

BURUNDI, RWANDA, TANZANIA, UGANDA AND ZAIRE: RWANDAN AND BURUNDIAN REFUGEES & RWANDA COUNTRY OPERATIONS

2 May 1997

appeal no. 01.02/97

situation report no. 1

period covered: 1 January - 24 April 1997

The current political and military situation in Zaire, Rwanda and Burundi is being monitored closely, while assistance to vulnerable populations is being carried out, insofar as it is feasible. Repatriation from Uganda to Rwanda continues, while operations for Burundian and Zairian refugees in Tanzania were maintained during the reporting period, despite heavy rains. Reconstruction activities have restarted in Rwanda after a temporary halt, while Red Cross activities in Burundi are being refocussed and revitalised.

The context

The Red Cross Societies of Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania, Uganda and Zaire, with the support of the International Federation, provide assistance to refugees, displaced people, returnees and vulnerable groups who have been placed at risk by conflict, war and disease in much of the Great Lakes region. During the reporting period conflict, disease and bad weather combined to hamper relief operations, but the efforts of National Societies and Federation Delegations continued notwithstanding.

Latest events

The major focus in the reporting period was the steady advance of the rebel alliance across a vast swathe of **Zaire**, their capture of the regional capitals of Kisangani (15 March) and Lubumbashi (12 April) and their control of precious mineral resources. Although the cities fell with hardly any bloodshed, tens of thousands of Rwandan refugees and an unknown number of Zairians displaced or trapped by the fighting were cut off, with little or no access to food or medical treatment.

Attempts by foreign leaders such as Nelson Mandela to bring the parties to negotiations were partially successful but hampered by Mr Kabila's insistence on the participation of

President Mobutu. Troops from the US, France and Belgium were deployed to neighbouring Congo to help in the event of expatriate evacuation from Kinshasa.

Uncertainty grew in **Rwanda** during the period, with the murder of twelve humanitarian workers and the consequent scaling down of humanitarian operations. To improve security the police force was doubled to more than 15,000. Trials of those alleged to have been involved in the 1994 genocide gained momentum, with a number of people being sentenced to death, but international concern has been raised over whether the trials were fair and just. At the same time the UN tribunal in Arusha was dogged by delays and revelations of chronic mismanagement which prompted the UN Secretary General to fire two senior staff.

In **Burundi**, sanctions imposed after the 1996 military coup, which had caused added hardship for vulnerable groups, were relaxed, allowing humanitarian organisations to import relief supplies. Meanwhile, up to 500,000 Burundians have been placed in "regroupement" camps by the Government, a measure that has been criticised by humanitarian organisations and governments. The situation remained volatile with frequent killings by government troops and opposition militia. In March an attempted coup was halted with the arrests of those accused. Violence in the capital, Bujumbura, escalated with a series of landmine explosions which claimed eleven lives in a month.

Rebel activity caused over 1,000 newly-arrived Rwandan refugees to leave **Uganda** for Zaire, but a further 15,000 have registered for repatriation. Elsewhere Uganda has been more adversely affected by the conflict with Sudan but on a positive note the IMF and the World Bank have agreed to write off some loans to Uganda under a new programme to benefit very poor countries.

The political environment in south western Uganda was characterised by actions of the Ugandan ADF rebels (Allied Democratic Front) but due to a combination of events in Zaire and action taken by the Ugandan army this movement was no longer of significance by the end of March. In mid-March however there were reports of rebel activity causing 8,159 refugees to flee from Kisoro and Matanda camps, presumably returning to Zaire. A March grenade attack on a community bordering Orukinga camp has placed great strain on refugee/local population relations, and has resulted in further calls for repatriation or relocation.

Tanzania is stable, but carries a heavy regional refugee caseload. The numbers of Zairean and Burundian refugees in the Kigoma region increased steadily from early January by which time an estimated 175,000 were already present in the area. Preparations for these refugees were poor, and the siting of Lugufu camp is particularly questionable as its current location is little more than a swamp. Poor roads and bad weather are exacerbating the problem.

The refugee crisis in Zaire has spread to the borders of neighbouring Angola, Zambia and Central African Republic as Rwandans and Zairians alike fled troop advances between November 1996 and March 1997.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Zaire •

Acting under immense security and logistical constraints the Red Cross Society of the Republic of Zaire (ZRC) was nevertheless able to provide limited assistance to 5,000 Zairians displaced in Kisangani and to another 100,000 Rwandans between Kisangani and

Ubundu. For a time, it was the only humanitarian organisation able to carry out any relief work on behalf of the vulnerable population. With the fall of Kisangani the responsibility of supporting the relief efforts of the ZRC's Haut Zaire committee was assumed by the ICRC.

In January, six Swedish Air Force Hercules flights delivered over 55 mt of Red Cross aid (principally rice, beans, oil and salt) from Nairobi to Kisangani for the benefit of displaced persons. The recovery of items from Goma/Bukavu and the settling of outstanding accounts was also ongoing during the period.

The International Federation has opened a Delegation in Kinshasa, after many months supporting the efforts of Zairian Red Cross from the Regional Delegation in Brazzaville.

To equip the National Society to cope with the situation, a training workshop for senior management of the ZRC in Disaster Prevention and Preparedness was held in Kinshasa in early April. Immediately after the workshop, two teams were despatched to Mbandaka, Bandundu and Bas Zaire. The Mbandaka team distributed USD 15,000-worth of medicines to combat the cholera outbreak there, and organised regional DPP seminars.

Rwanda •

In February nine humanitarian workers were murdered, six in Cyangugu province and three in Ruhengeri. Consultations, involving UN agencies, NGOs, and embassies, resulted in a decision by the Delegation to reduce activities and to cut the number of delegates from 24 to six. The team is now up to nine and limited operations are being resumed.

The situation has stabilised, although tensions related to repatriations from Zaire were observed in Gisenyi and Ruhengeri prefectures. Buffer stocks for 30,000 people have been positioned in Gisenyi for returnees.

The International Federation and Rwandan Red Cross's programme up to the end of June includes house construction (up to 1,500 by the end of the year), supporting the Rwandan Red Cross with Community Based First Aid, school feeding, institutional development and Disaster Prevention and Preparedness programmes. Food security and social support programmes, which were included in the original appeal, are currently on hold.

The Federation is also assisting the Rwanda Red Cross in preparing for its General Assembly in July 1997, finalising its operational plan and budget, supporting small scale income generating projects and following up on the recommendation of a Federation consultancy mission on resource development which took place in February.

Food distributions continued into January with 109,836 beneficiaries receiving 873,591 kg of food. Distribution to secondary schools was restricted to Butare and Gitarama in January as Ruhengeri and Gisenyi were not safe.

In March, goals and curriculum for the Community Based first aid programme were presented to the ministry of health. Meanwhile 16 students were selected and started training as anaesthetic nurses in mid-January at the Kigali Health Institute.

The first 25 units of the pilot shelter project, in Kivuye/Byumba were completed by the end of 1996. The second phase of 33 units in nearby Cyumba is nearing completion. Agreement has been reached for the construction of 140 houses in Kigarama/Kibungo, 120 more in Mounini/Kibungo and discussions are ongoing to find a site in Kanombe/Kigali Rural.

Five small income generation projects have been proposed, with the aim of raising finances for RRC local committees. Swiss Red Cross has accepted a financing proposal put forward by the Branch Development delegate.

Burundi •

Sanctions imposed following last year's military coup in Burundi have been relaxed to allow humanitarian organisations to import food, medicines and agricultural items. The Government has taken the controversial decision to place 500,000 of its citizens in "regroupement" camps, where conditions are said to be deplorable.

Burundi Red Cross (BRC) is assisting 100,000 lone elderly, single parents, orphans, minors with children and the handicapped in five Northern provinces with non-food items, seeds and agricultural tools, as required. The Society is also providing health education and campaigns against epidemics for regrouped persons, refugees and the displaced population.

In Bujumbura distributions continued to Gihanga and Gatumba camps. Phase two of the health centre at Maramvya was constructed by the end of January including a medical centre, a nutritional centre and shelter for 1,500 persons.

Training of community health teams, fighting the typhus epidemic and rehabilitation of five health centres continued during the reporting period. In the area of Institutional development the priorities were creation of more local committees through the health teams, and setting up small offices in each province.

In Gatumba returnees can stay for a maximum of seven days, receiving food distributed by the Red Cross who are also responsible for construction/upkeep of the site. In March WFP food was distributed by Red Cross workers to 3,216 beneficiaries while UNHCR food was distributed to 263 children under five years of age.

A Bujumbura "Kitchen" project has been readapted and WFP will provide food to vulnerable populations for six months through it. A finalised proposal will shortly be sent to the Secretariat.

The Federation is concentrating its efforts on capacity building and the institutional development of BRC. An emergency plan to deal with the possible repatriation of 260,000 Burundian refugees from Tanzania is being elaborated and a Federation mission in May will refocus assistance and involvement in Burundi.

Uganda •

The Federation and the Ugandan Red Cross continued their operations in support of refugees in the following camps :

- ◆ Kisoro - pop 9,836 in January (transit camp) made up of Zairians and Rwandan Hutus.
- ◆ Matanda - pop 6,143 in January (transit camp) made up of Zairians and Rwandan Hutus.
- ◆ Orukinga - pop 12,112 in January, mainly Rwandan Hutus.
- ◆ Nakivale - pop 2,352 in January, made up of Somalis, Kenyans, Ethiopians and Rwandans.

Activities in all camps include relief distribution, shelter, water and sanitation, social services, education and health. In the four camps where the URCS/Federation operates there are no other NGOs or government agencies working.

New refugee influxes combined with a government education campaign has led to severe classroom congestion in primary schools. Health education continued along with the provision of both curative and preventive health care.

Water and sanitation activities continued with 5 local staff. The Austrian Red Cross ERU (Emergency Response Unit) maintained production of 45,000 - 70,000 litres of safe drinking water per day at Matanda camp, before completing its mission in late April.

Rebel activity on the outskirts of Matanda in March caused over half of a 2,500-strong recent influx of Rwandan refugees to leave the camp and move into Zaire. Their whereabouts is currently unknown. Also in March, a grenade attack near Orukinga camp, which killed one person and injured four others, created tensions between refugees and local people.

By April 15, some 15,000 Rwandans had registered for repatriation with UNHCR. It is envisaged that all will have moved before the end of October.

Tanzania •

The Tanzania Red Cross operation was beset by tragedy during the reporting period, as two delegates and one Tanzanian Red Cross Society (TRCS) staff member were killed in a car accident, while another delegate died from malaria. The Delegates were part of a German Emergency Response Unit (ERU). During the reporting period, ERUs from Sweden (mass water, Kasulu) and two from Germany (specialised water and basic health care) were deployed.

Fighting in Zaire has led to the movement of large numbers of refugees into Tanzania. In addition, up to 600 Burundians arrive each day, to swell the total refugee caseload close to almost 500,000 people. The Federation/TRCS currently caters for 76,000 in the Kasulu area and another 50,000 in Lugufu.

Kigoma

In January the Federation closed down its operation in Ngara, handing over remaining responsibilities to the Tanzanian Red Cross. The operation covers services to 90,000 Burundian refugees and the TRCS has signed a contract with UNHCR to carry out camp management activities.

Assets, and some personnel have been transferred to the new operation in the Kigoma area which has developed rapidly into the largest Federation operation in the Great Lakes region. By early March TRCS/Federation were active in two camps in the Kasulu district (Muyovosi and Mtabila) and Lugufu camp 80 kms east of Kigoma.

The closure of the Federation operation in Ngara should help to ease the situation in Kigoma as experienced staff take some of the pressure off exhausted personnel.

Muyovosi and Mtabila

In Muyovosi (population 40,500) the Federation is responsible for preventive and curative health care as well as relief supply and camp management. Mtabila camp has existed since

1994 with a population of 13,000. Three extensions have since been added, adding 16,000 to a population which is expected to reach around 40,000. Red Cross responsibilities in Mtabila include health and water and sanitation in the three extensions.

In Kasulu Red Cross operations were assisted by a Swedish ERU (Emergency Response Unit) which took up responsibility for water and sanitation in late January 1997. This team quickly began establishing a proper water supply to the Mtabila extensions following which efforts concentrated on the fabrication of slabs for family latrines and the training of vector control teams.

Health services were also considerably improved during February and March for the Kasulu camps, although camp management has been seriously affected by the poor condition of the roads between Muyovosi and Mtabila. In March refugee influx from Burundi dropped from 200 to 300 per day to just a handful, possibly because people in Burundi were waiting for the harvest or because the Burundian army has cleared border regions.

Lugufu

Lugufu state farm was identified as a possible site by UNHCR and plans for a 255,000 camp were drawn up by November 1996, but formal consent to use the site was withheld by the Regional Commissioner until January 1997 despite approval from the Tanzanian government. By this stage the build up of Zairian refugees in Kigoma was approaching 20,000.

Red Cross staff have worked around the clock to receive refugees in the minimum time possible. Again operations were assisted by a mass water and a health team, this time from the German Red Cross team and by 10 February TRCS and the GRC were able to provide water and health facilities. The GRC team has completed its mission.

In Kigoma an office was set up to assist in the Kasulu and Lugufu operations offering administrative support, warehouse facilities etc.

The entire operation has had to plan for the very real possibility of further influxes of refugees whilst at the same time trying to cope with current constraints. However, around 1,500 refugees have signed up for repatriation from Lugufu, and it is thought that this number will grow as conditions in their home communities normalise.

The WFP food ration in the Kasulu operation has been worryingly low but improved in March, when the Federation supplemented the UNHCR pipeline of non-food items. The priority in Lugufu remains construction, particularly improving roads and drainage around the site.

The hospital at Benaco closed at the end of February and its functions were taken over by the local district hospital. Equipment was transferred to Lugufu camps, 80 km away.

OSU Nairobi •

Technical advisory missions to Tanzania were conducted by the regional fleet manager to support a temporary reduction of logistics delegates. The regional logistics delegate and the warehousing officer travelled to Kigoma to assist the Federation/Tanzania Red Cross in establishing warehousing and purchasing systems. The regional telecom delegate has been on an extended mission in Tanzania to set up various telecom stations in the operational areas of Kigoma, Lugufu and Kasulu.

The Swedish Air Force concluded its mission with the Federation conducting a total of 43 flights ferrying 430 MT of cargo. During the quarter, 15 flights were conducted carrying 135 MT of relief items. Destinations included Kisangani, Mwanza, Brazzaville and Bujumbura. A special flight was arranged to repatriate the bodies of three Spanish aid workers killed in Rwanda.

Special FED 01/02 King Air flights were organised for the German ERU Team deployed in western Tanzania. In February, FED 01/02 flight operations were altered to allow for the additional destination of Kigoma, Tanzania.

ZRC and the Federation's new country Delegation have set about identifying vulnerable groups in Kinshasa and, with the support of the Operations Support Unit in Nairobi, are receiving 30 mt of emergency supplies through a newly-established airbridge. These goods will be distributed to 8,000 displaced and to nutritional rehabilitation centres in early May. Distribution of emergency medical supplies to selected institutions is being discussed with ZRC.

Regional Delegation •

At the Regional Delegation in Nairobi a Delegate is tasked with assisting the Head of Regional Delegation in monitoring the situation and needs in the Great Lakes. In Geneva, Secretariat staff participate in the monitoring of and strategic planning for humanitarian intervention in the region along with UN agencies and other organisations.

Outstanding needs

Coverage for this appeal has been a fair 25% to date, but cash and in-kind support is still very much needed to allow the Federation and the five National Societies to respond to volatile, rapidly-changing needs. The Federation will issue revised plans for operations in the area in June/July 1997.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

The Delegations and National Societies consult regularly and in-depth with governments, UN agencies and NGOs to define joint strategies for action under the prevailing constraints.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

The prevailing situation in the Great Lakes region makes the work of the International Federation and Operating National Societies more and more crucial to the needs of beneficiaries. At the beginning of the year some activities had to be suspended, on a case by case basis, but the global strategy set out in the 1997 Emergency Appeal is still valid and will be pursued.

The relative calm in most areas will allow the Federation to increase its activities where it deems appropriate. These will be regularly assessed and new activities commenced within the general framework of the original plans.

A Federation mission to Burundi in late May will assess plans for operations in the country for 1997/98.

In Zaire the Federation is monitoring the situation, working closely with the Red Cross Society of the Republic of Zaire and with the ICRC Delegation, sharing short-term plans, ensuring information exchanges and maximising the use of available resources.

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