

INFORMATION BULLETIN



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération Internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

COTE D'IVOIRE: CIVIL UNREST AND POLIO

1 April, 2004

The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 181 countries.

In Brief

This Information Bulletin no 2/2004 is being issued based on the needs described below reflecting the information available at this time. The mass polio vaccination campaign that was scheduled to begin shortly was threatened with cancellation due to security concerns, and the government urgently requested the intervention of the Red Cross of Cote d'Ivoire, supported by the Federation. The cost of the operation is estimated at CHF 40,000, and the Federation is seeking support from donors for this unplanned emergency operation. Further information will be made available as the situation evolves.

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

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The Situation

A mass synchronised polio vaccination was launched on 23 February 2004 in 10 countries across West and Central Africa (Benin, Burkina Faso, Central Africa Republic, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon and Togo) in an effort to immunize more than 63 million children. This campaign is considered critically important to the African and global polio eradication effort, particularly because of an ongoing outbreak of polio originating in northern Nigeria which has re-infected previously polio-free cities as well as eight previously polio free countries, including Cote d'Ivoire.

The national polio vaccination campaign began in western Cote d'Ivoire on 24 March, 2004 but experienced difficulty in Abidjan due to political and security constraints when demonstrations prohibited by the government turned violent, resulting in thirty seven deaths and many injured.



Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Red Cross Society of Cote d'Ivoire had already put in place an alert and mobilization system for volunteers from the various local committees to prepare them to respond effectively to emergencies. Due to the violence the groups who were originally committed to carry out the campaign were unable to perform the tasks required, and the Ministry of Health and WHO asked the Red Cross Society of Cote d'Ivoire to take over the polio vaccination campaign. The authorities consider that only the national society, with support from the Federation, is capable of assuming this responsibility, and effectively mobilizing the population so that the vaccinations can be successfully carried out.

The Red Cross Society of Cote d'Ivoire is doing an excellent job by organizing 230 volunteer mobilizers, 28 supervisors, three coordinators and four drivers to sensitize the population in Abidjan. The Federation office in Abidjan encouraged the volunteers and provided incentives (in the form of per diem) as they cared for the injured and prepared to mobilize the population for the vaccinations. The overall goal was to facilitate Ministry of Health and WHO efforts to attain 100% coverage in the polio campaign.

Responding to the civil strife, eighty Red Cross volunteers, accompanied by two doctors positioned in different areas in Abidjan, evacuated a total of 147 wounded to various hospitals and treated those with minor wounds on the spot. The ICRC provided emergency medical supplies to strengthen the capacity of the volunteers.

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