

1. CRITICAL ISSUES FOR CHILDREN

The situation of children and women remains precarious as Burundi grapples with a fragile peace and heightened expectations of democracy dividends. The 12-year-long conflict and continuing political tensions have greatly hampered the Government's capacity to deliver basic services or address human rights violations of children and women. The infrastructural decay and lack of capacity to pull out of the emergency phase was clearly illustrated during the implementation of the Government's declaration of Free Birth Delivery Services and Medical Care for Children Under Five, aimed at reducing the high maternal and infant mortality rates, as well as of Free Primary Education.

The latest Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey indicated a rise in maternal and infant mortality rates, as well as an increase in acute malnutrition among children, especially those aged under five. According to Government figures for 2002, an average of 880 mothers died during childbirth for every 100,000 live births recorded in health centres and 1,030 died for every 100,000 live births recorded in hospitals, making it the third most common cause of maternal mortality. The number of mothers who die of haemorrhage, infection, abortion and other complications before reaching the health centres is however not known. Generally, infant deaths are closely interwoven with maternal deaths; 2003 figures show that, on average, 32 infants die for every 1,000 live births; children still-born or dead on delivery are estimated at nearly 74 per 1,000 in the hospitals and at about 60 per 1,000 in community health centres.

Only 79 per cent of the population have access to potable water and less than 36 per cent to safe sanitation facilities. The 2006 food shortages compounded displacements of refugees and returnees, putting severe pressures on the resources of host communities. Cholera epidemics frequently break out in 7 of the 17 provinces and the situation in the camps for refugees and repatriated persons is deteriorating.

The war left a legacy of mines and unexploded ordnance lying in wait for innocent victims. According to the United Nations Mine Action Coordination Centre (UNMACC), until September 2006, 14 mine-related accidents have been recorded in 2005 and one in 2006. The threat is particularly serious for returnees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and the associated humanitarian relief efforts. The close proximity of many suspected hazardous areas to schools and other points of public interest also calls for special attention. Targeted mine-risk education is a necessity for reducing the suffering in human lives caused by remaining landmines.

2. KEY ACTIONS AND ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2006

Interventions in some provinces were hindered due to the insecurity caused by clashes between former rebel forces and government troops. UNICEF has, however, continued to support the Government and to collaborate with national and international partners in responding to the humanitarian needs of the displaced Burundi population affected by the war, refugees from neighbouring Rwanda and the Congo, as well as Burundian returnees from Tanzania, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Rwanda. It has focused primarily on health, nutrition, water and sanitation, education and child protection.

UNICEF's Emergency Preparedness and Response Section delivered potable water through water tankers to 23,000 persons in two Rwandan asylum camps, as well as to eight communities along Lake Tanganyika and Ruzizi river to prevent cholera epidemics. In addition to distributing non-food items, such as mosquito nets, clothes, soap and jerrycans, to about 15,000 children and 5,000 mothers, UNICEF also provided recreation and school-in-a-box kits for three Congolese and Rwandan refugee camps to implement non-formal education activities in collaboration with UNHCR and NGOs.

In the area of health and nutrition, routine immunization services were improved through increased UNICEF technical and supply assistance to the Ministry of Health and other national partners. Some 1,230,000 under-five children were immunized against measles in a nationwide campaign from 19 to 23 June 2006. Up to 1,170,000 under-five children were also de-wormed, over and above the initially estimated 1,053,546 children. Vitamin A supplements were given to 151,000 children aged 6-12 months and to 1,100,000 aged 12-59 months, as against the planned 1,193,226 under-five children. An estimated 100,000 moderately and acutely malnourished children were successfully treated in therapeutic feeding centres thanks to the provision of nutritional supplies and the training of health staff.

Under the Emergency Preparedness and Response Project, UNICEF established child-friendly spaces to provide educational, recreational and counselling services to more than 100,000 displaced children. For this purpose, assistance was extended to local communities for the establishment of 181 classrooms and the access to education of another 10,000 children in the host communities. A major back-to-school campaign, begun in 2004 to return to the classroom children from Tanzanian refugee camps, has by 2006 returned to school more than 400,000 repatriated children, indigent students, displaced children, and children forced out of school by war, as well as 5,000 teachers.

During 2006, UNICEF supported the training of 981 unqualified teachers to ensure quality teaching for the Free Primary Education scheme. UNICEF also provided all pupils with exercise books and other school materials; constructed 706 additional classrooms; rehabilitated 556 classrooms to accommodate 63,100 additional pupils; and distributed 53,500 students' desks and 850,000 copies of school textbooks, mainly for grade one pupils.

Water and sanitation facilities are essential components of the Free Primary Education programme, as unsafe water and poor hygiene are major causes of child deaths in the country, while the provision of latrines is necessary to retain girls in school. For this purpose, UNICEF provided water and sanitation facilities to 72 schools around the country. In addition, some 80,000 people gained access to safe water through the rehabilitation and construction of water sources and benefited from improved hygiene through awareness raising and the distribution of hygiene kits.

In the field of child protection, UNICEF provided technical and financial support to sexual and gender-based violence prevention and treatment centres in five provinces, enabling these to offer medical, psychosocial, legal and referral assistance to more than 700 victims during 2006. UNICEF helped UNMACC develop mine-risk education (MRE) tools (including 500 training displays, 45,000 schoolbooks, 110,000 leaflets, 2,000 posters, 100,000 calendars and 1,000 T-shirts) and trained 100 teachers in MRE for UNICEF convergent schools. UNICEF also facilitated the establishment of a platform for street children, which meets on a monthly basis to coordinate and harmonize the efforts of all stakeholders on the reintegration of children into their communities of origin and to undertake sensitization activities.

3. PLANNED HUMANITARIAN ACTION FOR 2007

Coordination and partnership

Joint planning for humanitarian action is undertaken with the Government, media and civil society under the leadership of the Bureau Intégré des Nations Unies au Burundi (BINUB) which replaces the UN Contact Group and comprises Representatives of FAO, OCHA, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, and WHO. Thematic Groups plan and coordinate sectoral activities. UNICEF is cluster leader for education, and water and environmental sanitation (WES). UNICEF convenes nutrition meetings but shares cluster leadership with FAO and WFP. These structures are replicated at provincial and local levels in collaboration with local authorities, NGOs and community-based organizations. Sectoral coordination groups for health, nutrition, reintegration, agriculture, education and WES come together under the umbrella of provincial focal points.

Regular programme

Emergency preparedness and response is integrated into all programmes in the 2005-2007 Country Programme Action Plan, which is the outcome of the joint collaboration between UNICEF counterparts, government ministries, UN agencies and other partners.

Health and nutrition (US\$ 8,317,041)

Some 117,000 displaced persons, host communities and impoverished persons will benefit from the following key activities:

- Procure and distribute essential emergency drugs and equipment to 436 health centres;
- Train 80 county staff and 900 district-level staff in immunization services and cold-chain management;
- Provide essential drug supplies to 39 districts for an estimated 3 million people;
- Support impregnated mosquito net promotion through the training of 350 community health-based workers and distribute 300,000 impregnated mosquito nets to 150,000 households;
- Continue to support partners running 20 therapeutic feeding centres which cater to a monthly average of 1,500 severely malnourished children and 196 supplementary feeding centres which cater to a monthly average of 14,000 children;
- Train 60 health staff in the treatment of severe malnutrition;
- Support the implementation of four nutritional surveys, assessments and evaluations;
- Procure and distribute vitamin A and de-worming treatment medicines to all children under 14 years;
- Initiate the Community Therapeutic Care pilot project and develop the protocols;
- Reinforce the competencies of health service providers through competency-based quality training on emergency obstetric care for 19 doctors, 750 midwives and anaesthetist nurses from 12 provinces;
- Provide equipment and drugs in order to upgrade every district hospital and rural health centres in 12 provinces and enable them to provide comprehensive quality emergency obstetric care.

Water and environmental sanitation (US\$ 1,500,000)

Some 80,000 displaced and repatriated persons, especially children and women in the cholera-prone areas, will be reached through the following key activities, which will also benefit their host communities:

- Construct/rehabilitate water gravity-fed systems and adequate sanitary facilities in 120 schools;
- Provide potable water for some 50,000 individuals in permanent and return areas;
- Promote and support the construction of 10,000 household latrines;
- Train 7 provincial and 18 local water authority management teams in water assessments, repair and maintenance of mini-water supply systems and water source protection;
- Promote hygiene education and hygiene awareness programmes in 120 schools and 30 local communities to complement existing water and sanitation services.

Education (US\$ 1,200,000)

A total of 300,000 displaced and war-affected children and 2,500 teachers will benefit from the following key activities:

- Supply basic scholastic materials including notebooks, pencils and erasers for 2,000 primary schoolchildren;
- Procure and distribute recreation kits and school supplies for 300,000 children;
- Train 2,500 primary schoolteachers, with special emphasis on HIV/AIDS and peace education;
- Rehabilitate schools and build latrines in 120 localities;
- Support the construction of 200 temporary school and classroom structures to accommodate 10,000 primary schoolchildren.

Child protection (US\$ 1,013,300)

Some 2,000 street children and displaced children will benefit from the following key activities:

- Reinforce existing structures through further training, organizational management, and provision of relevant supplies for the reintegration of street children and displaced children;
- Support identification, tracing, care and family reunification;
- Set up five child-friendly spaces for street children and displaced children;
- Establish mechanisms for the prevention of violence, exploitation, discrimination, abuse and neglect for street children and internally displaced children.

Some 5,000 severely traumatized children in need of psychosocial support will be reached through the following activities:

- Identify children in need of psychosocial support through Focus Groups. Special attention will be paid to children living in IDP camps and to specially vulnerable children (street children, children in situation of exploitation and abuse, repatriated children);
- Sensitize and train local administration, NGOs and other stakeholders (teachers, trainers).

Some 25,000 children and their families will benefit from mine-risk education (MRE) through mass media and community networks:

- Conduct MRE programmes for IDPs and returnees through community networks and mass media;
- Provide MRE training for primary schoolteachers and pupils, and support the broadcasting of MRE messages over the national network of community-based radio stations.

Emergency preparedness and response (US\$ 899,196)

Some 15,000 children and 7,000 mothers will be reached through the following key activities:

- Conduct rapid assessment in emergencies in respect of the Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies in coordination with partners;
- Distribute non-food items and/or shelter material in emergency situations to IDPs, refugees, expelled people, natural disaster victims, extremely vulnerable people and minorities;
- Enhance emergency preparedness and response via local capacity-building – training, field simulation exercise, workshop on contingency planning with local partners (authorities, NGOs, church).