

WEST AFRICA

REGIONAL PROGRAMMES

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The Regional Delegation (RD) was established in 1990 and today covers 16 West African countries, of which eight are classified among the world's poorest. The region is prone to reoccurring disasters such as floods, droughts, famine and epidemics, as well as political instability and armed conflicts. Since the beginning of the 1990s, the region has been traumatised by civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone, resulting in hundreds of thousands of internally displaced and causing a refugee influx into neighbouring countries. The failing economies in many of these countries contribute to increasing poverty levels among the already vulnerable population with decreasing government expenditure on health and social services. The alarming spread of HIV/AIDS is a major public health concern, as sub-Saharan Africa accounts for over 60% of the world's total number of adults living with HIV (estimated at 13.3 million people). The region is also regularly affected by meningitis and cholera epidemics.

During its first six years the Regional Delegation's programmes focused on: Community Based First Aid; institutional and resource development; information, gender and telecommunications. It has also been actively involved in providing administrative and logistical support to various relief operations.

The ongoing regional change process started in 1995 — stressing the importance of the regional concept and the philosophy of regional co-operation — gained momentum after the fourth Pan African Conference in Kampala. Regional and sub-regional co-operation, use of human resources from the region and support to so called "forgotten" National Societies (NSs) are top priorities. NS representatives from the region have selected six 'priority NSs' — Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mauritania, Niger and Nigeria who had received the least partnership support.

In 1997 the regional Plan of Action was formally approved including task force work, sub-regional co-operation and regional programmes co-ordinated by the Regional Delegation. Three task forces representing all 16 NSs were established to ensure implementation of the Kampala Declaration in the areas of Health, Fund-raising and Vulnerability. In addition, a Regional Advisory Group on Institutional Matters was established.

One of the main aims for the Regional Delegation in 1997 was to increase competency in relief interventions. As the Côte d'Ivoire country delegation was merged into the RD, the latter took responsibility for the relief operation for Liberian refugees in Côte d'Ivoire. The new relief operations in Mauritania

and Niger also came under the RD's co-ordination.

During the year, health and gender aspects were expanded in regional programming and the RD continued to use regional resources through short term consultancies carried out by Red Cross/Red Crescent professionals from within the region.

To strengthen its ability to support NSs the RD filled six new delegate positions: development, health, relief co-ordination, reporting, telecommunications and Logistics.

Objectives in 1998

To implement the Regional Plan of Action based on the Strategic Work Plan and the Kampala Declaration;

to increase co-operation between NSs in the region;

to increase the number of partnerships between Operating and Participating NSs;

to develop and further use regional resources;

to contribute to the realisation of working as a Federation;

to improve the NSs' regional, national and community-based disaster preparedness;

to improve the NSs' regional, national and local relief intervention competencies and capacities;

to increase capacities and financial sustainability of the NSs;

to improve the health status of the most vulnerable people in the region;

to increase the visibility and understanding of Red Cross/Red Crescent principles, programmes and operations;

to ensure that gender aspects are considered in programme planning and implementation.

Programmes in 1998

Regional Development Programme

Each NS's development plan is built within a regional planning framework in order to efficiently use resources available in the region. The specific capacity building needs in West Africa involve increasing NSs' local resources and their financial self-reliance. In 1997 the Regional Delegation facilitated NS self-assessment processes and preparation of development plans, organised resource development training, assisted fund-raising strategy elaboration and the establishment of financial procedures. The fund-raising Task Force started the formulation of a regional strategy for resource development and the regional advisory group on institutional matters met to discuss issues related to governance, proper management and NS image.

Plan of Action:

Institutional Development:

Organise for Niger, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau and Mali a training workshop for human resource building in the areas of programme planning and management.

Organise a regional workshop on good governance for NS Presidents and Secretaries General.

Organise self-assessment workshops for the NSs of Liberia, Mali and Mauritania.

Follow-up on the implementation of national development plans for Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, Mauritania, Niger and Côte d'Ivoire.

Organise two meetings of the Task Force on institutional development.

Assist the Praia group - representing NSs from the southern sub-region - with its institutional development programme.

Organise exchange visits between NSs on institutional development.

Co-ordinate the activities of Development Delegates based in Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Liberia,

Niger, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

Organise two meetings for the regional working group to follow-up the regional plan of action.

Resource development:

Follow-up on the fund-raising Task Force work started in 1997.

Organise a Task Force meeting to finalise the regional fund-raising strategy.

Organise a regional meeting to approve the fund-raising strategy and launch its application on regional development programme.

Organise a Task Force meeting to plan the first regional fund-raising event and the regional sponsorship programme.

Co-ordinate a regional fund-raising event.

Provide technical assistance on resource development with special attention given to those 'priority' NSs chosen during the NSs' strategy meeting.

Train resource development personnel and volunteers to develop their skills and competencies, with special attention given to the 'priority' NSs.

Organise a regional workshop for resource development officers.

Organise exchange visits on resource development.

Provide technical assistance from the Finance and Administration Departments for 'priority' NSs.

Follow-up on the implementation of financial procedures in Gambia, Guinea-Bissau and Nigeria.

Provide financial management assistance on request.

Regional Disaster Preparedness (DP) Programme

Disaster Preparedness cannot be considered as an entirely separate activity as it is also implicitly part of other activities such as relief, logistics, health, development, training, etc, at regional, national and community levels. The Regional Delegation has integrated DP components throughout its regional programmes while also developing a separate regional strategy entirely focused on DP. The Vulnerability Task Force, composed of NS representatives, was established in 1997 to study vulnerability and capacity region-wide. The action plan for 1998 is based on the recommendations made by representatives of all NSs during the 1997 regional needs assessment workshop in Abidjan.

Plan of Action:

Organise a regional workshop on DP for all 16 NSs to increase their understanding of the concept and components of DP as it applies to West Africa.

Visit four NSs to assess the capacity and vulnerability to cope with disasters.

Assess the needs of each NS based on the outcomes of these visits while placing particular emphasis on their respective degrees of vulnerability to disaster.

Organise two meetings for the Vulnerability Task Force to analyse a standard survey on DP sent to each NS and to proceed with the implementation plan.

Relief Co-ordination Programme

Population movements, floods, droughts and epidemics are recurrent disasters in West Africa. The Regional Delegation aims to strengthen NSs' competencies and capacities for emergency local interventions and longer relief operations. This relief support started in 1996 through regional operations in Benin, Burkina Faso, Niger and Nigeria, followed by the appointment of a Regional Relief Co-ordination Delegate in 1997. The RD provided substantial relief support to operations in Niger, Côte d'Ivoire and Mauritania.

Increasing human resource capacities, operational support and training activities are essential to provide effective relief assistance. NSs in the region need to strengthen their capacities to assess and respond quicker to emergencies. Well-designed interventions need to be developed based on regional know-how to ensure operational cost effectiveness adapted to local needs.

The Regional Delegation is aiming to improve regional relief response competencies and capacities by making better use of existing and potential regional resources.

Plan of Action:

Design standard needs assessment procedures adapted to West African types of disasters.

Train relief staff to use a regional standard guide for needs assessments.

Train and utilise regional relief human resources in operations so that up to five Relief Administrators and five Finance/Administration Delegates from the region become skilled and available for any Federation emergency response in the region or elsewhere.

Create a regional logistics service with the capacity to respond to operational emergency requirements of NSs and delegations.

Improve the telecommunication network in liaison with ICRC (assessment, maintenance, training and some equipment).

Supervise ongoing relief operations' needs assessments, appeals, reports, operational follow-up and evaluations.

Regional Health Programme

The Regional Delegation and the NSs have expanded their Community Based First Aid (CBFA) programme started in 1991 to become a global health programme in 1997. CBFA remains a basic programme from which disaster preparedness is developed through training of volunteers in case of emergency. Health DP is also integrated into regional and national level programmes.

The Health Task Force representing NSs will work on needs already identified for the region, with particular emphasis on HIV/AIDS issues.

The RD's regional health programme will continue to promote networking and use skills and expertise available in the region. A surveillance team composed of NS health professionals was created in 1997 to provide expertise in the areas of health programme management and emergency response, such as epidemic outbreaks. In response to meningitis outbreaks the affected NSs — through the International Co-ordinating group (UNICEF, Médecins Sans Frontières, WHO and the Federation) — assisted close to 60,000 beneficiaries in the first half of 1997 and 48,000 people affected by cholera in 14 countries by providing vaccines, medical supplies and financial support.

Plan of Action:

In 1998 and into 1999 the Regional Health Programme will:

Organise an annual sub-regional meeting with Anglophone and Francophone countries to monitor and evaluate the new integrated health aspects.

Exchange information between NSs and the RD on ongoing programmes on a quarterly basis.

Organise two meetings of the surveillance team to analyse and propose strategies to NSs in need.

Organise two training workshops on HIV/AIDS and Reproductive Health issues.

Utilise health programme staff of more experienced NSs (Ghana, Togo, Gambia, Benin) to help other NSs with similar programmes.

Facilitate the co-ordination of ten work visits between members of the HIV/AIDS network.

Include six new country members to the HIV/AIDS network (Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde, Liberia, Nigeria and Guinea Conakry).

Systematically recruit competent and appropriate health professionals for short/long-term health assignments in the region.

Continue to provide technical and financial assistance for the development of CBFA programme planning in seven NSs (among which are Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, Mali).

Provide intensive overall assistance to the four countries with new CBFA programmes (Niger, Mauritania, Cape Verde and Senegal).

Finance and co-ordinate the exchange of regional CBFA resource persons (12 exchange visits) who will assist NSs in all stages of the programme including Training of Trainers workshops.

Evaluate the first aid programmes of eight NSs - Senegal, Mauritania, Niger, Cape Verde, Benin, Togo, Gambia, Sierra Leone.

Provide technical support to six NSs (Burkina Faso, Benin, Togo, Gambia, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire) to develop fund-raising activity plans using first aid and provide them with financial support to implement such activities.

Regional Information/Reporting Programme

To highlight the purpose and actions of the Federation/NSs in the region, the Regional Delegation established an Information service in 1995. Faced with recurring disasters in the region and the difficulty of getting crucial information from NSs, a Regional Information Network was created in 1997 to collect information, establish a regional data base and provide technical assistance.

Reporting in the region is an increasing priority as it is the main official tool of communication reflecting Red Cross/Red Crescent activities. The RD will help NSs to provide quality reports, and also directly report on Federation operations in the region to the Federation Secretariat and donors.

Plan of action:

Hold a regional meeting to assess the strengths and needs of the regional information network based on the recommendations of the 1997 Abidjan seminar during which the network was created.

Hold a regional communication training workshop attended by the 16 NSs in order to strengthen the skills of the regional information network and develop reporting techniques.

Publish a newsletter in co-ordination with NSs covering region-wide ongoing headlines on RC activities.

Continue to contribute to Federation publications by providing news stories and articles.

Provide technical assistance and training to NSs in information/dissemination.

Establish a documentation centre in the RD for distribution of relevant material on the region.

Gender Issues

Bearing in mind cultural and economical realities of the region, the Regional Delegation is attempting to address the differences in needs, constraints, opportunities and responsibilities between men and women while assisting the most vulnerable. Based on social-cultural and economic realities of the region, gender issues in West Africa specifically need to address the issue of women and development. Indeed financial and decision-making inequalities between genders significantly contribute to the vulnerability of women. In an attempt to begin to overcome this tendency, the Regional Delegation's gender issues programme prioritises awareness-building and training in each NS Task Force.

Plan of Action:

Organise a regional gender-awareness meeting for NS leaders.

Support four feasibility studies organised by NSs for women in development projects.

Facilitate eight national workshops on 'gender issues' awareness-building.

Analyse 'gender issues'-related vulnerability and capacity in two NSs.

Take part in the regional reproductive health seminars by providing counselling services on gender issues.

Support the launching of two savings and credit pilot projects in Benin and Gambia.

Priority National Societies

In the spirit of the Kampala Declaration, the National Societies of the region have selected six 'priority NSs' - Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mauritania, Niger and Nigeria - who had received the least

partnership support.

Guinea

The Red Cross of Guinea is still a very weak National Society. It has devoted most of its effort to the assistance operation for refugees; its institutional and resource development has suffered from this. Institutional and resource development will be reactivated by recruiting two ID leaders and organising a training seminar for staff. At the local level, two workshops per region will be held during the year.

Guinea Bissau

Guinea-Bissau is marked by poor health structures, serious sanitation and drinking water problems in the main towns, densely populated areas around Bissau and a very limited education system. The Red Cross Society of Guinea-Bissau is in a critical situation and needs to launch a long-term development process to improve training and resources, enhance the functioning of management bodies and initiate activities directed at the most vulnerable sectors of the population.

In 1998 the NS intends to set up a water and sanitation programme, and to establish a health centre at its headquarters. Other steps include: the recruitment of a programme co-ordinator; the establishment of an administrative and financial procedures system; and the start-up of two income-generating projects. Early in the year, a volunteer recruitment programme will be launched along with a campaign to enhance the NS's image.

Liberia

The Liberian Red Cross has been very active during the war years, making numerous humanitarian interventions that benefited over 300,000 people. It will continue in 1998, providing shelter, health, water and sanitation, relief and other services to 350,000 beneficiaries.

The institutional capacity of the LRCS will be strengthened in 1998 through the acquiring of basic infrastructure, logistics and training for staff and volunteers at headquarters and chapter levels.

Mauritania

Half of Mauritania's 2,300,000 people endure deep poverty and frequent outbreaks of contagious diseases like cholera and meningitis owing to poor hygiene. In 1998 the Mauritanian Red Crescent Society intends to train senior officials, particularly in the branches, and to provide material support for institutional development.

Twenty community hygiene promotion posts will be established in vulnerable areas of the capital, and a disaster preparedness plan will be elaborated. Under a health and nutrition programme 56 volunteers will be trained for basic health units and 13 nutritional rehabilitation centres established.

Niger

The country is at the heart of the Sahel and is periodically subject to drought in the north and to diseases, such as cholera, meningitis and yellow fever, which are becoming endemic. The socio-economic situation is precarious (infant mortality of 125 per 1,000, life expectancy of 45 years and poor access to health services). The National Society faces acknowledged inadequacies in training of officials and shortage of material resources. Through its 1997-1999 Development Plan it means to remedy these shortcomings and initiate its development.

All NS bodies will be renewed in 1998, staff will be trained in administration and programme management and equipment at branch headquarters will be updated. A disaster preparedness plan will be elaborated, eight teams of 20 relief workers will be trained and a store of emergency relief equipment will be established.

Seven community projects for the most vulnerable will be undertaken through an anti-vulnerability programme. Meanwhile, 20 people will be trained in fund-raising strategy and four profitable projects will be financed to increase resources.

Nigeria

Nigeria's economy has been deteriorating for several years, with a large external debt, a 70% devaluation in the currency and a sharp rise in unemployment. This has led to a decline in the social and health status of its people and periodic outbreaks of infectious diseases. Elections, scheduled for 1998 could prove to be another difficult and dangerous period.

The Nigerian Red Cross has recently undergone radical organisational and administrative change aimed at improving its capacity to assist its most vulnerable populations.

The ***Institutional Development Programme*** envisages recruitment of extra staff, training for management and monitoring/reporting procedures, the development of a national accounting system throughout the 37 branches, fund-raising activities and a new office building.

Under the ***Disaster Preparedness Programme*** emergency squads of volunteers will be trained in each of the 37 branches, radios and pactors provided, basic relief stocks (non-food) supplied to all branches, and the telecommunication systems in Kaduna, Ibadan, Kano, Port Harcourt and Enugu branches upgraded.

The ***Community Based Health Programme*** will oversee Training of Trainers health workshops, community health activities and the construction of wells and latrines with the assistance of a Water and Sanitation Delegate.