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## ACT Rapid Response payment: Rwanda (refugees from Tanzania)

07 Nov 2006 09:54:00 GMT

Source: [Action by Churches Together \(ACT\) - Switzerland](#)Website: <http://www.act-intl.org>

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Funds Sent To: Lutheran World Federation/World Service, Rwanda

Amount Sent: US\$ 49,993

Date: 1 November 2006

**Details of Payment**

Emergency: Forced repatriation of refugees from Tanzania

Date of Emergency: October 2006

Implementing Partner: Lutheran World Federation/Lutheran Church of Rwanda

Details of the emergency: The eastern province of Rwanda (formerly, Kibungo Umutara and part of Kigali Rural provinces) borders Tanzania in the east, Uganda to the north and Burundi to the south. The eastern province is made up of eight districts, three of which borders Tanzania i.e. Kirehe, Kayonza and Nyagatare. The three districts are part of the five district operation area of LWF since the 1994 emergency response; LWF was actively involved in rehabilitation and resettlement of returning refugees in these districts and continued to support community development through two projects 1) Kibungo Integrated Rural Development Project (Kibungo IRDP) 2) Umutara Rural Integrated Rural Development Project (Umutara IRDP). Over the years, Rwanda has experience intermittent conflicts that have led to displacement of large segments of its population at different times in the last five decades. While there were internal displacements affecting the population, it is the displacement of persons to external refuge that still has repercussions of the country. The 1959/60s conflicts caused displacements of hundreds of thousands into neighbouring countries. The 1973 conflict displaced more people adding thousands more to refugee camps in neighbouring countries and further beyond. till has repercussions of the country. The 1959/60s conflicts caused displacements of hundreds of thousands into neighbouring countries. The 1973 conflict displaced more people adding thousands more to refugee camps in neighbouring countries and further beyond.

Among the host countries, Tanzania had perhaps the largest number of refugees in refugee's settlements, towns, cities, group ranches and even woodlands. In addition to refugees, there were other Rwandans who had left Rwanda earlier in search of employment and greener pastures. This latter group lived among Tanzanians in villages, towns and cities. Another group was what came to be known as the new case load of refugees, majority of whom were forcefully returned to Rwanda in 1995/6 from camps in North Western Tanzania, while others dispersed and went to live with the local population in their villages. Over the years, the Rwandan community in Tanzania prospered, majority of them had large herds of cattle grazing in the savannah of North Western Tanzania, while others were traders and businessmen as well as farmers and peasants. In 1997, the government of Tanzania granted citizenship to all Rwandans on Tanzanian soil irrespective of their time of arrival in the country. This allowed them to further their pursuits in education, business and other economic activities. ts in education, business and other economic activities.

In late 1994 and early 1995, a large part of the old caseloads returned en mass to Rwanda coming with their large herd of livestock, most of which was decimated by rinderpest, F&M disease and other diseases. A large number of them being Tanzanians opted to return while an equally large number in business and livestock keeping had opted to remain there in the first place. However, their links to Rwanda remained and there continued to be a trickle of people crossing the

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boarder either to visit or voluntarily repatriating to Rwanda. In March 2006, a large number of Rwandans crossed the boarder at Rusumo Boarder crossing claiming that they had been forcefully evicted from homes and their property confiscated, most of them had proof of their citizenship (naturalisation certificate). In June, the Government of Tanzania announced that it would conduct operations to flush out illegal aliens from the North western Tanzania, the operation was carried out and a further eviction of Rwandans from Tanzania forced large numbers of returnees into an overwhelmed over crowded reception camp and transit centre. The government of Rwanda, WFP as well as UNHCR provided support to returnees and helped in resettling them. On the 20th of October 2006, LWF staff in Kirehe who had been monitoring the returnees crossing reported that the influx of returnees was increasing from the initial average of 100 persons per day to more than 300 per day. The transit camp was overwhelmed and the government's efforts to provide essential needs of the returnees were stretched beyond its ability. WFP no longer had enough food to provide minimum rations and the UNHCR has no budget and is essentially unprepared for this sort of emergency.

Major issues affecting returnees include shortage of food leading to malnutrition, lack of essential items such as pans and pots to cook the little food they get from the government and WFP and almost nothing in terms of temporary shelter. Majority of the returnees are women, children and the elderly, while men remain as most of the women and the elderly are loaded onto vehicles and exported to Rwanda when their husbands are out grazing cattle or they sometimes run away with their livestock leaving behind their families hoping they will comeback for them. Apart from clothes on their bodies, the returnees come with nothing in terms of essential things such as extra clothing and beddings. As October is the rainy season, women, children and babies sleep in the open and rained on waiting to be registered and moved to their settlement sites where they are again they left at the mercy of the elements such as rain cold and hunger.

Children are particularly affected nutritionally as the maize and beans provided despite not meeting the minimum rations do not have the high nutrition value for them. There is an acute need of powder milk as well as porridge bran particularly for children, pregnant and breast feeding mothers. Below are some statistics from an assessment conducted by LWF Staff at the settlement site:

[Chart that cannot be reproduced here]

Purpose of Response: Is to address crucial basic needs of the Rwandans being repatriated from Tanzania. These people are being returned under hash conditions, without their properties and most of them separated from their family unit. All returnees are characterised by high vulnerability due to many factors namely lack of food, clothing, shelter and basic sanitary requirements, and other non food items like jerry cans, blankets to mention but a few.

Before sending them to the resettlement sites they briefly transit at Kiyanzi transit camp (its capacity to hold 1,500 people), in the Eastern Province where the facilities are not enough to cater for their minimum requirement. There three identified settlement sites namely Ndego II in Kayonza district, Bukora settlement site in Kirehe District, Gatsibo resettlement site in Gatsibo district with capacity to accommodate 200, 147, and 120 families respectively. Currently, families are being moved to the resettlement sites, currently 166 families has been moved to Ndego II site, 147 to Bukora site, and 88 to Gatsibo site.

LWF intervention will focus mainly on providing relief assistance to the returnees in the resettlement camps by providing non food items as well as powdered milk. Activities will include procurement and distribution of non food items and distribution of powdered milk to families with children less than ten years of age with signs of malnutrition as well as those under treat of malnutrition. This is both lifesaving and life sustaining action to avert an eminent catastrophe. Further assistance will be provided through a joint appeal that will be launched in co-operation with local ACT Forum Members.

Criteria for the selection: Rwandans being repatriated from Tanzania under hash conditions, without their properties and most of them separated from their family unit.

Proposed assistance : An assessment of the three sites has already been undertaken by LWF staff in the area. This request for rapid response is based on the field reports prepared by LWF staff onsite as well as the reports from the

Lutheran Church of Rwanda that has been actively involved in the distribution of non food items and some food items to returning refugees. It is worthy noting that, the LWF emergency prepared stock of non food items had already been transferred to Lutheran Church in Rwanda our partner in emergency and disaster preparedness. The items in store were distributed to refugees in the transit camps since much and the motley stock had been exhausted by end of July 2006.

WFP as well as the Government are involved in food distribution, seemingly however, the non food items have not been given adequate attention and the increase in number of arrivals now approximately 700 families per day has aggravated the situation. The returning refugees have nothing other than the clothes on their back. There are unaccompanied children although the cases are few. In the co-ordination meeting held at the province on the October 18th, 2006, LWF was also requested to provide water and rehabilitation at the settlement camps. This is however beyond the resources at our disposal as it requires substantial investment of resources that are currently not available.

This rapid response request will facilitate LWF to procure and distribute non food items and powder milk to the most vulnerable households in the settlement sites. These include blankets, cloths for women and children, household wares and utensils to enable families cook food, sanitary materials such as red flannel, powder milk for malnourished children and mothers as well as meeting critical costs such as transport and staff costs.

Implementation Period: Two months from 1 November to 31 December 2006. Further needs assessments will be conducted with a view to issuing a joint appeal with members of the ACT Forum by December 20th, 2006.

[Chart of budget that cannot be reproduced here]

#### ACTION

The ACT Co-ordinating Office has approved the use of US\$49,993 towards the budget from its Rapid Response Fund and would be grateful to receive contributions to wholly or partially replenish this payment.

*[ Any views expressed in this article are those of the writer and not of Reuters. ]*

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