

ZAMBIA:

6 March 2001

Update on Assistance to Congolese Refugees

appeal no. 01.24/2001

situation report no. 1

period covered: 1 January - 15 February 2001

The Zambia Red Cross Society (ZRCS), supported by the Federation, continues to provide assistance to Congolese refugees in camps in Zambia, focusing on distribution of food and non-food items and the provision of health and water and sanitation services. Despite instability in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), refugees are arriving in Zambia in small numbers, at an average rate of 50 per week. However, the situation is unpredictable and relief needs continue to grow.

The context

In March 1999, large numbers of people fleeing internal conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo began to cross into Zambia through various entry points along the northern Zambian border. As the number of refugees increased at a rate of 200 - 300 per day, the government of the Republic of Zambia granted refugee status to those fleeing the DRC. As of July 2000, Mwange refugee camp had a population of some 25,000. The ZRCS, with the support of the Federation, is responsible for camp management, distribution of food and non-food items, warehousing, health services including the running of a camp clinic, and provision of water and sanitation and community services. In August 2000, the ZRCS was requested to deal with camp management and distributions in Kala camp, Luapula province. The Zambia Red Cross Society also works at the transit centres in Kaputa, Nsumbu, Mpulungu and Chiengi which facilitate the transfer of refugees to Mwange and Kala camps.

The assassination of President Laurent Kabila on 16 January was followed by the appointment of a new President committed to restoring peace in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Nevertheless, the situation in the DRC remains unpredictable. Although some observers expected an increase in rebel activity, surprisingly, the border area has been calm. Refugees are now arriving in Zambia in small numbers at an average rate of 50 per week, compared with 200 per day in the last two weeks of October, November and the first two weeks of December. However, the relief assistance requirement remains; moreover, the government of Zambia continues to route spontaneously settled refugees in the villages around the Chinese and Kaputa districts.

Latest events

Kaputa remained calm throughout the month of January, largely due to the presence of Zambian soldiers around the border town with DRC. Although a large influx of refugees through Kaputa was expected, the situation has been stable with new arrivals recorded as follows: transit centre: 301; Chiengi 680; Nsumbu 62 and Mpulungu 106, bringing the total number of new arrivals to 1,149. In the Chiengi area, the government of Zambia plans to register the refugees that have spontaneously settled with relatives in Chiengi district and Nchelenge. It is also reported that other refugees in neighbouring districts have decided to move to Kala camp because they have no food. Even food for work opportunities in the local settlement are rare and the community has started to advise refugees to move to the camps.

The refugee influx in Kaputa and Chiengi transit centres has stabilised, with some 40-50 refugees registered per week who are later relocated to Kala camp. By 31 January 2001, Kala camp had recorded a total number of 12,012 refugees, of whom 8,000 had been registered between the last two weeks of November and December 2000.

Mwange refugee camp continues to receive new arrivals from the DRC, who enter through Mpulungu. During the period under review, 88 new arrivals were received and have settled in Mwange where 23 refugee deaths and 112 births were recorded, bringing the current total number of refugees in the camp to 22,139.

Mpulungu transit centre continues to be active. One hundred and six refugees were registered, of whom 88 were relocated to Mwange camp, within the month of January. The shelter at the transit centre needs urgent attention and funds have been allocated by the UNHCR to construct semi-permanent shelter to accommodate 200 - 300 persons. Work has commenced and the first shelter will be habitable by the second week of February. Refugees coming from Mpulungu have continued to be settled in Mwange, although it is rumoured that some are leaving the camp for Malawi. Security in Mwange and Kala camps has been satisfactory and minor incidents have been dealt with by the security officers.

As the refugee influx stabilises in Chiengi and Kaputa transit centres, World Vision International (WVI) prepares to take over camp management in Kala, following a request from the UNHCR to take up reception, distribution, warehousing, community services, education and construction activities. Hand-over procedures between the Zambia Red Cross Society and WVI as regards food and non-food distribution, warehousing and reception were formalised on 31 January 2001. However, the task of monitoring transit centres remains a challenge for ZRCS, which should not be underestimated, given the unpredictable situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Due to the present financial constraints, institutional development activities with the ZRCS have been confined to branch development, supported by the Southern Africa regional delegation, and limited training of ZRCS finance staff.

Health:•

Stocks of essential drugs at the main pharmacy in the Mwangi clinic have been depleted and there is a need for prompt replenishment. However, as a temporary solution, three rural health centre kits (RHC-kits) were borrowed from Mporokoso hospital and will be replaced as soon as delivery of the kits procured with ECHO funds takes place; the current supply of drugs will cover needs until mid February. Meanwhile, strict procedures have been put in place to ensure monitoring of stocks.

The laboratory continues to offer services, but has also run out of some essential reagents which need urgent replenishment. The department continues to be run by a Congolese laboratory assistant. Of the services offered, the breakdown of cases for the period under review is as follows: blood slide (26.2%), stool analysis (21.9%) haematology (15.4%), serology (14%), urine analysis (12%), fluid analysis (8%), leprosy smear (3%), semen analysis (0.1%).

The out patient department saw a total of 4,965 patients as compared to 4,037 patients seen during December. Of this number, 299 patients were admitted while 103 were referred to Mporokoso hospital. Of the total caseload, malaria accounted for a total of 40.9% cases; respiratory tract infection (RTI)-non pneumonia 21.4%, watery diarrhoea 5%, worm infestation 4%; RTI-pneumonia 2.4% and bloody diarrhoea 1.5%.

There was an increase in the number of referrals to Mporokoso Hospital from 90 last month to 103 cases this month, with a breakdown of the caseload as follows: medical conditions: 70.8%; surgical cases 16.3%; obstetrics and gynaecology 12.6%.

As regards reproductive health, a total of 103 new beneficiaries were registered, whilst 453 re-attended the ante-natal clinic, of whom 81 were provided with tetanus toxoid. A total of 72 deliveries took place. The number of family planning patients is steadily increasing; 272 benefited from the services, of whom 43 were new patients. As for postnatal services, a total of 121 people were seen, of whom 76 received vitamin A supplements.

Immunisation of children was carried out for the target age group of 0-11 months, with 161 children immunised against BCG, 174 for DPT, 141 for OPV and 137 for measles. 62 patients were recorded as fully protected during the month under review. Vitamin A supplements were provided according to the SPHERE standards. As for growth monitoring, 121 children were newly registered. Of a total of 3,244 under-fives seen during re-attendance, 640 were recorded as below the lower line, which represents 19% of children seen.

Routine health activities continue with emphasis on the home-based care programme. Those in a critical condition are followed up on a twice weekly basis. Currently, there are 10 patients who benefit from home based care. TB and leprosy patients are visited once a month for assessment and monitoring of treatment compliance and those requiring physiotherapy are attended to as appropriate. The programme has greatly assisted in the care of chronically ill patients.

The clinic supports traditional birth attendants (TBAs) with sanitary facilities and other logistical support. During the reporting period, the TBAs conducted 27 safe deliveries within the community.

Water & Sanitation •

Water provided over the month gave an average of 18.4 litres per person per day which is in accordance with the SPHERE standards. There are 19 hand pumps, of which 14 are operational and provide water at an average of 0.35 litres per second.

All water points are free of stagnant waste water and drainage is provided at each point. The total number of running hours of the pumping machinery stands at 232, with a consumption of 897 litres of diesel. Because of the increased number of refugees arriving in Kaputa transit centre, some refugees

opted to draw water from the river given congestion at the water facility; however, this has been resolved, since the population has reduced.

To ensure the prevention of diseases for the refugee community in Kaputa, appropriate water purification was carried out. Insecticides were also provided to spray the toilets to prevent diseases at the transit centre. During the period, 66 family latrines were dug, of a planned 856. This is as a result of low production of sanitation platforms in the camp due to lack of funds. The work will continue until the target is achieved, funds permitting.

The target for refuse pits is of 1,100 for Mwange camp. A total of 800 refuse pits have been dug and are in use in all sections, at distances of 15 metres from each sleeping shelter. All public meeting places, such as markets, the clinic, offices, distribution centres, rub halls and police stations have communal latrines at an acceptable walking distance of not more than 2 minutes. As for vector control, 10,510 rodents were cropped during the period in Mwange Camp. Spraying against blow flies continues in the camp. The reception centre, the police station and the CARE restaurant were also sprayed and potential mosquito breeding sites were destroyed.

During the month, 700 household talks on hygiene were conducted by the hygiene promoters in the camp. The health information team (HIT) has continued building awareness in the community to fill open pits which were used for brick mounding and has helped with the construction of food distribution waiting shelters. Health education sessions were provided to the transit camp refugees by water and sanitation staff in Kaputa. The hygiene promoters are now embarking on a cholera and malaria awareness campaign in the camp.

Relief •

Two general distributions were conducted with few problems; all food items were available. Beneficiaries received full rations: 298.4 mt of maize grain; 761 mt of beans; 14.3 mt of cooking oil and 6.2 mt of salt were distributed to the beneficiaries.

Since October 2000, the WFP has maintained adequate food stocks which has facilitated Red Cross distribution of food items. At present, the WFP has stocks of food sufficient for two general distributions for the month of February. Contracts for more food were reported to have been signed and deliveries to the Mwange camp are expected in the second week of February 2001.

During the month of January, soap was distributed. During the same period, 88 new arrivals from Mpulungu transit centre received plastic mats, kitchen sets, blankets, plastic jerry-cans, plastic tents, as per UNHCR standards for non-food items.

During the first general food distribution 22,067 refugees received food items and during the second distribution, 22,169 received food rations. A supplementary request was raised during the second general distribution to cater for new born babies not included in the general distribution. It appears that some refugees have left the camp without informing officials and have sold their ration cards. Some of these cards have been identified and confiscated.

Outstanding needs

Thanks to much-needed timely contributions from ECHO and the Swedish and British Red Cross Societies towards the end of last year, the operation was implemented according to plan during the months of December 2000, January and February 2001.

Current financial constraints have forced the operational team to focus on critical activities only. Pledges have now been received; however, further funding is essential in order to maintain current

standards of care for the refugee community. In particular, there is an urgent need for replenishment of medical supplies (drugs not included in RHC-kits, consumables and reagents) for Mwange clinic and spare parts for water pumps.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

The good working relationship and excellent cooperation with the UNHCR, GTZ and other agencies and donors, was maintained. The weekly (Lusaka) and monthly (Mporokoso) interagency meetings, and day-to-day consultations continued to provide a forum for problem solving and information sharing, thus consolidating teamwork.

Contributions

Current coverage of the appeal stands at 23.8 per cent.

Conclusion

The UNHCR is contributing over 20 per cent of the appeal total. However, UNHCR funding does not cover the essential areas of health, water and sanitation and capacity building within the ZRCS, for which donors are encouraged to provide urgently-needed contributions.

Peter Rees-Gildea
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Zambia						ANNEX 1
APPEAL No. 01.24/2001		PLEDGES RECEIVED			03/05/01	
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
CASH						
REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->				2,808,400		TOTAL COVERAGE 23.8%
CASH CARRIED FORWARD						
UNHCR (01/AB/ZAMLS/402(a))		1,822,371,348	ZMK	637,830	02.03.01	RD CONGO REFUGEES
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				637,830	CHF	22.7%
KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL)						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
Sweden	Delegate(s)			29,733		
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES				29,733	CHF	1.1%
ADDITIONAL TO APPEAL BUDGET						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED				0	CHF	
THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS ARE LINKED TO THIS APPEAL:						