

# Luring the Ill From Goma's Human Wasteland

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GOMA, Zaire (AP) – Bernard Sebazzogue watched as cholera killed his daughter on Monday, his wife on Tuesday and his grandmother Thursday. By week's end, he gathered up his three remaining children and fled for help. To Rwanda.

What lay before him, rising from the dirt over the first 50 miles into his country, were five hospitals that began springing up just a few days before Sebazzogue's family began dying.

These outposts at Goma's doorstep are part of a quick and somewhat haphazard effort to create a corridor of health care in Rwanda from which more than 1 million people fled over several panicked days in early July.

This rapidly emerging row of waystations is meant to act both as an inducement for people to leave the fetid corpse factories in Goma for the relatively open and sparsely populated spaces over the border, and to stop them from spreading cholera - death by dehydration - deep into Rwanda.

Sebazzogue was one of a relative handful of Rwandan Hutus who allowed desperation to overcome fear of what might happen in Rwanda where a rebel army comprised mainly of minority Tutsis has won control of the country after Hutu massacres left between 350,000 and 500,000 people dead, most of them Tutsis.

"Help the world return the people!" Sebazzogue shouted angrily Friday as he and his daughters trudged down the road toward the first outpost, run by the French aid group Doctors Without Borders. "Otherwise they will all die!"

So far, the rate of returnees has been slow, and some medical relief workers fear the massive aid being poured into Goma may act as an inducement to keep people from returning. "In refugee situations, people just tend to stay where the help is," said Tom Turley, a logistics expert for the U.S. relief group AmeriCares. "The more the situation improves, the more refugee populations become

permanent.”

Refugees are also subjected to steady doses of propaganda and intimidation from officials in the former Hutu government, who are resisting repatriation efforts as long as the Tutsi-dominated Rwandan Patriotic Front holds power.

None of the refugees or relief workers spoken to had complaints about the former rebels, who now represent the government army. Their numerous road checkpoints were largely professional and organized, in contrast to the oppressive and threatening mood under the ousted government.

”It’s becoming very clear that the countries putting all their efforts into the humanitarian situation should try and put the same effort into the political situation,” said Panos Moutziz, a U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees spokesman.

The scenic hills from the Rwandan border town of Gisenyi to just beyond the city of Ruhengeri 40 miles away are certainly seeing their share of humanitarian money, though so far only a relative trickle of refugees.

The stretch includes three clinics set up by Doctors Without Borders and the sites for two more facilities : a 300-bed unit that the British army planned to build on Sunday in Ruhengeri, and a clinic that the relief agency AmeriCares planned to erect by Monday. Further down the road is

a barely functioning clinic that had been operated for years by Spanish nuns.

”You know, sometimes it seems that the left hand doesn’t know what the right one is doing,” said AmeriCares volunteer Mike Jones after he was told about the British hospital going up simultaneously just down the road.

The pace was slow at a clinic and dispensary run by Doctors Without Borders in Ruhengeri. At Murtura, about eight miles east of Goma, only a few dozen people were waiting at a Doctors Without Borders clinic that opened last week.

Nurse Maureen Mulhern, in Murtura, said about 200 patients were treated for a variety of afflictions, like dehydration and dysentery, but that the number per day had fallen to about 120 by later in the week.

There’s not so many coming. The cholera epidemic is getting a little better under control in Goma, so the impetus for coming back has subsided a bit,” she said.

But about 15 miles east of Ruhengeri, on a flat plateau at the top of a hill, AmeriCares workers were unloading and safeguarding \$100,000 in medicines and the parts needed for an expandable, domed aluminum health clinic.

About 20 Rwandans looking frail and weak stood by, and one woman lay ill in the grass, all waiting for the

hospital to go up.

"If all these people decide to come  
back home, we're gonna need as many

hospitals as we can get," said Ameri-  
Cares volunteer Jones.

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