

NIGERIA, TOGO, GHANA & BENIN: PREPAREDNESS

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The Context

Five years ago elections in Togo and Nigeria led to massive population movements, when some 400,000 people fled to neighbouring countries from actual or feared violence. Voting is scheduled to take place in both countries this summer, and based on the 1993 experience Red Cross Societies in Nigeria, Benin, Togo and Ghana are building their capacities in relief assistance, first aid and refugee/IDP management. If mass movements occur the Federation will launch an emergency appeal; the groundwork for which has already been prepared by the Regional Delegation for Western Africa in Abidjan and the National Societies (NSs) concerned.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

All four NSs have wide experience of refugee operations and are concentrating their preparedness activities on first aid training, relief assistance, dissemination and refugee/IDP management.

The **Nigerian Red Cross Society** provides first aid training for volunteers and has teams ready to deploy in the five states deemed to be most at risk: Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Kwara and Osun.

Togolese Red Cross is participating in training for population movements with the armies of four different countries in the region. It also has a relief programme serving 12,000 Ghanaian refugees in Bassar. In each of the Red Cross branches in the nine at-risk regions, 20-30 well trained volunteers are ready to assist displaced populations.

In Ghana's Volta region (25 km away from the border with Togo) there are 2,000 **Ghanaian Red Cross** volunteers, 570 of whom are trained in first aid. Some also have water and sanitation skills.

As Benin is situated between Nigeria and Togo, the **Benin Red Cross Society** has been actively training volunteers in border branches. Over 300 volunteers will participate in preparedness training for possible population movements.

Federation: four HF radios and two radio-pactors will be installed in Nigeria during 1998. Two delegates (development and health) currently assist the NS through a capacity building programme from Lagos. The deployment of Emergency Response Units could also be considered if the situation warrants.

A disaster preparedness delegate from the Regional Delegation visited all four NSs to assist them in preparing for civil unrest or population movements. This support will continue to be made available as and when required.

The French Red Cross Society has donated used clothes to the Regional Delegation — part of this stock will be diverted to Nigeria, Togo, Benin and Ghana if the need arises.

Plan of Action for the Potential Emergency Phase (June - September 1998) •

Nigeria (August-September): deploy volunteers in first aid posts established near polling stations, political party centres, clinics/hospitals and police stations in the five at-risk states. Local branches have ambulances available and will also monitor any population movements. If social unrest and border closures occur, the NS will provide food and non-food items for up to 50,000 IDPs.

Togo (June until July): In the nine at-risk regions 45 teams of first aid volunteers will be posted near polling stations, political party centres and other key locations as needed. The NS will distribute food and non-food items to a maximum of 2,000 IDPs as needed.

Ghana (June): Food, water and non-food items will be delivered to up to 20,000 refugees as needed.

Benin (June or August): Food and non-food items will be provided to a maximum of 20,000 refugees as required.

The Federation Regional Delegation will contribute communications, logistics assessment and operation co-ordination services.

Assessment of Needs

All four NSs conducted a needs assessment and mapping of at-risk zones in February in preparation for the visit of the Regional DP Delegate. During each visit, the NS — with the Regional Delegate's support — developed and finalised a DP plan and budget.

First Aid training material and refresher courses are urgently needed in all at-risk areas in all four countries. In the event of an appeal being launched, tents, plastic sheeting, blankets, jerrycans and cooking pots would be among the non-food items sought. Large quantities of beans, rice and oil could be purchased locally, while support would also be needed for transport and communications equipment.

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