

SIERRA LEONE: HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

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Despite an auspicious start to the year with well designed projects which directly responded to the urgent humanitarian needs and supported the country's positive peace developments, the subsequent conflict in May caused a major reversal in the security situation. Recent developments, however, indicate a return to the pre-May conditions, and the Federation is intent on continuing its support to the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society (SLRCS) in implementing the planned programme, including a revised budget. However, a new budget revision is expected in August 2000.

The context

Sierra Leone has been characterised by internal conflict, cross border attacks, and ethnic clashes, provoking massive population movements within the country itself as well as refugees to neighbouring countries. A brutal civil conflict recently ended with a ceasefire in May 1999, followed by a peace agreement in June. The conflict resulted in the destruction of the social and economic infrastructure, as well as local coping mechanisms. The large number of former combatants (many of them youth) may hamper reintegration efforts, and tensions between rebel factions may continue to present obstacles to peace.

Like the rest of the country, the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society (SLRCS) is recovering from the severe disruption and destruction caused by the conflict, and is steadily refurbishing and reopening its provincial branches, as the security situations permits. The SLRCS has also restarted its clinic support, blood and Community based Health programmes.

Country Assistance Strategy

The Federation's strategy is formulated to provide support to the SLRCS as the only indigenous organisation with a countrywide reach, and to play a positive role in implementing and promoting the ongoing peace process. By starting up SLRCS/Federation programmes, especially in rural areas, a positive signal is sent to the traumatised population as well as to the ex-combatants, highlighting the advantages for all

groups to return to a normal and peaceful society. The SLRCS supported by the Federation will continue their programmes and expand them to cover provinces where the SLRCS will be able to re-establish branches within the programme period, re-establish and retrain First Aid volunteers throughout the country and provide health services to the population. SLRCS and Federation activities are co-ordinated with the ICRC which is the lead agency in the country, as well as with the United Nations agencies.

Latest events

The year 2000 began on a positive note as the Lomé Peace process gradually moved ahead, although more slowly than anticipated. Decommissioning, and disarmament were ongoing, while re-integration programmes - the third element of the DDR programme - were only at an initial stage. The mood among the population was one of optimism and renewed hope.

The Sierra Leone Red Cross Society held a partnership meeting between 7 and 9 March which was attended by representatives of the three components of the Movement, with the participation of the British Red Cross, the Danish Red Cross, the Swedish Red Cross and the Canadian Red Cross. Discussions focused on support to the current SLRCS programmes run in co-operation with the ICRC and the Federation.

During the meeting it was decided that the 2000 Appeal which had been prepared in September 1999 and reflected the situation at the time, would be revised. Participants were favourable to stronger support to SLRCS as well as the introduction of three new Federation-supported programmes: the Child Advocacy and Rehabilitation Programme (CARP), the Community Animation and Peace Support Programme (CAPS) and the Job Assistance to War Amputees Programme (JAWA). The Partnership meeting therefore resulted in a revised programme and budget for year 2000. However, due to the abrupt change in the security situation which occurred in early May, a new revision of budgets will take place in August 2000.

An exodus of NGO and UN staff took place soon after, as well as a partial relocation of ICRC and Federation staff. The only reduction in Federation and SLRCS programmes was the closure of the Makeni clinic and the evacuation of its staff. The launch of the CARP Programme was also postponed, while the two other new programmes (CAPS and JAWA) had already been initiated. Contingency plans were immediately drawn up in relation to an emergency intervention to address the IDP situation which had begun to develop in the Lungi area and the Western part of Freetown, with the civilian population fleeing fighting around the Port Loko - Rogberi- Masiaka areas. The ICRC assumed the lead role in a combined Red Cross intervention. Non-food relief items were distributed in the Lungi area by the ICRC and SLRCS, and an emergency sanitation campaign was jointly launched in Freetown by the SLRCS and Federation, together with the establishment of a temporary health clinic in Lungi as well as at Mile 91 by the ICRC, SLRCS and Federation.

With the evolving nature of the situation (at the time of writing this report), there is expected to be an increase in the number of IDPs, and thus the SLRCS/Federation must be prepared to assist with emergency interventions in close co-operation with the ICRC. With the UN being still in the phase of re-enforcing their presence, it is important that the Red Cross Movement collectively shows a strong and neutral position through the SLRCS, with the capacity to assist the new IDPs, while being in a position to resume the expanded programme for the year 2000 as soon as the situation becomes more stable.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action/achievements

Disaster Response / First Aid Emergency Preparedness Programme •

This programme aims at establishing 40 action teams, of which 26 had been set up at the end of May (10 in Freetown, 4 in Kenema, 4 in Bo, 2 in Moyamba, 2 in Mattru, 2 in Lungim and 2 in Bonthe. Each

team consists of 10 trained First Aid volunteers fully equipped with First Aid material, who regularly carry out exercises for testing and maintaining their efficiency.

During the peace demonstration held on 8 May, teams were deployed along the demonstrators' route, and when the demonstration became violent the first aiders assisted victims with emergency first aid and also transported 33 seriously wounded victims to the hospital and 6 fatal cases to the mortuary. One of the patient's was a BBC reporter who later thanked two Red Cross volunteers for saving his life through a public announcement on the radio broadcast "Focus on Africa". The programme also operates first aid post at weekends at the main beach in Freetown and first aiders are actively involved in the ICRC and SLRCS relief programme targeting new IDPs around Lungi Airport and the Agricultural Relief Programme in the South of the country.

Community Based Health Program (CBHP) •

- **Primary Health Care Service:** The SLRCS has reactivated 6 of its Primary Health Clinics in Freetown, Kenema, Bo, Moyamba, Mattru and Bonthe, while a 7th clinic in Makeni had to be temporarily evacuated in early May as a result of the security situation. The Year 2000 plan includes these clinics, together with the reactivation of the SLRCS clinics in Port Loko, Kambia and Magburaka, where a major return of IDPs and refugees is expected as soon as security is secured. In addition, SLRCS operates a temporary clinic at the IDP camp outside Bo and is in the process of setting up a temporary clinic in Lungi to assist the new influx of IDPs coming from the areas around Port Loko, Rogberi and Masiaka where RUF and Government forces are fighting. The SLRCS is planning as well to set up another temporary clinic at Mile 91 for the IDPs fleeing from Lunsar / Makeni. Treatment figures for the first quarter of 2000 show a total of 20,349 patients treated and 6,565 vaccinated. The work of the clinics focuses particularly on maternal and child healthcare (MCH), growth monitoring, vaccination ante natal care, preventive health care and inter-links with the Health Education Project, the Community Based First Aid, and the Traditional Birth Attendance (TBA) Project.
- **Safe Motherhood (MCH):** Sierra Leone has a long tradition of assistance being provided at birth by TBAs, a necessity in view of the limited public medical facilities in the rural areas which, in many cases, remain remote and insecure. Furthermore, maternal and infant mortality rates are amongst the highest in the world in Sierra Leone. Under the project, as of the end of April, 160 TBAs had been trained and equipped in order to ensure safe deliveries and to provide health education. The aim of the project is to ensure that 600 TBAs are fully trained by the end of the year in order to assist with some 12,000 births annually.
- **Health Education:** Community awareness campaigns on immunisation, breast feeding, growth monitoring, STDs/HIV/AIDS and environmental sanitation have been carried out in the communities by the Branch Health Officers, youth peer educators and community volunteers. In addition, 23,994 mothers participated in the health education classes conducted at the health clinics.
- **Control and prevention of HIV/AIDS:** The information campaign on HIV/AIDS supported by the SLRCS has regularly made use of the weekly Red Cross radio programme to spread the message regarding safer sex and HIV/AIDS prevention. A popular drama on the theme of HIV/AIDS has been produced and a professional drama group is presently conducting training of the volunteer theatre groups in the branches and equipping them with the necessary costumes and other items in order for them to perform the play at local schools and community centres.
- **Water and Sanitation:** Material has been purchased and windlasses made for the rehabilitation of 25 traditional wells in Bonthe and Mattru, to be completed after the rainy period. Some 1,500 wells are regularly chlorinated in 9 branches. An extraordinary garbage clearing exercise was conducted in Freetown at the end of May, collecting more than 4,000 tons of garbage which had accumulated over the month during the period of insecurity.

- **Blood Programme:** The blood bank was extremely busy on 8 May, the date of the protest march, with 18 units of blood being issued to the victims of the unrest following the demonstrations. In total, the blood bank collected 1,309 units of blood during the period between 1 January and 24 May 2000.

Branch and Institutional Development Support Programme •

Branches in the Western area, Kenema, Bo and Moyamba have been re-established while the reactivation of the Makeni branch has been put on hold as a result of the security situation. It is hoped that the SLRCS will be able to return to Makeni and also re-establish the branches in Magburaka, Port Loko and Kambia once security is ensured. The branches have been the major entry point to the ICRC supported relief and tracing programme, and they have worked actively on re-establishing the membership base. Dissemination forms another important task, with branches actively using local radio stations, drama groups and public meetings to enhance the knowledge of the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement.

Community Animation Peace Support Programme (CAPS) •

This is a new programme which aims to consolidate and sustain peace within communities. It is envisaged that a pilot phase should be implemented over a 12 month period with a view to promoting cohesion within communities. Proposals have been put forward such as the introduction of literacy classes for widows and single mothers, income-generating projects for women, tracing for separated family members, skills development for ex-combatants and trauma healing through, for example, drama and song. The programme has been launched in the Moyamba and Bo Districts in the south of the country with the employment of 12 peace animators and the establishment of Village Peace Consolidation Committees. At present, the SLRCS and Federation are observing the security situation and it is hoped that the programme will soon enter into full implementation.

Child Advocacy and Rehabilitation Programme (CARP) •

The aim of this Programme is to assist around 200 war-affected children in view of the large numbers of children abducted and forced to perpetrate atrocities. Various categories of vulnerable children are under consideration: those enrolled in the opposing forces, those who were abducted, or children who have no family or guardians. The programme area has been defined as Port Loko and the Western Area, and as a result, implementation has been temporarily suspended. The programme will take place in the light of the work being carried out under the CABAC (Children affected by Armed Conflict) initiative. The recruitment of a specialised social welfare delegate has also been put on hold until improvements are seen in the security situation.

Job Assistance to War Amputees Programme (JAWA) •

The implementation of the JAWA programme in Freetown has been successful in finding employment for 26 amputees as security guards, shop assistants, tailoring, radio operators, parking attendance, bartenders, hairdressers and personal assistants. A position was found for one double amputee, who equipped with his two artificial arms now works as a night security guard. One of the main outputs of this programme has been the visible re-establishment of the hope for the amputees to be able to reintegrate back into the society, capable of again supporting their families.

However extension of the programme to the Provinces has been put on hold for the present due to the security situation. Instead resources are being used to assist the amputees in acquiring skills training, with initially 10 amputees selected to receive training within the fields of tailoring, batik making and literacy. A micro loan scheme is also being piloted, with 10 amputees receiving small loans to start self-employment projects in the retail business (sale of kerosene, food, soft drinks or other items selected by the amputee involved). The program is also considering assistance to the school in the amputee camp, with material and equipment, a need identified by the local management of the amputee camp.

Constraints

The major constraint in implementation has been the security situation, with the relocation to Conakry from 6 to 24 May of the expatriate staff, with the exception of the Head of Delegation. Not only did this result in a lack of implementation capacity, but also in a change in focus from long term to ad-hoc assistance programmes.

Outstanding needs

The budget for the year 2000 appeal has been revised from CHF 1,846,633 to CHF 3,135,502; by the end of June 2000, pledges received totalled CHF 1,759,639. However, with an opening balance of CHF 489,207 at the beginning of 2000 (carried over from 1999), the actual outstanding balance is CHF 886,659. Therefore, 71% of the Appeal is presently covered, and a 3rd budget revision is planned for August. The last revisions were carried out in accordance with the recommendations and findings established at the Partnership Meeting held in Freetown in March, using the detailed plans and proposals prepared by the SLRCS, envisaging the re-establishing of a total of 10 basic health clinics and 8 branches. The present security situation has partly changed this strategy, with some of the resources now being diverted to emergency assistance addressing the new IDP situation (a temporary clinic for new IDPs and an emergency sanitation campaign).

The revised budget includes CHF 577,049 for capital expenditures, which is needed in order to replace items looted or destroyed during the January 1999 invasion of Freetown. These are required in order to re-establish the SLRCS as the major indigenous humanitarian organisation, capable of taking on a vital role in the expected forthcoming return of refugees and IDPs. However, the actual purchase is pending until the security situation stabilises and this will be eventually reflected in the forthcoming budget revision.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

From March 19 to 21, the Federation's Secretary General, Mr. Didier J. Cherpitel, visited the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society and had fruitful discussions with the State President, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Health and the Minister of Development and Planning, addressing the SLRCS programmes supported by the Federation as well as the establishment of a Status Agreement. Meetings were also held with potential donors, ICRC and other agencies.

A weekly tripartite meeting is held every Thursday between the ICRC, the SLRCS and the Federation, and regular contact is maintained at the operation level, with additional meetings arranged when necessary (e.g. during the security situation in May, meetings were held daily). The Federation and SLRCS participate in the Government, NGO, and UN co-ordination meetings in the relevant sectors of health, assistance to amputees, provincial co-ordination and First Aid, as well as in the Main Co-ordination meeting held by the National Commission for Reconstruction, Resettlement and Rehabilitation (NCRRR).

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

This year's appeal has been revised in order to better reflect the growing needs in view of the positive developments in the peace process early in the year. The subsequent events in early May were initially

thought to be a set back in the peace process, but recent developments indicate a possibility of a return to the pre May situation, and there is even hope that a more secure basis for the peace process may evolve. However, in August 2000 a new budget revision will take place to reflect the actual and previewed expenditures for the different programmes.

Meanwhile, the revised programmes which were prepared in accordance with a different scenario still remain relevant for the types of assistance required to reinforce the peace process and efforts to bring about a full revival of a vibrant and effective Sierra Leone Red Cross Society, capable of taking on the role of one of the major humanitarian organisations involved with the return and resettlement of both refugees and IDPs and the rehabilitation of the country. Please note that detailed programme descriptions can be obtained from Anne Kirsti Vartdal, Desk Officer for West Africa.

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