

Document 7 (15.11.96)

Source: ICRC

Date : 15 Nov 1996

Update No. 96/5 on ICRC activities in Zaire

After several days of shelling on the Mugunga camp west of Goma, a mass of people from the camp has started moving towards Goma and may cross the border into Rwanda. The ICRC and many other humanitarian organizations are making emergency preparations in Gisenyi, Rwanda, to be able to cope with a possible massive influx of people.

Current ICRC activities

The ICRC has obtained authorization from the Zairian civil aviation authorities to operate its own aircraft within Zaire. Flight plans for flights to several destinations in Kivu province have been submitted to the authorities in Kinshasa. This morning, an ICRC-chartered C-130 Hercules transport plane loaded with relief goods took off from Nairobi and flew to Kisangani via Kinshasa.

The general situation in Goma is becoming increasingly critical, with food, fuel and especially medical supplies running low. There have been unconfirmed reports of cases of cholera at the general hospital. The ICRC sub-delegation in Goma has been restaffed and is supporting the more than 500 volunteers of the Zairian Red Cross who have been active in Goma since the emergency began, collecting and burying the dead, providing medical assistance and organizing garbage collection.

As a result of talks held with the leadership of the rebels, the ICRC has been given permission to resume activities in the general hospital in Goma. The green light for the ICRC to work in the hospitals in Bukavu and Uvira

is expected to be received shortly. A field hospital provided by the Norwegian National Society is on stand-by in Nairobi and will be placed where needed most.

Personnel

To carry out a large-scale humanitarian operation, the ICRC will be needing large numbers of medical personnel. The ICRC is therefore urging Participating National Societies to have staff ready who can be called up at very short notice.

Document 9 (19.11.96)

Source: IFRC

Date : 19 Nov 1996

Mobilising for reintegration

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies is planning massive aid to help hundreds of thousands of Rwandan refugees reintegrate into their home communities. Even as Rwandan Red Cross and Federation workers are fulfilling the most urgent needs of the refugees - food, water and first aid - plans are underway to help them settle in their original villages.

Before the end of November, the Federation will open two new delegations in Ruhengeri and Kibunogo to implement development, sanitation and agricultural projects. A third delegation is likely to be opened in Cyangugu.

"Rehabilitation and reintegration must be considered now, even while we are coping with the emergency situation of hundreds of thousands of people returning in such a short time" says Piero Calvi Parisetti, head of the Secretariat Task Force on the Great Lakes region of East Africa.

The Rwandan Red Cross will recruit and train hundreds of volunteers to work in villages. They will distribute food, help rebuild houses, dig latrines and distribute seeds and agricultural implements. Their work will not only benefit returning refugees but all vulnerable people in their communities, in accordance with the Red Cross/Red Crescent principle of impartiality.

When hundreds of thousands of refugees streamed across the Zaire-Rwanda border, Federation and Rwandan Red Cross workers immediately set up temporary dispensaries along the road from Goma to Gisenyi. They

distributed food and water and helped transport the elderly, infirm and handicapped. On the other side of the border, Zairean Red Cross volunteers brought those too weak to continue on foot to the border where Rwandan Red Cross volunteers took charge of them.

The Federation is preparing to cope with another possible influx of refugees near Cyangugu, at the southern tip of Lake Kivu. Delegates are on standby and relief supplies ready to be sent to Cyangugu when necessary.

The Federation continues to be active helping refugees elsewhere in the Great Lakes region. In Tanzania, it cares for 161,000 Rwandan refugees; in Uganda, for 11,000 Rwandan and 13,000 Zairean refugees; and in Burundi it manages a transit camp near Bujumbura currently hosting 10,000 returning Burundian refugees.

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Document 11 (15.11.96)

Source: ICRC

Date : 20 Nov 1996

Displaced: a Zairian's Firsthand Account

ICRC NEWS 46

"I HAD TO COVER 220 MILES ON FOOT"

"The fighting spread to the entire town, even the night before. We had no choice. We had to leave Bukavu for Walikale and then Kisangani". The ICRC employee left on that fateful day, 30 October. Fleeing the conflict, he became a Zairian displaced person like thousands of others. With a bundle on his head, he stepped up the pace, passing groups of civilians - mainly old people, women and children - all trudging north-west. "Every five minutes I passed yet another straggling band of displaced people". He walked six days without stopping, rested one day, and then rejoined the exodus, his only sustenance some sugar cane and a bit of cassava meal given by the elders of the villages along the way. To steer clear of the perils of the main road, he wandered for 18 days from country trails to forest tracks. Finally, on Saturday 16 November, exhausted, he knocked on the door of the ICRC office in Kisangani. He wanted just three things: news about his family which had left Bukavu before him, food, and water.

This ICRC employee's story is but one example of what is happening all over Kivu: thousands of Zairian men, women and children are fleeing, and no one knows for sure where they are or what help they need. Their plight is today the ICRC's main concern in Zaire. Since the beginning of the crisis and for the last three weeks the ICRC has attempted to gain access to these victims who have been displaced by the conflict and deprived of any assistance. The head of the Kisangani sub-delegation, Andreas Fuog, believes that in the

next few days there will be an influx of displaced Zairian families fleeing Bukavu on foot, but it is difficult to estimate how many. They are expected to arrive soon after the ICRC employee, who was able to move faster because he was young and on his own.

Notwithstanding the multiple difficulties barring access to these thousands of displaced people, the ICRC and the Red Cross Society of the Republic of Zaire have sent a truck loaded with four tonnes of medicines, food and blankets to meet them on the way. It set out from the ICRC's logistic base in Kisangani on 20 November.

The ICRC is taking every possible step in the capital to ascertain the whereabouts of all the victims and set up an emergency assistance programme.

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Document 21 (18.11.96)

Source: ICRC

Date: 18 Nov 1996

Update No. 96/6 on ICRC activities in Zaire

Since Friday, an estimated 400,000 of the refugees moving eastwards from camps near Goma, eastern Zaire, to Rwanda have crossed the border to the Rwandan town of Gisenyi, from where they will continue the journey to their home villages. More returning refugees are thought to be still on their way to Rwanda from Zaire. The ICRC and many other humanitarian organizations in Gisenyi, Rwanda, are working around the clock to provide assistance to the desperate masses of refugees.

ICRC activities during the weekend

ICRC delegates and volunteers from the Zairian Red Cross entered the camps at Mugunga and Ndosho, west of Goma, where they came across significant numbers of wounded and dead, as well as many people suffering from exhaustion, malnutrition and dehydration. The ICRC convoy made two return trips to the area, picking up 105 unaccompanied children and several dozen wounded. The wounded were transferred to hospitals in Goma and the children handed over to ICRC staff based in Gisenyi.

Hospitals in the city of Goma have been resupplied with ICRC medicines and medical material. ICRC expatriates have been given permission to stay in Goma overnight. No decision has yet been taken on whether the ICRC will be allowed to resume its activities in the hospitals in Bukavu and Uvira, but a positive response is expected in the next few days.

The ICRC has made representations to the authorities concerned to be

allowed access to all people detained.

Over the weekend, delegates in Gisenyi, Rwanda, cared for and registered over 1,000 unaccompanied children, some of whom were transported to Ruhengeri in ICRC trucks. One hundred tonnes of protein biscuits, including 19 tonnes donated to the Federation, were distributed by the ICRC to refugees at way stations jointly with the Rwandan Red Cross. Way stations all along the road to Ruhengeri are being supplied with safe drinking water by four ICRC water trucks.

The ICRC-chartered C-130 Hercules transport plane arrived in Kisangani on Friday, carrying 17 tonnes of medical materials, food and blankets. The plane has since left Kinshasa for reloading in Nairobi and is set to return to Kisangani early Tuesday morning via Kinshasa.

A large group of refugees and internally displaced people is reported to be in very poor condition in the area of Shabunda, a town between Bukavu and Kindu. An ICRC plane will attempt to land in Shabunda to assess the situation.

An ICRC team from Lubumbashi will move to Kalemie as soon as possible and a delegate will attempt to reach Bunia, northern Zaire, where fighting is reported.

On Saturday the United Nations Security Council approved Resolution 1080, authorizing the deployment of a multinational force which will ensure that humanitarian aid reaches victims of the conflict. The ICRC sent a memorandum to members of the Security Council and countries possibly contributing to the multinational force, reminding them of the applicability of international humanitarian law and the need to respect it.

Document 26 (20.11.96)

Source: ICRC

Date : 21 Nov 1996

Massive New Tracing Operation Gets Underway

Communication to the press

Nairobi, 21 November 1996

A massive new tracing operation has begun in the Kivu area to allow people still on the move to make contact with their families and to reunite children who have been separated from one or other of their parents during the population movements over the past few weeks.

This week, the ICRC is distributing pre-printed messages for those people newly displaced due to the conflict, to send to concerned family members elsewhere. The message- translated into French, Kiswahili, Kinyarwanda and Lingala - is to inform the recipient that the sender is alive and will be in contact once at a settled location.

"This is an extra-ordinary measure", said Beat Schneider, ICRC Tracing Agency Co-ordinator from the regional delegation in Nairobi". What families urgently need at this point is reassurance."

In a related development, the ICRC together with SCF-UK, UNICEF and UNHCR is also re-establishing a system to reunite unaccompanied children with their parents.

Previous to the recent dispersal of Rwandan refugees and displacement of Zairean civilians, there was an outstanding 20,000 unaccompanied children who needed to be reunited. Today no-one knows what has become of these

children, from Zaire, Rwanda and Burundi, whose numbers have increased by several thousand. The 2,800 who have to date been left behind in the crowds during this latest crisis are being looked after by different organisations in transit centres in Rwanda.

The ICRC's data bank in Nairobi will centralise all available information concerning the children. Copies of the data can be consulted at some 15 ICRC offices in Rwanda and neighbouring countries.

Before recent mass population movement in the Kivu area, over 107,000 unaccompanied children in the Great Lakes region had been registered in the ICRC data base, of whom 27,000 were reunited with their families. 40,000 are in contact with relatives through the ICRC message system.

Document 28 (21.11.96)

Source: ICRC

Date: 21 Nov 1996

Update No. 96/7 on ICRC activities in Zaire

QUOTE

As the tide of refugees returning to Rwanda slows, efforts by the ICRC continue to locate and reach the large groups of displaced Zairians, Zairians affected by the conflict, Rwandan refugees and Burundian refugees still remaining in eastern Zaire. In Gisenyi, Rwanda, the ICRC is part of the international effort to provide assistance to the estimated 500,000 returnees. The ICRC's activities are concentrating especially on unaccompanied children, the sick and weak.

Ongoing ICRC activities

In Gisenyi, the ICRC's activities continue to focus on those who have returned to Rwanda and are moving to their home villages. Mobile teams are distributing high-energy biscuits and are supplying safe drinking water through bladder tanks set up along the road to Ruhengeri. An additional 40 tonnes of biscuits as well as water and sanitation materials were sent to Gisenyi on Monday. A total of 2,634 unaccompanied minors has been identified and registered,, most of whom are being transferred to Nkamira or Ruhengeri. Food and non-food assistance for these children is being provided by the ICRC. Some 150 children have been photographed and their pictures will exhibited at various points between Gisenyi and Ruhengeri. ICRC delegates were able to reunite 445 families on the spot.

A group of about 480 unaccompanied minors has been transferred by the ICRC

to Kigali, where they are being accommodated by the Belgian Red Cross. The ICRC has supplied 500 blankets for this purpose. ICRC teams are also registering and caring for unaccompanied minors in Byumba. To facilitate tracing services, specially printed Red Cross messages have been sent to Kigali.

In Goma, eastern Zaire, the ICRC has resumed its activities, which focus on providing medical assistance in the hospitals and evacuating unaccompanied minors, and the wounded, weak or sick remaining in and around the camps west of Goma. In the city of Goma the water supply system has broken down, as a result of an electrical failure affecting the water pumps. To help solve the problem the ICRC will bring generators to Goma to restore the water supply.

Personnel reinforcements have arrived in Rwanda, Goma and Kinshasa.

Access to the displaced people and refugees remaining in eastern Zaire continues to be blocked. No permission has been given to enter Bukavu and Uvira. Administrative and practical difficulties in Kinshasa persist. Large groups of refugees are thought to be moving between Bukavu and Sake. An ICRC team is standing ready in Cyangugu, Rwanda, to enter Bukavu as soon as possible or to assist in case of a large influx of refugees in this area.

UNQUOTE

Best regards,

Press Division

Document 37 (21.11.96)

Source: ICRC

Date : 21 Nov 1996

Great Lakes Region: Massive New Tracing Operation Gets Underway

Communication to the press

Nairobi, 21 November 1996

A massive new tracing operation has begun in the Kivu area to allow people still on the move to make contact with their families and to reunite children who have been separated from one or other of their parents during the population movements over the past few weeks.

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children, from Zaire, Rwanda and Burundi, whose numbers have increased by several thousand. The 2,800 who have to date been left behind in the crowds during this latest crisis are being looked after by different organisations in transit centres in Rwanda.

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Document 45 (22.11.96)

Source: ICRC

Date : 22 Nov 1996

Update No. 8 on ICRC activities in Zaire

Although several hundred thousand Rwandan refugees have returned to Rwanda during the past week, vast numbers of Zairian displaced, Zairians affected by the conflict, Rwandan refugees and Burundian refugees are still without assistance and protection, and there are only unconfirmed indications as to where they might be located.

Ongoing ICRC activities

Tracing

ICRC activities for returning Rwandan refugees currently focus on tracing, especially for unaccompanied children. Even before the recent population movements, more than 19,800 unaccompanied children had been identified in the refugee camps in eastern Zaire. In the wake of last week's events this number has no doubt been swelled by several thousand more. The ICRC has developed a plan of action to coordinate the protection and assistance for unaccompanied children provided by the various humanitarian organizations active in the field.

Under this plan of action, the tracing process is organized into three phases: identification of the children, regrouping, and transfer to special centres in their region of origin. As soon as a child has been identified the ICRC immediately starts to look for its parents, in the hope of reuniting the family as soon as possible. Since the recent exodus from Zaire to Rwanda started, the ICRC has registered over 2,800 unaccompanied

children, reunited 500 families in transit camps, transferred some 1,000 children from Gisenyi and Ruhengeri to Kigali and assisted transit centres, run by humanitarian organizations, with blankets and food. The transfer of unaccompanied children continues. On Thursday alone, the ICRC transported some 250 children to various centres.

Since the Belgian Red Cross centre in Kigali is full, children are currently taken to Gitarama and Byumba. The ICRC made three trucks available for the transport of unaccompanied children from Nkamira, near Gisenyi, to their commune of origin.

The tracing plan of action also deals with the restoration of family links in general. To this end, the ICRC is distributing pre-printed Red Cross messages for newly displaced people in Rwanda, allowing them to inform relatives that they are safe and will be in touch once settled.

Preparations for tracing activities are underway in Butare in case of a sudden influx of refugees from Bukavu.

Tracing activities in eastern Zaire are hampered by lack of access. Prior to the recent population movements of Rwandan refugees and Zairian displaced people, some 2,000 children were awaiting reunification with their families. This number is sure to have increased dramatically over the past week. Detention

ICRC delegates are still gathering information on protection-related issues in and around Goma town.

Health activities

The sick and vulnerable picked up from among the stream of returnees are taken to hospitals in Nkamira and Mukamira. An ICRC medical delegate has been assessing the health situation in several communes. Dispensaries and

health centres are receiving medical supplies but shortages of rehydration solution persist in all centres visited by the ICRC.

On Wednesday the ICRC provided medical supplies for a small dispensary set up by nuns in Mugunga camp, eastern Zaire, for victims of the conflict. An ICRC surgeon completed his preliminary survey of the medical situation in Goma. Given the potential for conflict in the Goma area, the ICRC will continue to support the existing three hospitals in Goma with staff, equipment and medicines. Although there is no emergency situation in the hospitals at present, there are many cases of diarrhoea, dehydration and exhaustion.

Zairian Red Cross volunteers are picking up the wounded, sick and dead and taking them to Goma hospital. The ICRC's attempt to reach Rutshuru hospital was unsuccessful.

Water and sanitation

To alleviate the desperate water situation in Mugunga camp, two 10,000-litre water bladders have been installed. Two generators and spare parts needed to restore the water supply in Goma have arrived in the town. To secure a provisional water supply at the hospitals in Goma, the ICRC has installed bladders.

Three ICRC water and sanitation trucks from Gisenyi and Ruhengeri continue to fill bladders along the road taken by the refugees. As of Thursday, four ICRC water-tankers filling bladders have been operating along the Ruhengeri-Kigali road. The ICRC has installed bladders at the tracing centres in Mesengue, Masaka and Kigali.

To prepare for a possible influx of refugees from the Bukavu area, water and sanitation equipment has been sent from Butare to Cyangugu. The ICRC

has provided two water-tankers and water and sanitation materials, including a portable water purification pump, for Cyangugu, where it has also installed pumping facilities and water treatment plants. In addition, ICRC water and sanitation delegates are carrying out a survey in Kibungo in case refugees return from camps in Tanzania.

Relief

An ICRC transit centre has been set up along the Ruhengeri-Kigali road, where refugees are centralized before being taken directly to their communes of origin. The International Federation and the Rwandan Red Cross are providing returnees in the centres with first-aid and biscuits.

Three ICRC trucks are transporting medical and relief supplies and water and sanitation equipment to and from Ruhengeri and Gisenyi. However, the Rwandan authorities are not allowing the distribution of biscuits along the main refugee route, insisting that returnees should carry on moving. The ICRC made three of its trucks available for taking refugees to Kigali, provided that the vehicles could be used later to transport unaccompanied children.

In Goma, food is running very low and there is neither electricity nor water. An ICRC truck with protein biscuits destined for Goma was blocked at the border. ICRC staff are attempting to reach Sake and Kirotshe with biscuits and oral rehydration solution for malnourished children at the two orphanages.

In Kisangani, several hundred people were assisted. The Zairian Red Cross sent vehicles loaded with ICRC supplies in the direction of Lubutu, trying to assist people along the road.

Press Division

Document 33 (17.12.96)

Source: ICRC

Date: 17 Dec 1996

Update No. 14 on ICRC Activities Related to the Zairian Crisis

Light is gradually being shed on the whereabouts of large groups of Rwandan and Burundian refugees still remaining in eastern Zaire. After having located some 11,000 refugees (90% of whom are Rwandan and 10% Burundian) in Shabunda, about mid-way between Bukavu and Kindu, on 8 December, the ICRC has received information that groups of refugees and displaced totalling well over 100,000 people are in the areas around Shabunda and nearby Katshungu.

The ICRC's ongoing refugee counts show that between 2,000 and 3,000 people, mostly family units, are arriving daily at a site five kilometres east of Shabunda, accessible only by bicycle and dugout. As of this morning, some 23,000 refugees had arrived. The ICRC expects that in the days and weeks ahead refugees in the area will continue to move towards, and gather at, Shabunda. Among the refugees are 260 unaccompanied children who fled their orphanage, run by the Belgian Red Cross in Bukavu, when the fighting started. Most of the Rwandan refugees in Shabunda have said that they want to return Rwanda as soon as it is safe to do so. However, although they are prepared to walk back if necessary, they refuse to go through the Bukavu region.

Reports confirmed by missionaries in the area indicate that other large groups of refugees are moving along the road leading from Katshungu to Shabunda. As yet unconfirmed information about very large numbers of

refugees between Bukavu and the Shabunda area has also been received.

An ICRC team which flew to Lubutu on 11 December was unable to land in the town because the runway was crowded with people. However, estimates based on aerial observations indicate that large numbers of people are gathered seven kilometres west of Lubutu along the road to Kisangani. Today the ICRC will make a second attempt to land at Lubutu and evaluate the situation.

Faced with the masses of refugees, the ICRC is extremely concerned that urgent efforts should be made to find long-term solutions before new camps are established. Consequently, the ICRC aims to provide only 'light' food assistance, such as biscuits and dried fish, to use mobile medical teams rather than to set up hospitals, and to avoid construction work concentrated in one particular spot.

The ICRC has opened two health posts in Shabunda and two in the refugee site, and is providing basic medicines for the general hospital and two dispensaries. Biscuits and three tonnes of maize flour have been distributed as emergency assistance. An ICRC tracing office and special centres for orphans and unaccompanied children have been established, as have minimum sanitary facilities. In Shabunda the ICRC has registered some 2,500 Zairian displaced, whom it is supplying with food rations. The local population, which is suffering from the influx of refugees and displaced, is being assisted with food and other items.

Zairian displaced in Kindu and Kalima are also being assisted by the ICRC. In Kalima, 400 displaced at four ICRC sites are being supported through a church organization. In Kindu, food is being distributed daily to some 660 displaced, some of whom live at sites that are being equipped with mattresses, jerrycans and kitchen material. More displaced people are

arriving daily in Kindu from the Goma region.

In Kalemie, the ICRC has been permitted to supply food relief for some 13,000 Zairian displaced. The delegation is still waiting for authorization to go north of Kalemie, since there are unconfirmed reports of more victims of the conflict in the areas west of Baraka and Fizi.

The ICRC teams in Goma, Bukavu and Uvira continued to carry out their water and sanitation activities and to provide medical assistance. In particular, the ICRC in Goma supplies all three hospitals with medical equipment and drugs, and is active in 15 health centres and the three hospitals in Kirotshe, Rutshuru and Masisi. Assistance is given as needed to hospitals in Katana and Walungu, both near Bukavu, and to the general hospital in Bukavu itself. Ten health centres in Bukavu are also being supported. In Uvira, the ICRC assists the surgery unit of the hospital and ten dispensaries.

Although it is still very difficult to obtain authorization to move outside the three cities, the ICRC was able to bring back to Bukavu by truck some 2,000 Zairian displaced who had been located 30 kilometres west of the town, along the road to Walikale.

Logistics

To support its activities on the ground, an ICRC-chartered Hercules cargo plane is currently flying from Nairobi via Kisangani to Kindu. Efforts are being made to obtain authorization to fly directly from Nairobi to Kindu, Kalima and Kalemie. Cargo shuttle flights using small aircraft (Beechcraft, DC3 and Twin-Otter) will bring supplies to smaller towns whose landing strips are too short for the Hercules. Food coming from Lubumbashi is being

transported to Kindu and Kalemie by train. Three wagons with 120 tonnes of food and other assistance left Lubumbashi for Kindu, as did two wagons carrying 80 tonnes destined for Kalemie.

Document 39 (18.12.96)

Source: ICRC

Date: 18 Dec 1996

Update No. 15 on ICRC Activities Related to the Zairian Crisis

The humanitarian situation in Shabunda, a settlement about mid-way between Bukavu and Kindu, is slowly becoming critical. ICRC activities are hampered by poor infrastructure, heavy rains and difficult access to the refugee site. Relief supplies are flown to Kindu from Nairobi in a Hercules cargo plane and then on to Shabunda by DC-3. From the runway, which is often water-logged, relief has to be transported to a river, transferred by dugout, and carried by bicycle to the site four kilometres from the river. Faced with ever increasing numbers of Rwandan and Burundian refugees, ICRC staff are struggling to provide basic food and medical assistance. Most recent refugee counts show that some 40,000 people have by now arrived in Shabunda, and continue to pour in at the rate of 3,000-5,000 a day.

As these refugees are becoming increasingly settled at the site, urgent action is required to find a long-term solution, such as repatriation, before new camps are established. The ICRC has met with UNHCR representatives in Kinshasa and has offered air transport to Shabunda to make it possible to gather first-hand information.

Owing to heavy rain, the ICRC flight to Lubutu had to be cancelled. The ICRC has been in contact with Midecins sans Frontières (MSF), which is working in Lubutu hospital. MSF has said that there are some 30,000 refugees in Tingitingi, seven kilometres west of Lubutu, and tens of thousands more along the road between Walikale and Lubutu.

In Kalemie, the ICRC has started to distribute food rations to 4,400 Zairian displaced and 800 refugees.

Access to areas around Goma and in North Kivu is still not possible, and the ICRC has no information about the victims of the conflict in this area.

However, delegates have been given greater access to the areas around Bukavu, and the local authorities have accepted the use of Red Cross messages in the areas they control. An ICRC team and a representative of the German Red Cross went to Uvira to evaluate the situation at the hospital and the possibility of resuming activities there.

On 13 December, eleven Zairian border guards and 14 family members were repatriated to Kinshasa from Uganda in an ICRC-chartered Hercules plane.

A further source of concern for the ICRC has been recent Rwandan refugee movements in and out of camps in Tanzania. Refugees who had left their camps and moved deeper into Tanzania were returned to their camps. However, as of yesterday, a steady tide of Rwandan refugees has been returning to Rwanda via the Rusumo border post. The ICRC has set up two waystations along the Tanzanian road to the border to provide refugees with clean water. The ICRC also took care of 400 unaccompanied children found along the road. By the end of the day, 100 of these children had not yet been reunited with their families. On the Rwandan side of the border, four ICRC water engineers are providing safe drinking water using mobile treatment equipment and water tankers.

Document 66 (18.12.96)

Source: ICRC

Date: 18 Dec 1996

ICRC still only organization working in Shabunda

The ICRC is providing assistance for almost 50,000 Rwandan and Burundian refugees who have gathered near the town of Shabunda, 200 km west of Bukavu. This temporary site deep in the forest is seeing several thousand new arrivals every day. The aid operation is being conducted in extremely arduous conditions because of the nature of the terrain and heavy rainfall. Supplies are first airlifted by heavy transport plane from Nairobi to Kundo in eastern Zaire, then transferred to lighter aircraft which can land at Shabunda. There they are loaded onto dugout canoes, and for the last part of the journey bicycles have to be used.

On 17 December an ICRC team went to Lubutu to assess the situation of 120,000 other refugees who are living in very difficult conditions.

Document 11 (05.12.96)

Source: ICRC

Date: 05 Dec 1996

ICRC Update 96/12 on activities in Zaire

Owing to the deteriorating security situation ICRC delegates have evacuated both Kindu and Kisangani, eastern Zaire. In Kisangani, fighting broke out after members of the Zairian armed forces originating in Kivu started looting the town and clashed with local Zairian troops. In Kindu, the ICRC's decision to pull out was triggered by the presence of undisciplined soldiers in town and the general hostility towards foreigners and humanitarian organizations, held responsible for events in eastern Zaire.

The ICRC has assisted eight hundred Zairian displaced in Kindu and Kalima and has located several thousand more in various villages east of Kindu.

Many of these displaced Zairians were in an extremely poor state.

Unfortunately the delegates had no choice but to interrupt their programme launched in favour of displaced people in the region. The ICRC continues to be deeply concerned about the plight of large groups of displaced and refugees who have been without protection and assistance for weeks.

In areas of Zaire not affected by the conflict the ICRC will continue its activities for detainees in prisons by providing food and other assistance.

On Tuesday, 3 December, the ICRC, together with other humanitarian organizations, was able to enter Uvira, south Kivu, where it discovered German Red Cross hospital equipment, sent by the ICRC in October and previously thought to have been looted. Only a generator was missing. The

ICRC is working to reequip and restaff Uvira hospital, as all materials have been looted and the local staff have disappeared. It will also reopen several dispensaries around Uvira.

Basic drugs continue to be provided to the three Goma hospitals, which this week have seen several hundred cases of diarrhoea and suspected cholera. Fifty-eight war-wounded were also admitted. Assistance is being given to three hospitals in Goma, and, since 4 December, one each in Rutshuru, Kirotshe and Masisi.

The ICRC continues to provide water, biscuits and first aid, to groups of refugees emerging from the forest in the vicinity of Mugunga. In the past few days, hundreds of these people have been crossing into Rwanda every day.

The ICRC's water and sanitation team has installed two powerful generators in Goma to ensure the electricity supply for the pumping stations which are capable of providing two-thirds of Goma, including the general hospital, with drinking water during daylight hours.

In Bukavu, ICRC water engineers are setting up a medium-term support programme with the local water company. Under this programme the ICRC will supply fuel for the pumping station, chemicals for the water-treatment plant and technical advice and support. In Rwanda, the total number of detainees visited has risen to 88,059, of whom 58,174 are held in prisons and 29,885 in temporary detention centres. Visits were made to 210 places of detention. In all, 170 tonnes of food and other assistance, covering more than 50 percent of needs, have been delivered to places of detention in Rwanda this week.

The ICRC's tracing activities in Rwanda continue, with 4,730 unaccompanied children registered so far. Only 385 of these children were from the 1994 caseload. The total number of family reunifications carried out by the ICRC and other organizations is rising daily and currently stands at around 2,000. The success rate for reunifications is roughly 90 percent when children are taken to their commune of origin. As part of its massive tracing programme the ICRC has also been supplying food and other assistance to 11 transit centres for unaccompanied children.

Document 14 (10.12.96)

Source: ICRC

Date: 10 Dec 1996

ICRC Update 96/13 on activities in Zaire

After having had to leave both Kindu and Kisangani, eastern Zaire, last week, owing to the deteriorating security situation, an ICRC team on Sunday was able to fly to Shabunda, east of Kindu, from Lubumbashi. An ICRC delegate located between 8,000 and 10,000 Burundian and Rwandan refugees, originating from the camps around Uvira, who had recently arrived in the area. Most of the refugees were in very bad condition, suffering from diarrhoea, malaria and malnutrition. There are indications that large groups of women, children and elderly people are in the surrounding forest regions under very difficult living conditions. At this stage, the ICRC will concentrate its efforts on ensuring the survival of the refugees it has located. To this end, emergency food, in the form of protein biscuits, and medical supplies will be flown in as from today. However, the ICRC does not want its activities to favour the establishment of new camps and is discussing with the authorities and the UNHCR the future of these populations.

However, in the Goma area access to Rutshuru and Masisi continues to be blocked and authorizations are very difficult to obtain.

The ICRC delegation in Bukavu has been strengthened further and now consists of nine expatriates. Waystations are being organized for those of the 1,000 Zairian displaced located near Walungu, north-west of Bukavu, who wish to return to Bukavu.

Thanks to fuel supplies organized by the ICRC in Uvira, the water pump station is up and running six hours a day and supplying the town with water.

In Rwanda, ICRC delegates are preparing for a possible influx of refugees from camps in Tanzania. As in the past few weeks, ICRC efforts will concentrate on tracing, especially regarding unaccompanied children, and on providing transport and ready-to-eat food to the most vulnerable of the returnees.

Rwanda: most operations resume

The ICRC partially suspended its activities in Rwanda on 6 February. Ten days later it took the decision to gradually resume them. Although many places in Rwanda still remain off-limits to the organization's 60 expatriates there, most ICRC operations are to some extent now under way again.

Water and sanitation programmes are in progress in Kigali, Gikongoro, Byumba, Kibuye and Gitarama, and ICRC medical teams have resumed work at Kibuye hospital as well as at the limb-fitting centre in Gatagara. Meanwhile, prisons and communal lock-ups in accessible areas are being regularly visited, and children reunited with their families. The ICRC is paying special attention to the most vulnerable among Rwanda's population, with food being distributed to 16,000 schoolchildren in four prefectures (Gitarama, Butare, Gisenyi and Ruhengeri). Some 1,200 orphans have returned to school after the ICRC provided them with school kits and tuition fees. The Runyinya project, in which houses are being built for almost 400 women and children, survivors of the genocide, should be completed by the end of April. Lastly, a number of agricultural, bee-keeping and knitting projects have been started.

Source: ICRC Date: 27 Mar 1997 -----

Zaire: back in Kisangani

ICRC delegates returned to Kisangani on 20 March for the first time since rebel forces captured the city five days previously. There they carried out a survey to enable the ICRC to establish operational priorities. They found that there are some 25,000 displaced people in the Kisangani area who need help to return to their places of origin. A second priority is access to detainees, including large numbers of people arrested when the city fell.

While all international staff from the ICRC, the UN and various non-governmental organizations were withdrawn from Kisangani, the Zairian Red Cross continued working tirelessly to take wounded people to hospital and give first aid. Now back in Kisangani, the ICRC will fully support local Red Cross medical work.

To restore contact between people who fled the fighting and relatives who stayed behind, the ICRC will establish a Red Cross message service in conjunction with the Zairian Red Cross. For those who decide to embark on the 700-km journey home, aid stations will be set up along the main roads to the east. The most vulnerable - children, the elderly, pregnant women and wounded people - will be transported by lorry as far as road conditions permit.

Delegates are maintaining their presence in Lubumbashi, though they are spending the nights in Ndola, across the border in Zambia. Some staff based in Kinshasa have been redeployed to Brazzaville, the capital of Congo, to prepare an operations base in case the situation deteriorates in the Zairian capital.

Source: ICRC Date: 27 Feb 1997 -----

Update No. 4 on ICRC activities related to the Zairian conflict

Breakthrough for ICRC operations in Alliance-held areas

On 19 March the ICRC delegation in Goma finally received written authorisation from the Alliance to fly to Kisangani (Haut Zaire), Kalima, Kindu and Shabunda (Kivu), and Bunia (Haut Zaire) and Beni (Northern Kivu). Delegates are preparing to fly to Kalima or Kindu as soon as possible to follow up some 25,000 refugees in Kalima as well as several thousand Zairian displaced who were assisted by the ICRC before the area fell into the hands of the Alliance. Last weeks' attempt to reach Kalemie by boat had to be abandoned and is now planned for later this week.

The ICRC reopens its subdelegation in Kisangani

On Thursday 20 March, an ICRC team returned to Kisangani to assess the situation and work out a plan of action on the basis of its findings. As a first step, delegates established contact with the authorities, the Zairian Red Cross and staff in charge of medical and social structures. All relief activities on behalf of the victims of the conflict will continue to be carried out in co-operation with the Zairian Red Cross, with overall co-ordination undertaken by the ICRC. During the absence of international organizations (Red Cross, UN and NGOs), the Zairian Red Cross continued to transfer wounded to the hospital, provide first-aid and assist the internally displaced in Kisangani. It also collected and buried 33 dead bodies.

A thorough survey of the situation in Kisangani revealed two priorities. Firstly, food and non-food assistance will be given to internally displaced in Kisangani. The medical assistance programme run by the Zairian Red Cross will be supported by the ICRC, mainly with drugs and other medical materials. To restore links between internally displaced and their families left behind in the east, the ICRC will set up a Red Cross message service together with the Zairian Red Cross. Contact with family members may also encourage internally displaced to return home. For those who decide to embark on the 700-km journey, way-stations will be set up along the main roads to the east to help them return to their places of origin. The most vulnerable, including children, the elderly, pregnant women and wounded, will be transported by truck as far as road conditions permit. This will be a massive operation, since at present there are at least 25,000 internally displaced in the Kisangani area who wish to return home.

Secondly, access to detainees, including large numbers of people arrested following the fall of Kisangani, has become an utmost priority. Although earlier this year the ICRC was given a general authorisation to visit detainees in Alliance-held areas, the visits have not materialised so far.

The subdelegation will closely coordinate with other humanitarian organisations regarding future relief and tracing activities on behalf of the refugees currently in Ubundu, 100 km south of Kisangani. So far, no humanitarian organization has been granted access to Ubundu.

Surveys in Uvira and Fizi

In recent weeks the ICRC carried out a number of surveys in the areas of Uvira and Fizi (some 120 km south of Uvira). Delegates noted widespread pillaging of fields and settlements by refugees and internally displaced, who are struggling to return to their places of origin after having spent several months wandering in the forests. Both internally displaced and refugees are completely dependent on the local population, which itself has to make do with the bare minimum.

The ICRC is proposing a plan of action aimed at boosting the local economy, giving internally displaced people a fresh start in their villages of origin, and preventing pillaging by refugees emerging from the forest. Under this plan, way-stations sufficient for some 30,000 beneficiaries will be set up in co-operation with the Zairian Red Cross on the route from Lulunge (South Kivu) to Fizi and Uvira. Furthermore, "returnee packages" of food and non-food assistance, including agricultural tools, will be distributed to internally displaced returning home.

Preparing an operational base in Brazzaville (Congo) and Ndola (Zambia)

From Kinshasa staff has been deployed to the capital of Congo to prepare an operational basis should Kinshasa be evacuated. For the time being there are still five expatriates in Kinshasa. The presence of an increasing number of war-wounded arriving from the front line was noted. The ICRC provided health structures caring for the wounded with drugs and other medical supplies.

Likewise, ICRC expatriates continue to work in Lubumbashi, spending the night in Ndola, which lies across the border in Zambia and is only 15 minutes away by plane.

Coordination within the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

With the prevailing situation of conflict and the growing general insecurity spreading throughout the country, the general direction and leadership of the actions of the Movement will be under the direct responsibility of the ICRC.

Document 33/07 (01.04.97)

Source: ICRC Date: 02 Apr 1997 -----

ICRC demands access to conflict victims

ICRC Communication to the press No. 97/08

Geneva (ICRC) - In spite of the aid which has been trickling in over the past few days to help feed refugees gathered along a few kilometres of railway line between the towns of Kisangani and Ubundu, the plight of Rwandan refugees in Zaire remains disastrous. Although the fighting is no longer driving the refugees - most of them women and children - further into the interior, countless people have already died or are on the point of dying of exhaustion, hunger and disease, despite the efforts deployed in particular by the volunteers of the Zairian Red Cross.

In view of the magnitude and urgency of the needs, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) requests the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (ADFL) to grant its delegates unrestricted access to the victims. In limiting the distribution of humanitarian aid to the refugee assembly points along the railway line, and especially in forcing those having succeeded in reaching the outskirts of Kisangani - which is the logistics centre for the entire humanitarian operation - to move away from the town, the ICRC is concerned that any new forced population movement will lead to the death of thousands of people.

With the arrival of heavy rains in areas with dense vegetation, the scale of needs has become truly alarming. It is no longer merely a matter of feeding the hungry but of coping with serious medical emergencies (dysentery and malaria are already taking their toll, and there are fears of a cholera epidemic and outbreaks of other fatal diseases). The ICRC hereby appeals to all concerned to respect the victims' right to assistance and protection and demands immediate access to these people in desperate need of help.

The plight of the refugees gathered along the Kisangani-Ubundu railway line must not overshadow that of the tens of thousands of other conflict victims from Zaire, Rwanda and Burundi scattered all over southern Zaire, where every day ICRC delegates report having found people in a state of extreme exhaustion.

Document 34/15 (08.04.97)

Source: ICRC Date: 08 Apr 1997 -----

Update No. 97/03 on ICRC activities in Rwanda

Please find herewith an Update No. 3 on ICRC activities in Rwanda

QUOTE

Over 100,000 detainees registered by the ICRC

The ICRC's activities in Rwanda continued gradually to return to normal during the past few weeks. Delegates restarted their visits to between one and two thirds of communal lock-ups in all prefectures except Ruhengeri and Gisenyi. They are working hard to make up the delays in registering new detainees resulting from the recent constraints imposed by security conditions. Registration is important because it allows them to follow up detainees individually and thus to afford them protection. By the end of March, a total of 102,446 detainees had been registered by the ICRC in Rwanda. Of these, 63,920 were held in prisons and 38,526 in communal lock-ups. However, because of frequent delays between the time of arrest and registration, the actual number of detainees is estimated to be several thousand higher.

The ICRC is very concerned about the fact that overcrowding, which has always been a severe problem in many Rwandan places of detention, is clearly growing worse by the week, especially in communal lock-ups. In addition to registering detainees, delegates place special emphasis on oral and written representations to the local and central authorities to improve conditions of detention.

Assistance for prisoners

Because of ongoing food shortages in many places of detention, the ICRC, at the request of the Ministry of Justice, provides supplementary food assistance sufficient to meet at least some of the detainees' nutritional requirements. In one week alone, 176.8 tonnes of food were delivered to the prisons of Kigali, Butare 1 and 2, Cyangugu, Kibuye, Gikongoro, Nsinda and Nyanza. A total 31,471 detainees received 82.7 tonnes of cereals, 89.7 tonnes of beans, 2.8 tonnes of oil, 1.6 tonnes of salt and a supply of soap. Detainees held in Cyangugu prison were given 532 blankets, 36 jerrycans and 266 plates and cups.

Unaccompanied children still a priority

Delegates continue to register unaccompanied children and look after others who have not yet been reunited with their families. To assist with finding the families of some 300 children who are too young to give their names or places of origin, the ICRC has compiled a brochure showing a photograph of each child and any relevant information, such as the place where it

was found. The brochure is distributed throughout Rwanda to help parents locate their children. A second edition including the newly arrived children is currently being compiled. The ICRC is also working together with other humanitarian organizations in repatriating unaccompanied children from eastern Zaire to Rwanda.

Assistance for survivors of the genocide and other vulnerable people

The Runyinya project, under which houses are being built for almost 400 women and children who survived the genocide, continues and is expected to be completed by the end of April. To restore the self-sufficiency of other vulnerable groups, a number of agricultural, bee-keeping and knitting projects have been launched.

The school feeding programme has restarted in the prefectures of Gisenyi and Ruhengeri. Distributions are carried out by the Rwandan Red Cross Society. The last two weeks, 104.5 tonnes of cereals, 89.2 tonnes of beans, 4.2 tonnes of oil and 4.3 tonnes of salt were handed out to 6,505 pupils. Some 1,200 orphans have returned to school after the ICRC provided them with school kits and paid their tuition fees.

During the same period, a total of 1,515 vulnerable people received 16.1 tonnes of cereals, 6.1 tonnes of beans, 2.8 tonnes of oil and 2.5 tonnes of salt.

Document 35/33 (14.04.97)

Source: ICRC Date: 14 Apr 1997 -----

Rwanda: Most of the Operations Resume

(Excerpt from:) ICRC News

The ICRC partially suspended its activities in Rwanda on 6 February. Ten days later it took the decision to gradually resume them. Although many places in Rwanda still remain off-limits to the organization's 60 expatriates there, most ICRC operations are to some extent now under way again.

Water and sanitation programmes are in progress in Kigali, Gikongoro, Byumba, Kibuye and Gitarama, and ICRC medical teams have resumed work at Kibuye hospital as well as at the limb-fitting centre in Gatagara. Meanwhile, prisons and communal lock-ups in accessible areas are being regularly visited, and children reunited with their families. The ICRC is paying special attention to the most vulnerable among Rwanda's population, with food being distributed to 16,000 schoolchildren in four prefectures (Gitarama, Butare, Gisenyi and Ruhengeri). Some 1,200 orphans have returned to school after the ICRC provided them with school kits and tuition fees. The Runyinya project, in which houses are being built for almost 400 women and children, survivors of the genocide, should be completed by the end of April. Lastly, a number of agricultural, bee-keeping and knitting projects have been started.

Further information: Bernard Barrett, ICRC Kigali, tel. ++250 77 3441

Document 35/34 (14.04.97)

Source: ICRC Date: 14 Apr 1997 -----

Back in Kisangani

ICRC delegates returned to Kisangani on 20 March for the first time since rebel forces captured the city five days previously. There they carried out a survey to enable the ICRC to establish operational priorities. They found that there are some 25,000 displaced people in the Kisangani area who need help to return to their places of origin. A second priority is access to detainees, including large numbers of people arrested when the city fell.

While all international staff from the ICRC, the UN and various non-governmental organizations were withdrawn from Kisangani, the Zairian Red Cross continued working tirelessly to take wounded people to hospital and give first aid. Now back in Kisangani, the ICRC will fully support local Red Cross medical work.

To restore contact between people who fled the fighting and relatives who stayed behind, the ICRC will establish a Red Cross message service in conjunction with the Zairian Red Cross. For those who decide to embark on the 700-km journey home, aid stations will be set up along the main roads to the east. The most vulnerable - children, the elderly, pregnant women and wounded people - will be transported by lorry as far as road conditions permit.

Delegates are maintaining their presence in Lubumbashi, though they are spending the nights in Ndola, across the border in Zambia. Some staff based in Kinshasa have been redeployed to Brazzaville, the capital of Congo, to prepare an operations base in case the situation deteriorates in the Zairian capital.

Further information: Josui Anselmo, ICRC Nairobi, tel. ++2542 723 963

Document 35/45 (16.04.97)

Source: ICRC Date: 16 Apr 1997 -----

Airlift for Displaced Zairians

The ICRC has started airlifting some 15,000 displaced Zairians now in Kisangani back to the Goma and Bukavu region. On Tuesday 15 April, a Hercules C-130 made a first flight to Bukavu with 105 people on board. A B-727 is due in Kivu today. The two aircraft are expected to make two or three shuttle flights daily.

In Kisangani, the ICRC transports the displaced people to the airport, taking particular care to keep families intact. Each family is given food and material assistance to help with its resettlement.

Since 7 April, a cargo plane has been flying food, medicines and other relief supplies from Nairobi to Kisangani. This relief is subsequently distributed by volunteers of the Red Cross Society of the Republic of Zaire to the displaced people in Kisangani and to the crowds of Rwandan refugees along the Kisangani-Ubundu railway.

Further information on the spot: Tony Burgener, tel. ++ 871 692 281 030

Document 37/14 (28.04.97)

Source: ICRC Date: 28 Apr 1997 -----

Update No. 6 on ICRC Activities Related to the Zairian Conflict

ICRC air bridge for internally displaced continues

Since 15 April, more than 3,500 Zairian displaced have been flown back from Kisangani to Goma and Bukavu, despite technical problems which grounded two aircraft for two days. For most of the week, a Hercules and a B-727 carried out two to three rotations per day. When the airlift started, priority was given to unaccompanied children and other vulnerable groups who require special attention after their five-month journey through the forest. Most of the 150 children who made up the first group of passengers were reunited with their families soon after their arrival in Goma or Bukavu. The remainder are being taken care of by orphanages. Efforts are being made to locate their relatives using the tracing network built up over the past months in cooperation with the Zairian Red Cross.

The humanitarian situation south of Kisangani

The ICRC is deeply concerned that for the past week humanitarian organizations, including the Zairian Red Cross and the ICRC, have not been able to reach the refugees scattered along the railway line leading to Ubundu.

Assistance for returnees under way

In Kisangani, delegates are working around the clock to prepare an estimated 10,000 remaining internally displaced for their wazuu homeward flight. All displaced, most of whom stay in Kisangani town, pass through so-called "site H". They are grouped according to their area of origin and special attention is paid to ensure that family members can travel together. While waiting at site H, which can accommodate around 3,500 people, they are supplied with food. Relief items continue to be brought to Kisangani from Nairobi on regular shuttle flights. Two ICRC nurses are on hand to prepare the injured or sick for the short journey back home. The medical team has accompanied several flights carrying children and other vulnerable groups.

On arrival in Goma or Bukavu, returnees will receive resettlement kits to facilitate their reintegration. Delegates in Uvira continue to distribute food and non-food relief to a steady stream of Zairian refugees and internally displaced returning to Uvira from Kalemie, Fizi and Kigoma (Tanzania). In Goma, Bukavu and Uvira preparations are also being made to ensure that as many as 250,000 returnees have access to safe drinking water and basic medical care.

On 23 April, ICRC delegates flew to Kalemie, south of Uvira, to assess the situation of internally displaced and coordinate their return. Another similar mission is currently being carried out in Lubumbashi, where an ICRC team is establishing contact with the new

authorities to be able to continue its humanitarian activities in the provinces of Shaba and Kasai.

In Kivu, routine ICRC tracing, medical and water and sanitation activities continue largely uninterrupted. Tracing delegates are especially busy taking care of unaccompanied children arriving from Kisangani and locating their families in cooperation with the Zairian Red Cross.

Kinshasa

As far as possible, the delegation in Kinshasa, with a staff of six expatriates, is maintaining its detention, tracing and medical activities and preparing for a possible emergency situation. As part of these preparations, two delegates are based in Brazzaville, Congo, where emergency stocks have been stored.

UNQUOTE

Best

regards,

Press

Division

Document 38/54 (07.05.97)

Source: ICRC Date: 07 May 1997 -----

Ten Volunteers of the Zairian Red Cross Killed in Kenge

ICRC Communication to the press No. 97/15

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was deeply shocked to learn of the death of 10 first-aid workers of the Red Cross Society of the Republic of Zaire, killed some hours ago in Kenge, a town 200 km east of Kinshasa. According to information received by the ICRC delegation in the Zairian capital, the tragedy occurred as the volunteers were assisting people wounded in the fighting which had been raging in Kenge. Some 200 civilians were reportedly killed in the clashes, and 126 wounded have been admitted to hospital, 25 of them in critical condition.

The ICRC calls on the belligerents to respect all persons not taking part in the fighting, in particular civilians, prisoners and the wounded, and also the staff and buildings placed under the protection of the Red Cross emblem. ICRC delegates and Zairian Red Cross personnel will attempt to reach Kenge in the coming hours to provide medical assistance to the hospital.

Document 38/59 (09.05.97)

Source: ICRC Date: 09 May 1997 -----

Zaire Strife Ongoing

07:47:44 GMT

Despite the expectation that Sunday's long-awaited direct meeting between President Mobutu and Mr. Kabila would be a move towards easing the plight of the many victims of Zaire's six-month old conflict, the situation is becoming more dramatic by the day.

Delegates from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) based in Kinshasa, Kisangani, Goma, Bukavu, Uvira and Lubumbashi, are working with other humanitarian organizations to help alleviate the suffering of the local Zairian population and Rwandan refugees.

Kisangani Airbridge In Closing Stage

More than 3,700 displaced people had been repatriated from Kisangani to Goma and Bukavu, as of Friday, May 2. ICRC planes flew 31 rotations and UN organizations another six.

Under a second repatriation operation started in Kindu, 440 of an estimated 1,200 internally displaced people had been flown back to Bukavu by Friday, May 2. The operation is being organized by a team of ICRC expatriates temporarily based in Kindu.

In Kalemie, five expatriates are currently assessing the number of internally displaced present in the area and trying to arrange transport for those trying to leave. To gain access to displaced persons outside Kalemie, two landcruisers had to be shipped to the town. Some 120 unaccompanied children have already been identified.

In Uvira, the stream of refugees and internally displaced returning from Kalemie, Fizi and Kigoma has slowed considerably. Food assistance to the returnees continues.

Support Services for Repatriation

In Kisangani, some 45 Zairian Red Cross volunteers and two ICRC nurses offered medical assistance to families waiting at the site there.

To restore family links disrupted by the conflict and to provide an additional incentive for internally displaced to return home, several thousand Red Cross messages have been sent to and from Kisangani and Kivu over the past four weeks.

In Bukavu, delegates have set up a tracing team at the airport itself: disembarking families are asked whether any family members are missing and, if so, they are referred to a center for unaccompanied children.

Over the past few weeks, the Red Cross message network in Kivu has been using the services of local radio stations and churches, which has helped the Red Cross respond rapidly to the increased demand for tracing services.

As far as relief assistance is concerned, internally displaced have been assisted with food on disembarking. Resettlement kits will be distributed once beneficiaries have been registered.

Support for Rwandan Refugees

The ICRC remains highly preoccupied by the desperate plight of the Rwandan refugees in Zaire.

In Kisangani, 185 Zairian Red Cross volunteers are fully supported and coordinated by the ICRC to carry out food and non-food distributions to Rwandan refugees. They are working in close coordination with other humanitarian organizations.

Following reports that some 7,000 Rwandan refugees are traveling westward, from the area around Mbandaka, down the Zaire river, the delegation in Kinshasa has organized reconnaissance flights to locate the refugee groups.

Preparations in Kinshasa & Brazzaville

In cooperation with the Zairian Red Cross, priority has been given to emergency preparedness.

Throughout the 24 districts of Kinshasa, Zairian Red Cross first aid teams will be on standby, prepared to help the wounded and the sick and to evacuate the most seriously injured to one of eight reference hospitals.

In total, some 2,700 Red Cross volunteers, most of them specially trained, are ready to respond to medical emergencies.

Medical delegates have evaluated the health structures in Kinshasa and an inventory was drawn up to provide them with the right medical material, should the need arise.

Relief distributions in Kinshasa will be carried out by Zairian Red Cross volunteers, with technical and material support from the ICRC.

As of today (May 7), the Zairian Red Cross will start distributing food and non-food relief to some 16,000 people; among them internally displaced persons recently arrived in Kinshasa, as well as to hospitals, prisons, orphanages and other institutions throughout the capital.

To minimize the risk of a cholera epidemic, increasingly likely as the influx of internally displaced further raises population density in the city, ICRC supported clean-up and hygiene campaigns have been stepped up in markets and other public places. Water treatment facilities of the state water company have been assessed and measures taken to provide assistance if necessary.

The ICRC in Brazzaville has been reinforced with personnel and logistics and has prepared emergency stocks of food and non-food assistance, enough for 5,000 families for one month.

Ongoing activities in Kivu and Shaba

In Kivu, medical and tracing activities continue, although they have recently been hampered by increasing insecurity around Goma and Bukavu.

Water and sanitation delegates, who have so far concentrated mainly on water treatment plants in the main centers (Goma, Bukavu, Uvira, Kisangani), will now shift their attention to smaller towns, particularly in the north (Bunia, Isiro).

Document 39/39 (15.05.97)

Source: ICRC Date: 15 May 1997 -----

Congo emergency operation for Rwandan refugees

The ICRC has launched a temporary and exceptional operation to assist thousands of Rwandan refugees who are crossing the Zaire River into Congo, many of them in an appalling state of health. The refugees, who have walked through Zaire along jungle paths, are gathering near the Congolese fishing village of Liranga, where there is no drinking water, food or shelter for them.

The riverside village, surrounded by forests and swampland, is accessible only by boat or helicopter. An ICRC team from Brazzaville which carried out a survey in Liranga between 8 and 12 May found that over 3,000 refugees had been registered by the local authorities and several hundred more were arriving in the area each day. On the other side of the river, upwards of 20,000 are said to be waiting to cross -- provided they can pay local boatmen for the passage. Those with no money, or who are too sick to go any further, are left behind in Zaire.

Karen Thibaud, a member of the ICRC team on the spot, said the refugees were physically exhausted and malnourished. "There are likely to be many more crossing in the coming days, and they will need help urgently. We shall try to meet their immediate needs, but if we are to assist them in the longer term they will have to leave this area, which is barely suitable as a place of transit."

On 12 May the ICRC sent a first helicopter-load of food to Liranga. The following day a cargo plane arrived in the Congolese capital, Brazzaville, with 11 tonnes of high-protein biscuits, medical supplies and water/sanitation material. This will be taken by a smaller aircraft to Lukolela, a missionary station with an airstrip some 80 kilometres south of Liranga.

The ICRC is in contact with the Congolese authorities, UNHCR and other organizations with a view to coordinating the operation for the refugees.

Document 39/41 (15.05.97)

Source: ICRC Date: 15 May 1997 -----

More work for the tracing agency

The ICRC delegation in Kinshasa has seen a steep rise in the number of people anxious to restore contact with their families elsewhere in the country. In the past three and a half weeks, some 1,100 people have visited the office to write Red Cross messages -- a tenfold increase compared with just a few weeks ago. Philippe Beauverd, head of the tracing agency in Kinshasa, said that people separated from their families because of the conflict were learning about the service by word of mouth. Incoming messages are being distributed in the capital's 24 districts by Zairian Red Cross personnel.

Meanwhile, the Zairian Red Cross has organized the distribution of food parcels to some 17,000 displaced Zairians living in Kinshasa. The food (basic rations for one month, including flour, oil, salt, sugar and beans) was provided by various organizations in the capital, and the operation financed by the ICRC.

Further information: Nic Sommer, ICRC Kinshasa, tel. ++243 88 46 900 Rolin Wavre, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++ 41 22 730 2876

Document 40/43 (21.05.97)

Source: ICRC Date: 21 May 1997 -----

Update No. 97/8 on ICRC Activities Related to the Zairian Conflict

Update No. 97/8 on ICRC activities related to the Zairian conflict

Assistance to Rwandan refugees arriving in Congo

On 8 May a reconnaissance flight organized by the Kinshasa delegation located several thousand Rwandan refugees who had crossed the border to Congo. Two ICRC expatriates based in Brazzaville were immediately dispatched to Lukolela (Congo) on Friday 9 May. The next day they travelled by boat to Liranga, situated along the Zaire river roughly 500 km north-east of Brazzaville, bringing with them first-aid material. By Saturday evening, an estimated 4,000 refugees, all in very poor condition, had been counted. The current daily rate of arrival of 400 to 500 is likely to continue, given that a further 20,000 refugees have been reported in the area south of the Zairian town of Mbandaka, who are expected to try and enter Congo as well.

Owing to logistical constraints, attempts to bring relief supplies to Liranga over the weekend proved to be very difficult. Finally, on 12 May, an ICRC-chartered helicopter was able to fly in two tonnes of desperately needed food (beans and oil). Delegates also provided emergency first-aid to alleviate the suffering as much as possible.

At present the refugees can be reached only by helicopter or boat, as they are located 80 km from the nearest airport or road. The ICRC strongly suggests that a site be established further south along the river, where assistance could be more easily given. Coordination meetings are being held in Brazzaville between the Congolese authorities and humanitarian organizations to allow them to respond efficiently to the refugees' needs.

On 13 May a charter flight from Nairobi delivered 11 tonnes of food and non-food relief, including medical and water and sanitation material, to Brazzaville. As of today, the delegation expects a Twin-Otter plane from the ICRC delegation in Angola to arrive in Brazzaville and to forward the relief goods to Lukolela.

ICRC office opened in Kananga (Kasai Occidental)

Following an assessment mission to Kananga, in the province of Kasai Occidental, an ICRC office was opened there on Monday, 12 May. Over the coming days, a staff of three expatriates, together with the Zairian Red Cross, will concentrate on coordinating support for war-wounded evacuated from the frontlines. Authorization has been requested to go to Kikwit in Bandundu Province. Furthermore, delegates are concerned about the condition of thousands

of refugees reported to be in the area of Luiza, some 120 kilometres south of Kananga, and hope to gain access to that area very soon.

Air bridges for internally displaced

By late last week, a total of 5,243 internally displaced persons had been transported by the ICRC from Kisangani and Kindu to Bukavu, Goma, Isiro, Bunia and Lubumbashi. Airlift operations from Kindu have been completed and expatriate staff has been withdrawn. In Kisangani, the last few groups of internally displaced have passed through the transit site. Remaining ICRC aircraft capacity may be used for the repatriation of Rwandan refugees, in coordination with UNHCR.

Internally displaced in Kalemie

An initial census in Kalemie town revealed 5,000 to 6,000 internally displaced persons. More assessments are currently going ahead in the surrounding areas.

First evaluation missions are also being carried out in Bunia (North Kivu) and Isiro (Haut Zaire) to evaluate needs in these centres. Special attention is being paid to health structures and water and sanitation facilities.

Ongoing activities in Kivu

The subdelegations of Goma, Bukavu and Uvira continue their medical (including water and sanitation), tracing, relief and dissemination activities. However, owing to increased insecurity caused by sporadic clashes in the Kivu area, each field trip has to be carefully planned and some activities are occasionally delayed.

Emergency preparations in Kinshasa

Together with the Zairian Red Cross and other humanitarian actors an emergency plan for Kinshasa has been worked out. A total of 2,700 Red Cross volunteers, including about 800 specially trained team leaders, can be called upon. First-aid teams, trained to give emergency medical assistance and to evacuate wounded to one of eight reference hospitals, are already on stand-by.

The Zairian Red Cross, with logistical support from the ICRC, has also started food distributions to some 22,000 vulnerable persons, including patients and staff at 18 hospitals and around 17,000 internally displaced. The rations, made available by other humanitarian organizations which still have stocks in Kinshasa, are designed to meet nutritional needs for approximately three weeks. Distributions will be made over three days at 14 points covering 24 districts of Kinshasa.

Every day, the ICRC tracing team in Kinshasa handles more family messages addressed to relatives in other parts of Zaire. By helping to reassure relatives that their loved ones are alive

and well, the ICRC's Red Cross message service also eases tension. At the moment, 400 persons a day visit the delegation to write a family message.

Preparations in Brazzaville and Lubumbashi

The ICRC delegation in Brazzaville is fully operational and has been reinforced with personnel. It is managing an emergency stock of relief supplies, which can be used in Brazzaville or Kinshasa.

From Lubumbashi, high-level contacts are made with representatives of the Alliance with a view to obtaining authorizations to assist where needed and to gain access to detainees.

Document 40/45 (22.05.97)

Source: ICRC Date: 22 May 1997 -----

Update No. 9 on ICRC Activities in Zaire and Neighbouring Countries

Please find herewith a Update No. 9 on ICRC activities in the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire) and neighbouring countries

QUOTE

Kinshasa operations resume day after takeover

ICRC activities in Kinshasa resumed on Sunday, 18 May, one day after the ADFL's takeover of the capital. All of the work done over the weekend was carried out in excellent cooperation with the National Red Cross Society. Volunteers collected 200 dead from the streets of Kinshasa and evacuated several dozen wounded to various reference hospitals. On Sunday, a team of delegates visited hospitals throughout the capital to assess the situation there. Medical supplies were provided to ensure proper treatment of wounded. Emergency preparations made over the past week paid off, enabling a rapid and adequate response to be made to humanitarian needs in the city.

Neither ICRC staff nor Red Cross volunteers encountered problems in moving around in Kinshasa. Both are widely known for their humanitarian work, carried out in close cooperation and even in very difficult circumstances.

Over the coming days, the ICRC's main concern in Kinshasa will be protection, particularly relating to persons held in relation with the conflict. The most immediate priority will be to gain access to two military camps near Kinshasa.

Assistance in Brazzaville and Bangui

Over the weekend, two ICRC-chartered aeroplanes flew over four tonnes of emergency aid to Lukolela, in the Congo. Most of the relief goods were ferried to Liranga, a village some six hours away by dugout, where an estimated 5,000 Rwandans fleeing fighting in the Democratic Republic of Congo/Zaire have sought refuge. Since the start of this operation, the ICRC has transported some 21 tonnes of food to Liranga and Lukolela.

An assessment mission is scheduled for this week to investigate the situation in Impfondo, further north along the Zaire river. In addition, on the basis of a survey carried out to determine the most urgent needs of the local population, fishing materials are to be provided.

Another ICRC team is planning to go to Mbandaka on 21 May to assess the situation and possibly assist some 2,000 refugees in the area.

The Congolese authorities have given their approval for a site to be established for the refugees. As they are preparing to bring the refugees further south, the boats to be used in the operation have been loaded with ICRC food and other assistance sufficient for 2,500 people for one week.

In the Central African Republic, since 12 May, ICRC expatriates and staff of the Central African Red Cross Society have been taking care of a total of some 200 wounded and sick refugees who had crossed the border. National Society staff brought first-aid materials, donated by the ICRC, and tents across the river to the Democratic Republic of Congo/Zaire. They also erected tents in Bangui to provide temporary accommodation for arriving refugees and accompanied refugees being evacuated by the authorities from Bangui to Bouca, north of Bangui. On Sunday, the National Society launched an operation to transfer to Bouca around 500 refugees located south of Bangui.

In and around Zongo (Democratic Republic of Congo/Zaire), across the river from Bangui, volunteers of the local Red Cross assisted wounded and evacuated the bodies of those killed in disturbances. ICRC personnel attended to war-wounded cared for in the community hospital of Bangui and distributed dressing materials.

Source: ICRC

Date: 11 Jun 1997

Homeward Bound

ICRC NEWS 22

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

HOMeward BOUND

Planes, boats, trains, trucks, cars... just about every means of transport imaginable was brought into play for the ICRC's transfer of more than 6,500 people displaced within the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire).

The operation began on 15 April with an airlift: using a Hercules, a Boeing 727 and a DC3 (later joined by another transport plane dispatched from Nairobi), in six weeks the ICRC transferred a total of 6,019 people from Kisangani and Kindu to Bukavu, Goma, Isiro, Bunia and Lubumbashi. Other displaced persons were taken from Kisangani to Lubutu and Walikale by truck, and to Bafwasende by smaller vehicles. The ICRC also paid the train fares for 150 people from Lubumbashi to Kalemie.

In a new phase of the operation, which got under way on 2 June, a further 6,000 displaced people will be taken from Kalemie to Uvira. The whole undertaking is expected to continue for several more months, and forms part of a global assistance programme for the displaced population in the region.

Each family of returnees has been given a kit of essential items to help them settle back into their homes. The ICRC is also continuing to provide food and other assistance to the most vulnerable, in places affected by the passage of large numbers of people, looting and insecurity. A seed distribution programme is planned for the most affected areas.

All these assistance activities are aimed at helping between 250,000 and 300,000 people in the east of the country over the coming months. The ICRC is also continuing its rehabilitation and support work -- begun before November 1996 and maintained during the conflict -- for medical facilities in the east. This programme is seen as a vital contribution towards helping returnees resume a normal life.

Further information: Josui Anselmo, ICRC Nairobi, tel. ++2542 716 339

RWANDA

ICRC RESTORES WATER SUPPLY FOR NYANZA

Water is flowing from the taps once again for the residents of the southern Rwandan town of Nyanza. Less than 24 hours after receiving a request from the local authorities, the ICRC had a new pump delivered from its Kigali warehouse. Nyanza's 29,000 residents were suffering from a severe water shortage after two of the three pumps feeding the municipal reservoir had broken down.

The new pump, with a capacity of 35 cu.m/hour, has restored the water supply for the town's population and for its schools, hospital, health facilities and detention centres. The construction of the cement base, the plumbing and electrical connections were handled by the national utility company, Electrogaz. "Over the past few years we have done our best to provide emergency assistance to those in need", said Nicolas Stein, head of the ICRC's water and sanitation unit in Rwanda. Further information: Bernard Barrett, ICRC Kigali, tel: ++250 77 344

Source: ICRC

Date: 02 June 1997

Update No. 97/10 on ICRC activities in the DR Congo

More than six weeks after Kinshasa was taken over by forces of the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (ADFL), significant humanitarian problems persist in most of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. For the most part, these problems are related directly to the ongoing disturbances in Kivu province and to the fate of internally displaced people from Kivu and Rwandan refugees. The ICRC, in close cooperation with the Red Cross Society of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, is continuing the activities it carried out throughout the conflict.

Protection for detainees

In spite of ongoing negotiations with the new authorities, ICRC delegates have not yet been granted access to detainees.

Restoring family links

Although the ADFL offensive is formally over, thousands of internally displaced are still far away from their villages of origin. In many cases, the Red Cross Message system is the only means of communication that enables separated families to exchange news. As a result, thousands of messages are collected and distributed every week. In the east of the country, efforts are ongoing in the towns of Goma, Bukavu and Uvira to locate both Rwandan and Zairian unaccompanied minors and to take the steps necessary to reunite them with their families. In Goma, 94 unaccompanied Zairian children were located, and 13 family reunifications carried out in one week alone.

Delegates have also been trying to persuade Congolese families looking after Rwandan children to hand them over to the ICRC. If the families agree, the children are transferred to Rwanda, where they are looked after by the local ICRC delegation.

Thanks to painstaking work, an average of five family reunifications is carried out every week. In their efforts to find children's families, delegates have started using unusual methods: in Bukavu, for example, information about unaccompanied children is now broadcast by a local radio station.

Health activities

Health needs throughout the country remain enormous. Special support continues to be given to medical structures in and around Uvira, Bukavu, Goma, Kindu, Kisangani and Mbandaka, where assistance is required most urgently. As a general rule, medical activities will concentrate on places where the ICRC has a subdelegation or office. For flexibility, short-term projects will be favoured.

In recent weeks, regular visits were carried out to hospitals and health centres in and around Kisangani, Bukavu and Uvira. Medical supplies and other materials, such as mattresses, were provided as necessary. Health advice, for example on hygiene, was given wherever medical delegates consider it appropriate.

A total of 14 urban and rural health centres in Kisangani was evaluated by an ICRC medical coordinator. On the basis of the assessment, a project will be launched together with the Belgian Red Cross. Meanwhile, in Mbandaka, delegates continued to rehabilitate the obstetric ward, provide health care for internally displaced people and follow up the treatment of war-wounded. Evaluations were also carried out in Boende and Ikela, whose hospitals were stripped bare during the conflict. An assistance programme is being implemented.

In Kinshasa, war-wounded in five medical facilities were followed up by medical staff from the National Society. To improve medical care for children, paediatric kits were donated to seven health structures.

To assist hospitals treating war-wounded in Brazzaville, the capital of the neighbouring Republic of Congo-Brazzaville, more medical materials and medicines were brought in by ICRC or National Society staff travelling either by plane or dugout.

Water and sanitation

A total of six ICRC water and sanitation engineers are currently working in the country. In Bukavu, the ICRC came to the rescue last week after a landslide buried the town's only water supply pipe, leaving some 300,000 people without access to safe drinking water. The state water company, with the support of the ICRC, is currently repairing the damaged main pipe. Emergency work has been carried out on two smaller pipes, through which water will be supplied in the short term. The ICRC is financing transport and labour costs and providing various materials. Before the accident it had already been supplying fuel to power the treatment plant generator.

The inhabitants of the town of Isiro, north-east of Kisangani, had been without safe drinking water since early January. Starting on 2 June, however, the ICRC was able to restore the water supply: to put the local water treatment plant back into operation, delegates brought in 11 tonnes of aluminium sulphate, 3,400 litres of diesel fuel and spare parts for the water pumps. They also connected a provisional water reservoir to the supply network.

In Goma and Uvira the ICRC is supplying fuel for the generator powering the towns' water treatment plants. An 18 m³ water tanker was transferred from Rwanda to Bukavu to improve drinking water supplies for internally displaced people returning from Kalemie. On the Ruzizi plains, water and sanitation teams continued to construct septic tanks in numerous communes and to install the necessary pumping equipment. Water catchment work and latrine disinfection in Kisangani were pursued unchanged.

Relief

Food and non-food assistance continued to be provided to refugees from Brazzaville, who have sought shelter in Kinshasa. Some internally displaced people in Kisangani also received food relief. In addition, despite the situation in Brazzaville, further food assistance consisting of maize, beans, salt and oil was flown by Twin Otter plane to Lukolela, a town in the Republic of Congo-Brazzaville. The food was then transported to Liranga, a village to the north of Lukolela, which is currently home to some 5,900 Rwandan refugees.

The Kinshasa delegation also organized food assistance for war-wounded in Brazzaville. Maize, beans, salt and oil were taken to the strife-torn city by plane and boat, partly with the assistance of Congolese Red Cross staff.

In Mbandaka, food is provided for 200 refugees admitted to the local hospital, as well as to internally displaced people and unaccompanied minors awaiting transfer to Kisangani.

Lastly, following an assessment of the nutritional situation in the highland areas south of Bukavu and the region of Fizi, food and seed distributions are planned for an estimated 5,000 internally displaced people near Fizi and up to 10,000 internally displaced Babembe in the hills of Kaseka.

Adjustment of ICRC operational structure

When the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo started, the westward movement of the ADFL forces split the country into two parts. In order to maintain its operational effectiveness in ADFL-held areas, the ICRC established a mission in Bukavu, in the east of the country, in addition to the main delegation in Kinshasa. Now that the entire country has been taken over by the ADFL forces, the ICRC has adjusted its operational structure accordingly. The ICRC delegation, as well as all coordinators, most of whom were previously located in Kivu province, will be based in the capital Kinshasa. The towns in which the ICRC is present, namely Bukavu, Goma, Uvira, Kalemie, Lubumbashi, Kanangu, Kisangani and Mbandaka, will become sub-delegations or offices of Kinshasa. Congo-Brazzaville will remain a sub-delegation of Kinshasa until further notice.

Source: ICRC

Date: 04 July 1997

ICRC Continues Work in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Posted on Fri, 04 Jul 1997 13:09:54 GMT

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For the most part, these problems are related directly to the ongoing disturbances in Kivu province and to the fate of internally displaced people from Kivu and Rwandan refugees. The ICRC, in close cooperation with the Red Cross Society of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, is continuing the activities it carried out throughout the conflict.

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Source: ICRC

Date: 28 Aug 1997

ICRC medical supplies for attacked refugees

ICRC NEWS 33

RWANDA: ICRC MEDICAL SUPPLIES FOR ATTACKED REFUGEES:

ICRC emergency medical supplies have been donated to the Gisenyi hospital in north-western Rwanda to help treat people injured in an attack late last week on a nearby refugee camp.

RWANDA

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ICRC emergency medical supplies have been donated to the Gisenyi hospital in north-western Rwanda to help treat people injured in an attack late last week on a nearby refugee camp.

Official reports state that over 130 people were killed and at least as many wounded. The Mudende camp, near the town of Gisenyi, housed thousands of people who had fled fighting in the Masisi region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

During the weekend, the ICRC delivered dressing kits for five hundred people and 2,000 litres of IV fluids, as well as IV kits, material and medication to treat burns and cuts, painkillers, antibiotics, antimalarial medication and sterilized and non-sterilized gloves.

Local ICRC employees visited the hospital in Gisenyi on 23 August and saw that supplies to care for the wounded were inadequate. Authorization to donate the material was obtained the same day and, because the ICRC maintains emergency stocks throughout the country, delivery was completed within 24 hours.

"It's part of our mandate to be ready to help victims of conflict," said Dominique Dufour, head of the ICRC delegation in Rwanda. "We hope these supplies will partly alleviate the suffering of these people."

Further information: Bernard Barrett, ICRC Kigali, tel. ++250 77 344

Source: ICRC

Date: 05 Sep 1997

Sign of hope

ICRC News 34

Children's voices will soon once again echo down the halls of the Kigali school run by the Salesien Sisters of Don Bosco. In 1994 the ICRC turned the school into a place of refuge in the midst of the wave of mass killings then sweeping through the country. The International Committee, which is continuing its still sorely-needed action to help hundreds of thousands of Rwandans, is returning the compound to the Salesien Sisters of Don Bosco, who will reopen the school there this month. The offices and the surrounding compound hold vivid and tragic memories. In 1994 they sheltered close to a thousand people during the genocide and the battle for Kigali. "These buildings have been the scene of both suffering and courage", says Primo Corvaro, head of ICRC's sub-delegation for eastern Rwanda.

One building being handed back to the religious order was used temporarily as a makeshift hospital with operating theatre, one of the few medical facilities to remain open throughout the events of 1994. Over two thousand people were treated there. Two Rwandan staff and several patients were killed when a shell landed on the operating theatre. A number of other staff and Rwandan Red Cross volunteers lost their lives in the attempt to bring wounded people to the complex.

The ICRC is today continuing to assist the people of Rwanda through work to restore access to drinking water and to distribute food and other essential items. It is also supporting health-care centres throughout the country. Over three million Red Cross messages have been forwarded, thus enabling contact to be restored between relatives separated by the conflict. Thanks to the ICRC, some 28,000 unaccompanied children have so far been reunited with their families. In addition, over 120,000 detainees receive regular visits and assistance from ICRC delegates in Rwandan prisons and local lock-ups.

Source: ICRC

Date: 18 Sep 1997

Republic of the Congo Water and Hygiene a Priority

The teams of Congolese Red Cross volunteers and ICRC delegates who are helping people displaced by the fighting in the capital, Brazzaville, are not expecting any improvement in the situation with the onset of the rainy season. The need for assistance, especially drinking water, is growing by the day and the impending rains will only hamper relief work.

The ICRC and the aid organization Midecins sans frontières have set up five water tanks, which are being replenished on a regular basis, along the road leading north from Brazzaville through hundreds of kilometres of savannah. The ICRC has also built latrines and installed showers for tens of thousands of displaced people in the southern part of the capital.

Similar assistance is being provided on Mbamu, an island set in the middle of the Congo river between Brazzaville and Kinshasa, where thousands more have found refuge. The ICRC has repaired a well on the island and distributed the tools necessary to dig more wells. It has also set up showers and dug pits for the disposal of refuse.

In the coming days, the ICRC will distribute canvas sheeting against the rain to displaced persons who are still without shelter.

Further information: Paolo Dell'Oca, ICRC Kinshasa, tel.: ++243 12 34 191

Source: ICRC

Date: 08 Oct 1997

Uganda aid for 14,000 displaced

The ICRC has just finished distributing blankets, plastic sheeting and soap to over 14,000 internally displaced people in Nyahuka, south-western Uganda. The town's original population of 3,000 increased six-fold when thousands of people sought refuge there from the surrounding hills, fleeing the clashes which broke out in the area last June. "Some of the displaced have found shelter in crowded churches and schools, but most of them are living in makeshift huts in the bush around Nyahuka", said Louis Grasveld, the ICRC field delegate who supervised the distribution. The operation went ahead smoothly thanks to the support of the Uganda Red Cross Society, whose volunteers first registered all the beneficiaries and then helped distribute the supplies.

The distribution is part of a vast operation launched three months ago by the ICRC and the National Red Cross Society to assist some 70,000 internally displaced people in the south-western districts of Kasese, Kabarole and Bundibugyo. To date, in the first two districts about 30,000 people have received relief supplies and monthly food rations, while in Bundibugyo roughly the same number have been given blankets, soap and plastic sheeting.

"The operation will last until December, the start of the harvest season", said Claudio Baranzini, head of ICRC operations in Uganda. "After that, we will of course continue to monitor the situation in the region, in close cooperation with the local Red Cross, so that we can step in quickly should new humanitarian needs arise."

Further information: Claudio Baranzini, ICRC Kampala, tel. ++25641 230517 Josui Anselmo, ICRC Nairobi, Tel. ++2542 716339

Source: ICRC

Date: 08 Oct 1997

Priority in Kivu given to clean water and medical care

The ICRC has completed its relief operation for displaced Congolese in the Kivu area under which 150,000 people received food, seed and other basic items, and is now endeavouring to improve the provision of drinking water and medical care.

In Goma, ICRC engineers have restored the sanitary installations in seven health-care centres and work is currently under way to rehabilitate three other medical facilities. Together with Regidesco, the national water company, the ICRC is extending the water-supply network in two districts of the town.

Further south, in the Bukavu area, the ICRC has set up a gravity-feed system for Nyangezi hospital. The same type of system will be used to supply densely populated areas in the suburbs. Meanwhile, a similar project is nearing completion on the island of Idjwi, where 12 kilometres of pipe have recently been laid to supply Monvu hospital and 12 small towns.

In addition to providing medicines and various other items, the ICRC is covering the running costs of the hospitals in Bukavu, Goma and Uvira. An ICRC team made up of two doctors, a nurse and a radiologist has also set up basic and advanced training courses for the staff of the 170-bed local hospital in Uvira.

Since the beginning of this year, the ICRC has supported 52 health-care centres in Kivu (10 in Bukavu, 29 in Uvira and 13 in Goma). These centres, each of which gives between 10 and 20 consultations a day, meet the medical needs of approximately 270,000 people.

Further information: Roland Sidler, ICRC Geneva, Tel. ++ 41 22 730 20 45

Source: ICRC

Date: 16 Oct 1997

Rwanda: Course in law of war for army instructors

ICRC News 97/41

On 13 October the ICRC opened a week-long course in international humanitarian law, also known as the law of war, for 25 instructors from military academies throughout Rwanda. The course is designed to assist the instructors in teaching the subject to the troops and officers of the Rwandan army.

The law of war covers such matters as respect for civilians and non-combatants, the treatment of prisoners and the wounded, and the use of force in proportion to legitimate military objectives. Under the Geneva Conventions, States are responsible for spreading knowledge of this body of law among their own armed forces. The ICRC has been running such courses for national armies and other organized armed forces worldwide for the past 25 years.

The coordinator of the ICRC's dissemination programme in Rwanda, Glenn O'Neil, described this week's course as the first stage in a broader programme of cooperation with the Rwandan army to ensure that the law of war is included in military training. The participants will be given ready-to-use training materials, lesson plans, case studies and practical examples of how the law of war should be applied in combat situations. "We are rebuilding our training structure", explained the Head of the Rwandan Army Operations and Training Department, Lt. Col. Patrick Nyanvumba. "We want to incorporate this material at the outset so that we can achieve self-sufficiency in teaching it as quickly as possible."

Source: ICRC

Date: 12 Nov 1997

Update No. 97/01 on ICRC activities in Uganda

Uganda has been undergoing major changes since the beginning of the year: the Lord's Resistance Army, an armed opposition movement operating mainly in the northern districts of Gulu and Kitgum, has intensified its activities in recent months, adding significantly to the existing numbers of internally displaced. In the West Nile, though the situation has generally calmed down, a renewed rise in tension, linked to a splinter group of the West Nile Bank Front, has been observed in the area. In the south-western Kasese region, a new rebel group, the Allied Democratic Forces, emerged in the Rwenzori mountains. Their presence resulted in a dramatic upsurge in hostilities in the region, culminating in attacks on the towns of Bundibugyo and Kasese in June and July 1997. Until then, the internal conflict had largely been restricted to the north and north-west of the country.

The civilian population is affected in numerous ways. In the north, around Gulu and Kitgum, civilians have been living in constant fear of attack and abduction for more than a decade, and even though some of the people who have had to flee the fighting have recently been able to return to their homes, hundreds of thousands are still displaced. Thousands more, these so-called "night-stayers", seek shelter during the night in towns and trading centres. The Ugandan government's policy of protecting villages and trading centres with the army, thereby attracting internally displaced people and concentrating them in these areas, has cut off farmers from their fields and livelihood. The clashes in the south-west have triggered mass population displacements, currently totalling some 70,000 people, and are seriously disrupting economic activity in the area.

In the West Nile area, approximately 30,000 displaced people have been moving back to their villages, and thousands of Ugandan refugees have returned home from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sudan. At present only a few thousand internally displaced remain in the region, as do some 60,000 Sudanese refugees.

Protection and detention activities

The ICRC currently visits some 1,700 detainees in 16 places of detention including military barracks, prisons run by the civilian authorities, and police stations. To address the problem of poor material conditions in civilian prisons, the ICRC distributes food and non-food assistance (such as soap, blankets, buckets and cleaning materials) on an ad hoc basis and provides technical advice on how to improve water and sanitation facilities. Medical supplies are available in the case of acute emergencies, such as the threat of an epidemic. The ICRC also reminds the authorities of their obligation to maintain acceptable standards in prisons and to

ensure fair treatment of detainees. Efforts are being made to improve contacts with opposition movements in order to obtain access to people possibly held by rebel groups.

Health activities

The worsening security situation, population displacements and lack of access to land have resulted in a gradual deterioration of the health of people living in or adjacent to conflict areas. In particular, the incidence of many common illnesses is raised among displaced populations as a result of changes in environment, lack of health care facilities or inability to afford treatment. Population movements also place an additional burden on fragile water supply and sanitation systems, which in turn increases the risk of outbreaks of water-borne diseases.

Local public health facilities are supported to enable them to treat those affected by conflict and notably the war-wounded. As malaria in particular is an enormous problem among internally displaced people, a malaria control programme is being planned in conjunction with the Ugandan Red Cross Society (URCS).

Water and sanitation activities

In the West Nile, the ICRC continued to implement a water rehabilitation programme in cooperation with the URCS. Seven out of 12 planned spring protection structures have been constructed and work has commenced on repairing existing boreholes. Fifteen of these are planned to be finished by the end of the year. The water supply system in these villages serves some 22,000 people.

In the South-West, owing to hostilities in the Rwenzori mountains, 300 families were displaced to a disused cobalt mine in Kilembe. With material and financial assistance from the ICRC, the mines engineer and his team restored the water supply to areas now inhabited by internally displaced.

Relief activities

As with health care, the combined effects of conflict, displacement and lack of access to land resulted in a gradual deterioration of the economic and nutritional status of people in conflict areas. Given that there is an estimated total of 300,000 internally displaced people in Uganda, conditions in many parts of the country are conducive to poverty, illness and malnutrition. For internally displaced people who have some coping mechanisms, such as family or rented access to land, the ICRC provides basic non-food necessities, including hoes and small agricultural packages, so as to avoid a further deterioration of their situation and to help them get back on their feet. Newly displaced people, many of whom lose all their belongings when fleeing their homes, are assisted with food and shelter materials as the situation requires.

Cooperation with the National Society

As part of ongoing ICRC efforts to support the URCS tracing service, ten motorbikes were handed over to the National Society. The first URCS regional tracing/dissemination training

workshop took place in September and was attended by 29 participants from branches throughout northern, eastern and north-western Uganda.

Two joint URCS/ICRC tracing missions took place in July and August to the Kyangwari, Kiryandongo and Oruchinga refugee camps.

Assistance programmes in Gulu, Kitgum and western Uganda are carried out in close cooperation with local branches and volunteers in the areas concerned.

Source: ICRC

Date: 13 Nov 1997

Uganda: aid to 80000 people displaced in the Southwest

ICRC NEWS 45

** SHORT MENU....

UGANDA: AID TO 80,000 PEOPLE DISPLACED IN THE SOUTH-WEST: Whenever 35-year-old Biira, mother of nine children, wants to see her house again, she has to negotiate steep hill paths, escorted by three soldiers of the Ugandan army.

** STORIES IN FULL...

AID TO 80,000 PEOPLE DISPLACED IN THE SOUTH-WEST

Whenever 35-year-old Biira, mother of nine children, wants to see her house again, she has to negotiate steep hill paths, escorted by three soldiers of the Ugandan army. For a year now, this area of south-western Uganda, near the country's borders with Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, has been the scene of regular clashes between the Allied Democratic Forces and the Ugandan army. Nearly 100,000 people have had to abandon their homes and their fields.

Some 10,000 of these people have found refuge in the deserted houses of Kilembe, a town that just a few years ago accommodated the families of workers at a cobalt mine there. Now, Biira has nothing but the scant harvest of cassava leaves which she gets from a tiny hillside plot of land allotted her by the local authorities. She is alone in taking care of her children, who share with her a small room that doubles as kitchen and bedroom.

On 8 November, the ICRC organized a food distribution in Kilembe to augment the displaced people's meagre resources. Despite the burden of the heavy basket perched on her small frame, Biira was all smiles as she carried home her sack of flour, plus cooking oil, salt, beans and soap.

Since June 1997, the ICRC has been setting up programmes to provide aid in the form of food and other essential items for displaced Ugandans, most of whom live in extremely precarious conditions.

Further information: Josu=E9 Anselmo, ICRC Nairobi, Tel. ++2542 723 963

Source: ICRC

Date: 13 Nov 1997

Rwanda: helping the vulnerable help themselves

ICRC NEWS 45

SHORT MENU...

RWANDA: HELPING THE VULNERABLE HELP THEMSELVES: The need is simple but pressing: seeds and a hoe. For some of the poorest people in Rwanda, the rudimentary means to grow their own food spells the difference between being dependent on outside aid and being self-sufficient.

STORIES IN FULL...

RWANDAHELPING THE VULNERABLE HELP THEMSELVES

The need is simple but pressing: seeds and a hoe. For some of the poorest people in Rwanda, the rudimentary means to grow their own food spells the difference between being dependent on outside aid and being self-sufficient.

In the last two months, the ICRC has acted through local associations and Rwandan non-governmental organizations in different areas of the country to distribute seed, agricultural tools and fertilizer to over 2,000 people.

With the start of the rainy season, this assistance will allow the beneficiaries to plant beans, potatoes, sweet potatoes, maize, carrots, cabbage and onions, thus enabling them to start back down the road to autonomy.

Many of these people are widows or orphans and often support an entire household. Most work small private or collective plots owned by local non-profit organizations. In other cases, however, age or infirmity makes it impossible for them to do the heavy work required to prepare the plots for planting. In these cases, the ICRC provides additional aid to the organizations owning the plots to enable them to organize food-for-work programmes to get the planting done.

Further information: Bernard Barrett, ICRC Kigali, Tel. ++250 72 783

Source: ICRC

Date: 19 Nov 1997

Children seek parents through ICRC photo album

ICRC NEWS 46

** SHORT MENU....

RWANDA: CHILDREN SEEK PARENTS THROUGH ICRC PHOTO ALBUM: There are 440 pictures in all, each of an infant holding a board with an identification number in front of him or her.

** STORIES IN FULL...

RWANDA CHILDREN SEEK PARENTS THROUGH ICRC PHOTO ALBUM

There are 440 pictures in all, each of an infant holding a board with an identification number in front of him or her. Some appear bewildered, others stare timidly, a few smile. They are all very young, most of them between one and four years of age.

These are children who became separated from their families during the return of Rwandan refugees from the former Zaire (now Democratic Republic of the Congo). Because they are so young, they are unable to provide any information about their identity, the names of their parents or their places of origin.

The ICRC, with the help of UNICEF, is distributing 2,500 copies of the photo album to churches, municipal offices and NGOs throughout Rwanda, even in the most remote areas of the country. Entitled "Do You Know This Child ?", the album contains a plea to anyone who recognizes any of the children to contact the nearest ICRC office.

"Because we have so little information", explained Roberta Martinelli, the ICRC Tracing Agency coordinator in Rwanda, "there is no other way of carrying out an active search for their relatives. We hope the album will bring the families to us."

Last May, the ICRC distributed the first photo-tracing album with 208 pictures of infants. Over 100 of the children in this first album have now been reunited with their families. "As well as the parents of those children", Ms Martinelli added, "hundreds of other families have contacted us because of the album, providing useful details about their own lost children."

Since the mass return of refugees to Rwanda last November, the ICRC has registered 1,800 cases of children separated from their families and too young to give any information about them. A third photo-tracing album is already being prepared and should be distributed at the beginning of next=A0year.

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Source: ICRC

Date: 11 Dec 1997

Rwanda: secondary school education for orphans

ICRC News 97/49

After waiting quietly in line for their names to be called, the youngsters come forward to take a mattress and blanket each and receive an armful of school supplies. Before carrying their new possessions back to the dormitory, they applaud and thank those in charge of the distribution.

These 69 young people, aged between 12 and 18, all lost their parents during the 1994 genocide and are now trying to rebuild their lives. With the assistance of the Association for the Support of Survivors of the Genocide, they and 121 other students are attending a secondary school in the commune of Kanzenze in central Rwanda.

They have teachers and staff to look after them, and the school is building classrooms and dormitories on the site of a former hospital. But their needs begin with the most basic items: school equipment and proper sleeping quarters. Some are three to a bed at present, and 55 students share one pit latrine enclosed with plastic sheeting.

At the request of the Association, the ICRC has given a school kit, a mattress and blanket, soap, a kitchen set, a jerrycan for water, and material for a school uniform to each of the youngsters. Each school kit consists of 22 notebooks, pens, pencils, erasers, a ruler and a geometry set. In addition, the ICRC pays the students' tuition fees, which amount to 25,000 Rwandan francs (80 US dollars) each per year.

The coordinator of the Association, Ndimbati Claver, explained that this help is important because of the devastation of 1994. "Those events caused not only the damage you can see, but also the wounds hidden inside," he says, looking at the adolescents. He underlined the importance of working with these young people. "As in any other country, our young people are the future and their education is of vital importance."

The ICRC is providing school kits and paying tuition fees for over 1,400 orphans throughout Rwanda, thus allowing them to continue their secondary education. "Part of our mandate is to aid recovery in the aftermath of conflict and to assist the vulnerable," explained ChÚrine Pollini, the ICRC delegate responsible for these projects in Rwanda. "Helping these orphans to rebuild their future by allowing them to complete their education is an integral part of the ICRC's role in Rwanda."

Source: ICRC

Date: 18 Dec 1997

Displaced people go home on barges

ICRC NEWS 50

**** SHORT MENU....**

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO: DISPLACED PEOPLE GO HOME ON BARGES: It is on board what look like floating villages plying the waters between Kinshasa and Kisangani that the ICRC has taken home many of those displaced during the conflict which brought Laurent Desir Kabila to power.

**** STORIES IN FULL...**

It is on board what look like floating villages plying the waters between Kinshasa and Kisangani that the ICRC has taken home many of those displaced during the conflict which brought Laurent Desir Kabila to power. One of these barge convoys, pulled by the Ketsy and carrying 613 passengers, took 43 days instead of the expected 21 to cover the 1,500 km that separate the two cities. The delay was caused by a shortage of fuel in Mbandaka, the half-way point, and by mechanical problems.

On 5 December, the day before the convoy's arrival in Kisangani, the ICRC sent another boat out to meet the barges and register all the passengers. Because of an outbreak of measles on board, 34 people were taken to hospital immediately on arrival in Kisangani; all the other passengers were vaccinated and the barges were disinfected. Thanks to these measures, the outbreak was contained.

Now that these displaced people have returned to Kisangani, others originally from Goma, Bukavu and Kindu are to be taken home by plane, boat or train.

The third and final barge convoy between Kinshasa and Kisangani has now arrived at its destination four days ahead of schedule.

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