



Executive Brief on WFP/FAO/UNHCR Joint Needs Assessment for the Great Lakes Region: Burundi, Rwanda and Tanzania

Overview

After years of conflict and political unrest, which displaced almost three million people and increased poverty and food insecurity, the political situation in the Great Lakes region is now stabilising. In particular, Burundi and Rwanda have made progress towards national reconciliation and economic recovery; the repatriation of refugees is under way and will intensify if the political situation allows, in particular in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Between 2003 and 2006, WFP has been providing assistance through a regional Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation (PRRO) which targeted the three countries because of the regional dimension of the conflicts and socio-economic impacts. In November 2005, WFP's Executive Board (EB) approved a one year expansion of the regional PRRO. The EB also requested WFP to undertake a robust needs assessment with UNHCR and other UN agencies to prepare new operations for consideration at the November 2006 EB session. The joint needs assessment (JNA) took place with UNHCR and FAO in March and April 2006.

The JNA recommends that the interventions shift from targeted relief to recovery activities. WFP should continue to distribute relief rations to about 680,000 severely food insecure people affected by drought and disease in the north and east of Burundi and to the most food insecure population in Rwanda affected by recurrent droughts. In addition, continued assistance should be provided to refugees and returnees. In Tanzania, an average of 223,000 refugees in 2007 and 123,000 in 2008 will need food rations.

The assessment was based on an analysis of available secondary information and data collected during field visits through interviews with relevant stakeholders including beneficiaries, local and national authorities, donors, partners and other UN agencies. To understand food availability and the possibility of procuring food locally, food production and market analyses were also conducted.

A complementary review of the PRRO management concluded that the situation had changed and called for separate country-based interventions to ensure greater ownership by the governments and stronger links with their strategic priorities.

Burundi

After a decade-long civil war, the country is consolidating its political transition; this offers some stability despite sporadic fighting near the capital and surrounding provinces. The conflict has had a detrimental impact on the economy; Burundi ranks as the third poorest country in the world. Over 90 percent of the population depend on subsistence farming.

Who is food insecure?

Northern provinces (Kirundo, Muyinga, Karuzi, Ngozi, Kayanza, Muramvya): Between 18 and 30 percent of the households are severely food insecure. They have limited access to food. Some of these provinces show a very high prevalence of underweight children and the highest prevalence – above 50 percent – of stunting among children under five. They also received the largest numbers of returnees from Tanzania since 2002.

Eastern provinces (Cankuzo, Ruyigi, Gitega, Rutana, Mwaro): Between 5 and 11 percent of the population are food insecure. The eastern part of Cankuzo, Rutana and Ruyigi provinces have been affected by recurrent erratic rainfall and dry spells.

Nutritional situation: 44 percent of children under five are stunted; more than one third are underweight. The prevalence of chronic malnutrition is a major cause for concern, indicating very long term public health and nutritional problems.

Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs): As of April 2006, Burundi hosts 10,000 Congolese refugees who live in camps and depend on external assistance because they lack self-reliance opportunities. The country also hosts 19,000 Rwandan asylum seekers. Another 117,000 people remain internally displaced.

Why are they food insecure?

Food insecurity is mainly chronic and no longer caused by conflict-related violence, except in areas around Bujumbura. Persistent poverty, limited livelihood alternatives, reduced access to land and high reliance on domestic production are part of the problem. Poor technologies, the lack of quality seeds and fertilizers and poor agricultural support services have led to low productivity and declining soil fertility. In addition, there is a strong competition for natural resources and arable land in a country that has the second highest population density in Africa.

Food stocks are not adequate: the 2006 CFSNAM¹ forecasts a national deficit of 388,000 metric tons of cereal equivalent. Due to the increased population size and the 24 percent reduction in food production since 1993, the food gap is steadily increasing.

In the north, chronic food insecurity has been aggravated by recurrent droughts, crop pests and diseases such as cassava mosaic disease. This disease has a very important impact on food security as cassava plays major role in the diet of the population and acts as a buffer stock².

Recommended food and non-food assistance (see the annex for a map with targeted districts)

In Burundi, the programme should shift from targeted relief to recovery in concert with the upcoming government programme for food security and nutrition. However, the situation needs to be monitored as the vulnerability to food insecurity of a high proportion of the population can further deteriorate in the event of minor shocks. Due to rainfall patterns, harvest failure is likely to occur in the future.

Recommendations for relief actions: (only used to relieve temporary and severe food insecurity)

- Provide a relief ration twice a year during the lean season to 500,000 severely food insecure people in 2007 and to 400,000 people in 2008 mainly in the north (Muyinga, Kirundo districts and parts of Karuzi, Ngozi and Kayanga districts).
- Provide supplementary feeding to 127,300 children and pregnant and lactating mothers; and therapeutic feeding to the most severely malnourished children.
- Distribute supplementary rations (10kg of maize/month) to the families of 106,000 malnourished children.

Recommendations for recovery actions:

- Expand the pilot school feeding programme to cover 270,000 children in 2007 and 320,000 in 2008.
- Implement food-for-work activities for 490,000 people in 2007 and 579,000 people in 2008.
- Provide food-for-training for 24,500 people in 2007 and 29,000 people in 2008.
- Given the high levels of chronic malnutrition, extend the pilot Mother and Child Health programmes (post- and ante-natal services) to three new districts and cover a total of 61,800 pregnant or lactating mothers.

Recommendations for humanitarian assistance to refugees and returnees:

- Provide rations to 10,000 refugees and asylum seekers in 2007 and 5,000 people in 2008.
- Provide a three month package to 80,000 returnees in 2007 and 55,000 people in 2008 (UNHCR estimates).

Non-food assistance:

- Explore opportunities to collaborate with the World Bank and IFAD on their existing projects.
- Explore the possibility of supporting the government's project to build regional capacities in project identification and monitoring.

Given the national food deficit and that markets are not functioning well, cash-based interventions should be considered with caution.

Rwanda

Rwanda has come far in a relatively short time and has enjoyed a decade of rapid and sustained economic growth after the 1994 genocide. However, it remains one of the poorest countries with 60 percent of the population living below the poverty line. Ninety percent of the population depend on access to land for their livelihoods.

Despite a production increase of 18 percent over the last eight years, Rwanda is a structurally food-deficit country due to inadequate farm plots caused by high population density, soil exhaustion, weak farming

¹ Crop and Food Supply and Nutrition Assessment Missions have taken place twice a year since 1999.

² Cassava accounts for about 60-70 percent of the Burundian diet and 27 percent of caloric intake, according to the last CFSNAM report.

methods/agricultural support, and a lack of agricultural inputs. In addition, Rwanda has increasingly faced recurring drought-like conditions and an alarming spread of plant and animal diseases that negatively impact agricultural production.

Who is food insecure? (see the annex for a map)

Reliable national data and analysis on the number and percentage of food insecure and vulnerable people were not available at the time of the assessment.

However, according to preliminary information from the Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA)³, an estimated 28 percent of the population are food insecure. A distinction is to be made between those who are usually moderately food insecure but being pushed into destitution because of recurring erratic rainfall or longer than normal dry periods and those who are chronically severely food insecure even during normal times. Food insecure households are spread across all livelihood profiles and geographic areas. The three most vulnerable livelihood groups identified by the CFSVA preliminary report were the agriculturalists, agro-labourers and people with marginal livelihoods. The highest proportion of food insecure people (above 35 percent) live in the northern, southern and eastern provinces (former Gikongoro, Kibuye, Gisenyi, Ruhengeri, Gitarama and Kigali rural provinces).

Nutritional situation: A recent survey of the nutritional situation shows that at national level stunting is of major concern. 45 percent of children suffer from chronic malnutrition while 5 percent are wasted. There is a proven high level of poverty and repeated food shortages in chronically food insecure areas. Many vulnerable households (particularly the elderly, single female-headed, or those with a high dependency ratio or access to less than 0.1 Ha of land) face extreme hardship to regularly meet all their food needs. This fragile situation can easily develop into a crisis if there are continued drought-like conditions or a lack of systematic safety nets to support these groups.

Refugee situation: Rwanda was hosting 41,000 refugees from Congo and 2,500 from Burundi by the end of April 2006. They rely mainly on food aid as they have limited access to self-reliance activities.

Why are they food insecure?

In recent years, rainfall amounts have been well below normal in certain areas and have resulted in poor crop yields (97 percent of agriculture plots in Rwanda are rain-fed). Furthermore, due to lack of seeds/planting materials, poor germination and pests, the production of sorghum, maize, sweet potatoes and cassava has been declining. Food insecurity is directly linked to people's very limited access to land, heavy reliance on subsistence agriculture and the lack of regional/national buffer stocks particularly during the lean seasons.

Recommended food and non-food assistance

On the basis of the EFSA findings and while awaiting the finalisation of the CFSVA, the following provisional recommendations are made. To avoid a further deterioration of the food security situation, WFP supports a twin-track approach consisting of long-term development and a safety net component including food-for-work and nutrition support activities.

Recommendations for recovery actions:

- Implement food-for-work or cash-for-work programmes during the lean season for 210,000 people in 2007 and 2008 who belong to the most food insecure households. This would enhance their livelihoods and food consumption and act as a safety net to avoid any further deterioration in their situation.
- Extend supplementary feeding coverage to 12,000 people in 2007 and 8,500 people in 2008 through the Mother and Child Health programmes in vulnerable areas.
- If any shocks occur, an EFSA will determine whether relief is required.

Recommendations for relief actions for refugees:

- Subject to joint UNHCR/WFP assessments, provide a full 2,100 Kcal ration to about 30,000 refugees in 2007 and 18,000 refugees in 2008 while monitoring the repatriation plans of UNHCR to adapt to changing requirements;
- Provide a three month food ration to 10,000 returnees in 2007 and 5,000 returnees in 2008.

Cash responses can be considered as markets function well and are integrated.

³ The CFSVA was to be finalised in September 2006. Please contact the WFP Country Director in Rwanda for more information.

Tanzania

Tanzania hosts the largest refugee population in Africa with over 195,000 Burundians and 150,000 Congolese living in camps in the north close to the border with Burundi⁴.

With the on-going peace process and increased stability in Burundi, the “promoted” repatriation of the Burundian refugees was initiated in June 2006. The repatriation of Congolese refugees is much more difficult to foresee due to ongoing insecurity and the uncertainties regarding the 2006 election results.

If UNHCR’s planned repatriation of 50,000 people in 2006 and 75,000 in 2007 takes place, the number of Burundian refugees would drop to 76,000 by the end of 2007 (including a 3 percent population increase) allowing for a final phase out possibly by the end of 2009. In the case of the Congolese refugees, assistance could be reduced to feeding 118,000 people in camps by the end of 2006. Repatriation is voluntary at present and the ability to facilitate this repatriation is logistically constrained. With repatriation planning figures of 35,000 in 2007, about 85,000 Congolese refugees will remain in Tanzania by the beginning of 2008.

What is the refugee food security situation?

The majority of refugees rely on WFP food assistance due to restrictions on moving outside the camps, which limits their access to self-reliance activities. Nonetheless Burundians (often agriculturalists) have led successful kitchen gardening projects which produce enough food to allow for petty trade or diet diversification. The livelihood of the DRC refugees is oriented towards small businesses that are established thanks to NGO micro-credit schemes. Two types of markets are used: a daily market within the camps and in some cases a bi-weekly common market located outside. However, these livelihood opportunities remain tenuous at best.

A nutritional survey conducted in September 2005 in the refugee camps showed a decrease in wasting but a very high rate of stunted (36 percent) and underweight children. The level of anaemia is an even more striking problem and affects 40 percent of children under 5 and 30 percent of pregnant women.

Host communities have benefited from the refugee presence by using the camps’ health and water facilities and by participating in a number of WFP interventions such as school feeding or food for training. Their market and trade opportunities have improved and they could in some cases employ refugees as cheap labour. Nonetheless, the refugee presence has increased the pressure on natural resources and the environment.

Recommended food and non-food assistance

Recommendation for relief actions:

- Distribute a 2,100 Kcal ration to an average of 223,000 refugees in 2007 (267,000 in January 2007) and to an average of 123,000 people in 2008 (151,000 in January 2008). The 2007 figures take into account UNHCR planned repatriations and will be closely monitored to adjust food requirements.
- Improve the quality of the ration to address micronutrient deficiencies, in particular iron, in targeted vulnerable beneficiaries.
- Continue support to the host communities (10,000 people in 2007 and 7,000 people in 2008) through access to WFP interventions (school feeding and food for training) and other camp facilities.

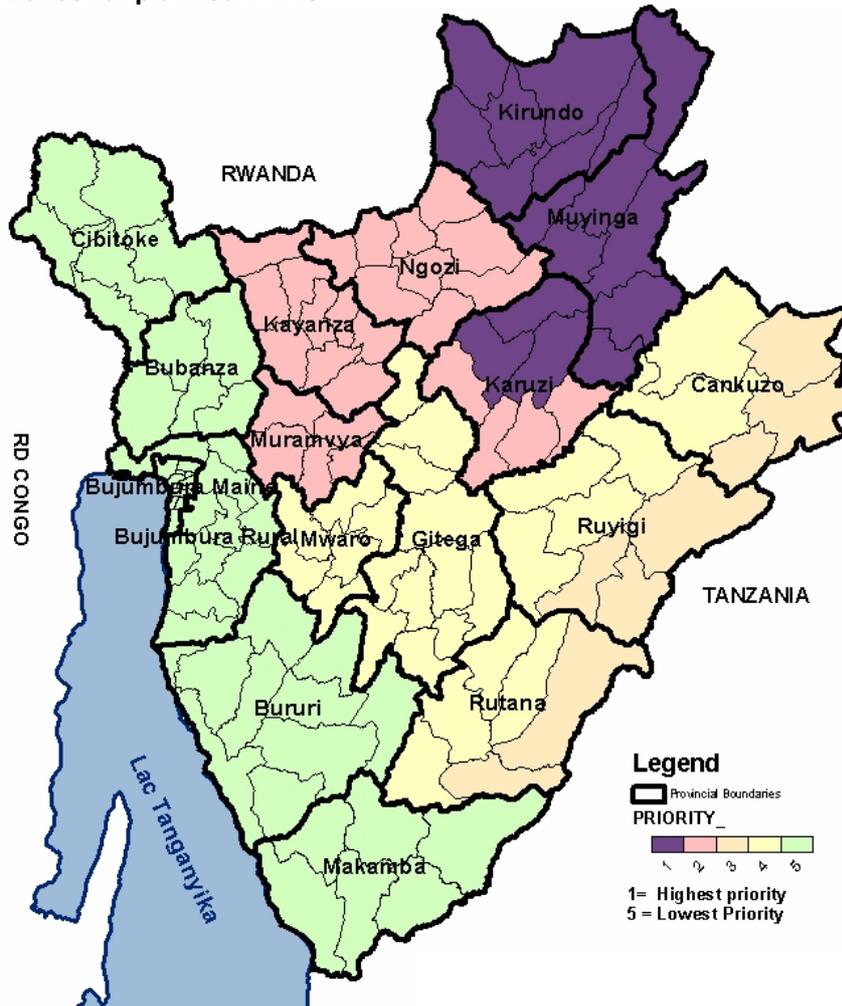
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⁴ January 2006 figures.

ANNEX – MAPS

Burundi: priority zones for planned PRRO



Rwanda: Food insecurity

