

# ***THE GAMBIA: SIERRA LEONE REFUGEES***

*19 June 1997*

## **Information Bulletin N° 1**

### ***The Disaster***

Some 1,500 refugees have arrived by boat in the Gambia in the wake of the military coup in Sierra Leone. The Government of the Gambia has established a Task Force consisting of UNDP, the Gambia Red Cross Society (GRCS), the Ministries of Health, the Interior and Defence, WFP, UNHCR, and others, charged with receiving, screening, registering, feeding and integrating the refugees within families or into camps. Adequate human, material and financial resources are required as the Gambian Ministry of Health is unable to meet operational expenses.

### ***Red Cross/Red Crescent Action***

The National Society has activated its Divisional Red Cross Action Teams (RCATs) -- a group of 150 qualified first aiders trained in disaster response and emergency preparedness activities. The nursing/welfare officer is currently in Conakry assisting with the airlift of Gambians moving through the Sierra Leone/Guinea border. GRCS staff and volunteers in the Greater Banjul area have been working on evacuation, reception, registration, feeding, management, tracing services and sea rescue.

The Federation Secretariat in Geneva and the Regional Delegation in Abidjan is being kept fully informed on the situation. CHF 30,000 is being released from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund to cover the cost of the operation. Swedish Red Cross has reallocated CHF 27,720 of earmarked funds from its contribution to the 1997 Emergency Appeal to enable the GRCS assist Sierra Leonean refugees. Local people and embassies have rallied to help the GRCS, donating small amounts of food and non-food items, while the Government has donated CHF 3,200.

### ***Needs***

The immediate needs are for fuel and emergency relief materials. In the near future, GRCS will also need assistance with further training for the RCATs, communications and administration.

Ann Naef  
Acting Head  
Appeals & Reports Service

Bekele Geleta  
Director  
Africa Department