



Burundi Weekly Humanitarian News

17 November - 07 December 2008

Activities and Updates

Health situation

- **Cholera epidemic in Cibitoke:** Cholera epidemic continued in Cibitoke province (50 km North West of Bujumbura) with a total of 65 cases and no death from 10 November to 8 December 2008. The situation is now under control with the decrease of new cases in the concerned health centres. A daily monitoring system continued with the support of health partners. Support to provincial teams is provided WHO, UNICEF, Solidarités, CRB, ICRC and other health partners.

- **Bacillary dysentery in Kirundo:** Bacillary dysentery epidemic continued in Kirundo province (150 km north of Bujumbura) with a total of 1201 cases and 4 deaths from 10 October to 8 December 2008. WHO supported an epidemiological investigation which confirmed the bacillary dysentery. Additional health personnel were sent to the Kirundo province to support the management cases.

- **Health personnel strike still ongoing:** The government and senior health officials have started discussions to end the strike that has crippled health services across the country. The Government officials met provincial health directors, hospital managers and heads of health districts but said the government would not be able to increase salaries. The government has set up a commission to examine the budgetary impact of the health workers' demands. However the strike continued for a third consecutive week.

- **Health implications of the repatriation process:** In the context of the implementation of health component of the repatriation process, WHO set up two sub offices in Musinga and Makamba. These offices with the support of two national medical officers will provide technical support for the access to health services for repatriates and other vulnerable in the most affected province of the reintegration process.

Repatriation of Burundian Refugees

Statistics

During the period of 24 to 30 November, 1,477 returnees arrived in Burundi. 1,464 returned from Tanzania to Makamba (incl. 1,040 from the Old Settlements and 424 from Mtabila camp). 12 returnees arrived from South Africa and one from Cameroon.

Between 01 January and 30 November 2008, 91,322 Burundians have returned which is more than in previous years since UNHCR began its voluntary repatriation operation in 2002. In 2008, 435 Burundians have returned in January, 1,991 in February, 8,377 in March, 6,675 in April, 5,272 in May, 19,635 in June, 17,504 in July, 9,640 in August, 8,441 in September, 6,857 in October, and 6,495 in November. The figures include the return of 27,855 refugees from 1972 mostly in Makamba province (Nyanza-Lac, Vugizo and Mabanda communes); in Bururi province (Rumonge and Vyanda communes) and in Rutana province (Bukemba and Gitanga communes).

Among those who declared not knowing their address of origin, most of them retrieve nearest relatives and left the temporary lodging centre.

To date, 470,119 Burundian refugees have returned home.

Congolese (DRC) refugees

78 refugees from DRC, most of them from South Kivu, were transferred to Gasorwe camp (Musinga) on 01 December after an initial screening in Bujumbura.

A UNHCR mission to Cibitoke province on 28 November did not find any evidence of new arrivals from DRC in this province, which would, due to its geographical position, be the most important entry point for refugees from North Kivu.

Protection and community reintegration of returnees

During the period of 17 to 23 November, the Legal Aid Clinic Project of the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) successfully mediated in 8 disputes Nyanza-Lac, Rumonge, Gisuru and Cendajuru communes. Out of 8 disputes, 7 were related to land and 1 related to family law. In addition, ACCORD conducted 5 conflict management trainings in the communes of Nyanza-Lac, Bukemba, Mabanda, Cendajuru and Gisuru for 125 community leaders and local administrative authorities. Finally, 9 people received legal advice from ACCORD and were after referred to either Avocats sans Frontières (ASF) or to relevant judiciary institutions. These initiatives assisted towards the reintegration of returnees into communities, the promotion of reconciliation and the protection of returnees.

Update on Education activities (UNICEF)

From January through September 2008, approximately 8,000 repatriated and 6,500 expelled children of school-age received school kits supplied by UNICEF, distributed by UNHCR, GTZ and Croix Rouge. 39 permanent classrooms are under the final stage of construction in areas of heavy repatriation in the province of Makamba that has enrolled 5,988 repatriated children in primary schools since the new school year started in September 2008. In addition, 150 semi-permanent classrooms were assisted through the provision of iron sheets in 9 provinces. UNICEF also supports the Ministry of Education in: 1) the 6-month vocational training for 80 repatriated youth in the existing Vocational Education Centres (CEM) in the communes of Kayogoro and Nyanza-Lac, Makamba; 2) the Teacher Emergency Package (TEP) for 1,250 over-age returnee and other vulnerable children in the provinces of Rutana, Bururi and Makamba through NRC; and 3) the initiation of Early Childhood Development (ECD) programme in Makamba. A study is being conducted between November 2008 and January 2009 on the situation of repatriated and expelled children's school access and achievement to help define strategic interventions to ensure and promote the (re-)integration of repatriated and expelled children in the Burundian school system.

FAO assistance

FAO is currently involved in the distribution of cereal seeds (sorghum and rice). These agricultural inputs are distributed to vulnerable households in return areas, such as the Moso, Bugesera and Imbo

natural regions. These regions were also the most affected by the erratic weather which occurred during the 2008B agricultural season, were affected by severe cassava mosaic, in addition to being the most densely populated in Burundi.

Some 25,000 households will receive seed rice while 25,000 will benefit from sorghum seeds. 150,000 families will receive cassava cutting and 40,000 sweet potato cutting. This operation is carried out in addition to another programme which provides a basic agricultural package consisting of vegetable and beans seeds as well as tools. This programme has provided assistance to 175,650 vulnerable families.

Human rights

The situation of albinos in Burundi is of growing concern as they continue to be targeted despite protective measures taken by Burundian authorities. The Human Rights & Justice Division was informed this week of the murder of a six-year-old albino girl in Kinyinya Commune, Ruyigi Province, as well as an attempted murder of a young male albino in Cendajuru Commune, Cankuzo Province. A total of five murders of albino persons (including three minors) have been reported since August in Karusi and Ruyigi provinces. The bodies of the victims have reportedly been dismembered and exported to Tanzania in relation to witchcraft practices. In an effort to improve their safety, local authorities have regrouped albinos in Ruyigi.

The adoption by the National Assembly of the revised penal code is seen as a positive development as it provides the abolition of death penalty and includes provisions of international law against genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. However, HR&JOs are concerned by some of its provisions regarding the criminalization of homosexuality and domestic violence which remains an offence that will be pursued only after a complaint filed by the victim. This draft law still needs to be approved by the senate and promulgated by President Pierre Nkurunziza. Following the adoption of the draft law on the revised penal code by the National Assembly on 22 November, the international NGO Human Rights Watch (HRW) issued a press release on 3rd December lamenting the criminalisation of homosexuality, the decriminalization of arbitrary detention by state agents and restraints with regard to spousal violence. Meanwhile, the HR&JD conducted on 2nd December its weekly discussion with representatives of the media, trade unions and civil society on the

repression of violence against women as provided for by the revised draft penal code.

The draft law on the establishment of the Independent National Human Rights Commission was also adopted on [27 Nov.] by the Council of Ministers. The HR&JD is concerned by the suppression of all articles related to proceedings for the follow-up of human rights violations by this Commission. In this new text, the powers of the Commission have been limited to investigative powers only.

On 1st December, the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Burundi issued a public statement expressing his deep concern over the deteriorating situation of freedom of expression and association currently prevailing in Burundi. He encouraged the Government to report on the measures taken to ensure respect for such rights within the framework of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism, and to seize the opportunity of this review to further strengthen its commitment to promotion and protection of human rights.

On 2nd December, National Solidarity, Human Rights and Gender Minister, Immaculée Nahayo presented the national report on the situation of human rights before the Working Group of the Human Rights Council, in the framework of the UPR. Following an interactive dialogue with delegates of members and observer States, the report was adopted ad referendum along with a series of recommendations. Burundi committed to examine the latter and will provide responses in due time. Burundi also indicated that it will establish a National Independent Human Rights Commission in compliance with the Paris and that consequently, the mandate of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights would no longer be necessary.