

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

REPUBLIC OF CONGO

25 April, 2001

This Programme Update is intended for reporting on Annual Appeals.

Appeal No. 01.08/2001

Appeal Target CHF 3,087,000

Programme Update No. 1 Period covered: 1 January - 30 March, 2001

In 2000 a more favourable economic environment in the Republic of the Congo and the considerable resources made available to the programme enabled the Federation to provide effective support to strengthen the capacities of the Congolese Red Cross (CRC). The Federation's 2001 assistance programme for the CRC, presented in appeal no. 01.08/2001, the logical continuation of the work undertaken last year, has so far not received the needed funding. With the funds made available locally the Federation has, however, continued to support the CRC in the implementation of four projects: assistance to 6,000 Cabindan refugees at Pointe Noire, the programme to combat polio, the reproductive health programme and the AIDS programme (for which the plan of action has been strengthened so as to increase its impact). Considerable effort has also been put into staff administrative management to work out statutes for the paid and volunteer CRC staff. Training in finance management was organized for CRC finance staff at the regional delegation. Lastly, confirming how effective last year's community-based first aid training was, the CRC teams successfully assisted 150 victims of a train accident in the region of Niari and 2,000 persons affected by a sudden rise in the waters in the region of central Cuvette. It is clear that without a stable source of funding for the rest of the year, the objectives set cannot all be achieved, and it feared that the advances made in the programme last year will be threatened by the lack of available funds.

The context

As conditions become more favourable in the Congo, efforts have focused on removing the scars left by the recent conflicts. Considerable progress has been made such as the reopening of the railway between Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire and the resumption of negotiations with the international funding agencies, including the World Bank, IMF and the European Community. The population's needs are, however, still immense. At the end of the war, most of the country's infrastructure had been destroyed. More worrisome yet, the social fabric has been seriously weakened following the mass exodus of more than one third of the Congolese population, forced to flee the combat zones and to take refuge in the bush for over one year. The instability in the region and particularly the fighting in the province of Equateur in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) threaten the fragile peace in the Congo today. Aware of the major job to be done, the Congolese Red Cross (CRC), supported by the

International Federation, worked out a realistic development plan, to take part, within its means, in the reconstruction of the country.

Recent events

The death of President Kabila in January, 2001 was the most significant event of the year to date. To prepare for any potential unrest in the Republic of the Congo, contingency plans were updated, and while the situation is calm events are being followed closely.

Along the River Oubangui where some 100,000 refugees from the DRC have found shelter, the situation is stationary. UNHCR has opened an office in the village of Bétou and is present at Impfondo and Loulouléla to provide assistance and protection to refugees.

In January the Congolese government also officially announced a timetable for the process of a national dialogue. This timetable, between 15 March and 30 April, foresees a decentralized debate in the regions and communes, the convoking of the national convention, the signing of the peace agreement and the adoption of the draft constitution by the national transition council following which the election timetable should be worked out with the dates of the constitutional referendum and general elections.

The Congo-Océan railway linking Brazzaville to Pointe-Noire was put back into operation on 14 August 2000. The train played a decisive role in opening up the capital and contributed to the country's economic recovery. As train traffic was gradually returning to normal, on the morning of 10 January two trains collided between Pointe-Noire and Dolisie, at Mvougouti, in the region of Niari. The toll was very high with over 45 deaths and more than 120 seriously injured. The CRC played an active role in providing treatment to the accident victims.

At the end of January, the surveillance system set up by the CRC in the region of Cuvette indicated flooding along the river Alima, to the south of the city of Oyo. More than 21 villages were affected by the natural disaster and an estimated 2,000 persons were directly affected by the sudden rise in the water. The impact of the floods on the most vulnerable is worsened by the lack of health infrastructure and the local population's scarce food resources.

Also in this first quarter the regional committee in Kouilou pointed out the persistent problem of street children. During the last conflict in the country the presence of a marginalized population of very young children living in the street became apparent. This phenomenon, instead of improving as the standard of living rises, is becoming increasingly widespread.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

Cabindan refugees: The regional committee of Kouilou began the management of the assistance programme for some 5,000 Cabindan refugees, with the help of the relief delegate made available to the Federation by the Netherlands Red Cross. In view of financial difficulties with the project at the beginning of the year and in close cooperation with UNHCR which is funding it, activities were focused on primary health care. As indicated in the chart below, the Red Cross teams in the three dispensaries situated in the camps carried out an average of 800 consultations per month.

PATHOLOGIES (10 among the most common)	January	February	March
Malaria	276	216	170
Respiratory infections (high)	76	28	41
Respiratory infections (acute)	138	80	37
Bloody diarrhoea	4	4	7

Non-bloody diarrhoea	44	17	24
Intestinal parasitosis	42	59	52
Urinary infections	31	31	20
Rhumatism	34	33	19
Gastralgia	25	14	23
Scabies	29	12	11
Other	327	266	256
TOTAL	1026	759	660

Activities promoting refugee self reliance were a second priority in the areas of health education, schooling, agriculture and developing income-generation micro-projects.

Strengthening the reproductive health structures and assistance to female victims of sexual violence: The last phase of this project, carried out under the coordination of the Ministry of Health via its general directorate for the population and with the support of the United National Population Fund (UNFPA), was launched. The project will be completed at end of April. During the first quarter priority was given to activities increasing awareness of prevention of STD/HIV/AIDS. These activities were supervised by the CRC communal leaders for Pointe-Noire and by the project coordinator for Brazzaville, Kinkala, Nkayi, Sibiti and Dolisie. A total of 83 awareness sessions were organized for 649,000 persons from 13 Red Cross observation posts and one health post of the evangelical church in the Congo.

Combating polio: Following the satisfactory results in last year's vaccination campaign, the CRC, with the support of the Federation, is pursuing its 2001 plan of activities to combat polio. Training of trainers was pursued for 32 persons at Brazzaville and for 25 persons at Pointe-Noire on the following topics:

- Clinic and situation of polio in the Congo.
- Organization of national vaccination days.
- Door to door and outreach.
- Micro-planning.
- Surveillance of acute limp paralyses.
- Conservation and transport of vaccines.
- Social mobilization and vaccination.
- Role of the CRC in polio eradication.

Activities are focused on installing the communications network and equipping the headquarters for the next vaccination campaigns in Niari, Bouenza, Lekoumou and Cuvette centrale, thereby strengthening the CRC's structures. Integrating the Red Cross's work in health structures is a priority and many contacts have been made with EPI, WHO, UNICEF, Rotary, the ICRC and the other participants in the national polio eradication programme.

Development of the CRC's AIDS project: In close cooperation with the regional delegation in Yaoundé and the national delegation, the CRC has considerably developed the AIDS project presented in the 2001 appeal, in line with the Movement's AIDS policy. Contacts have been made with the French Red Cross representatives who are working on a major outpatient programme so as to ensure collaboration and coordination of related actions. Furthermore, many noted the participation of the French Red Cross in the AIDS and malaria day, greatly contributing to getting the national programme for these two diseases going again.

Floods: The CRC and Federation team, led by the head of the relief department and the head of the information department, conducted a one-week mission in the district of Tchicapika, in the region of Cuvette centrale, to assess the extent of flood damage in January. The mechanisms developed by the neighbouring populations function well and enabled them to cope with normal floods. This year, however, the floods lasted much longer than usual. This was compounded by the fact that the health structures are not able to cope with the needs of the populations in the district. The most vulnerable persons were severely affected due to a combination of these two factors. UNICEF made a substantial donation to the CRC enabling it to distribute plastic sheeting and cooking kits to 2000 displaced persons and medicine for the integrated health centre at Tchicapika.

Train accident: As soon as it learned of the accident, the Congolese Red Cross regional committee at Dolisie mobilized a dozen first aiders who immediately went to the site to give first aid and to reassure the victims. The injured and dead were evacuated to the hospital in Dolisie, with two ICRC vehicles made available to the teams of CRC first aiders. The civil authorities organized the transport of those seriously injured to the better-equipped medical infrastructure in Pointe-Noire. With the support of the relief delegate at Pointe-Noire, the CRC communal committee placed teams at Agosthino Neto airport to welcome the injured. Fifteen volunteers were entrusted with helping the emergency and resuscitation services at A. Sicé hospital which admitted the seriously injured. Another team tried to locate the families of the victims in the districts of Pointe-Noire. Close cooperation between the local authorities and the Red Cross meant fast, effective intervention, saving many lives. UNICEF provided medicines which were used in the hospitals in Dolisie and Pointe-Noire. This joint action was possible thanks to the community-based first aid training workshops organized last year with the help of the Federation precisely to enable the CRC to intervene in the event of a disaster.

Strengthening the capacities in human resource management: To strengthen the CRC's capacities in human resource management, considerable work was carried out between the competent CRC and Federation services to produce a first set of documents relating to current labour law in the Congo. The following documents were updated:

- The revisions of the rules applicable to CRC paid staff.
- The general provisions of the rules applicable to CRC paid staff.
- Open work contracts.
- Fixed-term work contracts.
- The convention covering first aiders / volunteers.
- The Rules of Procedure applicable to all projects.
- The CRC/Federation programme/project contract.

Street children project: The CRC and the Netherlands Red Cross, with the assistance of the Federation, established fruitful work relations leading to the signing of a bilateral agreement relating to a project to help street children in Pointe-Noire. Over 200 young children will be cared for in the short term under this project, in association with other local NGOs and the civil authorities in Pointe-Noire.

Outstanding needs

To enable the delegation to keep its commitments and to ensure continuity in its support activities for the CRC, it is essential to take action in two areas. First, with regard to human resources, a head of delegation, a field delegate and a telecommunications delegate are required to replace the delegates completing their mission and to install the telecommunications equipment. Secondly, with regard to financial resources, although part of the projects are funded locally such as the refugee assistance project and the project to assist persons victims of sexual violence, funding has still not been secured for several projects presented in appeal 2001. Based on last year's results, a funding strategy must be put in place for the Congo so as to guarantee stable financial support for the coming two years.

External relations/government/UN

Relations with operational partners are excellent and the projects carried out with UNHCR and UNFPA support were renewed this year. Regular contacts have been established with the delegation of the European Commission to whom some of the projects in appeal 2001 have been submitted. Frequent meetings are held with the Ministry of Health, both at the level of the general directorate and of the general directorates (e.g. general directorate for the population, directorate for humanitarian action as well as with the departments responsible for AIDS, polio and malaria). Visits were made to the UN agencies to present the CRC and Federation plan of action for 2001. Given their very positive reactions, new partnerships are quite likely with UNICEF, UNDP and FAO. Every month OCHA gives details on the different actions carried out by the CRC/Federation in the Congo in its paper. Finally, the CRC published, with ICRC funding, the first CRC 2001 paper, one more occasion to disseminate information on the Red Cross in the country.

Contributions

See annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

The considerable work carried out last year enabled the CRC to rebuild its network throughout the country and to reopen 10 regional committees. The Federation's support programme this year builds on this to forge ahead and to put into practice the CRC's development plan. In full harmony with the ARCHI 2010 programme, the CRC plans to strengthen its health activities for the most vulnerable persons. During this first quarter the polio programme was strengthened and the programme to support the reproductive health structures and to assist persons victims of sexual violence was pursued. In the same way the AIDS programme was reconsidered so as to enhance the impact of future CRC actions in this field. Despite these positive results funding remains limited and the investments made last year may be lost if the difficulties with funding and with obtaining delegates continue. This is a real threat for the Federation's plan of action this year and steps must be taken immediately to develop a long-term financing strategy for the Federation's programme in the Congo.

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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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Congo Republic						ANNEX 1
APPEAL No. 01.08/2001		PLEDGES RECEIVED				04/25/01
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
CASH						
REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->				3,087,372		TOTAL COVERAGE 16.9%
CASH CARRIED FORWARD						
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES - RC		5,000	USD	8,140	20.02.01	REFUGEES IN CENTRAL AFRICA
UNHCR - 410(A)		1,732,998,687	XAF	406,388	13.03.01	
UNHCR - 400(B)		28,897,500	XAF	67,765	13.03.01	
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				482,293	CHF	15.6%
KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL)						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SWITZERLAND RC	DELEGATE			40,000	03/24/01	HEALTH DELEGATE
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES				40,000	CHF	1.3%
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:						