

SIERRA LEONE: EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE TO SIERRA LEONE RED CROSS

23 September 1999

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situation report no. 2
period covered: 1 July - 31 August 1999*

As the security situation in Sierra Leone has begun to stabilise with the signing of peace accords during the reporting period, the International Federation will continue to support the institutional development of the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society (SLRCS). A revised Appeal will be presented shortly to extend this support to more project-related activities through to the end of the year.

The context

On 17 May 1999, the ICRC and the Federation returned to Freetown to re-establish assistance programmes and provide support to the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society. The ICRC, the lead agency, is focusing on emergency health and relief, while the Federation's role is to provide capacity building and programme support. To this end, the Federation launched an appeal on 31 May, seeking CHF 753,000, to assist the Sierra Leone Red Cross for three months. A co-ordination mechanism has been established in the field as well as in Geneva.

Latest events

Peace accords were signed in early July ending the eight-year old war in Sierra Leone. A series of abductions occurred in August, threatening the stability of the newest peace initiatives. After all abductees were released, peace efforts were renewed within the country. The SLRCS is expected to play a major role in rehabilitation activities and in the resettling of returning refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Community Based Health Programme (CBHP) w

First Aid training was conducted for 41 UNICEF staff, 20 Oxfam staff and 60 community volunteers (20 in Bo, 20 in Kenema and 20 in Western Area). Community sensitisation campaigns for the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS was organised by Youth peer educators in the Western Area branch; 12,960 condoms were also distributed.

Water and Sanitation activities included: the construction of three compartmentalised latrines in Waterloo camp and one at a primary school; the chlorination of 86 traditional wells in Bo, Mattru and Bonthe; environmental sanitation campaigns at Mattru, Bonthe and Moyamba; and the collection of 1,392 tonnes of garbage in Freetown.

In total, 6,591 patients were treated in July and 9,504 patients in August at Maternal and Child Health clinics in the Freetown area (Bo, Moyamba, Mattru and Bonthe clinics). Therapeutic feeding was provided for 250 beneficiaries in the Freetown area and supplementary feeding for 100 beneficiaries in the Bo area. Also, baby parcels were provided for 588 new born babies.

Branch Development w

The branches of Bo and Kenema were refurbished and renovated while renovation is ongoing in Moyamba. Assessment is also ongoing on the needs for the town groups in Bonthe and Mattru Jong, in order for them to resume their activities.

The restructuring of the SLRCS, involving a significant reduction in the number of paid staff, is moving according to schedule, with contracts of 62 staff terminated at the end of August.

Country Assistance Strategies (CAS) have been prepared for year 2000-2001 with detailed planning presently being carried out at a SLRCS/Federation workshop. In view of the positive progress of the peace plan, the proposed strategies might prove not to be ambitious enough, as securing the peace will involve returning and resettling of both refugees and IDPs, programs where the SLRCS will be called upon to play a major role.

Blood Service Programme w

In July and August, 517 units of blood were collected at the blood bank, of which more than 60% were issued to children under ten years of age and pregnant women. Motivators visited Red Cross groups, communities, institutions and satellite clinics to encourage voluntary blood donations. Mobile blood collection actions were carried out at three locations at which 42 units of blood were collected.

First Aid Volunteers w

Six first aid volunteers have been assigned to the Connaught Out-Patient ward, assisting 492 patients in July and 406 in August. In addition three volunteers have been assigned to each of the three SLRCS clinics in the Western Area.

Outstanding needs

The SLRCS is still in need of additional vehicles, although one vehicle has been recovered from the ECOMOG and negotiations are ongoing for the release of another vehicle. An additional three vehicles which were looted have been identified as being used by the ECOMOG forces.

In kind donations of blood bank equipment and HIV screening kits are urgently needed.

The Federation Delegation urgently need to be reinforced by the recruitment of an Admin/Finance Delegate and an Institutional Development Delegate.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

The SLRCS/Federation attend meetings of the Commission of Resettlement, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction, the UN agencies and international NGOs.

The Federation daily meets with both SLRCS and ICRC and a tripartite meeting is held every Thursday.

The Acting President and the Secretary General of SLRCS, together with the Acting HOD of the Federation's delegation, met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, delivering a draft proposal for a Status Agreement between the Federation and the Sierra Leone Government, which would enable the SLRCS/Federation to ensure more rapid and efficient assistance to the most vulnerable groups in country. The draft Agreement was received positively by the Minister and carried a lot of media attention, and it is hoped the Agreement will be concluded before the end of the year.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

The Sierra Leone Red Cross is recovering from the severe disruption and destruction caused by the conflict in the beginning of the year, and is steadily refurbishing and reopening its provincial branches. The Society has also restarted its clinic support (presently in seven clinics), blood programme and Community Based Health Programme. The SLRCS needs continued support from the Federation to strengthen programmes aimed at meeting the needs of the most vulnerable. A revised Appeal will be issued shortly to allow the Federation to continue this support through to the end of the year.

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