

# OPERATIONS UPDATE



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

## GABON: EBOLA OUTBREAK

15 March 2002

*This Ops Update is intended for reporting on emergency appeals.*

*Appeal No. 04/2002*

*Launched on 1 February 2002 for CHF 248,922 for 3 months.*

*DREF Allocated: CHF 50,000*

*Beneficiaries: 60,000*

*Operations Update No. 1; Period covered: 1 February - 7 March 2002*

### "At a Glance"

*Appeal coverage: 80.2%*

*Related Appeals: 2002 Annual Appeal for the Central Africa Region (no. 01.05/2001)*

*Outstanding needs: CHF 49,327*

*Summary/Update: Despite operational constraints associated with the isolated region where the outbreak occurred, the Gabonese Red Cross Society (GRCS) has mounted an effective response, with support from the Federation. The Red Cross response in the Republic of Congo has also encountered geographic constraints and has been slow in overcoming organizational limitations, but a plans of action and revised appeal (in the form of an Operations Update) is expected shortly.*

## Operational Developments

### Gabon

The latest figures of the Ebola hemorrhagic fever outbreak in Ogooue Ivindo Province in Gabon provided by WHO are as follows: as of 4 March 60 cases and 49 deaths had been reported. Surveillance, case detection, and follow-up of suspect cases, and contact efforts continue. In the initial emergency phase beginning early December, the Gabon Red Cross Society (GRCS), with Federation support, provided social mobilization and psycho-social support in the outbreak localities to victims and their families.

The affected population is mostly rural and extremely poor, and has been severely affected by the disease and by certain outbreak control measures such as:

- w** the destruction of household items (mattresses, sheets, clothing and household objects which had been in contact with the sick or the deceased), an activity which is required to prevent the further spread of the disease;
- w** confining suspected and confirmed cases in isolation facilities;
- w** surveillance and contact-tracing rules which restrict population movements and gatherings;
- w** limiting traditional burials procedures;

w the adverse economic impact of the boycott of farming and hunting products from the region (Mekambo, Makokou, Booué) for fear of disease transmission.

Red Cross volunteers, with their personal links to the affected villages and their ability to speak local languages, have played a valuable role in mediating between public health authorities and the affected communities, helping to enforce control measures and providing support to the affected families.

In the Republic of Congo, recent cases have also been reported, with the initial source from Gabon situated in the north-western part of the country in the districts of Kelle and Mbomo near the Gabonese border. Twenty confirmed cases with 12 deaths were recorded in the Mbomo district, and 15 suspected cases including 12 deaths in three villages approximately 65 km from Kelle. The Congolese Red Cross dispatched their health director who returned with a plan of action for social-mobilisation and sensitisation needs in the region. MSF-Holland are operational and active with relief goods that have rapidly reached Kelle through its small airport. However there remains a need for social-mobilisation and IEC activities to reach the population not only in the Kelle region, but also in the districts of Nduoukou (covering 12 villages), Ndjouono (covering 19 villages), Omboye (with 15 villages), and Obala (with 4 villages). Although some Congolese Red Cross branches have been involved since the early stages in November 2001 in tracing the first cases of the virus with contact persons that had been reported crossing the border from Gabon, the national society and the Federation were not officially requested to assist. Members of the Ministry of Health and MSF were immediately deployed in the regions affected by the Ebola epidemic. Since the recent outbreak in Kelle district, the Congo Red Cross has assisted the Ministry of Health in an evaluation and the Federation has now been requested to support the activities in that district. An Operation Update with a revised budget to include Congo is being prepared and will be shared shortly.

### **Red Cross and Red Crescent action**

A total of 120 volunteers have been trained and organized for social mobilization activities between December and February, disseminating disease prevention messages to populations in the following locations:

- Makokou 45 volunteers
- Mekambo 30 volunteers
- Booue 25 volunteers
- Libreville 20 volunteers
- **Total 120** volunteers

### **Relief distributions w**

During the reporting period 55 volunteers distributed the following goods to 68 beneficiaries from a total of seven extended families in Makokou and Mekambo.

- 17 mattresses;
- 14 kg of soap;
- 30 litres of oil (15 gr x 68 people x 30 days);
- 255 kg of rice (125 gr x 68 people x 30 days);
- 8kg of powdered milk for children (400 gr x 20 days);
- 7 kg of mackerel (1 kg per family).

Following this initial emergency response phase, activities will move into a maintenance or follow-up phase, including on-going social mobilization and psycho-social support.

**Objective 1** Increase the awareness of the communities and the authorities.

**Social mobilisation:** In the epidemic zones (Ogouué-Ivindo) more concentrated efforts are being made to sensitize the population that could serve as links to the communities affected by the epidemic with a more focused dissemination strategy. Teams in the field are working with the Co-ordination Committee (Ministry of Health and WHO). The Gabon Red Cross has been distributing and putting up posters and leaflets and it is intended that the coverage will be extended to other areas with a further distribution of this diffusion material.

This sensitisation campaign will be done in conjunction with the IEC/surveillance epidemiological teams from the WHO and the Ministry of Health. Fourteen volunteers and two Red Cross supervisors are being mobilized for the IEC activities in the affected regions for a duration of 20 days over a two month duration.

The Red Cross will start work in the Upper-Ogooué and Woleu-Ntem Provinces, as contact people in the region have been identified and the population must be informed rapidly on prevention and precaution methods and measures. Seven volunteers and a supervisor for Upper-Ogooué and 14 volunteers and a supervisor for Woleu Ntem are being mobilized for a ten day period.

**Objective 2** Provide cured patients and families of victims with material and psycho-social support.

**Material and Psycho-social activities:** Ongoing, rapid distribution and replacement of basic items that have been destroyed for hygiene and prevention measures continue, with one standardized basic kit distributed to the families by the GRCS. These kits consist of mattresses, mosquito nets, blankets, traditional fabric used for clothing, soap, and rice.

Beneficiaries will be identified by the Co-ordination Committee using criteria defined by the Gabonese Red Cross. The Red Cross supervisors will regularly inform the committee of these distributions with the list of beneficiaries. In Mekambo and Makoukou 10 volunteers have been mobilized for ten days to conduct this program.

**Further sensitising of other branches of the GRCS:** To continue to play an active role in other regions, 15 community trainers from 15 department branches of GRCS will need to be trained in Ebola awareness and response. This is the fourth Ebola outbreak in Gabon since 1994, and the GRCS needs to be prepared for other outbreaks.

### **Operational aspects w**

A relief co-ordinator has been deployed and thoroughly briefed by the health advisor, and will follow through with the logistics, distribution, and relief activities. He will be working closely with the GRCS health director, and together they will co-ordinate the operation and communicate regularly with the Ministry of Health and the international team of health experts.

### **Outstanding needs**

The Federation intends to support the Congolese Red Cross activities and its response to the victims of the Ebola epidemic along the Gabon border in the north-western region of the Republic of Congo. A plan of action has been presented and is being revised and the appeal will be revised accordingly to include this country in the fight against the epidemic.

In Gabon the operation must continue as planned in the initial objectives but will be expanded to additional regions with a priority focus on social mobilisation, psycho-social support, the distribution of basic kits to the family of the victims, and IEC with GRCS local committees. There is an urgent need to spread these activities to regions which may have some cases of people which have been in contact with the affection populations, such as Upper Ogooue (Franceville and Okondja) and Woleu-Ntem (Oyem, Minvoul and Minzik). The national society is therefore planning training for more volunteers. The GRCS has 15 community trainers that will be rapidly recycled into a prevention and dissemination Ebola training campaign which will allow for better preparedness in future. This is the fourth Ebola epidemic outbreak in Gabon since 1994 and the population must be better prepared to face further outbreaks. Coverage of the appeal has been very satisfactory but there are outstanding needs which require funding.

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*All International Federation Operations seek to adhere to the Code of Conduct and are committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE Project) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.*

*This operation seeks to administer to the immediate requirements of the victims of this disaster. Subsequent operations to promote sustainable development or longer-term capacity building will require additional support, and these programmes are outlined on the Federation's website.*

*For further information concerning Federation operations in this or other countries, please access the Federation website at <http://www.ifrc.org>.*

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<b>Gabon: Ebola outbreak</b>						ANNEX 1
<b>APPEAL No. 04/2002</b>		<b>PLEDGES RECEIVED</b>				12.03.2002
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
<b>CASH</b>						
REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->				<b>248'922</b>		<b>TOTAL COVERAGE 80.2%</b>
BRITISH - GOVT (DFID)		49'020	GBP	119'119	22.02.2002	
FINNISH - RC		30'000	EUR	44'367	12.02.2002	
JAPANESE - RC				8'200	08.02.2002	
NORWEGIAN - RC		150'000	NOK	27'909	05.02.2002	
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				199'595	CHF	80.2%
<b>KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL)</b>						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES				0	CHF	0.0%
<b>ADDITIONAL TO APPEAL BUDGET</b>						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED				0	CHF	
<b>THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS ARE LINKED TO THIS APPEAL:</b>						