

REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO: HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

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Measurement of the work accomplished by the Congolese Red Cross (CRC) in the first ten months of the year takes into account the development of the CRC's regional committees. In December 2000 the Red Cross network was confined to the cities of Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire. Today, this network covers six regions (Likouala, Cuvette centrale, Pool, Lekounou, Bouenza and Niari) with more than 600 volunteers trained in community-based first aid providing quality assistance to the community by organizing hygiene and sanitation activities as well as IEC sessions. In October this CRC network was mobilized to participate in the polio vaccination campaign organized by UNICEF, WHO and the Rotary Club --a first for the CRC.

Joint CRC and Federation missions are planned in the six regions before the end of the year to consolidate the work already done. The missions require funding so as to achieve the full range of objectives planned for 2000.

The context

The conflict that broke out in the Republic of the Congo in September 1998 prompted the displacement of some 350,000 persons - 810,000 at the end of 1999. The humanitarian consequences were dramatic. Hundreds of thousands of persons no longer had access to their traditional sources of supplies and medical care, and their health was threatened. The instability prevailing in the region, the major role played by the militia and the fairly poor outlook for economic growth continue to compromise food security and to further weaken an already faltering health system.

In view of the conflict, the Federation worked out a temporary development plan for the CRC, in order to meet humanitarian needs. Security conditions in the country permitting, plans have been designed to help the National Society strengthen its operational capacities in three areas: emergency response, community health and first aid.

The Federation also intends to provide the CRC support to reconstruct and restore its headquarters, improve resource management and development and hold regional and communal general assemblies.

Latest events

The cease-fire agreements have been respected for more than ten months and the whole national territory is now accessible. Reconstruction of infrastructure is gradually getting under way. The different parties that signed the peace agreements are pursuing a national dialogue, and an election calendar has been set for the adoption of the new constitution by referendum by the end of June 2001 and for the election of a president before the end of the first half of 2002.

International institutions such as the World Bank and the European Union are on the spot and many sources have implied that funding is being considered for the Congo. All the UN agencies present in the Congo have agreed to prepare an appeal presenting the priorities that would contribute to consolidating the present fragile balance. These priorities include resettlement of displaced persons, rehabilitation of health services, reintegration of the former militia and development of programmes for a culture of peace.

Whilst the country is increasingly committed to a peace and reconstruction process, the conflict is continuing in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The civilians in the province of Equateur are fleeing the fighting and crossing the Oubangui and Congo rivers in great numbers. It is estimated that more than 100,000 refugees are now scattered along the river in the regions of Likouala and Cuvette centrale.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Support to the CRC's community health and first aid services •

This project to restore and strengthen the operational capacities of the CRC network, co-financed by the ICRC, has achieved and even gone beyond its objectives in terms of geographic coverage (see chart below):

Coverage of CRC network	First aiders trained	Target population for the community-health activities
Regional committee of Likouala	23	6,600
CRC regional committee in Cuvette	45	13,500
CRC communal committee in Brazzaville	300	6,000
CRC regional committee in Pool	44	15,000
CRC regional committee in Niari	56	15,000
CRC regional committee in Bouenza	43	12,900
CRC regional committee in Lekounou	42	12,600
CRC communal committee in Pointe-Noire	107	60,000

All volunteers who took part in training are engaged in community-health activities at least one day a week. Activities are adapted to regional needs and include hygiene and sanitation in districts and hospitals, holding Information Education Communication sessions on everyday and epidemic diseases and on STD/HIV/AIDS, holding sessions to increase the awareness of heads of families of the culture of peace based on the Red Cross principles, fitting out water sources, construction of latrines, first aid activities at football matches, making surveys of malnourished persons in order to prepare a list of beneficiaries of food assistance, and first-aid assistance for sick refugees, children and older persons.

The CRC's health and action department made a study of the impact of community-health activities on the rate of volunteer retention. It highlights that the new members are very motivated and that retention rates of volunteers trained in the region are high. Pre-training information dissemination related to the Red Cross and Red Crescent and focused on volunteers is therefore considered an important activity, mobilizing many new members. Soap-manufacturing and market-garden micro-projects have also been set up to help increase the retention rates of the volunteers trained.

Training of health personnel

The ICRC is pursuing its health programme in 18 dispensaries in the regions in the south and west of the country. The ICRC and the Federation have launched a project as part of this programme, illustrating the excellent collaboration between the different components of the Movement. The CRC trainers, under the supervision of the Federation, will provide retraining in reproductive health for the personnel in the 18 dispensaries. Something similar may be undertaken for ICRC activities in the area of renovation of water points in the region of Niari.

Vaccination campaigns

The CRC, with the support of the Federation, took part for the first time in vaccination campaigns to eradicate polio in the Congo, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Health, Solidarity and Humanitarian Action, UNICEF, WHO and the Rotary Club. 200 volunteers situated in Brazzaville, the region of Pool, Niari and Bouenza took part in social mobilization of the community. The percentage of coverage for the first round was very encouraging, with 95.7% of a target population of 562,642 children.

Strengthening reproductive health services and assisting female victims of sexual violence in a post-conflict situation

This project, carried out in close cooperation with the General Directorate for Population and the UNFPA (main project donor) helps the health service assist some 2,000 female victims of sexual violence in five of the largest urban centres in the country. The first phase of the project was launched in May 2000 and is now over. It comprised training and/or retraining of 106 doctors and 76 first aiders. The distribution of medicine has begun as well as minor repairs to 14 health centres and 4 health posts, and 16 CRC observation posts have been opened.

Assistance to Cabindan refugees

The project, carried out by 30 first aiders from the regional committee of Kouilou, with the support of HCR and under the supervision of the Federation, provides assistance to some 6,000 refugees and strengthens the capacity of the refugees to assume responsibility for themselves and to gradually move towards self reliance. HCR has however announced budget cuts. Should this happen, fewer activities may be carried out for refugees in certain sectors.

HIV/AIDS prevention

Contact has been made with the French Red Cross representatives responsible for AIDS screening and treatment centres for outpatients. Cooperation is envisaged between the CRC, the Federation and the centres for HIV/AIDS prevention campaigns.

Street children project •

At the instigation of the CRC and the Federation, the Belgian Red Cross (BRC) made an evaluation mission and prepared a proposal for an assistance project for street children. The project, which was presented to the delegation of the European Commission, will target 200 children and encompass the cities of Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire.

Preparation of Appeal 2001-2002 •

Relief operations have come to an end and development-orientated work begun. This transition is reflected in the choices and directions for the Federation's appeal 2001 - 2002 for the Republic of the

Congo, drafted in September. This appeal takes into account the recommendations adopted in Ouagadougou and reflects the CRC's intentions to pursue work begun in 2000. This includes the following projects:

Disaster response programme	Assistance project for Cabindan refugees in the province of Kouilou.
Disaster preparedness programme	Project to strengthen the capacities of the communities to reduce the impact of floods in the north of Congo
Health programme	Community health project (CBFA, combating malaria, STD/HIV/AIDS).
	Reproductive health programme
	Participation in national polio vaccination campaigns
	Reviving nine dispensaries in the region of Kouilou
Institutional development programme	Holding regional assemblies and training CRC leaders

Outstanding needs

The activities planned to revive and strengthen the CRC regional and communal committees have been pursued thanks to budget revisions and the development of local partners, but funds are still required to cover the cost of running the delegation. CRC priorities also include holding regional general assemblies for the committees that benefited from community-based first-aid training. Funding has not yet been secured for this despite local efforts.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

Red Cross magazines and publications are distributed to embassies and the different ministries with which the delegation works, thus guaranteeing good visibility of the Red Cross Movement. The Movement strengthened its ties with the other national and international organizations by participating in national vaccination campaigns.

Very productive relations are maintained with the humanitarian agencies present in the Congo, in particular with UNHCR and UNFPA, through regular coordination meetings. There is also cooperation with the private sector. Contacts have been made with a vocational training enterprise, "Young Chamber of Commerce". Regular contacts are maintained with the delegation of the European Commission and ECHO.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

The Federation pursued the implementation of the plan of action set out in the CRC assistance strategy, as planned, in the third quarter. The different partners involved in the current projects point to the good results. These positive results are in some measure due to the present favourable conditions in the Congo. It is essential for the Congolese civil society that the peace process be pursued and the different calendars - both reconstruction and elections - be respected. The CRC has stepped up the pace, to contribute to the peace process. With the help of the Federation, it has extended its network to cover the entire country and developed its human resources. It now must get ready for its forthcoming national general assembly for which regional general assemblies are a precondition.

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Congo						ANNEX 2
APPEAL No. 01.07/2000		PLEDGES RECEIVED			12/14/00	
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
CASH						
REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->				1,020,769		TOTAL COVERAGE 76.5%
Carried forward from 1999				(349,946)		
Outstanding payment ICRC				349,946		Invoice 1492/SRI 2125/A -
AMERICAN - GOVT/PRM		81,000	USD	136,769	17.07.00	
CANADA - RC/GOVT		100,000	CAD	108,470	03/15/00	NOT FOR PURCH/TRANS FOOD
ICRC				482,749	03/17/00	DISPLACED PEOPLE
ITALY GOVT				45,000	03.11.00	
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				772,988	CHF	75.7%
KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL)						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
Belgium	Delegate(s)			8,378		
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES				8,378	CHF	0.8%
ADDITIONAL TO APPEAL BUDGET						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED				0	CHF	
THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS ARE LINKED TO THIS APPEAL:						
PCG516						