

First school exams after massacres

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KIGALI, March 24 (AFP) - Some 65,000 Rwandan pupils sat their graduation exams for secondary school this week with the test papers set in four languages: Kinyarwanda, French, English and Swahili.

That was done to enable children who had been based with their refugee parents in Zaire, Burundi, Tanzania and Uganda to pass the exams without too much difficulty, the education ministry here said.

In former times, just French and Kinyarwanda were used. Primary schools badly damaged in last year's inter-tribal massacres and looting reopened six months ago.

Many of the children's parents were refugees who returned to Rwanda after the Rwandan Patriotic Front scored a military victory over government forces last July and took power.

The front is dominated by the minority Tutsi tribe which was in rebellion against a government run by hardliners of the Hutu majority.

Some of the refugees had been in exile for dozens of years.

Children as well as adults were among the estimated 500,000 to one million people, largely Tutsi and moderate opposition Hutu, slaughtered last year. Thousands of other children are still in refugee camps in neighbouring countries.

There are about two million refugees, most of them Hutus who fled the advance of the RPF, fearing reprisals for the massacres, triggered by the death in a suspicious plane crash at Kigali last April 6 of Hutu President Juvenal Habyarimana.

Another innovation at the schools this time was that the class record cards of each pupil no longer mentioned the tribe or region of birth.

The government has already removed such details from identity cards. Unlike in the past, ethnic and regional balance will no longer play a part in the selection of successful pupils, the education ministry said.

UNICEF, the UN Children's

Fund, helped reopen the primary schools by supplying books and other material, working with UNESCO (UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation). The German government printed the exam papers.

UNICEF's representative in Kigali, Dan Toole, said the fact that the children were taking the graduation exam marked "another important step towards the return to nor-

mal life in Rwanda."

He added that the aid bodies hoped "to get the education system, including the establishment of secondary schools and a full curriculum, back on its feet in time for the 1995-1996 school year beginning in September."

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