

NIGERIA: BUILDING CAPACITIES

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The Nigerian Red Cross Society (NRCS), with Federation support, continues to establish itself as the major relief operator in the country. It is maintaining its respect and recognition as a neutral and dependable agency during times of internal unrest. Organisationally, it is adapting to achieve higher levels of accountability and transparency and, with new Headquarters staff appointments underway, will be better able to service its 37 Branches. The Tripartite Programme has assisted in rejuvenating the Branches both in staffing and governance, but much still needs to be done to translate this capacity into self-sustaining activities to assist vulnerable people. With improved results-based programming and management allied to transparency and accountability, there is a healthy dynamic at work. The fundraising initiatives underway should produce results before year end.

Consistent with the accepted NRCS strategy of focusing on Branch development aligned to programme implementation for 12 Branches per year, it is feasible to expect that Federation Delegation support should be for a maximum of three years. It is therefore important that the National Society change and development momentum is maintained and given the required support over this crucial period.

The context

With the largest population of all African countries (over 120 million people) and 250 ethnic groups, Nigeria's political and social developments are considerably influenced by ethnic issues and tensions. This factor, in addition to the fact that since independence in 1960 (and until recently), Nigeria has been ruled by a succession of military leaders, has resulted in deteriorating social and health services, and a total collapse of the educational sector. The ethnic tensions are a major source of vulnerability, resulting in loss of life, property, homes and livelihoods and many are left destitute as they are uprooted from their environment. Today, only 40% of the rural population has access to safe water and access to health services nationwide stands at 51%. This lack of access to health and sanitation facilities on the

part of half of the entire population leads to the rapid spread of disease, particularly cholera and other diarrhoeal diseases, malaria, yellow fever and tuberculosis.

The political situation has improved significantly with the transfer of power in May 1999 to a democratically elected President. The new government appears determined to overcome the country's numerous economic and social problems, including corruption.

There is also a great need for health education and awareness building at community level. HIV/AIDS is a major concern throughout the entire West African region. In addition to ethnic rivalry threatening political stability, chronic needs in relation to health and social services, the country is also prone to natural disasters, in particular floods.

Country Assistance Strategy

The Federation formulated a strategy based on assisting the Nigerian Red Cross Society (NRCS) to improve its ability to cope with crisis, strengthen the capacity of vulnerable groups to cope in their daily lives, enhance respect for human dignity and humanitarian values, and work towards a stronger National Society. In support of these goals, the Federation will improve the disaster preparedness and response capacity of the National Headquarters by assessing vulnerabilities, developing planning, assessment and reporting systems together with training for effective mobilisation of resources in emergencies, and stocking of relief items and extension of the radio network. Assistance will also be provided to further develop the Community Based Health Programme (CBHP) activities in each State, and reinforce linkages with the government and UN agencies so that the health needs of the communities served by the NRCS are addressed. Finally, the institutional and resource base of the National Society will be developed through the formulation of plans, strengthening of existing structures, and the implementation of improved management and reporting systems.

Latest events

In Nigeria, implementation of Red Cross programmes continued against the background of a tense first year of democratic rule, celebrated in May 2000. The Nigerian Red Cross Society and Federation work in the context of a difficult economic and social climate, deteriorating health and education sectors and increasing vulnerabilities of a large percentage of the population. The first semester of the year was dominated by ethnic and religious conflict.

Adoption of Sharia law in the Northern States of Zamfara, Niger, and Katsina has progressed with Sharia law courts established and laws ranging from amputation punishment to separation of male and female in public transport implemented. The issue of Sharia law versus Nigerian criminal law has been left untackled and it is for individuals to take legal action if they feel their human and civil rights are abused. The issue of Sharia, the absence of "fruits of democracy", and the conflict between executive and legislative powers have all contributed to an increase in tension.

Furthermore, a proposed increase in the price of petrol and diesel in early June drew widespread industrial action with general public support of the strike. After several few days when the country was brought to a virtual standstill, the price increase was rescinded, a move considered a significant move by the Government which remains under IMF and World Bank pressure to reduce the high rate of petroleum subsidy. Investigations and prosecutions linked to corruption under the previous Abacha military regime are underway. The many efforts to attract foreign investment into diversified industry other than the petroleum sector have been unsuccessful as the utilities infrastructure declines and general instability is seen as contributing to a high risk business environment.

Political conflict with religious, ethnic and land ownership connotations erupted in many parts of the country. The conflict in the Northern State of Kaduna on 21st and 22nd February was the most serious of all with a now acknowledged number of more than 1,000 killed, many more injured and loss of

property and livelihoods leaving up to 120,000 people affected. An estimated 30,000 remain internally displaced as a result of this conflict and are in need of rehabilitation assistance. In reprisal attacks in the Southeastern States of Abia, Imo, Anambra, Inugu and Akwa Ibom on 28th February, some 400 people were killed and up to 20,000 made homeless. It was significant that people had enough confidence in the police and army to take refuge in military compounds during and in the aftermath of violence and this had a positive effect in reducing further casualties. The conflict caused an exodus of non-wage earners (mostly women and children) who moved North - South and South - North, as people sought safety in their ethnic origins, and it remains unclear how this will affect the longer term demography of the country. The conflicts in the Delta region also increased as protests on lack of development and environmental issues in this oil producing region continued.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Community Based Health Programme (CBHP) •

In the first quarter of the year the CBHP programme for the years 2000-2002 as originally submitted, was reviewed and revised to reflect the need for: focus on six Branches per year, activities to be linked with measurable results, and the establishment of Mothers' Clubs as the main priority. Field work was carried out in Gombe State in early March to facilitate the preventive cerebro spinal meningitis vaccination campaign. This was carried out in collaboration with the Gombe State Ministry of Health (MoH), and Red Cross volunteers were engaged in village to village mobilisation in co-ordination with the MoH vaccinators. The Health Delegate participated fully in the campaign. The Health Delegate and the National Society Health Officer also played an active role in the National Immunisation Day Annual Planning Meeting held by the MoH and UN agencies in the capital, Abuja. National Immunisation days were scheduled for the year 2000. Recognition was given to the important role of the NRCS health volunteers in mobilisation work throughout the country. The NRCS undertook to increase its level of input in vaccination work. The Health Officer from NRCS attended a meeting organised by the Regional Delegation as part of the Regional Health Surveillance Team work. Networking with UN, Government and other agencies in the health sector continued. The Health Delegate visited Ghana Red Cross to learn of the NS's long experience of Mothers' Clubs organisation and activity, and this insight has proved beneficial to the programme.

In the second quarter of the year the CBHP programme activities progressed with four Branches given field work attention. Water and sanitation assessments and community organisation were carried out in the cholera-affected areas which received assistance in 1999. The field work in the six affected States showed that the cholera reduction campaign had been most effective and that there had been no reoccurrence of cholera amongst the two million people within the operational area. A total of 22 communal water sources and latrines are in an advanced state of organisation with Red Cross community mobilisation, and funding of this initiative will commence in August.

Disaster Preparedness and Response •

With disaster relief operations the preoccupation during the period, it was not possible to carry out much work under the programme apart from visits to five states for DP training and evaluation of response readiness. Relief supplies were given to the Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees remaining in the country in collaboration with the UNHCR. The NRCS senior management was engaged with the National Emergencies Management Agency of the Government through participation in a workshop to set out the basis for national emergency contingency planning. The role of NRCS was discussed and plans for development of DP under the DP Programme were shared with the agency. A review and revision of the previously submitted programme plan of action and budget was carried out. The revised plans reflect a greater linkage between activities and measurable results and a focusing of organisation, training and support to six Branches prioritised to establish Emergency Response Teams. There was discussion leading to agreement with ICRC on a co-ordinated approach to DP and Relief in which the strategy of focusing on developing 30 Emergency Response Teams in 6 States is to be supported.

Institutional Development/Resource Development •

The Tripartite Programme which concluded in June 2000, continues as an Institutional and Resource Development Programme and has been the subject of detailed quarterly reporting by the NRCS Secretary General. Activity was again restricted due to the deployment of officers in relief operations. The relief emergency stocks previously supplied under the programme were exhausted to meet the conflict emergencies in the Northern Kaduna State and the Southeastern States of Anambra, Awaka Ibom, Enugu, Imo and Abia. Replenishment of relief stocks with British government DFID and DP programme funding was organised under reorganised procurement procedures. NRCS, with assistance given by the Delegation, revised programme plans and proposals including the 3 Year NRCS Strategic Plan for the years 2000 -2002. This involved a new results-orientated approach with clear linkage of activities, results, and indicators to SMART Objectives. A National Training workshop was held in Abuja in March for all Branch Secretaries to orientate them on Branch accounting, duties and responsibilities for relief operations, roles and relationships with Branch Governance and Branch reporting.

The NRCS Secretary General took up a Delegate position with the ICRC and his Deputy has been appointed as Acting Secretary General. The National Society advertised for three additional staff for the positions of additional Health Officer, National Training Officer and Assistant Accountant. The appointment of an Assistant Director, Fundraising as proposed under the Tripartite programme was made and the selected candidate commenced work in April. The Vice President, NRCS, attended a Regional Workshop on Good Governance organised by the Regional Delegation. A Quarterly Meeting of the Central Executive Council of NRCS was held in March.

The Regional Delegation organised an induction and study visit to Ghana for the new Fundraising officer. The Officer is now engaged in organising a fundraising dinner to be hosted by the Grand Patron of the National Society, President Obasanjo. This event is to be the major fundraising event of 2000 and a new Fundraising Sub-Committee with excellent professional and business connections is enthusiastically engaged in ensuring its success.

Much work was done at Headquarters level in establishing better systems of programme financial control and the National Society is now operating a monthly Cash Request system on which Working Advances are made by the Delegation. This was part of the ongoing development of National Society financial systems towards the goal of cash flow budgeting and programme management accounting.

President Obasanjo was invested as Grand Patron of the Society at an event on 8th May at which time he also encouraged NRCS to take advantage of his offer of assistance in re-siting its Headquarters in the capital, Abuja. Negotiations continue for the acquisition of suitable land and buildings.

During a visit by the Desk Officer from the British Red Cross and the Regional Disaster Preparedness Delegate, the issue of staging a VCA was discussed and a programme for training and implementation was agreed. A training programme for the National Training Officer on commercial first aid was also agreed with the British Red Cross. Representatives from the Swedish Red Cross visited the country and carried out a field monitoring visit in relation to the Community-based health Programme which formed the basis for discussion on strategies towards NS capacity building.

Promotion of Humanitarian Values

The communal clashes operation has been an important opportunity for demonstration of values in action when volunteers drawn from both Christian and Muslim backgrounds worked together to bring relief. Care has been exercised to demonstrate our neutrality by ensuring co-ordination with religious entities and equality of relief distributions to both factions affected by the conflict.

Delegation Management •

The relief operations were also a main focus for the Delegation during the period with the HoD working in the field with the NS on the Kaduna relief operation and co-ordinating relief response,

negotiations with in-country donors and improving implementation and accountability. A Relief operation MoU was agreed upon with the ICRC Delegation. Much time was spent on institutional development work and on-the-job training with the NS and this is reflected in the programme report above. The Head of Delegation (HoD) attended a Regional Delegation-organised retreat for HoDs from Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia during January when planning coordination, regional programmes, ARCHI, and financial issues were discussed. The HoD also attended the HoD Meeting in Geneva in June. Delegation security regulations and revised accounting procedures were developed and introduced. A revised job description for the position of Finance Development Delegate was drawn up for recruitment of a Delegate needed for the end of June 2000.

The major constraints on greater progress towards the work of developing the National Society have been the limited number of NRCS Headquarters staff and this has been particularly pronounced during this period when relief operations made further demands on the 7 management staff available. The staff appointments to be made will greatly develop NRCS capacity to respond to disaster and health needs, service its Branches, improve financial and technical management, and generate its own income.

Outstanding needs

A revision of budgets will take place in August 2000 to better reflect actual and expected expenditures until the end of the year. However, since the Management and Coordination Program is in serious financial difficulties, it will be integrated into the other programs to facilitate fundraising. Regarding Delegates, the recruitment of a Finance Administration and Development Delegate, a Health Delegate and a Branch Development Delegate is urgent.

The Federation Delegation faces funding and human resources constraints at a crucial time in the National Society's development. There is a clear need and potential for expanding the Health programme activities to include preventive activity in HIV/AIDS and a concerted effort towards polio eradication. The NRCS requires Federation Health delegate assistance if this is to be achieved. Equally, Finance and Branch Development delegates are required urgently for this vital period of developing NS capacity.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

The Federation Delegation had meetings and contact with the Swiss, British, Irish, Malaysian, Swedish and Norwegian Embassies. Contact with the Australian Ambassador resulted in a contribution to the NRCS of USD 4,000. During the Kaduna crisis, good donor contact was established with USAID, DFID and Irish Aid officials, and working relationships with UNICEF and MSF were also improved. During the week of 8th May, joint visits with the NRCS were made by the Federation HoD to the headquarters of all the major press, TV and radio media which resulted in good press coverage for the Movement. Media coverage of the NRCS relief operations in Kaduna and Southern States was extensive.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

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