

PROGRAMME 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

Sierra Leone

4 July 2001

Appeal No. 01.06/2001

Appeal Target: 3,431,000 CHF (as revised March 2001)

Programme Update No. 2 Period covered: February - June 2001 (last Programme Update issued 16 March 2001)

“At a Glance”

Appeal coverage: 65.7%

Related Appeals: 14/01; West and Central Africa: Meningitis

Outstanding needs: CHF 1,175,600

Update: Despite the very positive developments with the peace process encountered thus far this year, the situation in Sierra Leone and its neighbouring countries still remains fluid and unpredictable. The programme requires further donor support to reach the established objectives, and flexibility with the use of resources and funds continues to be essential in order to respond in the most efficient way.

Operational Developments:

Although the first half of 2001 has been turbulent, there has been steady improvement in the security situation with the Abuja Ceasefire Agreement in November 2000 between the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and government basically holding, except for some minor skirmishes around Tongo Fields/Kono in April and May. In March, United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) forces were deployed in Lunsar, the first deployment in a RUF-controlled area since the UN withdrew from RUF-held areas in April last year, as a consequence of more than 500 UN soldiers being taken hostage. The deployment in Lunsar was followed in April by deployment in Makeni and Magburaka. By the end of May, the disarmament and withdrawal of RUF forces from Kambia were followed by deployment of both the UN and the New Sierra Leone Army (NSLA).

The deployment of NSLA in Kambia and the expected subsequent reopening of the overland route from Guinea to Freetown via Kambia and Port Loko, could result in a dramatic overland return of Sierra Leonean refugees, who had decided to stay in the Forecariah area in southern Guinea even though the seven refugee camps there were officially closed, heading not only for Freetown but also the now safe areas around Kambia, Port Loko and Lungi. In anticipation of this, the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society (SLRCS) is in the process of reopening its branch office in Port Loko and is considering start up in Kambia.

A positive sign is the voluntarily disarmament and withdrawal from Kambia of the RUF forces, which has markedly improved the security situation in Kambia and might be followed by a more comprehensive peace settlement.

The second half of the year may see the peace process in Sierra Leone progressing steadily, which may lead to an expanded need for resettlement assistance, an area where SLRCS will have to take on a more prominent role. Nearly 30,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) and 15,000 refugees may return to the Kambia district alone. There would be a major need to rehabilitate community-based services within health, water and sanitation.



Although the situation seems to be developing positively in Sierra Leone, the prospect of the sub-regional crisis becoming larger and difficult to contain remains high especially with the potential for the conflict in Liberia to spill over into Sierra Leone. The latter has already occurred with the arrival of more than 30,000 refugees in Daru/Kenema. Liberian refugees are also arriving in the southern parts of the country. Sierra Leone has become a refugee receiving country at a time when it is struggling with accommodating returning refugees from Guinea and Liberia, looking after IDPs from unsafe areas, and carrying out a major resettlement programme for IDPs and returning refugees originating from areas now declared safe. With the government's limited resources, external assistance is needed to ensure this ongoing process is implemented in a manner that promotes the stability of the still fragile ceasefire and ensures that the returning refugees and IDPs are settled in a sustainable way.

Disaster Response

Presently, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is the lead agency for the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in Sierra Leone. Should the situation return to normal, the SLRCS, with Federation support, plans to activate rehabilitation and resettlement projects targeting returning refugees and IDPs. Full cooperation with ICRC would ensure the best possible use of resources and avoiding overlaps. A first step towards this has been the assistance given by SLRCS to the returning refugees from Guinea at the reception centre established in Freetown Harbour in cooperation with IOM/UNHCR and various NGOs. The returnees are given medical treatment by SLRCS/community based health programme staff and, if necessary, transferred to the government hospital by SLRCS volunteers trained under the disaster preparedness programme. The volunteers also provide a simple meal to the returnees. Since the beginning of the operation in September 2000 until the end of May 2001, 48,351 refugees were received by this team.



Disaster Preparedness

Objective 1: To upgrade skills of SLRCS staff and volunteers in disaster management.

A six-day disaster preparedness (DP) workshop was carried out for 15 senior staff members of SLRCS from both headquarters and branches.

Objective 2: To coordinate with ICRC and the Federation in the provision of emergency stocks (comprising first aid materials, food and non-food items and used clothes) and put in place procedures to guarantee an efficient response and distribution system.

An inventory of relief items was carried out at the SLRCS and Federation stores and an inventory list was compiled. With only one logistics officer being in charge of all purchases, storage and warehouse management for all SLRCS operations, recruitment for an assistant logistics officer is underway. The assistant's main task will be warehouse management and logistics for DP.

Objective 3: *To provide support to the national society and branches in implementing disaster preparedness projects.*

Forty-five volunteers received training in first aid, emergency response, relief and emergency health intervention. First aid materials were supplied for Bo, Kenema, Western Area and Bonthe branches. One high-frequency radio was installed in the branch office on Bonthe Island. A computer with accessories was installed in the national society's DP office, for the establishment of a database for stocks, potential suppliers and available/potential logistics as well as for relevant NGOs and ministries.

Objective 4: *To promote food security activities.*

SLRCS together with ICRC, carried out a major agricultural support programme in the southern and eastern provinces with about 18,000 families targeted for assistance (seeds and agricultural tools).

Objective 5: *To cooperate and collaborate with ICRC, the Federation, other international organizations, NGOs, governmental ministries and national societies in the sub-region for better networking.*

SLRCS is an active partner in the coordinated effort of UN agencies, the Federation, international organizations and NGOs assisting returnees from Conakry, Guinea, to Freetown. For the year 2001, until mid-May, a total of 25,053 received assistance.

In cooperation with the government and the national tourist board, SLRCS erected a first aid post at Lumley Beach, which by mid-May, had provided first aid to 56 casualties.

Humanitarian Values

Objective 1: *To place at least 60 more amputees in permanent jobs - Job Assistance to War Amputees (JAWA) programme..*

Since the start of the year, the project has succeeded in placing nine amputees in permanent jobs - tally clerk, radio operator, security guards, lottery retailers and receptionist - with the International Organization for Migration, Mount Everest Security Agency, CAR Project, State Lottery and Frandia Company Limited. The uncertain security situation has limited the number of available jobs companies have been reluctant to invest thus reducing job opportunities overall.

With the positive development in the security situation seen at the end of May, it is hoped there will be an increase in the number of jobs offered.

Objective 2: *To expand the micro-loan scheme to an additional 100 amputees (JAWA).*

Micro-loans are given to amputees to enable them to start self-employment operations, such as selling rice, palm oil, sugar, kerosene, wood, slippers, cooking items and prepared food/meals. By the end of May, 30 additional beneficiaries benefited from the micro-loan scheme - 20 in Kenema and 10 from the Murray Amputee Camp in Freetown. This is slightly below the planning figure, but due to the uncertainty of funding at the beginning of the year, the signing on of new beneficiaries and new micro-loan schemes was delayed.

In addition to the 30 new micro-loan beneficiaries, the SLRCS provided advice and counselling to the 62 micro-loan beneficiaries from last year. The loan repayment from this group is ongoing. Part of the repayment has gone into additional loans for those beneficiaries seeking additional capital for business expansion.



Objective 3: To identify and place 100 amputees in skills training positions (JAWA).

The programme expanded its operation to Kenema where 15 amputees started courses in tailoring. Tuition fees and sewing machines are provided, and upon successful completion of the 18-month training course, the machines will become the property of each student, enabling them to start their own business. Continued monitoring and assistance was given to the 33 amputees placed in skills training courses last year.

Similar constraints as experienced above (Objective 2) were encountered in keeping with the planned target for 2001. The need to identify additional training possibilities that could satisfy amputees not wanting to be tailors was partially met with the investigation into the possibility for secretarial courses.



Objective 4: To resettle back into their communities a minimum of 10 amputees with family presently staying at the Murray Amputee Camp (JAWA).



With an estimated 600 amputees in the Freetown area, of which more than half lives in the Murray Amputee Camp, the government established a special working group to address the possibility of resettling the Murray Camp residents back into their communities. The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) has taken the lead in this working group and has already started the construction of the first 100 houses that will provide permanent accommodation for all amputees presently staying in the Murray Camp, thus enabling the government to close this camp.

With the strong support from NRC and the other partners of the working group, SLRCS agreed to concentrate its very successful programme in job placement of amputees, micro-loans and skills training, as this forms an essential part of a full reintegration package for amputees back into their communities. It has therefore been decided to cancel the housing part of the programme and instead use more energy and funds on expanding JAWA to the upcountry areas including the newly opened areas in the North. The programme budget was revised accordingly.



Objective 5 Advocacy on behalf of amputees and other disabled groups for public support and understanding (JAWA).

Jingles are aired regularly on various FM radio stations in the country explaining the plight of amputees and advocating for assistance in reintegrating them back into society, including the provision of permanent jobs. A drama performance was televised on the national television station performed by the Amputee Amateur Drama group, depicting their situation and the need for assistance by all. The JAWA programme's advocacy officers make regular visits to business communities, government offices, international and private organizations to solicit their support and assistance to amputees.

Objective 6: To strengthen family ties and social community cohesion - Community Animation and Participatory Support (CAPS).

Before CAPS, some families were discriminated against for reasons such as having relatives who were a part of the opposition fighting forces that had committed atrocities in their communities or for having collaborated with these forces. The victims of discrimination were often prevented from resettling into their communities of origin; their lives were threatened or they were treated as pariah. Parents and other relatives also refused to accept back

their children and/or relatives who had been recruited or abducted by opposition forces. Dance, singing, drama and drumming - all a part of communal life in Sierra Leone - were suspended during the war due to displacement, destruction of personal property and homes, separation of families and forced conscription. CAPS has revived these activities; and the communities are enthusiastically participating, coming together and acting together, something which they have not done for years.

Drama groups were formed, trained and provided with costumes. They perform regularly in all the communities. The themes are centred on topics ranging from family reconciliation, rights and responsibilities of marital partners, children and adults, to communal values and morality issues. Dance groups were also formed in the communities, where they preach peace and reconciliation through dances and songs. Drama and folk dances are popular entertainment in the rural communities and proved very successful in disseminating the peace and reconciliation messages, enhancing the willingness to cohabitate.

The Community Peace Consolidation Committee (CPCC), which was created by CAPS, works with the CAPS animators living in the communities to facilitate the implementation of project activities. Having received training in conflict analysis, the CPCC and animators work together to seek non-violent means in settling disputes. Peace building workshops are in the planning stage.

Community sports are another important means in bringing people together, with football being the most popular among young and old alike. CAPS provided footballs and kits for all the communities involved. Local youth reconstructed and rehabilitated the football fields under supervision of the animators. The project also supported an athletics meet for school children in the Baoma Chiefdom, which proved very successful in bringing children together via sports, something that had not happened for years. Similar events are planned for other chiefdoms.

Objective 7: *To de-traumatize vulnerable individuals and reintegrate them into their communities (CAPS).*

The CAPS animators are viewed as a focal point for problem solving. Vulnerable individuals, such as single parents, rape victims, war widows, child ex-combatants and war wounded, have found their interaction with the animators helpful in building confidence, hope and self-worth. Advocacy is made on their behalf for communities to recognize their vulnerability and help them build coping mechanisms.

Vulnerable women's groups were assisted with seeds and tools for vegetable gardening. Sports, drama and dance performances helped people to face their worries and heal their pain, which is evident through the increased participation in communal work and social activities. At the start of the project, there was much talk in the communities of vengeance, suspicion and resentment towards perceived perpetrators. One year later, there is now more talk about accepting and accommodating 'erring brothers' with the general mood that the ten-year-old war is at its end.

Objective 8: *To improve sustainable living standards for the whole community (CAPS).*

A micro-credit revolving loan scheme was started in all 24 CAPS communities, enabling community groups to embark on viable petty trading, soap making and bread baking in order to raise income. In total, 108 community groups were supported with vegetable seeds and farming tools. Eight communities started processing cassava (using machines supplied by the project) and marketing the food products, such as *fufu* and *gari*, for communal profit.

Sixty volunteers from the communities were trained in basic first aid and supplied with first aid kits. The trained volunteers have also been mobilizing the communities for environmental sanitation in addition to attending to emergencies. Also, functional literacy classes started in 15 communities; 70 percent of the students are female.

All 24 CAPS communities received basic building tools including shovels, pickaxes, head pans, wheel barrows and brick machines, to rebuild their homes and roads, and to dig latrines and wells.

Objective 9: *To strengthen social awareness and good governance in the communities (CAPS).*

All communities have been animated to construct a community meeting place, which they fondly refer to as the 'Peace Hut,' where ongoing discussions on good governance and human rights takes place. The animators also target community groups - chiefs and elders, women, youth, ex-members of the civil defence force (CDF) - in focal group discussions on human rights, good governance and on International Humanitarian Law (IHL). Community drama on human rights and good governance are performed regularly.

Today information is broadcast on local FM radio stations, including news on the peace process, information on disarmament and reconciliation messages. In order for the communities to be able to access this information, 200 clock radios donated by the British Red Cross were distributed to community groups.

The image and understanding of the Red Cross has improved and resulted in the formation of Red Cross groups in the communities paving the way for a receptive entry for other SLRCS projects such as CBHP. ICRC has also been able to conduct IHL dissemination to community leaders and ex-combatants.

Objective 10: *To de-traumatize 100 children, raise their dignity and strengthen their family ties - Child Advocacy and Rehabilitation (CAR) project.*

A month before the RUF invasion of Freetown on 6 January 1999, the RUF overran Waterloo and used its environs as an entry point into the city. Scores of children were abducted, some serving as arms carriers while others suffered untold atrocities. In view of this, it was decided to start the first centre of the CAR project in the Waterloo area, with a survey of the seven communities included, to determine the ages and characteristics of the most war-affected children.

The survey was completed in January 2001, and 308 children were identified within the target group. In view of the capacity of the programme, it was decided to limit the intake to non-school attending children, which reduced the number of children to 110, with the following age and gender breakdown.

AGE	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
<i>10-12</i>	15	12	27
<i>13-15</i>	14	20	34
<i>16-18</i>	20	20	40
TOTAL	49	61	110

Before entering the programme, most of these 110 youth were idle with little prospect of full reintegration back into their communities. Now being involved in a structured programme, receiving caring support from the team, learning skills and receiving sessions on trauma sensitization, the children healing. A more formalized counselling support approach is presently being developed.

Children who report on problems encountered in their homes or communities are accompanied by advocacy officers who sensitize their parents or foster parents on the right of the child and the need for them to be encouraged. Visits to their homes have been welcomed and appreciated by both the children and the parents, with many expressing surprise, since they never have experienced this form of support before - the positive result being that today there is more cooperation and problem solving starting in the various families.

Objective 11: *To promote child advocacy and reintegration into the communities (CAR).*

The advocacy officers, together with the Waterloo Headman, participated in radio discussions to promote the CAR project. The intention was to decrease the negative labelling of the CAR youth (some residents had nicknamed the CAR centre 'rebel school') and to promote their reintegration back into their communities.

In addition to home visits, the advocacy officers also attended community meetings held monthly in each of the seven communities. Staff attend the monthly child protection meeting at the Ministry of Social Welfare, Women and Gender Affairs, where national issues on child protection are addressed.

Objective 12: *To engage beneficiaries in educational and skills training activities (CAR).*

Many of the CAR children had little or no schooling and were illiterate when they joined the programme. This is being addressed through classes in basic literacy and numeracy along with English and mathematics for those at an advanced level.

Beneficiaries in the age group of 13-18 years also engage in skills training classes of their choice, such as tailoring and dress making, soap making, tie-dying, canvas design, needle work, block laying, cement and concrete work. Classes are also conducted on health and hygiene, trauma sensitization and religion.

Objective 13: *To promote recreational, cultural and social activities in order to facilitate healing through play for 100 children by the end of 2001 (CAR).*

Daily sessions are scheduled for recreation and physical education, including indoor games, such as *ludo* and various card games, and outdoor activities, such as soccer and other sports. Through sportsmanship there has been a noticeable improvement in relationships within the group.

Objective 14: *To improve the economic status of the child's biological or foster parents (CAR).*

A plan of action to best to assist the beneficiaries, their parents or foster parents and the communities as a whole is being designed.

Objective 15: *To increase community awareness of the Convention of the Right of the Child, International Humanitarian Law and human rights.*

At various meetings, community members are educated on the Convention of the Right of the Child and to respect the dignity of the children. Advocacy officers also attend meetings with NGOs where they bring up this issue.

Dissemination on the Red Cross, the emblem and the fundamental principles as well as on objectives of the CAR project have started. Sensitization sessions through drama are being planned to further disseminate these topics.

Health and Care

Objective 1: *To sensitize and mobilize communities, to be aware of their role and responsibilities in reducing their exposure to health risks, thereby limiting the morbidity and mortality rates in the SLRCS operational areas.*

The branch health officer holds weekly community meetings in the CBHP operational areas with community volunteers and youth peer educators. Drama groups in seven branches conduct twice monthly performances - one for school children and one street performance. Street campaigns addressing health issues are also carried out monthly by youth peer educators in the seven operational branches. Three radio stations covering all accessible areas, broadcast the monthly SLRCS project which includes health and sanitation messages and quizzes.

Objective 2: *To reduce the spread of infectious diseases through improved sanitation.*

A backlog in the planned rehabilitation of wells for 2000 was carried into 2001 due to the late arrival of funds and a longer than expected rainy season. Rehabilitation therefore continued into the first quarter with two wells in Taiama, two wells in Bo and two wells in Freetown completed.

The arrival of returning refugees from Guinea in SLRCS operational areas also necessitated the shift of resources in order to address the urgent health needs of this group. The communities made urgent requests for assistance in rehabilitation of additional wells. They also requested roofing materials for the latrines. Thus, it was decided to change from the planned distribution of 3,000 latrine slabs, and instead use the funds for well rehabilitation and for the construction of 200 community pit latrines.

Additional material was purchased for chlorinating wells in 25 communities which, together with existing stock, now means chlorine is available in all seven active branches. The chlorination is carried out by community volunteers on a regular basis.

Objective 3: *To increase the capacity of the communities to address minor accidents and ailments.*

Six first aid refresher courses for 100 community volunteers were held in the CBHP operational areas, with more training planned for later in the year. Twenty first aid kits were procured and given to the branch health officers, to replace looted kits during the civil war.

Objective 4: *To provide primary health care service to target beneficiaries in ten branches and two groups.*

Essential medication, as specified in the SLRCS essential drug list, is being supplied free of charge on a continued basis from the ten operational SLRCS clinics. During the first quarter of this year, 33,864 patients were treated at these clinics, of which 15,041 were children below the age of five, and 4,263 were antenatal. Medicine for the programme is presently stored at two small warehouses in different locations, which creates an inefficient working environment. To overcome this, renovation of a suitable warehouse next to the main office in Freetown is presently ongoing and the budget for 2001 was amended to include the added cost.

All branches and clinics use the Sierra Leone 'Essential Drug Manual for Community Health Workers,' including the treatment guidelines and standards for 'Integrated Management of Childhood Illness' as a basis for treatment provided at the clinics. Regular staff education sessions are carried out at all clinics. To ensure the standards are adhered to, a monitoring and supervisory visit was carried out by the programme coordinator and the health delegate to six of the ten clinics during the reporting period.

Regional health committees, consisting of ten members and representing different community groups, were established and hold regular quarterly meetings to review and advise on programme implementation. In addition to this, one health committee meeting was held at headquarters where the 2001 work plan was discussed and recommendations given. One recommendation, reproductive health service to be introduced in the IDP camps, has now been implemented.

Objective 5: *To reduce the infant and maternal mortality rate in the SLRCS operational areas.*

Seven refresher courses for 210 traditional birth attendants (TBAs) were conducted in June using the new UNICEF manual. Training and supply of basic TBA kits for 500 new TBAs has been planned and budgeted for the second half of this year.

Objective 6: *To reduce the incidence of vaccine preventable diseases by increasing immunization coverage in SLRCS operational areas by 20 per cent by December 2001.*

During the first quarter, immunization of children under five was carried out in five clinics. A total of 6,670 doses of vaccine (against six vaccine preventable diseases) were administered. In addition, 2,392 doses of tetanus vaccine were administered to pregnant women and women of child bearing age. This represents a 40 per cent increase in vaccinations of children under five and a 33 per cent increase in vaccinations of pregnant women over the same period for last year.

The SLRCS is planning to continue its participation in the October/November national polio immunization campaign this year, covering four chiefdoms in Port Loko District, as compared to one chiefdom in the 2000 campaign. The three new chiefdoms represent areas where security considerations limited access in the 2000 immunization round and, therefore, forms an essential part of the eradication campaign.

Objective 7: *To create awareness among high risk groups on sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and HIV/AIDS in SLRCS operational areas.*

The HIV/AIDS prevention message is a continued topic in the monthly SLRCS radio broadcasts on three stations countrywide. The radio programmes also advocate on behalf of the HIV/AIDS victims for the need and care of people infected with the virus and support to their families.

SLRCS has 130 trained peer educators covering the seven active branches, who conduct regular outreach activities targeting schools, community gatherings and public places. Five, three-day refresher training sessions on HIV/AIDS were carried out for 100 youth peers educators (Bo 20, Kenema 20, Moyamba 20, Lungi 20 and western Area 20).

SLRCS established, trained and equipped with costumes and musical instruments seven peer educator drama groups, one in each operational branch. The seven groups have been trained by professional actors who also have written the HIV/AIDS relevant plays they perform.

Objective 8: To enhance the capacity of staff and volunteers in programme management.

The branch health officer for Kono attended the 26th Pan-African four-week facilitators' course in Kenya. The programme coordinator and health delegate attended the fifth meeting of the Regional Surveillance Team in Abidjan in April. The team focused on expanding the HIV/AIDS programme, Red Cross procedures for disease surveillance during epidemics, and reproductive health.

With the expansion seen in the CBHP, a need was identified for additional management support. Presently, recruitment is ongoing for the position of deputy programme coordinator which ultimately also should eliminate the need for a health delegate.

Objective 9: To intensify the expanded sensitization programme on the control and prevention of Lassa fever.

The expanded community sensitization, including radio and street education, against Lassa fever continued until the end of March in the Kenema District. In addition to a cleaner environment and better sanitation, vector control was the focus of the campaign with over 5,000 rats exterminated. Six volunteers continue to give health talks in the communities as well as in two IDP camps, the latter in partnership with Merlin.

Objective 10: To improve and promote the nutritional status of the most vulnerable in SLRCS operational areas by 30 per cent by December 2001.

All pregnant and lactating women are given free folic acid and iron supplements at SLRCS clinics. A total of 4,263 antenatal visits were recorded in the first quarter of the year at the ten operational clinics. The SLRCS clinic in Bo provides malnourished children under five supplementary grain-based food supplied by the World Food Programme. Three other clinics have a referral system, where malnourished children are sent to feeding centres run by NGOs.

Growth monitoring is carried out on children under five at all SLRCS clinics. TBAs, when operating outside the SLRCS clinics, use community areas when teaching about perinatal nutrition with some communities even constructing special rooms/huts for use by the TBAs. In the first quarter of the year, 8,277 visits to monitor growth of children under five, were recorded at the eight SLRCS clinics, with community volunteers using the African Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies' Health Initiative (ARCHI) model on childhood illnesses as a guide to sensitize communities on the importance of growth monitoring.

Micro-credits have been given by SLRCS to community groups to start communal backyard gardens, the majority associated with community mothers' clubs. The local TBAs also use the gardens to teach the community about the opportunities and availability of various vegetables which offer a varied prenatal diet.

Institutional and Resource Development

Objective 1: To re-establish the SLRCS provincial branches and membership base.

Assessment missions were made to Rutile, Matru Jong and Bonthe Red Cross Groups, resulting in the awarding of branch status to Bonthe District in February 2001.

Port Loko Branch was temporary relocated to Lungi, although it is expected that it will be able to reopen in Port Loko in the second half of 2001. Tonkolili Branch was temporary relocated to Mile 91, but with the IDPs around Mile 91 now starting to return to Makeni and Magburake, the Tonkolili Branch is also expected to reopen in the second half of the year.

The main constraint has been the lack of access to five out of the ten branches countrywide. With the positive development in the peace process at the end of this reporting period, it is hoped that the second half of the year will see the reopening of four if not all five presently closed branches.

Objective 2: To recruit more members, especially women and increase the retention rate.

During the first five months of 2001, a total of 798 new members enrolled, out of which 355 were female. At the same time, a drive is on to re-register members in all the reactivated branches. By end of the year an updated membership list is expected.

Information and dissemination seminars were held for traditional leaders in Bo, Port Loko, Moyamba and Kenema on the Movement, in order to encourage a wider membership base.

Objective 3: To strengthen human resources and the organizational structure.

Middle managers and senior staff participate in weekly in-house computer courses. Ten computers were supplied for the daily work as well as easy access to on-the-job training through the employment of an in-house computer assistant.

A three-day workshop for senior staff and management was conducted in March. A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis of the national society was carried out and a draft of its strategies for 2002-2005 was prepared.

Branch elections were held in the West, Bo, Moyamba, Kenema and Bonthe District and the General Assembly of the SLRCS was held in Freetown in March. A field officer was appointed for Bonthe District and presently recruitment is undergoing for the positions of general administrator, programme coordinator for humanitarian programmes, assistant programme manager for CBHP and assistant logistics officer. The appointment of the latter four should be seen in connection with the expansion of the programmes in 2000-2001.

Objective 4: To strengthen the financial and material resources of the national society.

At the SLRCS General Assembly in March, a major increase in membership dues was agreed upon, although full implementation will not be until next year.

Plans are underway to open used-clothing shops in Moyamba, Bo and Kenema in addition to the existing shop in Freetown. The expansion is conditioned on a positive reply from sister societies as to the supply of additional used clothes, with SLRCS taking on the responsibility of funding the transportation cost.

The income of the SLRCS has been increased this year with the renting out of the top floor of its building in Freetown. In Kenema, the SLRCS has completed construction of the first floor of its new branch office and clinic thanks to income generated by the income generation building in Freetown. The national society intends to rent out the first floor of the Kenema branch office. The Moyamba and Bonthe branch offices and clinic buildings as well as the Matru clinic were rehabilitated and refurbished. A branch office and clinic were constructed on the SLRCS-owned plot in Lungi. Ten new motorbikes were supplied to branches, branch health officers and headquarters.

Objective 5: To improve planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting procedures.

Monthly and quarterly reports were prepared by all departments within the SLRCS and the annual report was presented at the SLRCS General Assembly in March. Monitoring visits are regularly carried out by headquarters staff to all operational areas and branches.

Coordination and Management

Objective 1: To assist the SLRCS in re-establishing its branch network and effectively managing its programmes.

Bonthe District received SLRCS branch status in February 2001 with sub-Red Cross groups in Bonthe, Matru and Rotile. The Federation supported the establishment of the branch - refurbishing part of the Bonthe clinic building to be used as office space, donating and installing a HF radio and training new staff.

The Port Loko Branch was also partly re-established with activities centred around the clinic in Lungi, while plans are under way for the construction of a small branch office in Port Loko. This is being done in full cooperation with ICRC who will establish a tracing office in the same building.

With the UN troop deployment in Makeni and Magburake, plans are also underway for the reopening of Makeni clinic, followed by the reestablishment of the branch office.

Objective 2: To enhance the capacity of the finance department of SLRCS.

The Federation's CODA accounting system was successfully introduced to the country delegation. Due to the absence of a finance and administration delegate since early March, however, plans to upgrade the computer capability and programmes of the SLRCS financial department were delayed. The new delegate who arrived in mid-May will take up this challenge.

On-the-job training was given to SLRCS staff in receipt handling. The amount of outstanding working advances has been reduced; the average outstanding time is now down to four weeks.

Objective 3: To assist SLRCS establish an efficient and cost conscious logistics department.

The SWOT analysis of SLRCS conducted in early March at the management workshop clearly indicated the need to upgrade the society's logistics department. The main constraint identified was the lack of staff. An assistant logistics officer/warehouse manager is presently being sought.

Objective 4: To help SLRCS upgrade its computer capability.

With the purchase late last year of ten laptop computers for SLRCS, a computer assistant post was created within the delegation. Weekly computer courses are conducted in-house for SLRCS and delegation staff. The computer assistant also carries out individual tutoring as well as assistance with installation of both hardware and software.

With the expanded usage of computers by SLRCS staff, additional computers are needed this year. Plans are underway to expand the computer training to Governance, with the treasurer being the top priority.

Objective 5: To ensure correct and proper reporting to donors, both narrative and financial.

At the beginning of the year, the Federation's delegation managed to change the financial reporting system from FRT to CODA. Initially this caused some delays and put quite a lot of work on the office, but by March 2001, the system was up and running, being operated by well-trained local staff. Detailed financial and narrative donor reports have since been prepared for each pledge in order to ensure full utilization.

Objective 6: To revise the Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) for the SLRCS.

In early March, a three-day management workshop was carried out at which a draft was prepared of SLRCS strategies for 2002 to 2005, which will form the basis for the CAS. In addition to this, the national society's secretary general and Federation's head of delegation participated in the West Africa Partnership Coordination Meeting in Dakar from 23-27 April, where the draft strategy was presented to the partners and proposed amendments noted down for further incorporation into the final version.

Outstanding needs

With the very new development in the Kambia area, which could lead to a major overland return of Sierra Leonean refugees from Guinea, SLRCS is considering possible assistance to the returnees within the area of health (mobile clinics), transport assistance for referral of severe cases to hospitals, feeding and drinking water supply to returnees en route, as well as possible resettlement assistance.

Although very positive developments have been seen toward the continuation of the peace process thus far this year, the situation in Sierra Leone and its neighbouring countries still remains fluid and unpredictable. Therefore, flexibility with the use of resources and funds continues to be essential in order to respond in the most efficient way.

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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.

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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