencies implementing the operation as well as the refugees themselves. Ongoing dialogue and negotiation have resulted in increased coordination, with more clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and a decrease of overlapping efforts and duplication of assistance. Relations with partners have also improve with the ZRCS/Federation since the team has increased in the field both at Lusaka and Mporokoso. The National Society has made an effort to gain the confidence of the operational partners.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

Relations between the ZRCS/Federation and UNHCR, MSF were strained at the start of the operation, in large measure due to a lack of proper consultation and co-ordination over respective roles and responsibilities. The issues encountered by all the operational agencies during the last two months have now been resolved, resulting in more precise refugee population figures and better delivery of assistance. Likewise, the issues of co-ordination and collaboration have been addressed, and the Federation has played a key role in providing support to the ZRCS in improving service delivery and transparency. In view of the improvements made, donors are encouraged to provide both cash and in-kind support to this operation.

Should additional information be needed, please contact Richard Hunlédé, Team Leader for Southern Africa in charge of the Zambia Operation. Tel. +41 22 730 43 14 email: hunlede@ifrc.org

Peter Rees-Gildea
Director
Operations Funding and Reporting Department

Bekele Geleta
Director
Europe Department