

## **ZAMBIA: REFUGEES FROM THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO**

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### ***Information Bulletin N° 1***

### ***The Situation***

Increased fighting in and around the town of Pweto in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has resulted in a new dramatic influx of refugees to Zambia. In one day alone, up to 5,000 people arrived at the transit centre of Chiengi. At a meeting among humanitarian agencies in Lusaka on 4 December, UNHCR confirmed a figure of 10,000 new arrivals at the transit centre. UNHCR also estimates that an additional 50,000 and 100,000 civilians could potentially be waiting to cross into Zambia as they are scattered in villages along the border. Unconfirmed reports indicate that 20,000 - 30,000 of these refugees may already be in Zambia, hiding in the border area.

The refugees who have arrived in Zambia are mainly civilians, but there are reports that 500 government troops have also fled the fighting.

At the daily interagency meeting of UN agencies and other humanitarian organizations, those agencies involved in the Kala camp (UNHCR, WFP, and MSF Holland) committed to managing the immediate health, water/sanitation needs, and the provision of food and non-food items. A UNHCR assessment mission is underway.

The latest reports from the area indicate that 3,000 of the 10,000 refugees have left to surrounding villages in search of food as the WFP trucks have not yet arrived. As the fighting continues in the DRC, the Zambian Government and humanitarian agencies are preparing for further refugee developments.

### ***Red Cross/Red Crescent Action***

The Federation and the Zambia Red Cross Society (ZRCS) are already managing the Mwanze refugee camp in Mporokosso and transit centres, and are assisting in some areas affected by the new influx.

The Red Cross is monitoring the situation in coordination with the other humanitarian agencies. To ensure Red Cross participation in the area and to verify the numbers of new arrivals, the ZRCS project co-ordinator from Mwanze camp has been sent to visit the Kala camp and Chiengi transit centre.

A Red Cross team has also assessing needs in Kala camp, including food and non-food item distribution system to cover the needs of the increased refugee population. The ZRCS now has 1 senior and 2 junior administrators and 20 volunteers present in Kala where they have been assisting UNHCR with food distributions. The ZRCS also has 2 volunteers in Chiengi who have been assisting in the registration of refugees during the last 6 months.

The Red Cross is also assisting in transporting refugees from transit centres to Kala camp and 5 volunteers help in registering the people who cross the border. The Federation's delegation is providing HF radio communications equipment which will be installed immediately at Chiengi.

While valuable Red Cross human and material resources have been made available on a short-term basis, the Red Cross will not be able to make a longer-term commitment to continue assisting the new arrivals due to the need to maintain the current standards in the Mwangi refugee camp and the lack of overall funding support for the operation. The Federation and the ZRCS are reluctant to make new commitments without indications of stronger donor support.

## *Needs*

The Red Cross is not in a position to provide direct relief assistance for the present influx, but will continue to coordinate with UNHCR and the other operational agencies to monitor the situation and the needs of the refugees.

If the numbers dramatically increase, the Red Cross will reconsider its response based on the needs and its current capacity.

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