

KENYA WELFARE FOUNDATION (KWF) APPEAL FOR PEACE AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO KENYA



Displaced Victims Face Starvation And Disease

A humanitarian crisis looms in several parts of the country, with hundreds of thousands of displaced people facing hunger and lack of essential services.

NAIROBI, January 15, 2008 - In the aftermath of post-election violence, Kenya Welfare Foundation (KWF) staff visiting camps and settlements for internally displaced people in Western, Nyanza and North Rift valley Kenya have found a major crisis. Thousands of individuals and families are seeking refuge in churches, police stations and schools because their homes were destroyed.

"The needs of the people who have fled their homes remain great as many camps are overstretched, crowded and in poor sanitary conditions," says James Kinyanjui, KWF Chief Operation Officer (COO) in Kenya, following a visit to slum areas of Kibera and Mathare Nairobi, Kenya's capital. Official statistics indicate that approximately 600 people were killed, thousands injured and over 250,000 people are displaced.

Most camps in Western, Nyanza and North Rift valley Kenya are hosting a significant number of small children, pregnant women, nursing mothers and elderly people, all of whom have special dietary and health needs. Many camps are overwhelmed in their ability to meet those needs.

In addition to requesting basic necessities such as plastic sheets, water jerry cans, kitchen utensils, soap, sanitary pads and blankets, many people expressed their concern on being unable to send their children to school next week, the official start date designated by the Government of Kenya following the post-election delay.

"Our home was burned down and with it all my school books and my notes for the secondary school exam," said 15-year-old Rispa Irungu, staying at a police station in the Burnt Forest area in western Kenya "I wish someone could help me because I do not want to miss out on my education and I want to sit for my final examination."

Meanwhile, scores of women, girls and young children have been raped in slum areas in Nairobi during the post-election violence, a UN agency report says. United Nations Population Fund said in a press briefing, on Friday that many women had suffered gang-rapes.

Red Cross representatives in Molo also mentioned that displaced people staying in school premises would likely have to vacate as of this week when schools are due to open again. Plans are being made as to where these people might relocate, considering the scarcity of available land and safe premises.

Many people, especially women and children, expressed fear about returning to their homes, citing attacks carried out in the middle of the night and an overall feeling of insecurity. Though some have managed to return to their fields to retrieve their harvest and a few belongings, many found their property either burned down or looted.

Some people interviewed during the KWF assessment mission observed that although this is not the first time that people have been displaced from their homes after an election in Kenya, the magnitude of this displacement is much higher than in the past. Survivors are struggling to understand why this has happened to them again.

The psycho-social impact of this crisis will be felt for a long time, especially when considering that a lasting political compromise is still not in sight. It will take years to rebuild trust among neighbours at the community level.

Further, entire communities face severe economic losses. Along the road to and from western Kenya, assessment teams saw burned shops, looting and widespread vandalism. The cost of many basic goods has quadrupled, leaving ordinary people feeling the pinch.

Residents of the huge Kibera slum in Nairobi are also deeply impacted by the violence.

"All the kiosks are burned down and few people are in the streets compared to the usual crowds that populate this area of Nairobi," said Peter Kariuki, project officer for KWF in Nairobi. "There are also very few children outside. Women and children have fled to churches or safe heavens in other parts of Nairobi. Since many people lost their livelihoods, they are forced to go out of Kibera to look for food and find a way to survive."

Residents of Kibera told the KWF team that their most pressing need is food. Though some agencies are already distributing it, ensuring that the most vulnerable get is challenging as fighting often erupts and people who receive food are assaulted on their way home."

It is critical to work with community leaders to ensure a smooth distribution of food aid; otherwise women and child-headed households may not receive the assistance they need"

In addition to food aid, Kibera residents told KWF staff that they need access to safe water, rehabilitation of community latrines, medicine, and key household and emergency items such as mosquito nets, blankets, kitchen utensils, shelter and infrastructure. Security also remains a concern as residents are afraid of attacks in the middle of the night.

Incase of material donations please send them to:

THE KENYA WELFARE FOUNDATION (KWF)

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5th Floor, Office N°7.

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NAIROBI – KENYA

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BANK: EQUITY Bank LTD.

A/C Name : Kenya Welfare Foundation
Kshs. A/C N° : 0170 2909 72892

Branch : AUTO BRANCH NAIROBI
Address: NHIF Building, 14th floor
P.O. Box 75104-00200, **Nairobi – Kenya**
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