

Alert

Burundi/Tanzania/Uganda/DRC

Burundian Crisis Sparks IDP and Regional Refugee Influx

Geneva, May 20th 2015

1. Brief description of the emergency and impact

Since April 2015, Burundians have been fleeing their country following the announcement that President Pierre Nkurunziza is seeking a 3rd presidential term. Mass protests have followed, during which at least 20 civilians have perished. There was a subsequent failed coup which has led to a deterioration in safety and security in Burundi including significant displacement towards surrounding countries, with an estimated 70'187 refugees in Tanzania, 26'300 in Rwanda, 9'183 in the Democratic Republic of Congo and 3'014 in Uganda (as of 18 May 2015)¹. In addition to those who fled in other countries, there are internally displaced people². Civil society and some political leaders are in continuous fear of persecution and are fleeing and hiding.

UNHCR reports reveal that around 70'000 Burundian refugees are present in Tanzania, among whom approximately 35'000 refugees are at Kagunga, with approximately 10'000 waiting to cross the border. With the rapidly increasing number of people arriving in Kagunga, the living conditions have become extremely dire. People have managed to bring some food and are able to fish in the lake, but the lack of clean drinking water, latrines and shelter is acute. Additionally the local health services in the village are overwhelmed³. On 18th May, a cholera outbreak was confirmed at a refugee camp in Tanzania. In DRC, the number of new arrivals has reached 9'183 as of 18 May. Burundians are entering primarily through Fizi in South Kivu, with over half the population originating from Cibitoke province. The majority are being hosted by Burundian refugee families who have been in South Kivu for many years.

2. Why is an ACT response needed?

A multitude of reports show a desperate situation in western Tanzania, where a rapid response to the refugee influx is needed. The government of Tanzania has called for Tanganyika Christian Refugee Service (TCRS) to respond to the crisis and LWF Uganda/Burundi program shall offer administrative and technical support to respond to the following needs: Water and Sanitation Services, Food items, Shelter, Non-Food Items and Protection Services.

1 There are many more refugees in those countries who are not yet registered. Figures mentioned above are continuously changing as days go. There are also many Burundians who fled in other countries (Kenya, Europe, etc.).

2 However, as they are seeking shelter in their friends or relative families, it is difficult to know the figures for the moment.

3 UNHCR Briefing Note, 15 May 2015 Link: <http://www.unhcr.org/5555dfcf9.html>

In DRC, the increase of refugees adding up to the already fragile situation in South Kivu could lead to a worsening of the situation for both Burundi refugees and host communities. As such, the DRC ACT forum will determine areas of support following the results of a needs assessment.

3. National and international response

In Burundi, the Red Cross and Médecins Sans Frontières are providing medical assistance to people wounded during the demonstrations. Churches are mobilizing communities to provide food and non-food items to those in needs. Churches are also providing messages on conflict resolution.

UNHCR is setting up transit centers in neighboring countries. UNHCR is setting up one in Kalinzi, in Tanzania where refugees are brought to Nyarugusu the next day. In Kigoma, they have turned a stadium into a large transit centre. Refugees stay a few days at the transit centres, to undergo medical checks, vaccination if needed and to be registered, before being transferred to the Nyarugusu refugee camp.

In DRC, UNHCR started biometric registration of refugees in collaboration with the Government's National Commission for Refugees (CNR). The Government has determined a location site next to the village of Luzenda (Mboko), where refugees will be transferred⁴.

4. ACT Alliance response

The ACT Burundi Forum is carrying out a rapid needs assessment to map exactly what are different needs, especially for children, girls and women.

LWF Burundi and TCRS have deployed a joint team to carry out a rapid joint assessment of the approximate 70'000 Burundian refugees in Tanzania. TCRS has already mobilized Non-Food items from their contingency stock in Kibondo to assist incoming refugees. Two TCRS staff are on the way; one WASH engineer and one Program Officer both with a good experience in refugee management. One staff will assist in controlling emerging diseases and the other will deal with general management and logistics while waiting for funds from donors.

LWF Uganda in consultation with UNHCR and the Office of the Prime Minister is assessing how the Burundian refugees arriving in Uganda can be assisted.

In DRC, the ACT Forum will deploy a joint team to carry out a Rapid Joint Assessment. Following the results of this assessment, Finn Church Aid (FCA), Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), Diakonie and possibly LWF DRC are planning to provide assistance to the refugees and host communities.

5. Planned activities

The ACT forum Burundi is planning interventions to assist Internally Displaced People (IDPs) and those waiting at borders to cross into neighboring countries or those returning back home.

In Tanzania, as the situation persists, the key area of intervention will be determined by the finding of gaps and needs from the joint rapid assessment, but most likely in the following area: Water and sanitation, Core Relief items, Reception Center Management, and Shelter establishment and improvement.

In DRC, the planned activities will be selected based on the results of the assessment. The most likely areas will cover Food and Non-Food Items, Protection and cash distribution.

4 UNCHR, 18 May 2015.

6. Constraints

Not applicable at this time.

Any funding indication or pledge should be communicated to the Head of Finance and Administration, Line Hempel (Line.Hempel@actalliance.org).

For further information please contact:

ACT Regional Programme Officer, Florine Jobin (Florine.Jobin@actalliance.org)

ACT Web Site address: <http://www.actalliance.org>