

Back on the Brink?

Burundi Crisis 2015

Rapid Assessment Report



In collaboration with:



July 2015

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Against the backdrop of recent political events within Burundi, Save the Children International, together with Terre des Hommes Lausanne and War Child Holland, conducted an inter-agency Rapid Assessment (RA) in Burundi in late June 2015. The sample group for the RA was small, using a mixture of random and purposive sampling, blending together a mixture of confidential Key Informant (KI) and Household Interviews with Focus Group Discussions. The assessment targeted a wide cross section of community members from four provinces, which incorporated both rural and urban areas of Burundi. The use of purposive sampling, the rapid nature of the assessment and the limited sample size means that the information is *indicative* in nature. *It should also be stressed that while this report refers to groups in favour or opposed to the President's Third Mandate campaign, the appropriateness of either perspective is not within the purview of this document, and as independent non-governmental agencies, we have no affiliation to any political party.*

At this crucial juncture in Burundi's history, the expectation is that this RA will provide a useful snapshot of: a) the issues impacting on children as a consequence of the political/economic crisis and b) the likely impact on children if the crisis escalates, with a specific focus on child protection issues. Headline conclusions include:

Historical Precedent: The warning signs are there. Preparedness is key. Since Independence, Burundi has suffered numerous political and economic crises. A cursory review of the data from the last 50 years reveals numerous periods in which high refugee and IDP numbers are the norm, not the exception. In 1999, Refugees and IDPs represented 20% of the Burundian population, a scenario which, if repeated today, would equate to over 2 million people displaced. The data also highlights certain patterns in population movements, areas of risk and indigenous coping mechanisms that are likely to be relevant in the unfortunate event that the crisis escalates. It is practical, not pessimistic, to proactively take these lessons into account for the purposes of preparedness planning. A failure to prepare effectively within Burundi will further accentuate the exportation of the crisis to neighbouring countries

The Economic Squeeze: Close to breaking point? 100% of respondents cited a reduction in household income and an increase in prices, with Bujumbura the worst hit. A continuation of the crisis beyond a further 5 to 6 weeks (early/mid-August 15) is likely to represent the breaking point for most households in Bujumbura and strain the capacity of households in the "Interior". In the event that the crisis escalated rapidly, the "tipping point" could come far sooner.

Composition of Refugees: Rising numbers of political refugees. As of July 13th 2015, refugee numbers across Burundi's neighbours total approximately 166,000. Although the majority are economic refugees, it is apparent that, as defined by the **1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees**, many thousands, particularly amongst those going to Rwanda, are *political* refugees, fearful that their political views could lead to reprisals. Such a trend could have important ramifications for sub regional dynamics.

IDPs: A lot more IDPs than people think? At present, there are no official IDPs numbers ascribed to the present crisis. Nevertheless, respondent reports indicate that many thousands have seemingly already moved within the country, typically to hosts amongst family and friends. Looking at data from the last 20 years, it seems probable that if the crisis continues, there will soon be a substantial IDP population in Burundi. It is also notable that high numbers of families have relocated to calmer Quartiers in Bujumbura. This heightens the possibility of a rapid spike in IDPs in the short term if Bujumbura becomes more volatile.

Impact of crisis on children: Bad and getting worse. The political and economic situation is already starting to have a negative impact on the lives of children, particularly in unstable parts of Bujumbura. Incipient malnutrition, closed schools and clinics, reduced access to health care and numerous and increasing child

protection challenges are being reported. Refugee populations have already reported high numbers of SGBV and the separation of children, and the possibility that these numbers will greatly increase in the event of further and more chaotic mass displacement is a major concern.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Economic Impact

- Price rises and substantially reduced income due to loss or reduction of employment are having a serious impact on the household economy in Bujumbura.
- Across all the assessment areas, the economic impact on households **hosting** visitors was highlighted as a major challenge.
- The shortened working day – with people starting late and returning early to avoid possible clashes has greatly impacted on the income of the vast majority of Bujumbura’s employed.
- Some households are close to breaking point with those in the most volatile Quartiers worst impacted. In these Quartiers, the picture is of incipient malnutrition, closed schools and clinics, the taking on of debt, with numerous and increasing child protection challenges, including reduced access to health care.
- Households which send family members away for safety often incurred substantial additional costs.

Population Displacement

- Population displacement is widespread. It is probable, based on respondent reports that tens of thousands have already moved within Burundi. All respondents knew of people that had left their homes, most could cite numerous examples.
- Population flows up to mid-June mainly consisted of women and children. While women and children continue to move in considerable numbers, recent relocations also involve substantial numbers of men.
- Over 90% of respondents stated they would move if the situation deteriorated and believed this would be replicated across the country. Adult men are the most likely group to remain.
- Broadly speaking, there are 3 main groups seeking refuge abroad; a) those living close to a border area often seen a place of refuge (Rwanda border near Kirundo, much of Southern border with Tanzania, etc); b) employed/wealthier classes moving to Rwanda and Tanzania outside the Camps and c) those opposed to the 3rd mandate, often living in Bujumbura, for whom Rwanda seems to be the main destination.
- Whilst the vast majority of respondents stated that ethnicity is not a key driver at **present**, the “instrumentalisation of ethnicity” remains a concern. Numerous respondents referenced an increase in ethnic-focused rhetoric and cited such language as a possible reason for accelerating their departure.
- Those moving or planning to move within Burundi are often from poorer economic groups.
- Since 1993, 4 Provinces have been the host area for 59% of Burundi’s IDP population.
- For those households disinclined/unable to move, the lack of finances was the most commonly cited reason for this decision, alongside a fear that their home could be looted if they left.
- Refugees in Tanzania are comparatively far more likely to consider making it their permanent home.
- Over each of the last 20 years, Tanzania has consistently been the preferred destination for refugees

Impact on Children

- Many schools in Bujumbura are shut. Where schools are open, attendance is often very low, with the fear of insecurity deterring parents from sending children to school or teachers from heading into work.

- Reduction in household income is starting to impact on nutrition levels and health seeking behaviour, particularly in worst affected areas of the Capital.
- Insecurity, the spiralling cost of living and concerns about the health and education of their children are the main drivers cited for relocation.
- As of 3rd July 2015, 8 children have died as a direct consequence of the crisis. Large numbers of children have been caught up in protests and appear more likely to adopt high risk practices.
- Fears that children are being encouraged to join gangs, the protestors or Youth Militias.
- Amongst the first approximately 100,000 of refugees, there were hundreds of reported cases of SGBV and over 2,000 unaccompanied and separated children. In the event of future mass/chaotic population movements, the concern is that such abuses could be multiplied.
- People with disability and elderly family members are the most likely to remain in the event of rapid displacement. The lack of information on children with disability implies that this group is likely to be acutely vulnerable.
- There is very high awareness about the risks of forced population movement. Theft, physical and sexual violence, “unwanted” pregnancies and the separation of children are core concerns. Once arrived at their destination, would be refugees/IDPs stressed the need for education to be available for children.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Under the leadership of the Ministry of Solidarity (**MINISTÈRE DE LA SOLIDARITE NATIONALE, DES DROITS DE LA PERSONNE HUMAINE ET DU GENRE (MSNDPHG)**) and UNICEF, prioritise child protection **preparedness** measures, using established international Child Protection in Emergencies (CPIE)/Sphere standards for guidance, with a particular focus on UASC and SGBV.
- Incorporate a review of historical patterns of Burundian IDP and Refugee Population into preparedness activities.
- Agree specific roles and responsibilities of all agencies in the event of an emergency, including government bodies, UN and NGO partners. This would include an emphasis on emergency stock preparedness¹.
- Consider the launch of information campaigns within Burundi highlighting risks to children during displacement, notably SGBV and child separation, and propose coping strategies to mitigate against these risks. Ensure that particular risks to girls and children with disability are prioritised.
- Prioritise the availability of family tracing services and the appropriate referral mechanisms for support and services if separations do occur.
- As a matter of urgency, initiate prevention and awareness raising activities to reduce the recruitment of children and youth into armed groups or gangs.
- Under the leadership of the Ministry of Education (**MINISTÈRE DE L'EDUCATION DE BASE ET SECONDAIRE, DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT DES MÉTIERS, DE LA FORMATION PROFESSIONNELLE ET DE L'ALPHABÉTISATION (MEBSEMFP)**) and UNICEF, and in line with the principles established in UNICEF's Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies, Education Partners should rapidly identify interventions that can mitigate the current/future impact of the crisis on education services.
- Strengthen/develop child friendly activities for Burundian Children currently out of school and include vulnerable children, in particular children with disability, in all CPIE activities
- Undertake a food security/nutrition survey in August/September in targeted quartiers of Bujumbura and areas of high host family populations.

¹ If there is no major crisis, this stock could be used for returnees, many of whom sold household possessions to facilitate their departure

OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY

Objective and thematic focus

The RA aims to a) establish whether recent events have had any notable impact on the standards of child protection within Burundi, and b) to gain a greater understanding of the impact on child protection in the event the crisis continues or escalates. Questions focused on child protection issues, supplemented by enquiries regarding household economy and population movement.

Methodology

Sampling and Geographic Scope. The sample group for the RA was small², using a mixture of random and purposive sampling. The use of a degree of purposive sampling, the rapid nature of the assessment and the small data size means that the information is *indicative* in nature. The RA targeted 3 provinces: i) Kirundo, in the North West, a Province with perennial food security challenges and the source of some refugees in Rwanda; ii) Makamba (Nyanza Lac) in the South of Burundi, the source of many refugees in Tanzania and iii) Gitega, Burundi's second city, indicated by various sources to be a possible destination for any potential IDPs.

4 Quartiers of Bujumbura were also targeted. Musaga and Buterere have undergone considerable unrest over recent months. In contrast, Kamenge is generally calm, with schools and shops functioning more or less as normal. Rohero is also calm and was categorised by sources as a relatively neutral Quartier, comprising of wealthier households and considered a safe destination. The information garnered from the various sites was triangulated with information gathered from numerous key informants from areas outside the provinces and Quartiers named above.

The number and the locations of the sites were determined by the knowledge base and contacts of each participating organization. Sites were primarily chosen in areas where organizations had on-going programmes, which may have excluded other areas of need. While the information was collected at the site level, this report only occasionally provides site specific information.

The interview methodology blended together a mix of Household, Key Informant and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) targeting a range of age, wealth and occupational groups, with gender parity being emphasised. 38% of the FGD participants were children and 51% were female.

Assessment teams. Assessors comprised of 20 people, 18 of whom were Burundian. 50% of these were women. Most had previous experience in assessment work for child protection agencies and all received pre-assessment training by an established CP professional. All assessors signed a child safeguarding contract. At most sites, briefings were held with respondents about the purpose of the assessment.

Access & Security. Due to on-going protests and grenade attacks in areas near 2 of the targeted Quartiers, access was on occasion problematic. In Kamenge, interviews were briefly delayed whilst permission for interviewing was sought (and provided) by local authorities. Questions were inherently non-political in nature and designed to gather humanitarian data only.

Context. We emphasised that the constitutional/political issues that are the cause of much recent debate within Burundi were not our concern and that all participating agencies are non-political and secular in principle and approach. Therefore, whilst this report does include mention of those in favour or opposed to the third mandate of the President, it should be emphasised that the rights or wrongs of such different positions and perspectives are not within the purview of this document.

² The team interviewed 34 Households, held 19 FGDs with a total of 154 people (adults and youth) and interviewed 35 Key Informants. Numerically, there was a data bias towards Bujumbura Respondents and this is reflected in the information gathered.



Map No. 3753 Rev. 6 UNITED NATIONS
September 2004

Department of Peacekeeping Operations
Cartographic Section

BACKGROUND

Since independence in 1962, Burundi has been marked by ethnic divisions, repression and episodic massacres of opposing ethnic groups. In 1972, over 150,000 Hutus were massacred and in 1993, after the assassination of the first Hutu president, a massacre of Tutsi was followed by reprisals, sparking a 12 year long civil war with approximately 300,000 casualties and over a million people displaced. The war was finally brought to a close after the signing of the Arusha Accords, which provided a platform for peace, power sharing and relative political stability.

In April 2015, President Pierre Nkurunziza announced that he would stand as a Presidential Candidate for a third term. This decision resulted in demonstrations in the capital, Bujumbura, and in some surrounding areas, with protestors claiming the 3rd Mandate was contrary to the Arusha Accord and consequently unconstitutional. Since April 2015, Burundian refugees, principally women and children, have been arriving in the DRC, Tanzania and Rwanda.

The President's supporters argued that since he had been appointed in 2005 by parliament and not the electorate, he was entitled to stand once again. On the 5th May, the Burundian Constitutional Court ruled that the President was eligible to stand for election. Amidst recriminations, considerable international pressure and after several delays, the legislative elections took place on the 29th June 2015 and the Presidential Election, is, at the time of writing, scheduled for the 21st July 2015. The current political crisis also compounds and complicates existing deep rooted economic challenges, which pose an increasingly difficult economic context for the Burundian population over recent months.

It is against this backdrop that Save the Children International, together with Terre des Hommes Lausanne and War Child Holland, conducted an inter-agency Rapid Assessment (RA) in Burundi in late June 2015.

FINDINGS

THE ECONOMIC IMPACT

All Bujumbura respondents stated that recent events had an impact on their household economy. The lowest impact cited was a 10% **reduction in household purchasing power** due to an increase in prices; the highest cited was a 100% **reduction in household income** due to loss of employment. Of those that specified a percentage decline, the average was between 30% and 40%.

A high majority of respondents cited the rise in food price since mid-April 2015 across a range of key **household items**, with beans, manioc flour, rice and cooking oil being the most commonly mentioned, as well as cooking materials such as charcoal. Most adult informants from Bujumbura noted the decreasing **availability and quality** of such items. Shopkeepers say the price of fresh goods like tomatoes and potatoes have risen by up to 300%.

The perceived reasons for the **price hike** and fall in quality include the strengthening of the dollar leading to traders diverting products to other markets; low agricultural production, difficulties (and increased costs) to convey food stuff to Bujumbura; the avoidance, by traders/food-sellers, of Bujumbura's markets which are seen as areas of unrest; and the stocking-up of such items by wealthier families (although this was seen as a risky strategy if security worsened). A common refrain in the Capital was that "*Shops open late and shut early*" and in the weeks preceding the Legislative Elections on the 29th June, numerous traders had left Bujumbura entirely.

A widespread **reduction of incomes** was reported, across all sectors. Factors cited included insecurity at market places, including grenade attacks and regular gunfire; intimidation by both protestors and the police; protestors preventing working residents from leaving, *“people try and stop you from working or leaving the Quartier”*. The shortened working day – with people starting late and returning early to avoid possible clashes – greatly impacted on the income of the vast majority of Bujumbura’s employed.

The reason given for perceived **low agricultural production**, in a year when the harvest is seen as generally good, is that agriculturists cultivating on the periphery of Bujumbura are occasionally disinclined to go to the fields to cultivate due to fears of insecurity.

Households which send family members away often incurred substantial additional costs. This was particularly prevalent for those that had sent family members to Rwanda (not Mahama Camp). Living costs in Rwanda are seen as prohibitive and there were numerous mentions of people returning back to Burundi because they could not afford to stay in Rwanda. Major costs included transport to move family members and possessions to Rwanda, house rent and food once in Kigali/Rwanda and the need to pay for education for their children in Rwanda, because many schools in Burundi were closed. *“House rent would be much more expensive in Rwanda, perhaps three times more expensive...”* The financial pressure was exacerbated by **inflation** in Bujumbura, the need to cover the ongoing costs of their Burundian home and the expense of regular trips to visit those that had left.

Various informants from wealthier households stated that it was common for professional and business classes who sent family members to Rwanda – *“pretty much everyone from my Quartier has sent someone”* – to take out loans, including bank loans, to cover these new costs. It was also clear that some people were not leaving because of concerns on the long term economic impact of taking on such debt.

Across all the areas studied, the economic impact on households **hosting** visitors was highlighted as a major challenge. One Bujumbura respondent cited an additional household expenditure of 80% to cover the costs of their visitors from other Quartiers and another KI from Rohero remarked that the family had taken in 6 people from Musaga and Ciboteke and such a response was replicated across the Quartier: *“if you have a spare room, you’ll have at least 4 guests”*.

The Economic Squeeze. Coping Mechanisms :

- ❖ Migrate abroad to seek work/safety or to rural areas where food is available and costs more affordable
- ❖ Reduction of expenditures (number of meals per day, this includes reducing the food of children)
- ❖ Bringing cheaper food from family community in interior, or sending family members to interior to buy up and bring back cheaper goods
- ❖ Avoidance of certain costs as those relating to health care, purchase of low-cost drugs
- ❖ Negotiation of rent rates with landlords
- ❖ Taking out loans
- ❖ Selling of agricultural crops, livestock or household goods at low cost for rapid sale
- ❖ Changing of lifestyle; reducing / cancelling unessential costs (clothing, beer, leisure)

The Economic Impact - Direct Impact on Children

Although the majority of Burundian schools have stayed open, the crisis has had a marked impact on education in Bujumbura. Schools have been shut for many weeks in the more volatile Quartiers such as Musaga, Buterere, Mutakura, etc and the timing has coincided with the period of end of year exams. If this situation continues, it could engender a high dropout rate of students and have a profoundly detrimental impact on many of these children's future

Even in calmer Quartiers, school attendance is typically very low, with the fear of insecurity deterring parents from sending their children to school or teachers from heading into work. The situation is better in areas of high Government support such as Kamenge, where schools are open and often well attended

Both adult and child respondents highlighted their concern that children are caught up in the protests, often leading to injury and in a small number of cases, their death. By 3 July 2015, 8 children³ are thus far reported to have died, 7 in the Capital. One was a 4 year old caught by a stray bullet. Another family has also reported that a child disappeared during manifestations. The closure of schools and the lack of alternative activities have meant that many children have "*plenty of time on their hands*" and are drawn to the excitement of street protest. There is also a concern, more often voiced by parents, that older boys in particular are being encouraged to join gangs, the protestors or Youth Militias.

A small number of Bujumbura respondents noted an increase in children begging on the streets, often in the Town Centre which is known for its insecurity, for example near the Central Market. This appears to be a small but emerging phenomenon, and respondents felt that the numbers of child beggars would increase if schools stayed closed and/or the economic crisis continued.

It was noted that the desire to access food or money was likely to make children, particularly girls more vulnerable to sexual violence and prostitution. The growing inability of parents to provide for their children, due to loss of income was a profound concern cited by the majority of adult respondents in Bujumbura, with particular focus on their struggle to pay for health care and the worry that their investment in their children's education might prove to be futile

Many respondents focused on the risk of "idleness" of the newly "out of school" children, noting a decline in behaviour and standards since the problems began: "*In my commune there is no school and the behaviour of children is worse... nothing to do, they are scared... some were hurt in manifestations...*" There was a general sense that coping with "idleness", food shortages, and a loss of belongings was manifest in increasingly high risk behaviour, with "*some children (starting) to look for unhealthy pastimes, they drink alcohol, smoke, go to nightclub and are having sex*". The fear that girls would engage in high-risk sexual behaviour, with the impact of unwanted pregnancies, was cited repeatedly.

³ UNICEF spokesperson Christophe Boulierac

Main Risks to Children – The Respondent's Perspective

- ❖ Education disrupted
- ❖ Reduced access to health care
- ❖ Sexual promiscuity
- ❖ Increased involvement in criminality and gangs
- ❖ Children have nothing to do
- ❖ Drug abuse
- ❖ Lack of discipline (when they are out of school or if parents away)
- ❖ Sexual violence
- ❖ Unwanted pregnancies
- ❖ Children joining Youth Militias or Protestors

The Economic Impact - Conclusions

Some families are close to breaking point. One respondent, in response to a question on how they were surviving in current conditions responded *“complete anguish, agony”*. Another said, *“before, I earned 3000 Burundian Franc (1.5 USD) a day, now I earn nothing. I have used up all my savings. There isn’t enough to eat, the children beg in the streets. When you’re poor, the children are affected at every level, not enough food, clothes, or the school costs”*. A single mother responded *“I live off charity and the compassion of my neighbours.”* Many focused the lack of food: *“Before I fed my family 3 times a day, now it’s a struggle to feed them once”*. Another respondent told us, *“We haven’t eaten today”*.

While the crisis is causing considerable economic pressure on households, **most households are currently (end June 2015) able to manage** through a variety of coping mechanisms. The most common adaptive strategy was to eat less, with over 50% of respondents stating that where they had previously eaten three times a day, they now ate twice a day or less. This was common across all social grouping but was most apparent amongst the households of agriculturalists, manual labourers and petty traders.

A struggle to pay the rent due to income being reduced was regularly mentioned. Not having money for rent is likely to force some people out on street in the near future or to look for charity.

While it was difficult to specify a precise “tipping point”, **a continuation of the crisis beyond a further 5 to 6 weeks would probably represent the breaking point for most households in Bujumbura**, and strain the capacity of households in the “Interior”. Savings, the benefits of a good recent harvest and the limited impact of the crisis in much of the interior would no longer suffice. **If the crisis escalated rapidly and violently, the “tipping point” could be far sooner.**

Those living in volatile Quartiers are struggling the most. The majority of respondents from these areas reported a drop of 50%+ in household income. All had friends and family that had left: *“Actually, the population are living in misery. Musaga is a community of people who live from petty commerce ... there is none at the moment. Some people eat only once a day; the population is desperate, there is fear, there are so many rumours”*. A number of respondents stated they had witnessed cases of malnutrition

(kwashiorkor) in the community – referring normally to Quartiers where clashes were frequent – but none shared any direct knowledge of such a case.

POPULATION MOVEMENT

Key drivers for population displacement

- ❖ Insecurity, especially if the population started to arm themselves, or rumours about ethnic divisions increased
- ❖ To find gain access to food/cheaper food.
- ❖ The education of their children
- ❖ The health situation of their family
- ❖ The future of their children.
- ❖ Activists or persons wanted by security forces;
- ❖ Intimidation

Population Movement - Who's Moved or Moving and Why?

Over 90% of informants stated that they would migrate if the crisis escalated/if necessary and the vast majority cited fear of insecurity as the major reason for fleeing. The majority would choose to go abroad as a first option if feasible, with historically safe or family locations in perceived safe areas of the country being the less preferred, but still acceptable, second option. 100% of respondents knew someone who had moved – in most cases they knew of many examples. A typical response was the following: *“in our ‘plot’ (parcelle) there are 5 households. Only 2 remain and even they’re not full because the children have left already”*.

Whilst leaving home and migrating to the interior or abroad is an adaptive strategy for families from the majority, if not all, the Quartiers of Bujumbura, the approach is most apparent in those Quartiers where insecurity is most commonplace.

Women and children still comprise the large majority of refugees and “IDPs” and data from the Refugee Camps⁴ in neighbouring countries highlight that the first migratory wave⁵ consisted largely of women and children. More recent migration, from mid-June onwards, appears to be more gender and aged mixed, with some men moving to join families and older boys and youth also leaving the Capital as they become increasingly fearful of being targeted or because successful police tactics have drastically reduced the demonstrations, which had been seen as a reason for staying in Burundi.

Adult men are the most likely age/gender group to remain in Bujumbura. Reasons for this include a need to ensure some form of income; a desire to protect elderly relatives or their property from possible looting; the need to participate in local security patrols, particularly in tense areas; and a fear that “the head of household” being seen to leave the country may be viewed as unpatriotic and lead to problems if the situation returns to normal. Households containing Civil Servants have been particularly concerned since it is generally thought that Civil Servants not **consistently** available for work throughout the current crisis

⁴ 77% of the refugees into Rwanda were women and children. UNICEF HAC Report June 15 2015

⁵ Between late April and mid-June 2015.

would be “struck from the list”. Regardless of whether their salaries are presently being paid, the fear of losing such a secure employment is a serious concern.

For those households disinclined/unable to move, the lack of finances was the most common reason for this decision, closely followed by a fear that their home could be looted if they left. These households also cited a lack of family contacts in other parts of Burundi or abroad. 2 Respondents from Makamba also voiced their fear that children had died in the camps, a reference to news of cholera, and they felt that the risk wasn’t worth it. This perspective is perhaps unsurprising. After the mass cholera outbreak amongst Burundian Refugees in May, it was common to hear people questioning whether it was worth running away from bullets in Bujumbura, only to be killed by cholera at the border.

Another reason given by some of those unlikely to leave their homes, and cited by various respondents, was that their community would revert to violent measures to defend their livelihood and family if the situation continued for much longer. This included establishing or strengthening systems of local security in their community.

Population Movement Abroad – Who is Moving and Where are they Heading?

The recognition that Rwanda was too expensive – and also potentially an area of insecurity if the crisis spread more widely – encouraged some families to go to Uganda, which is perceived as providing a better welcome and was “cheaper” and “safer”. One respondent knew of “*more than 100 families*” which had headed or were heading to **Uganda** instead of Rwanda.

Rwanda was identified as a destination popular amongst those with families and friends there, and informants also stressed that it would be particularly attractive to Tutsi families, although the refugees have been ethnically mixed up to now. Clearly, as with all the three neighbouring countries, geography played a large part, with easy access to a nearby border being an important consideration. 6 Key Informants stated that Rwanda would be the destination for people “*opposed to the 3rd mandate*”. Poorer households planning to head to Rwanda, particularly those without relations there, believe they have little option apart from the Camps; “*We plan to go to Rwanda, it’s where you’ll find our children. We haven’t relations in Rwanda, or any money, but we’re planning to go to the Camp. Our children have become separated and we fear for their security and their education*”.

DRC is viewed as a less desirable destination by most of the respondents, a perspective perhaps borne out by the current relatively low number of refugees. The capacity of DRC authorities to provide services such as food, education, protection and shelter was questioned and those who indicated they would relocate to DRC rarely mentioned it as their first choice. The “Forest” area on the DRC border side is rumoured to be an area used for Militia training and therefore a place to be avoided. In general, DRC was characterised by many respondents as more lawless, which is beneficial in that it is easier to evade the authorities/customs (who were viewed as corrupt) but greatly increased the possibility of the refugees being victims of crime. The porous border and large expanse of unpopulated areas does however mean that it is an option for refugees trying to get to Rwanda by foot and wishing to avoid Northern Provinces rumoured to have a high youth militia presence.

The **DRC** was a more probable option for those Burundians, many from the Capital, with families just over the border and a small number of respondents from poorer economic backgrounds proposed it as a

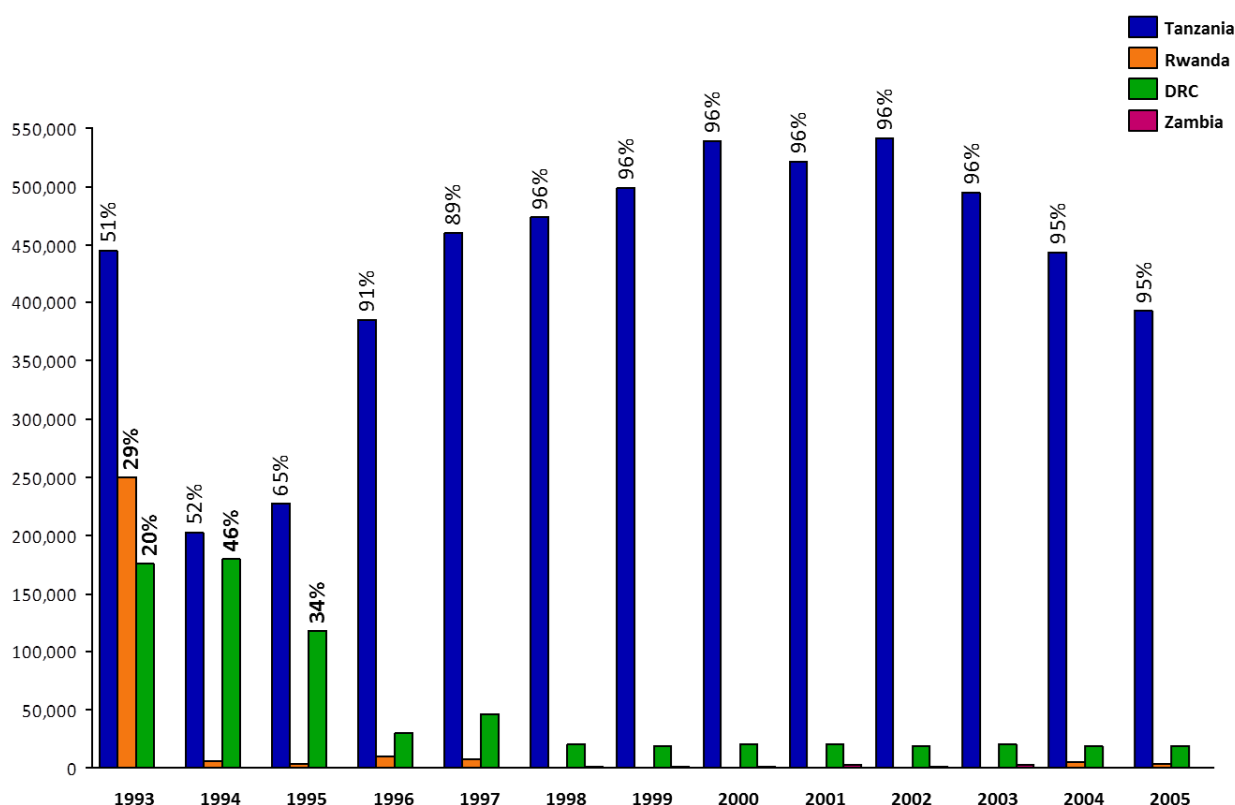
possible location. The DRC also attracts agriculturalists cultivating on the Burundian side of the border who can traverse the border easily. They often cultivate during the day and cross back to DRC in the late afternoon.

For the wealthiest refugees, **Belgium, Kenya, South Africa and even Canada** were cited destinations.

Although **Rwanda** was seen as the primary destination for the majority of respondents in Bujumbura, it is seen largely as a *temporary* location before returning home. In contrast, there was a greater tendency for those who have moved/or would move to **Tanzania** to consider the possibility of making it their permanent home. This may reflect that many Tanzanian based refugees had been living in Tanzania prior to forced repatriations in 2012 or had family members that had settled there. This phenomenon was borne out by the June 2015 IRC Needs Assessment in Nyarugusu Camp, in which 5 of 6 focus groups of Burundian Refugees stated *“they feel safe and secure in Tanzania. They never want to return to Burundi”*.

Population Movement – a snapshot of Refugee migratory trends over the last 22 years

Figure 1 Year on Year #Burundian Refugees by Country of Destination
1993 - 2005



Discerning too many patterns/trends from the data in Figure 1 is problematic, since the contextual factors driving the refugee movement at that time were quite distinct, with, for example, the 1994 Rwandan Genocide having a huge impact on population flows in the Great Lakes Region. The diagram also represents a period of considerable population movement, and, since 2006, the refugee numbers have been considerably lower. Nevertheless, it is glaringly apparent that a) Tanzania is typically and consistently the destination of “choice” for an overwhelming majority of Burundian refugees and that b) the current

numbers (July 15th 2015) of Burundian refugees represent less than 20% of the numbers at their 1993 peak and typically less than a third of the average number of refugees over this period.

Again with the above caveat re caution in mind, the current situation, in terms of destinations chosen by refugees, most resembles the situation in 1993, albeit with much lower numbers. It is also notable that apart from 1993, the DRC has proven a more attractive location for refugees than Rwanda.

Population Movement In Burundi – Who is Moving and Where are they heading?

Internal population movement, particularly from Bujumbura to the interior, appears to be far higher than currently reported. Whilst it is difficult to confirm the statistical validity of the varying statements, most respondents knew of numerous colleagues, friends or family members that had moved to perceived safe locations in the interior. At present, the main pull factors are family contacts/ancestral homes, cheaper prices and security. People are seemingly moving throughout the country, although certain areas, such as the Southern States, Ngozi and Gitega were the most commonly cited places for refuge within Burundi. Respondents in Musaga and Buterere stated that *“at least 40%”* of their Quartier had left – principally women and children – with the Interior and other Quartiers in Bujumbura often the destination.

The majority of those that stated they would flee **within** Burundi were often of /referring to poorer social groups and was reflective of their belief/fear that the cost of life abroad would be prohibitively expensive. Even those correspondents that would prefer to move abroad noted that the Interior could be a viable option because of its relative cheapness.

Poorer families are more likely to send their families to perceived safe places within Burundi and were developing strategies for managing the cost implications of such a decision. One respondent stated *“if the situation continues. I will stay in Musaga and my wife will go to her parents in Ngozi. We will sell furniture, a bed and some mattresses to buy a ticket for her and the remainder will be for my food”*. Another told us that the neighbouring family had fled to the ancestral village of Mukike and had sold their possessions to buy a ticket. The selling of household possessions to cover transport costs was cited by numerous people, although a small number of respondents believed that they wouldn't be able to sell their goods because *“there is nobody left to buy them”*.

Those living in “calmer” and “neutral” Quartiers, have been called upon to host families escaping the most insecure areas of the Capital. Informants from Musaga and Buterere suggested that there are a small number of neutral Quartiers, which are seen as places of possible sanctuary by members of their community.

Gitega is seen as currently calm and ethnically mixed and was named by numerous respondents as a possible destination. It is notable however that respondents in Gitega commented that numerous people had left the province and headed either to more rural locations or, typically towards Rwanda

Population Movement – A Snapshot of IDP Migratory Trends Over the Last 22 Years

Figure 2

Year on Year %IDPs of Total Population 1993 - 2005

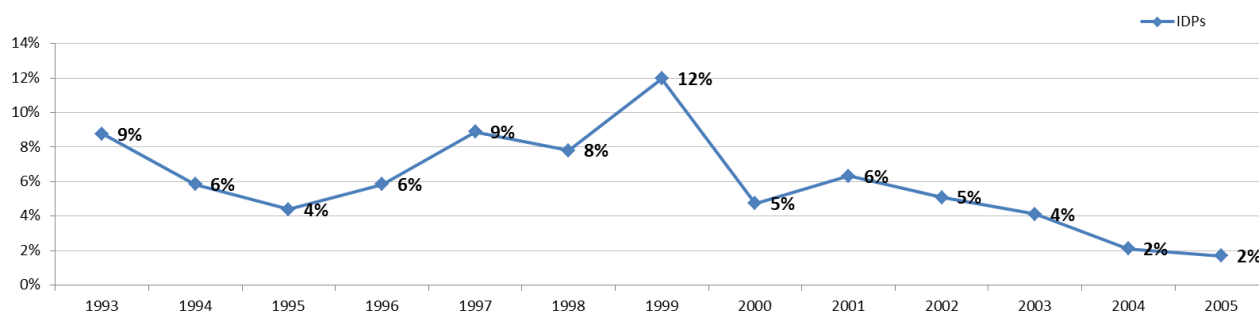
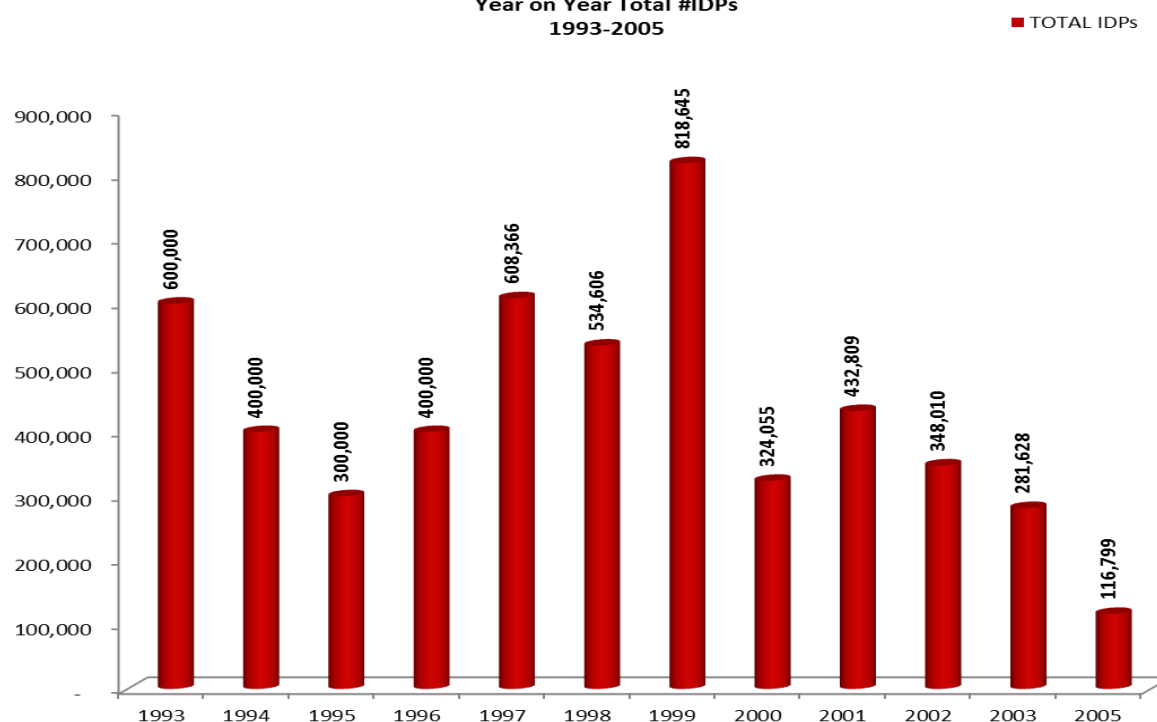


Figure 3

Year on Year Total #IDPs 1993-2005

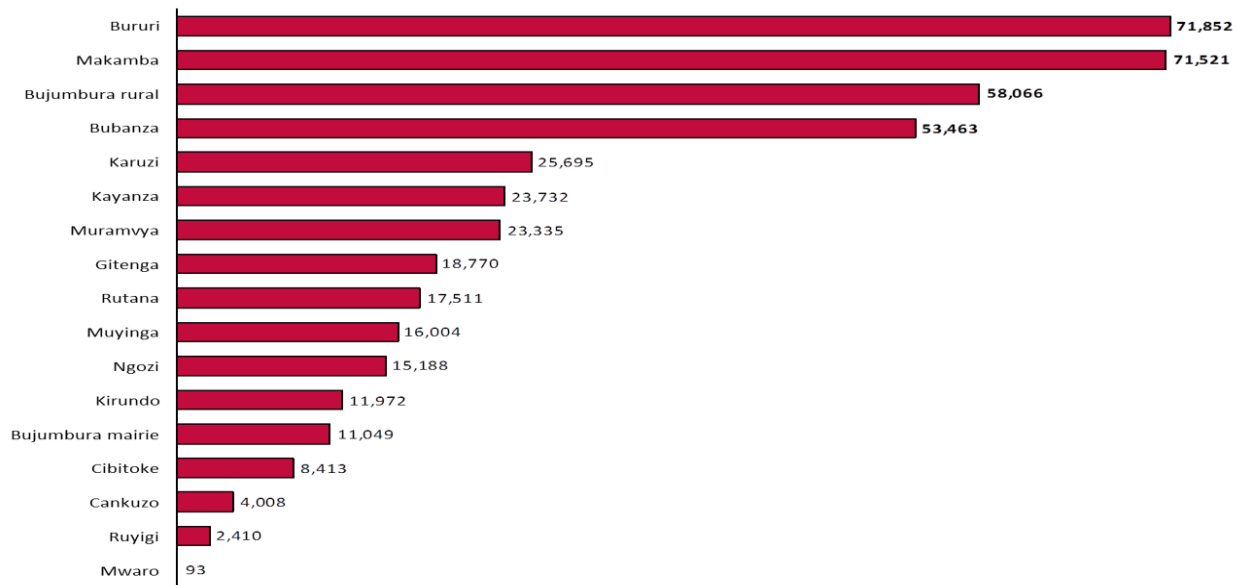


Source: USCR, 1995; OCHA, 2005 *1993 average of estimates

The two diagrams above show the numbers and percentages of IDPs within Burundi from 1993 to 2005. There are currently no official IDP numbers in Burundi related to the current⁶ crisis.

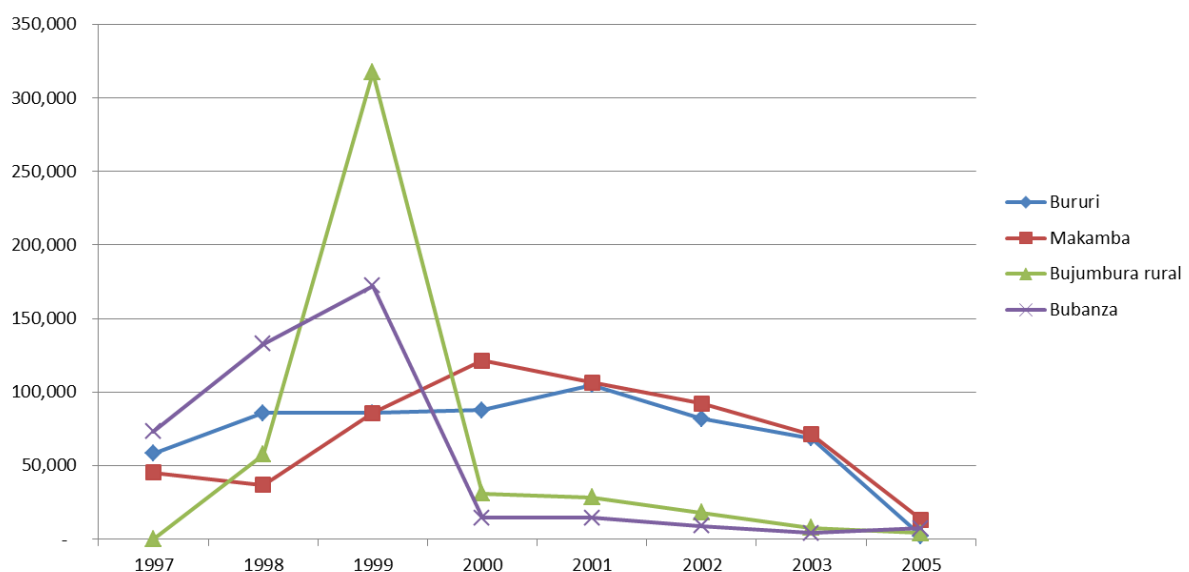
As the diagrams show, internal population movement is a common adaptive strategy used by Burundians during periods of crisis and that once such population flows start, the practice can easily continue over many years. In 1999, over 800,000 Burundians, 12% of the population, were IDPs. If we add the 500,000+ *refugees* in 1999, it means that approximately 20% of the Burundian population were displaced. A similar scenario today, based on the recent Burundian Census, would equate to over 2 million refugees and IDPs.

⁶ There are approximately 78,000 Burundians officially designated as IDPs prior to the current crisis.

Figure 4**Average #IDPs by Province per Year, 1997 - 2005**

The chart above shows the most frequented destinations over 7 years of large scale internal relocation, highlighting the **average** number of IDPs in each year. The Southern States of Bururi and Makamba have consistently the largest number, and the general sense is that the Southern and Southern Central areas are seen as a safer sanctuary than the Northern Provinces. Bujumbura Rural also hosted large amounts of IDPs, reflecting both local kinship ties and its proximity to the Capital.

From 1997 to 2005, 59% of all IDPs were located in 4 of the 17 provinces: Bururi, Makamba, Bujumbura Rural and Bubanza. The chart below highlights the peaks of movement, notably in Bujumbura Rural in 1993 and demonstrates that the 2 Southern States of Bururi and Makamba hosted a consistent number of IDPs through much of this period.

Figure 5**Year on Year IDP influx trends in the four provinces that on average have hosted the largest numbers**

Population Movement – The Perceived and Known Risks

One striking finding was the very high awareness amongst respondents about the risks of forced population movement and their ability to identify/prepare numerous coping mechanisms. This fact and the almost uniform preparedness to move quickly if necessary are perhaps indicative of *“a history of massacres (that) has taught the people of Burundi, regardless of their ethnicity, that their personal survival hinges on their ability to flee and seek a safer place temporarily ...It is a lesson handed down from generation to generation”*⁷.

The refugee/IDP experience is widely known to be traumatic, with a potentially hugely detrimental impact on the family, most notably children. The possible risks were repeatedly emphasised by Key Informants, some of whom recalled the impact of the 1993 crisis and the ensuing Civil War. *“I fled in 95, I was in Congo, Tanzania and Malawi... I saw my children lose their mother tongue, they spoke a mix of languages (patois), they left school, my daughters had unwanted pregnancies in the camps and there were never-ending rumours about events in Burundi that stopped us returning. The only positive was the solidarity and love between the refugees in the camps”*.

One respondent from Makamba stated that they had left Burundi in April 15, together with their family, only to return a few days later. *“We saw other migrate, but we decided to return because we were scared, and we were worried about sickness and about the death of children in the camp”*. There were also numerous reports of families returning from Rwanda during late May, early June, ascribed to the unsustainably expensive cost of living in Rwanda and a hope that the situation in Burundi was starting to calm down. Some returnees were also justifiably fearful that their empty home was vulnerable, with one respondent who had recently returned to Bujumbura commenting that *“unfortunately, our savings diminished (abroad), so we left again but on our return we found thefts, deteriorations, the prices have gone up, there are no clients in the market and less for us to buy”*.

Numerous respondents stated that they would not be able to take everyone with them in the event of a departure, rapid or otherwise, from the family home. The elderly and disabled members of the household were seen as being particularly vulnerable to the challenges of transit and of camp life and would pose an additional risk by slowing down other family members. One elderly respondent said, *“I won’t leave, I am old, I die here”*. The concern that family members with disability would struggle is again borne out by the IRC study in Nyarugusu: *“When asked which groups experienced the most difficulty accessing services, 13 of 19 respondents cite persons with disabilities”*.

The most often cited preoccupation about making a journey, particularly amongst those with less money and more likely to do the journey on foot was security, both related to their physical security and that of their possessions. Most respondents were very aware that the journey would be a perilous one and that there was a high probability that they would meet criminals, authorities or militia along the way, all of whom posed a possible threat, with theft, sexual violence, physical violence, separation of children and kidnapping being the most often mentioned.

⁷ Analysis from the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) in 1998

Informants cited various ways of minimising the risk on their journey:

- Moving in large groups wherever possible, often forming a security community to enhance organisation and security. This was cited by 3 respondents in Makamba.
- Sending children ahead in safer transport (had financial impact).
- Adult men travelling with group before returning home.
- Moving in “steps”. This meant heading to a first target and waiting there while compiling information about the safety and appropriate routes for the next step, etc.
- Avoiding areas with known criminal or militia presence.
- Selecting routes based upon information gained from earlier waves of refugees – this was particularly apparent in Makamba.

A number of key informants from volatile Quartiers in Bujumbura stated that taking the Route National One (RN1) from the Capital towards Rwanda represented a particular risk for refugees on foot or with limited amounts of money. The route goes through Kamenge, rumoured to be a location where refugees could be stopped and threatened. The RN1 route was believed to be less risky if people were travelling with a reputable bus company, which afforded travellers some protection, but there was a perceived risk that travelling on the RN1 out of Bujumbura meant being stopped at roadblocks and prevented from further travel. It was suggested that most people fleeing towards Rwanda would prefer to avoid this route. Similarly, for this same grouping of refugees, there was a worry voiced about taking the most direct route to Rwanda, because it signified passing through provinces rumoured to have high numbers of Youth Militia, such as Cibitoke, Bujumbura Rural and Bubanza.

Population Movement – Direct Impact on **Children**

Numerous respondents highlighted the risk of sexual violence during the journey and in the camps, with “unwanted” pregnancies being a particular concern. One girl was reported as being forced into marriage. This pervasive nature of the threat of sexual violence was underlined by the IRC Nyarugusu report which stated that *“GBV (was) the second most cited incident (14/19), perpetrated by family and intimate partners/or ex partners primarily, but also by the Imbonerakure. While fleeing Burundi, 4 of 6 focus groups spoke of being exposed to sexual and domestic violence”*.

Concerns about the education of children was a theme across the majority of interviews. The lack of education in many of the schools in Bujumbura was a major reason, along with security, why families chose to send their children away from home. Conversely, fear that their children would not get a good education in the Camps, in rural villages or along the journey, was a reoccurring concern.

Alongside education, the challenge of ensuring a reasonable level of health and nutrition for family members, most specifically the children, was constantly reiterated. Challenges included accessing fresh and regular food, the lack of access to health care and the higher probability of sickness along the route.

Over 25% of respondents highlighted the risk of children being separated on the journey or even when arriving at camps. It was also thought that children were often sent on ahead on their own, whilst the adults stayed at home seeking work or to protect the family house/possessions. Preferably the children were sent with older siblings or relatives, but this wasn’t always possible. The awareness of this risk was particularly prevalent in the Southern part of Tanzania and underlined by the fact that in the IRC report *“there was a universal acknowledgement (28/28) of cases of children and youth separated from usual*

caregivers, with the major source of separation occurring during transit from Burundi to Tanzania (21/28)...particularly from Kagunga to Kigoma". We also received reports of one child rescued on his way to Rwanda by the Red Cross.

Reviewing the data – and despite a number of questions specifically about disability – it is notable how little statistical information is available with regards to disabled children. Only 3 children with disability were referenced, 2 with physical disability, the 3rd with undefined “mental difficulties”. The invisibility of disabled children, when analysed alongside comments that such children are most likely to be left behind, and the lack of support at their destinations, means that this group of children is likely to be acutely vulnerable in the event of any escalation of the crisis.

Perception of risks linked with displacements

- ❖ Poor nutrition along the way
- ❖ Poor access to health care
- ❖ Dangers of mines and weapons
- ❖ “Refugees live permanently with anxiety”
- ❖ Increased exposure to sickness in camps
- ❖ Rape of women and girls
- ❖ Separation of children
- ❖ Poor hygiene conditions
- ❖ Loss of the actual job and idleness
- ❖ Reduction of income

Population Movement – Conclusions

At present, there are no official IDPs as a result of this present crisis. Nevertheless, all evidence indicates that there are **currently** large numbers of people moving from perceived volatile areas such as the Capital. **It seems highly probable, based on respondent reports, that tens of thousands have moved within the country,** especially those either further away from a border or without the financial capacity or family support to survive abroad. Looking at data from the last 20 years, it seems probable that if the crisis continues, there will soon be a substantial IDP population in Burundi.

Compared to previous moments of unrest in Burundi’s post-independence history, the numbers of refugees, particularly those in Tanzania are relatively low. As with IDPs, it is therefore not unreasonable to assume that in the event that the current crisis escalates, **IDP numbers will substantially escalate.** If so, the preparedness capacity of neighbouring countries, particularly Tanzania (in an election year) is likely to be severely tested.

Building on the previous 2 points, if we take 1999, when 20% of the population were either IDPs or Refugees, as an example of a **possible worst case scenario re population movement, this would equate in 2015 to over 2 million refugees and IDPs.**

Whilst the vast majority of respondents stated that ethnicity is not a key driver at ***present***, **the “instrumentalisation of ethnicity” remains a concern**. Numerous respondents referenced an increase in ethnic-focused rhetoric and cited such language as a possible reason for accelerating their departure.

Large numbers of relocated families are currently staying in calmer Quartiers in Bujumbura. Historical precedent infers that they are unlikely to remain there if the situation escalates. **This heightens the possibility of a rapid spike in IDP numbers in the short term** if Bujumbura becomes increasingly volatile.

The first wave of 100,000 refugees across Tanzania, DRC and Rwanda witnessed high numbers of SGBV cases and reports of 2000+ Unaccompanied and Separated children. This occurred during what was a relatively orderly process of migration. **The concern must be that in the event of mass and more chaotic population movements, such protection abuses will be multiplied**. Appropriate preparedness within Burundi to reduce or prevent such occurrences is therefore of the highest priority.

In discussions with respondents, it was apparent that there is a sophisticated knowledge of historically, safe, risky and unsafe locations within Burundi, mutating along shifting parameters related to ethnicity, family ties, finance and politics. Whilst shifts in the context may mean that such parameters change, it is reasonable to predict that any **moving population will incorporate this historical information into their decision making and that preparedness planning should take this into account**.

Burundi has suffered numerous political and economic crises. A cursory review of the data from the last 50 years reveals numerous periods in which high refugee and IDP numbers are the norm, not the exception. **It is practical, not pessimistic, to proactively take these lessons into account for the purposes of preparedness planning**. A failure to prepare effectively within Burundi will further accentuate the exportation of the crisis to neighbouring countries.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This assessment would not have been possible without the support and hard work of numerous colleagues and Partner Agencies in Burundi, not least the enumerators and respondents themselves. Particular appreciation should go to colleagues in Terre des Hommes Lausanne and War Child Holland in Burundi for guiding, advising and supporting Save the Children International staff whilst in country. Thanks also to Ian Vale from SCI Regional Office in Nairobi, Bernard Ngamo of SCI DRC and Sarah Reggianini of SCI in London for their much needed technical inputs throughout the process. Finally, as is customary at such moments, it should be emphasised that any errors or incorrect conclusions in this document are fully the responsibility of the author.

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