Highlights

- 21 July presidential elections resulted in the reeption of the country’s current President. The United Nations Electoral Observation Mission in Burundi (MENUB) concluded that the overall environment was ‘not conducive’ for an inclusive, free and credible electoral process.

- Following fighting in the northern province of Kayanza, a total of 58 minors were arrested on charges of ‘involvement in armed groups’ and held in a high school in the province of Cibitoke, in dire conditions with limited access to water and food. 7 of these have since been released, whereas 14 have been sentenced to 2 years imprisonment.

- Twelve students who were excluded from their secondary school in Muyinga province on the grounds of their political affiliation have been allowed back to school.

- Concerns are emerging that the withdrawal of bilateral aid from a number of donor countries will lead to a reduction in available funds for social services - which risks to seriously threaten access to nutrition, healthcare and quality education for children in Burundi, especially the most vulnerable, over the medium and long term.

Key figures

- 58 Children detained on charges of “involvement in armed groups” following fighting in Kayanza province (UNICEF, 28 July)

- 14 Children sentenced to 2 years’ imprisonment on charges of “involvement in armed groups” (UNICEF, 28 July)

- Over 177,000 Seeking asylum in neighbouring countries (UNHCR, 28 July)

- 1 New cholera case in Burundi since last reporting period, bringing the total to 181 confirmed cases (Ministry of Health, 28 July)

Situation Overview & Humanitarian Needs

The overall socio-political environment continues to adversely affect children, with possible long-term implications for programmatic implementation by UNICEF and partners to improve the situation for children in Burundi.

While no further deaths of children have been reported, the arrest of children on charges of involvement in armed groups is a worrying development.

Generalized fear and insecurity continues to propel Burundians – the vast majority of whom are women and children – across borders, with thousands crossing during the week of the presidential elections.

The cholera outbreak along the southern border has slowed, with only one more case over the reporting period, suggesting that the epidemic is under control.
Humanitarian leadership and coordination

Joint assessment missions conducted in May identified priorities including WASH (cholera prevention and response), food security/nutrition, and protection. Discussion with partners at sectoral level is on-going to define urgent response including funding requirements.

Humanitarian Strategy

UNICEF’s preparedness and response strategy has focused on support to existing structures, such as management of severe acute malnutrition at community and facility levels, including additional therapeutic feeding. UNICEF has been providing crucial support to cold chains for resumption of EPI services. UNICEF ensures children’s and women’s access to water for drinking, cooking and personal hygiene. Monitoring of violations against children’s rights in the context of the current environment with related advocacy remains an important focus of UNICEF’s response to the situation.

UNICEF’s Response with Partners

Health & Nutrition

Since the beginning of the outbreak on 14 May, a total of 181 cholera cases have been reported. The epidemic now seems to be under control, with only 1 new case in the two Cholera Treatment Centres reported in the last two weeks.

Discussions were initiated with MOH about the needs to develop alternative temporary mechanisms notably to ensure essential drugs for children and women and the functioning of health centres and district hospitals.

UNICEF and MOH are completing a training of trainers on Positive-Deviance with focus on the first 1,000 days of life to improve resilience of the most vulnerable households through nutrition counselling at community level. This new pool of trainers will be involved in the training roll-out at the peripheral levels.

WFP and MoH conducted a community screening of acute malnutrition in the health district of Nyanza Lac, which is affected by strong population movements towards Tanzania. UNICEF and partners are waiting for the results of the screening.

Education

The education response to the Burundi refugee crisis is currently being discussed with the four countries hosting Burundian refugees. With respect to the issue of national 6th grade exam, several rounds of discussions have been held in Burundi with relevant actors, including the Ministry of Education and UNHCR, to discuss the possibility of organizing national 6th grade examinations for refugee children in Rwanda, Tanzania, the DRC and Uganda.

Many children, mainly in Bujumbura Mairie, Bujumbura Rural and Bururi, have returned to school in order to finish their school year in accordance with directives of the Ministry of Education. Currently, school year closures have been extended to 20 August. A special session of the national 6th grade exam will take place on 6 August for pupils who cannot take it. Upper secondary examination will be held from 3 to 6 August.

Following a mission by a commission led by the Ombudsman, the twelve students expelled from their school in Muyinga on grounds of political affiliation have been allowed back to school.

WASH

Collaborative efforts on cholera response and control continue in CTCs in Nyanza Lac region. Recently, The Burundi Red Cross (BRC) improved the conditions of latrines for the CTC in Bukeye. Protection materials for disinfection are being procured upon the request of the BRC. Data analysis and consolidation of the WASH sectorial assessment in 9 priority provinces is on-going. Key findings will be shared with sectorial partners shortly.

Child Protection

Following fighting in Kayanza province on 10 July, the Burundian army arrested a group of 39 children aged 14 to 17, who were then kept in the Cibitoke high school as provisory detention center with little access to food and water. The number subsequently increased to 58 children in detention. 7 of these children, including a 14-year-old, were released. However, 14 children have been already sentenced to 2 years imprisonment. A further 37 are pending trial. UNICEF is working with its partners to ensure that these children receive a fair trial and are supported by a lawyer in the legislative process. On 17 July, 51 children were transferred to the Rumonge prison. UNICEF and its partners are advocating for their prompt
The Child Protection in Emergencies Group is working with the PAFE (Police in charge of the border control) and the Child and Family Department (Ministry of National Solidarity), on issues related to the migration of children across borders. Key areas of concern are procedures for granting travel documents for children, establishing an appropriate mechanism to control the migration flow of children, with special emphasis on children in residential care homes.

The Child Friendly Spaces system in Bujumbura Mairie (covering Buterere, Kabondo, Kanyosha, Kamenge, Kinama, Buyenzi, Bwisa, Musaga, Ngagara, and Cibitoke) continues to meet the increasing vulnerability of children and to provide psychosocial support. The number of activities will be increased during the month of August, the school holiday period. Organization is currently underway to ensure adequate training and psychosocial support is implemented for the inclusion of children with disabilities and enhance capacity of leaders in order to meet the needs of all children.

Communications for Development (CAD)
On 17 July, UNICEF successfully launched the CADEVI awareness campaign in Makamba with National Radio and TV (RTNB) media. 95 community leaders and administrative authorities from 3 communes were trained and improved their general knowledge on cholera prevention and medical referrals for cases of diarrhoea within health structures. In conjunction, the section has drafted a radio programs linked to these activities.

UNICEF, in partnership with the health district, also launched a door-to-door program named ‘Friends of Health’. 6 health district supervisors were selected to ensure collaboration and quality control of 1,200 households who were identified, surveyed and mobilized on the cholera situation. 120 youth peer educators, identified jointly by administrative, religious and community leaders for transparency and effectiveness purposes, also received training. In Nyanza-Lac, 10 members of GEC (Community Listening Groups) collaborated with the youth peer educators for the project.

Tippy Tap activities will be launched soon once the door to door mobilization activity ends. Recent Insecurity factors raised in Nyanza-Lac this week may further delay the activities. So far, 5 out of 40 people (a group of participants in trainings) have already heard about Tippy Tap mechanism, while only 1 has set up a Tippy Tap in his household. 2 trained youth have already received training and been identified as master trainers.

Supply and Logistics
8,092 cartons of Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food from Somalia has arrived and continues to be distributed to the 45 sanitary districts of Burundi. In addition, critical air shipment of Measles and Rota for PEV have also been delivered. UNICEF Burundi is currently ensuring continued procurement of EFPI.

Media and External Communication
External Communication continues to ensure that key issues related to Children’s Rights, Child Protection and provision of essential services is mediatised, despite international media attention on election-related news.

A series of tweets were sent out through regional channels on the situation of arrested children and UNICEF response.

Two new webstories on child-friendly spaces in Bujumbura and building resilience in provinces vulnerable to food insecurity were published on the UNICEF website, and a feature article on the increased vulnerability of children in Burundi was published in El Pais, Spain’s main daily. Materials regarding UNICEF’s work in Burundi were also prepared for the SG’s spokesperson in New York.

FUNDING
UNICEF Burundi’s 2015 Humanitarian Action for Children appeal is for currently for USD 2.5M of which USD 1,162,745 has been received. However, funding needs are being revised in light of increasing support for sustaining critical basic health and nutrition services for children.

Next SitRep: 12/08/2015

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