

MINOR EMERGENCY



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

UGANDA: CONGOLESE REFUGEES

Minor Emergency no.
05ME008
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The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 181 countries.

In Brief

CHF 55,250 (USD 46,468 OR EUR 35,680) HAS BEEN ALLOCATED FROM THE FEDERATION'S DISASTER RELIEF EMERGENCY FUND (DREF) TO RESPOND TO THIS OPERATION. UNEARMARKED FUNDS TO REPAY DREF ARE ENCOURAGED.

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All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) in Disaster Relief and is committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (Sphere) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For longer-term programmes, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal: East Africa sub-regional programmes 2005 Annual Appeal no. 05AA004 (which includes Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda) – refer to http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.pl?annual05/05AA004.pdf

The Situation

An influx of nearly 1,000 refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) into western Uganda during the past week reflects the extreme volatility in the region. It follows renewed fighting among various armed factions in the DRC around Kyoma and Kasenyi villages. These new arrivals camped in the transit site of Nkondo, South of Lake Albert; UNHCR has started moving them to the Kaseeta reception centre further inland.

Reports from across the border indicate that the armed factions have attacked most of the villages: civilians have been killed, women and girls abducted, and properties looted and/or burned. Humanitarian organizations remain

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deeply concerned about the situation in the DRC and fear that larger numbers of Congolese may cross the border into Uganda in the coming days.

In January, Uganda witnessed an influx of some 15,000 refugees but apparent insecurity around the Ishasha village pushed some 10,000 of them to either return to DRC, or seek shelter further inland. The refugees, mostly women and children, came into Uganda through Ishasha in Kanungu District and Nkondo in Hoima District. The Ugandan government, UNHCR and WFP as well as the Red Cross conducted rapid assessments, provided logistical support as well as relief assistance leading to the relocation of about 2500 refugees to Kyaka II Refugee Camp.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Due to the fast-developing nature of the situation in the border areas, the Uganda Red Cross Society¹ decided that it was unpractical to set up a transit camp in Ishasha as initially requested by authorities. The persistent clashes in the North Kivu area, tensions across the border and the trends witnessed in the recent past indicate that there is a real possibility for another refugee influx in the near future.

To address these events, DREF funding has been requested to pre-position non-food relief items to cater for a conservative estimate of 5,000 people (approximately 1,000 families). If the situation deteriorates, the Federation will consider the launch of an international Emergency Appeal on behalf of the Uganda Red Cross.

In close collaboration with partners, the Uganda Red Cross has been continuously monitoring the situation at possible crossing points. It is coordinating all its activities with the Federation's East Africa Regional Delegation and East Africa Sub-Regional Office, ICRC, the Government of Uganda, the Ministry of Disaster Preparedness and Refugees, Kanungu and Hoima District Local Authorities, and UN agencies (OCHA, UNHCR, and WFP).

The national society has a well-functioning Disaster Preparedness and Response programme and has acquired experience especially from the South Western Refugee Operation which it has implemented with little external support over the last four years. The national society has also been conducting a relief operation for internally displaced people (IDP) in northern Uganda since 2002.

In addition, Uganda Red Cross has a trained national disaster response team (NDRT) and Red Cross action teams (RCAT) in all the branches including those bordering the DRC ready to intervene if needed. The national society accomplishes its tasks - including management and distribution of relief items to large number of refugees - through its extensive network of volunteers.

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¹ Uganda Red Cross Society – refer to <http://www.ifrc.org/where/country/check.asp?countryid=176>