

**BRIEFING NOTE ON RWANDA**  
**13TH IASC-WORKING GROUP MEETING**  
**27 July 1994**

**I OVERVIEW**

The extraordinary events in Rwanda have created a humanitarian crisis of historic proportions. In Rwanda proper, there have been massive population shifts to avoid the fighting and a complete disruption of all government services. In neighbouring Zaire and Tanzania, the massive outflows of people have overwhelmed available resources. Problems with security, access and logistics exist for humanitarian organizations throughout the region. The net outcome is that the need for coordination within the humanitarian community has never been more important.

**II UPDATE**

As of 21 July, large scale fighting in Rwanda had ceased with the defeat and the withdrawal of RGF forces from the northwest border town of Gisenyi. This left the RPF, and its newly established government, controlling approximately 75% of the country. The sole exception was the southwest corner of the country where the French coalition "security zone" had been established in the rough triangle of Kibuye - Gikongoro - Cyangugu. Large portions of the population (estimated in excess of 2 million) have moved into the French zone seeking protection from the RPF. Additional population movement from this zone into Zaire (south of Lake Kivu in the Bukavu and Uvira areas) has also begun. Initial estimates of this movement range as high of 400,00 which is unconfirmed at this writing.

In the RPF controlled zone, relative stability exists. The RPF is generally supportive of humanitarian efforts and has worked with agencies and NGOs to facilitate their work. Aid officials have met frequently with RPF representatives to work out modalities for security of humanitarian efforts and proper assessment of needs. Ironically, the massive depopulation of the RPF zone, through migration and murder, has reduced the burden on humanitarian agencies. Nevertheless, great challenges remain. One positive factor is that the current harvest is reportedly a good one and only suffers from lack of labour to harvest the crops.

In southwest Rwanda, the situation is more difficult. The French coalition forces have been helpful in creating a secure environment but they have insufficient forces to control the entire region. Security concerns inhibit both access by humanitarian agencies and reduce the willingness of transport operators from Burundi to deliver supplies to Rwanda.

The exact extent of migration from southwest Rwanda into Zaire is unclear at this writing. However, there is limited humanitarian capability in the region to meet any sudden influx of refugees.

The situation in Goma at present is chaotic. While humanitarian agencies have responded as fast as possible, the sudden influx of 1 to 1.2 million people has overwhelmed available human and material resources. The usefulness of the Goma airport (the only air point of access in the immediate area) has been affected by inadequate air coordination, shortages of material handling equipment/aviation ground support equipment and limited capacity in general. Overland access to the Goma area is via marginal highways from Uganda and Burundi and has been affected by lack of transport as well. The minimum daily food requirement has been set at 1000 metric tons per day. While reportedly sufficient sources of water have been identified in the region to meet an estimated 30 million litres daily requirement, lack of distribution systems and trucks has severely limited efforts to provide adequate water. Health and sanitation efforts have also been restricted due to supply and distribution problems as well as the volcanic nature of the ground in Goma which makes it often impossible to dig wells, burial sites, etc. Two problems which affect all humanitarian assistance in Goma are the sheer number of people in the area which retards or prevents humanitarian distribution and an unsatisfactory security situation caused by lawless elements and rogue members of the RGF army which retreated into Zaire in disarray.

### **III ITEMS FOR IASC-WG CONSIDERATION**

#### **Development of an Inter-Agency Strategy**

The sheer size of the Rwandan tragedy, its impact on the other countries in the region and the need for humanitarian organizations in the mission area to focus primarily on meeting immediate needs in a very demanding situation, augurs for efforts by the IASC-WG to develop an integrated regional humanitarian strategy to address both immediate and long term needs. Development of a strategy will provide a road-map for the future, assist all involved organizations in planning and resource allocation and enable the humanitarian community to present a coherent picture of its vision, organization and needs to donors and other interested parties.

Many components of the strategy already exist e.g. the creation of the UN Rwanda Emergency Office, the Consolidated Appeal, separate agency/ NGO/ICRC appeals, the deployment of additional staff and resources into the region by the humanitarian community and the prospect of an expanded UNAMIR. These elements need to be brought together in one strategy to provide direction for all concerned.

### **Contingency Planning In The Event of Problems in Burundi**

The situation in Burundi has remained relatively quiet since April. However, it has frequently been described as tense by humanitarian officials in the region. Given the importance of Burundi in supporting Rwanda operations and the potential impact on relief operations in Rwanda should lines of communication from Burundi be disrupted, contingency plans need to be developed. The IASC-WG should, in concert with their representatives in the mission area, develop contingency plans to address a possible loss of Burundi as a base for humanitarian operations.

### **Secondment of Personnel to the UN Rwanda Emergency Office (UNREO)**

UNREO has established a presence in Kigali, Kabale, Goma, Bujumbura, Kampala and Nairobi. These offices have been critical in supporting humanitarian organizations through their coordination efforts both within the humanitarian community and with UNAMIR, RPF and other parties. The staffing needs of these coordinating offices have largely been sourced from UNDP Rwanda and DHA. While this will continue to be so in the future, assistance is sought in filling certain key assignments as Senior Liaison Officers in UNREO. Openings currently exist in the Goma and Kigali locations and more may arise in the future. Nominations for these posts (on a loan basis) are urgently sought.