UNICEF Burundi Humanitarian Situation Report

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UNICEF

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Highlights

- The past weeks of civil unrest, mainly in the capital, and ensuing response by the security forces have raised serious concerns regarding child rights violations. Continued presence of children in political demonstrations has led to another death of a child (making the confirmed total of child deaths 5), as well as injuries by gunfire and teargas.

- On the Burundi side of the border there are 52 confirmed cholera cases in the province of Makamba and 10 suspected cases in the province of Rutana with in total 5 deaths.

- Access to health centers and hospitals in Bujumbura has been challenging for children and women in the last four weeks.

- Budget cuts to fund elections after key donors pulled out of the electoral fund were announced by the Government on 21 May. This will pose a risk to social sectors, including Health and Education.

- Burundi is one of the poorest countries in the world, with one of the highest child malnutrition rates and figures on the top of the Global Hunger Index. Prolonged insecurity that provokes repetitive displacement of people is likely to have a massive impact on an already vulnerable population.

- UNHCR has revised the number of Burundian refugees seeking asylum in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda since the beginning of April 2015 to 72,681 following a head count of refugees in Tanzania. The situation is further aggravated due to space limitations, medical stockouts or shortages and outbreak of diseases.
Situation Overview & Humanitarian Needs

There is particular concern regarding humanitarian needs in Bujumbura, especially in neighborhoods most affected by protests, where access and economic activity has been greatly disrupted, people have been unable to earn living.

Fear, intimidation and a lack of information especially in rural areas due to violence and closure of radio stations have forced over 72,000 Burundians (source: 28 May 2015) to flee for safety to neighboring countries and that number is likely to increase. The majority of these refugees are women and children.

The past four weeks of civil unrest and ensuing response by the security forces have raised serious concerns regarding child rights violations. There is continued evidence of children being present during political demonstrations and this has led to another child death by bullet, making the total number of confirmed child deaths 5, and other children injured, including by bullet and by teargas. Demonstrations have spread beyond urban communes of Bujumbura, including to Bururi province.

UNICEF has called on all parties to ensure the safety and protection of all children and in particular to ensure children at not involved in political demonstrations and other actions that could put them at risk.

Many schools in the capital city remain closed, raising serious concerns on children’s right to education. Upcoming national 10th year exams are scheduled for 17-19 June, but concerns persist on the ability to hold exams in the current climate, where children’s right to protection is not ensured.

Budget cuts were announced by the Government on 21 May, citing that they needed the funds to cover for withdrawn donor funding for elections. These cuts, slated to affect nine ministries including Health and Education, are expected to seriously impact social sectors and may compound increasing vulnerability. Burundi CO is undertaking a detailed analysis of the reductions and their potential impact on the social sectors. Further to budget cuts, the Government of Burundi appealed yesterday to "patriotic citizens" to make contributions to an elections fund established at the Banque de la République du Burundi.

Humanitarian leadership and coordination

A regular information sharing and coordination system has been established between UNICEF, the Burundian Red Cross, the Belgian Red Cross, GIZ Burundi, MSF, and UNHCR in Burundi. Additionally, regular coordination occurred with the other countries involved in the emergency response, including UNICEF Rwanda, UNICEF DRC and UNICEF Tanzania, focusing on cross-border movements from Bujumbura to Uvira, Kagonga to Kigoma and Niarugusu.

UNICEF and WHO are co-lead of the Emergency Health Sector. Health partners are meeting on a weekly basis. Likewise for Nutrition, the Emergency Nutrition sector group under the leadership of UNICEF is holding weekly coordination meetings.

UNICEF is lead of the Child Protection sub-Sector. Partners have been meeting on a weekly basis, specifically also to coordinate on response to children detained in the demonstrations and street children in shelters. OCHA and UNHCR are providing regular follow-up refugee figures.

Joint assessment missions will start on 28 May to determine any emerging humanitarian needs in the country. Inter-sectoral (health; water, sanitation and hygiene; protection; food security; nutrition; shelter/non-food items; economic impact) teams from UN agencies, Government authorities and Burundi Red Cross will target three regions of Burundi: the north (Kayanza and Kirundo Provinces); the south (Bururi, Makamba and Rutana Provinces); and the west (Bujumbura Mairie and Bujumbura Rural). Assessment results are to be shared next week.

Humanitarian Strategy

UNICEF’s preparedness and response strategy has focused on support to existing structures. Focus has been laid on management of severe acute malnourished children at the community and facility levels, including initiation of additional therapeutic feeding as required to reach the estimated population in need (in line with CCC in emergencies). UNICEF has been providing crucial support to re-establishment of routine services, including cold chains for resumption of EPI services. UNICEF has ensured that children and women have access to sufficient water of appropriate quality and quantity for drinking, cooking and maintaining personal hygiene.
Health & Nutrition

Currently support to refugees from Burundi has been focused on Tanzania, hosting the majority of displaced people. UNICEF Burundi provided a second batch of supplies to Tanzania with 2 additional cholera kits. The response on the Burundi side is organized though the Burundian Red Cross which is ensuring the prevention of cholera spread and some support to the organisation of cholera treatment centers/units (CTC/CTU). The medical management of cholera cases and suspected cases is ensured by the Health System in place. UNICEF had pre-positioned some cholera kits in the currently affected provinces (Makamba and Rutana) which are utilized now and has already undertaken 3 field mission to bring additional supplies and provide technical support for a proper functioning of the 3 CTC/CTU recently re-established on the Burundi side. The agreement with the NGOs Africa Humanitarian Action – AHA will ensure continued technical support to the Health System by providing additional qualified human resources at the field level.

Malnutrition is a major concern in the northern province of Kirundo where about 75% of the Burundian refugees in Rwanda are coming from. UNICEF has signed an agreement with the NGO Concern Worldwide to undertake a community screening of acute malnutrition in the province of Kirundo. The results will help understand the alarming high level of acute malnutrition reported among Burundian refugee children arriving in Rwanda.

Both Health and Nutrition emergency sector groups are meeting weekly (Health under the leadership of WHO and Nutrition under the leadership of UNICEF) and are a good platform for sharing information. However, a coordinated response is still difficult to implement due to the lack of funding.

WASH

Responding to the needs of Burundian refugees in Tanzania, UNICEF Burundi provided WASH supplies, including soap, water purifications tabs/powder and water tanks. A WASH awareness raising campaign was launched to prevent further spread of the cholera outbreak.

Under the standby agreement signed with the Burundian Red Cross, UNICEF will preposition WASH non-food items (NFI) in 5 warehouses located in Bujumbura, Makamba, Cibitoke, Rutana and Muyinga. UNICEF is prepared to provide access to safe water and sanitation to affected populations, especially children and women, and WASH-related information campaigns to prevent child illness.

Child Protection

The Child Protection in Emergencies Working Group is meeting on weekly basis to share information, coordinate Child Protection interventions and monitor child rights violations.

UNICEF continues to work with partners to provide assistance to children living in the street, who are increasingly seeking refuge and food due to current unrest in the capital city. UNICEF provides meals and liquids to the children on a daily basis.

The 80 children sheltered by a faith-based organization, all of whom are accompanied by either a parent or a close relative, are receiving WASH, ECD, and psychosocial support from UNICEF, who has also mobilized further support from WFP for meals.

Summary Analysis of Programme response

Health

Red Cross continues to ensure transport of emergency cases from health centres to the major reference hospitals, as well as evacuation of people injured during demonstrations. Health centres of Bujumbura still manage to ensure minimal services but are reporting problems for the transport of pregnant women who have difficulties to get out of their suburbs and join either a health centre or one of the main hospital. Some HIV persons have reported difficulties in accessing health centres to get their treatment.

Health facilities outside Bujumbura are functioning normally. Given the announced cuts, the Health budget could have a major impact on an already weak public health system. Indeed pre-existing delays in the payment of the government contribution (since beginning of 2015) and Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) reimbursement (> 8 months) will soon interfere with the replenishment of essential drugs at the district and the health centre level country wide. In addition, 52 confirmed cholera cases have been reported in the province of Makamba mainly from Burundian people coming back from Tanzania. The 10 additional suspected cases in the province of Rutana were identified at the community level indicating the spread of the outbreak in the host population. UNICEF pre-positioned supplies are currently being used for the management of the cholera cases. Three CTC/CTU have been established (2 in Makamba province and 1 in Rutana
province). The main challenge is to ensure that qualified human health resources are in place to strictly implement the cholera protocol. UNICEF agreement with AHA will allow the deployment of additional human resources to support the Health System in place.

**Nutrition**
UNICEF Burundi has signed an agreement with Concern Worldwide to undertake a community screening of acute malnutrition in the northern province of Kirundo, particularly given reports from Rwanda of children arriving across the border severely malnourished. This assessment is still depending on Ministry of Interior agreement. The results will help understand the alarming high level of acute malnutrition reported on the Rwanda side and give the rationale to possibly engage a Nutrition response on the Burundi side.

Currently UNICEF, who is Burundi’s main provider of therapeutic feeding products (with in kind donation from USAID) only has sufficient stock to cover the expected regular needs for 2015 only until end of July. The 2015 gap for regular needs of therapeutic feeding products of 1.2 million USD (ca. 17,000 RUTF CAR) is alarming. In addition, 200,000 USD (ca. 3,000 RUTF CAR) are needed for treatment of 3,226 SAM children under five in an emergency situation.

**WASH**
UNICEF facilitates WASH sector coordination in cooperation with the Burundian Red Cross (BRC). In addition to the re-establishment of CTC/CTUs, forty separated toilets and equipped with hand washing tools for women (24) and men (16) are being constructed at the two borders. To increase access to safe drinking water, two water tanks have been installed in Kabonga and Bukeye sites. Furthermore, a joint field mission has been planned to evaluate the situation using the MIRA tool.

**Education**
The national examination for grade 10 is scheduled for 17 - 19 June. Discussions are ongoing with all partners and the Ombudsman to see how schools can become peaceful spaces until the end of the year and for the next year. Discussions also envisage brokering a ‘truce’ and cessation of demonstrations during the exam period in June.

UNICEF Burundi is in discussion with the office of Tanzania, DRC and Rwanda, to see how to provide teaching materials and organize exam sessions for refugee children.

**Child protection**
UNICEF has continued to support its child protection partners in implementing regular programmes as well as supporting children in emergency situations. Outside Bujumbura, the Child Protection Committees and “Nawe Nuze” solidarity groups have continued their work without interruption.

**Communications for Development (C4D)**
Communication tools for WASH and in particular image boxes to promote best practices in the context of the cholera response have been distributed to affected border areas. C4D has continued to support program sectors in their responses, including promotion of healthy behaviour.

**Supply and Logistics**
One cholera kit plus oral rehydration salts (ORS), glucose, and sodium lactate were sent to Nyanza-Lac, while 2 other cholera kits were sent to Kigoma in Tanzania to support response to cholera. An air shipment of measles vaccine (GAVI for PEV) was received and stored at the national Programme Elargi de Vaccination. Finally, 2,000 PAC of 50 mid-upper arm circumference measuring tapes (MUAC) for screening of malnutrition in children were ordered from Uganda, with a planned arrival for the end of the week. Given the reluctance of transporters to enter into Burundi, discussion are ongoing regarding a Plan B for trailers from Dar-El-Salam to be unloaded in Muyinga and then to be reloaded to Bujumbura.

**Media and External Communication**
Following continued evidence of the presence of children in political demonstrations in the capital, as well as the death of child by bullet on 25 May and the injury of another by bullet on 26 May, a media note renewing calls to all parties to ensure the safety and protection of all children was issued. The media note in particular requests all parties ensure children are kept out of all political demonstrations and actions that put them at risk.
Only one radio, the national state radio RTNB, is broadcasting for the moment. Private radio stations remain closed, and numerous journalists are working in an ad hoc manner, including some within the online media coalition SOS Medias, which is broadcasting on Soundcloud.

Testimonies and experiences of children affected by the situation, in Bujumbura and elsewhere, continue to be regularly collected.

FUNDING
UNICEF’s 2015 Humanitarian Action for Children appeal is USD 2.5 million of which USD 896,639 has been received to date. Given the recent developments with the possibility of a continued deterioration in the situation, UNICEF is reviewing its requirements to meet the humanitarian needs of women and children affected by the current political crisis.

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