**BURUNDI: Natural Disasters**

**Flash Update No. 1**

22 April 2020

**KEY POINTS**

- On 19 April, according to local authorities, 27,972 people were displaced due to the Ruzizi river overflowing into six districts of Gatumba in Mutimbuzi Commune (Bujumbura Rural province)
- 6,010 houses were flooded, severely damaged or destroyed
- Shelter, access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WaSH) and food are among the most urgent needs. At present these supplies are low, making it difficult for humanitarian organisations to respond.

**SITUATION OVERVIEW**

- Torrential rains, violent winds, landslides, and floods that occurred between 13 and 19 April have caused devastation in Cibitoke, Bubanza, and Bujumbura Rural provinces.
- In Bujumbura Rural, the rains have caused the banks of the Ruzizi river to overflow, flooding over 6,010 houses and displacing thousands of families. In Mutimbuzi commune, the river flooded six districts of Gatumba, including Kinyinya 1&2, Muyange 2, Mushasha 1&2, Gaharawe (Bujumbura Mairie)
- Strong winds, torrential rains, and landslides have affected a total of 813 people in Rumonge province (715) and Bubanza province (98), the majority of whom are now displaced
- The damage toll is still rising as flooded houses continue to collapse
- On 20 April, Civil Protection, with the Burundian Red Cross (BRC) and OCHA, conducted an initial mission in the affected area to assess the damage and identify shelter options for the most vulnerable. The mission was followed by an inter-agency rapid assessment on 21 April to confirm the numbers and get a better sense of the immediate needs as well as agree on the response strategy

**NEEDS**

- A temporary relocation site (emergency shelters including WaSH amenities) in Gatumba is a top priority. People also urgently need food due to the loss of stocks
- The COVID-19 prevention measures, such as the traffic limitations at the border between Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo - with these floods - have further harmed the local economy in Gatumba
- Over 400 Ha of crops that were ready for harvest were flooded, depriving the local population of a food supply
- Thousands of homes were flooded, destroyed or isolated. At present, 6,010 households need shelter
- Most household effects were washed away or destroyed by the floods. As a result, many people no longer have clothes, food stocks, or basic necessities such as blankets, cooking utensils and water containers.
- Latrines have overflown, contaminating flooded areas and drinking water sources. Children play in these waters and people are defecating in open areas. New pathologies have emerged, including skin itching and locals express concern over
parasites in the water. Health actors warn of the spread of diseases such as malaria and cholera. Mosquito nets are urgently needed. Flooded areas must be continuously disinfected to reduce the health risks.

- 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 materials, making it difficult for them to resume classes.
- Although the total number of people affected and in need are not fully confirmed (evaluations are ongoing), sectors’ capacities will not be able to cover all humanitarian needs.

MULTISECTORAL RESPONSE AND GAPS

**WaSH:** Burundi’s Civil Protection, in partnership with UNICEF, has started to supply drinking water to the homeless population grouped around public buildings such as churches and schools. They plan to install hand-washing facilities in population grouping points to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. The BRC has continued to disinfect areas where latrines have overflowed or been destroyed, and where these is open defecation.

**SHELTER/NFI:** The shelter and non-food items (NFI) sector have started to identify and target the most affected people, especially those who are forced to sleep outdoors and those who have taken refuge in churches and classrooms. Shelter and WaSH hope to coordinate efforts to provide complementary kits, but this will not be enough in view of the heavy and above average rainfall predicted until end of May. The sector has 500 NFI kits (including blankets, mosquito nets, and buckets) and 200 emergency shelter kits available for distribution. These numbers should increase as soon as the CRB has completed its evaluation and communicated its stock capacity. Advocacy is underway for a more viable relocation site to shelter these groups, although further advocacy will be needed for the entire country.

**FOOD:** The Ministry of Public Security and Disaster Management has provided an initial food aid to 13,000 children in the affected districts, consisting of milk and energy biscuits. Humanitarian actors have started discussions with the public administration to produce lists of the affected people according to their vulnerabilities.

**PROTECTION:** The deployment of specialists in clinical psychology has been agreed upon in order to provide support mainly to children from families who have lost everything. A listening point will be set up to provide support to victims, of both the floods and gender-based violence (GBV). No cases of GBV have yet been recorded, however there remains a high risk of GBV as most live in poorly lit areas.

**EDUCATION:** A team of crisis education specialists will conduct an in-depth mission on 22 April to provide information on the numbers of affected children and their needs in terms of school kits.

**CONSTRAINTS**

- The capacity of the different sectors to cope with disasters’ consequences is extremely limited, their stock is insufficient to adequately respond to the needs of those affected. Sectors’ resources are even more at risk as the rains are projected to continue until mid-May
- The extent of the damage in these areas and elsewhere in the country is not yet known. IOM and the Burundian Red Cross will be conducting a more thorough evaluation in the coming days
- There are concerns about overcrowded gatherings at emergency shelter sites and aid distribution points, given the current COVID-19 pandemic. If phase three of the Business Continuity Plan is activated, sectors will need to reduce the pace of distributions to ensure physical distancing, which will require further logistical support (such as trucks), which will also mean aid assistance will be slower.