

# **GREAT LAKES REGION: REFUGEES**

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*The ever-evolving Red Cross operations in the Great Lakes region continue, with the emphasis shifting from large-scale population movements to National Society development, consolidation of existing programmes, and the care of IDPs and refugees in the region and its hinterland. The most urgent need at present is for Delegates, primarily in Tanzania and Burundi, but also in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Regional Delegation, Nairobi.*

## ***The context***

In mid-May eight-month offensive of the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire came to an end with former Zairian President Mobutu leaving Kinshasa and Mr. Laurent Kabila becoming President of the new Democratic Republic of Congo. Large groups of Rwandan refugees, who had left their country in the aftermath of the 1994 massacres, became trapped in the forests in the South and South East of Kisangani during the offensive. Around 45,000 were repatriated while many thousands of others escaped the rebel advance and crossed into Central African Republic, Congo/Brazzaville, Angola and Zambia. No information is available on the fate of approximately 100,000 refugees, who are either still hiding in the forests or may have died. But soon after the situation was brought under control in Democratic Republic of Congo severe fighting broke out in Brazzaville between two faction groups representing the current and the previous presidents of Congo Democratic Republic. The fighting which started on 5 June is still continuing.

## ***Red Cross/Red Crescent action***

### **Congo •**

All Federation delegates were evacuated on 9 and 10 June as a result of the heavy fighting in Brazzaville. Radios, cars and other assets were handed over to the National Society. The situation is being monitored from Kinshasa.

### **Democratic Republic of Congo •**

The Democratic Republic of Congo Red Cross Society (DRCRCS) has distributed 430 MT of maize grain to vulnerable groups in the capital, one MT of medicines to Bandundu, Nyoki and Luozi (transported by barge), pharmaceutical supplies to Kinshasa health centres, and 800 kg of high-protein biscuits to refugees from Congo/Brazzaville. Meanwhile an agreement has been reached with WFP to start the distribution of dry rations to these refugees from July. The delegation has requested the Operation Support Unit in Nairobi to send blankets, jerry-cans and cooking pots.

32 senior members of the DRCRCS (directors and co-ordinators at headquarters and five regional presidents) have produced an evaluation of the national society, focusing on institutional development needs.

DRCRCS, supported by the Delegation, is finalising a proposal, expected before the end of July, concerning the creation of 'multi-functional Red Cross centres' which will help to strengthen its basic health, DPP and training activities.

The Deputy Head of Delegation and the DRCRCS Secretary General visited Goma and Kisangani during the month and found that medical and food support for children and sanitation support were the priorities. The visit also served to re-establish links between the headquarters and branches.

### **Rwanda •**

Security in Kigali and the East/South-East of the country remains good. Violence however continues in the West/North-West of the country, where two national staff members of UN agencies and their families were killed in their homes. Security further deteriorated in the Cyangugu area with heavy clashes around Kamembe. All Federation delegates are based in Kigali except for one delegate in Butare where the situation is perceived as safe.

The repatriation of Rwandan refugees from Kisangani to Kigali has slowed down. Since 27 April, approximately 45,000 refugees have been transferred by air to Kigali.

The rehabilitation programme is continuing slowly: the foundations of 21 houses at the Nyamugali site (Kibungo) are ready and others will soon follow. A second site has been identified.

A Community Based First Aid delegate has been identified and will leave shortly for Kigali to start the Training of Trainers courses which are needed to get the programme running.

The Norwegian Red Cross' commitment to the Nyanza health project includes rehabilitation of a hospital and several health centres, medical support and a community based health care element.

The school feeding programme (food distribution to approximately 14,000 students of secondary schools) was suspended in Man in the Gisenyi and Ruhungeri area where conditions became too dangerous. A joint RRC/Federation evaluation was held to determine the programme's future .

### **Tanzania •**

The influx of Burundian refugees increased significantly during the month -- up to 500 per day at the time of writing. The Federation currently caters for 89,000 Burundian refugees.

A planned pilot repatriation of 300 refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo was called off as Tanzanian authorities did not receive sufficient guarantees on the future security of these potential returnees. Only three candidates in the Tanzanian Red Cross Society (TRCS)/Federation Lugufu camp put themselves forward for the 100 places offered.

The arrival of two extra water and sanitation technicians is giving extra momentum is given to the implementation of the Malagarasi-Lugufu water scheme. Tanks for the water treatment are now installed by the river and the pipeline to the camp is being put in place.

Progress was made on the implementation of the co-operation agreement between TRCS and Federation with the receipt of a plan and budget at the end of June. Some issues remain to be clarified before final approval of the budget is given, but the target date for hand-over set for 1 August, is considered a realistic goal.

#### **Burundi •**

Sanctions against Burundi were lifted completely by the Kenyan Government on 1st July 1997, commemorative day of Burundi's independence. It is expected that other countries in the region will soon also lift the sanctions, since lately each country has been individually responsible for their implementation.

Between last October and the end of May, 32,106 cases of typhoid were confirmed in Burundi. Assisted by the Federation, the Burundi Red Cross Society began the distribution of 18 MT of permethrine (bought with the support of the Spanish Red Cross) to 10 provinces to kill the lice that spread the disease. Pilot distributions took place in Karuzi, Kayanza, Kirundo, Muyinga and Ngozi. Some 17,000 people have been treated so far.

During the distribution it turned out that people did not have any spare clothes to put on while treating their clothes with the permethrine. Swedish Red Cross resolved the problem by donating suitable second hand clothing.

#### **Zambia •**

The influx of refugees from Rwanda and Democratic Republic of Congo is causing concern. Worsening security conditions in Shaba province are triggering new refugee movements which are affecting Zambia. A Federation delegate has been present since April and is supporting the National Society in coping with the influx. Given the unpredictability of the security situation in Shaba province, an increase in the operation cannot be ruled out.

## ***Outstanding needs***

Although most operations continue to need extra funding to cover the rest of the year, finding suitably qualified delegates has become the priority. The following positions need to be filled:

<b>Country</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Till</b>
Burundi	Finance/admin	01/12/97
Burundi	HOD	10/11/97
Burundi	Relief admin	10/11/97
Burundi	Relief admin	01/01/98
Burundi	HOSD	01/12/97
Burundi	Health delegate	01/07/97
De. Rep. Congo	Relief admin	ASAP
Rwanda	DPP delegate	ASAP
Rwanda	Logistics delegate	04/08/97
Tanzania	Medical co-ordinator	ASAP
Tanzania	HOD	01/07/97
Tanzania	Health/PHC nurse	ASAP
Tanzania	Surgeon	ASAP
Tanzania	Team Leader	ASAP
Tanzania	Team leader	ASAP

Tanzania	Logistics delegate	ASAP
Tanzania	Finance/admin	ASAP
Tanzania	Wat/san delegate	ASAP
Nairobi Regional D.	Reg. wat/san	ASAP
Nairobi Regional D.	Reg. DPP	ASAP

## ***Contributions***

See annex 1 for details

## ***Conclusion***

Conditions in the Great Lakes region are still unstable but have improved with the end of hostilities in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Assessments of needs and capacities in that country are a top priority to better define the Federation's future involvement and its contribution to the rehabilitation of the country. Operations in most other countries are limited due to security constraints. For more information please contact Roger Bracke, Senior Officer, Great Lakes & Indian Ocean Islands on ++4122 7304207

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