BURUNDI: Natural Disasters
Flash Update No. 2
28 April 2020

KEY POINTS

• National solidarity mobilizes in support of the 34,905 people affected by the flooding of the Ruzizi River.
• First 100 displaced households settled on the new official site in Gatumba, Bujumbura Rural province.
• Nearly 10,000 students did not return to school at the start of the third term due to their schools being flooded.

SITUATION OVERVIEW

• One week after the Ruzizi River began to overflow, flooded areas continue to rise, endangering more people. 4,855 new people have recently abandoned their homes due to flooding in the villages of Muyange, Rukaramu and Warubondo. A total of 6,981 households are displaced by the floods.
• A total of 6,981 households, or 34,905 people, have been displaced by the floods in 9 hills in the Gatumba and Rukaramu areas, in the commune of Mutimbuzi of Bujumbura Rural province.
• The Ministry of Human Rights, Social Affairs and Gender donated 27 tons of food on Saturday 25 April, and the ruling party donated 4.2 tons of food and non-food items (medicines, mosquito nets.) to the affected people.
• Following the multisectoral evaluation on 21 April, sectoral groups such as education, shelter and non-food items (NFI), and water, hygiene and sanitation (WASH) returned to the field to reinforce data collection and refine their analysis. Meanwhile, the water level continues to rise, causing the already damaged houses to collapse.

NEEDS

• Despite the identification of a temporary relocation site (emergency shelters, including WASH equipment) by provincial authorities, access to water is far. Motorized water supply remains the only option for now.
• Of the 14 schools in the Gatumba and Rukaramu areas, 4 are flooded and non-functional, while the others accommodate displaced persons. This is disrupting the schooling of more than 9,944 students, of whom 4,738 girls. Placement of students in schools is difficult due to lack of space, especially for students in the 9th grade.
• Additional assessments conducted by the public administration indicate a rise from 6,010 displaced households to 6,981 households after the inclusion of displaced persons from the villages of Muyange, Rukaramu and Warubondo. Humanitarian actors from the Burundian Red Cross (BRC) and the International Organization for Migration (IDM) have carried out activities to identify and register those who were forced to sleep outdoors.
• Despite the assistance provided to date, the affected people are still in need of food aid. Many of these people have lost their food stocks and/or no longer have access to their fields due to them being submerged by the Ruzizi River.
• Most household items have been washed away or destroyed by the floods. Women and girls of childbearing age have indicated an urgent need for towels and dignity kits.
• Contaminated water poses a serious sanitary health hazard which could increase the spread of water-borne diseases. For example, children continue to spend their time swimming in stagnant water, soiled by overflowing latrines. 3 schools have flooded, preventing over 1,500 students from returning to school. Children living in the six affected areas have lost all their school material, making it difficult for them to resume classes.

MULTISECTORAL RESPONSE AND GAPS

WaSH: Burundi’s Civil Protection, in partnership with UNICEF, continue to provide drinking water to the homeless population, grouped around public buildings such as churches, schools and store pavements. 10,000 litres of drinking water are distributed daily from the truck. The NGO GVC, a UNICEF partner, has carried out an initial assessment for the installation of sanitation facilities in the shelter site opened by provincial and national authorities.

SHELTER/NFI: The Shelter and NFI sector has conducted an extensive assessment in the disaster area and in the assembly areas. As a result, 187 households sleeping in the open along the main road to Gatumba were identified. 100 households are already settled in the open relocation site. IOM plans to distribute NFI kits to these first households settled on this site. This distribution will consider the NFI donations from the ruling party to avoid duplication.

A target of 100 households to be installed each week has been set by the National Platform to ensure a better coordination and adequate response. The next target is for families living in public buildings such as schools/churches.

However, the sector has less than 500 standard NFI kits (including blankets, mats, mosquito nets and buckets) and 200 emergency shelter kits available for distribution.

FOOD: The Ministry of Interior called for national solidarity in the aftermath of the first displacements. As a result, the Ministry of Human Rights, Social Affairs and Gender offered 27 tons of food aid, and the ruling party donated 4.2 tons of food. Further Community contributions are expected next week.

These efforts will enable humanitarian actors to better prepare the response by targeting the most vulnerable according to humanitarian principles.

PROTECTION: The national NGO PPCM has deployed a team of psychologists to care for children who have been affected by these events and to run a listening centre. Recreational areas will be quickly set up for the children to get them off the road where there is a huge risk of traffic accidents and to prevent them from swimming in stagnant water.

UNFPA plans to distribute dignity kits to women and girls of reproductive age at the new site on Tuesday 28 April. This distribution will continue as displaced people occupy the site. A stock of nearly 1,800 dignity kits and 450 baby kits is available.

EDUCATION: A joint team of specialists from the emergency unit of the Ministry of Education, UNICEF and the NGO Human Health Aid Burundi conducted an in-depth assessment and provided initial assistance. The team distributed school materials, consisting of two notebooks and a pen to 2,111 students in schools in Mushasha I, Mushasha II and Warubondo districts. Per the emergency unit of the Ministry of Education, the 9th grade students will be integrated in schools close to their displacement site.

CONSTRAINTS

• The local authorities with the BRC have constraints in producing nominal lists of the most vulnerable people. This delays the planning of individual assistance. Further assessment will be needed to produce beneficiary lists to avoid duplication of assistance services.

• The capacity of the different sectors to cope with the consequences of these disasters is extremely limited, the stock level is too low to adequately meet the needs of the affected people. Sectors’ resources are all the more at risk as the rains are expected to continue until mid-May.

• OCHA will continue to support multi-sectoral assessments, organized by the National Platform, to other villages affected by this season’s rains to compile information for strong and comprehensive advocacy.

• Continued rains pose a high risk and are expected to have a greater humanitarian impact on the most vulnerable - especially people with special needs, children, pregnant and/or lactating women.

• Gatherings at emergency shelter sites and aid distribution points are of concern, given the current COVID-19 pandemic. Additional efforts are needed to ensure that appropriate protective measures are taken against COVID-19 during aid distributions. If the number of cases continues to increase, the capacity of humanitarian partners to assist may be limited. For example, sectors will need to reduce the pace of distributions to ensure social distancing, which will require additional logistical support (such as trucks) and thus aid assistance will be slower.