

SOUTHERN AFRICA: REGIONAL PROGRAMMES

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This Situation Report provides an update and overview of regional activities in the Southern Africa region during July - September, 1998. Three major challenges characterize the situation: the conflict in the DRC and the resulting threat of a refugee influx from the DRC to Zambia, the drought situation in the southern provinces of Zimbabwe, and the post election violence in Lesotho. Red Cross/Red Crescent actions to meet the challenges encountered have either been taken or are under consideration.

The context

The threat of a refugee influx from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) into Zambia has been a preoccupation for the Regional Delegation to make sure that preparedness measures are in place to provide a minimum level of Red Cross capacity to respond. Resources have been dedicated to this, and more particularly when (towards the end of the quarter), developments in the National Society threatened to constrain its capacity in the short term. Steps have been taken to identify standby personnel in the Region to assist if a sudden large influx should occur.

The drought situation, particularly in the two southern provinces of Zimbabwe, has been the subject of an assessment. After several years of below normal rainfall and short rains in 1997/98 that left no or very little harvest for many people in this region, food shortages are becoming critical. Statistics show under-nutrition among under five year olds and school age children are suffering with school drop out rates increasing as energy levels fall. The assessment, which has required a substantial investment of time and energy in collecting statistics both in the field and in Harare, consultation with government officials, famine early warning organizations, as well as the UN and other agencies, will result in an appeal in October. The beneficiaries for a feeding programme for six months will be carefully targeted and a water and sanitation programme will address the needs of people who are facing special water stress.

The South African Red Cross General Assembly was held in August and was attended by the Federation President, ICRC Vice President, Director of the Africa Department, among others. The meeting was an opportunity for the branches to voice concerns about the support received and the organizational constraints. The problem of the National Office to cover financial needs was highlighted. A strategic plan for the Society to agree on the way forward was worked upon, but at the end of the quarter, there were still clear resource constraints in following through on the results of the General Assembly. At one level of support in helping to address the problems, the Regional Delegation has pursued its plan for the assessment team to visit towards the end of the year, but in October, as the

Society decided to cut its National Office by 50%, a request was made to postpone the assessment until February/March 1999.

The Southern Africa Region was the first to implement the training programme for Regional Recruitment of Delegates and Training Programme. A consultant and a trained Delegation staff member ran two workshops in Harare and Gaborone to train National Society in recruitment procedures for the selection of personnel from the Region for a Basic Training Course planned to be held in the third quarter of 1999. All National Societies, except Namibia, had representatives attend. The workshops were acclaimed not only for the training given in relation to identifying future delegates from the Region, but also for the human resource skills provided which apply more specifically to the Societies' work.

Latest events

The quarter was marked by regional events affecting SADC. The attack by a rebel group on the Government of the DRC in early August resulted in a split in the SADC group as **Zimbabwe, Angola** and **Namibia** took an initiative (under the umbrella of the SADC) to send troops to support the DRC Government at the critical point when Kinshasa was about to fall. The intervention was seen initially by **South Africa** as inappropriate, and taken without the sanction of the SADC. South Africa's position was later clarified to that of support to a SADC leader through a search for a political solution - rather than military.

The subsequent military intervention by **South Africa** and **Botswana** in **Lesotho** to quell the civil disturbance, also under the guise of SADC, led to further splits in the SADC family.

The 1998 Summit of SADC was held in Mauritius on 14 September. The above issues were on the agenda. President Chiluba of **Zambia** was asked to mediate between the government and the rebels in DRC. Other items included the political developments in Angola, the constitutional process in **Swaziland** where the monarchy has committed itself to an exercise of rewriting the constitution, the slump of currencies in **South Africa** and **Zimbabwe** and the slow progress with the ratification of SADC protocols. Predictably, the Summit ended with a statement of political accord.

At the end of the period, the situation in **Lesotho** remained very unstable. The demonstrations that started in May after allegations of vote rigging in the general election erupted into violence after the release of the Langa Report. This report had been prepared by a commission comprising representatives of three SADC countries (Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe) and was released after some delay which was viewed particularly by opposition members as the period needed by the regional politicians to whitewash the findings. The request for external military intervention by the Prime Minister to maintain control led to looting and a rampage that left Maseru and two other main towns severely damaged. Efforts to find a political solution remained unsolved at the end of September with the opposition demanding a place in a transitional government in the lead up to new elections in 15 - 18 months time.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Disaster Preparedness •

The Regional Disaster Preparedness Delegate spent three weeks in September, with the Regional Water and Sanitation Officer and Zambia Red Cross DP Officer, making an extensive survey of the areas

where refugee influxes from DRC could be expected. At potential entry points Refugee Reception Core Groups, each of three Red Cross volunteers, have been identified to assist with reception. Further work has been identified as being needed in training 68 volunteers in aspects of programme and camp management. UNHCR contingency plans have formed the basis for the preparedness work, with Red Cross expected to assist at all reception centers and in camp management in North and Luapula Provinces.

Work continues with the inventory of National Societies' capacities with a view to determining development needs. Lesotho, Malawi and Zambia have completed their first drafts on availability and distribution of human and material resources and follow up with each Society has been conducted to plan and promote strengthening of disaster preparedness. In Malawi, this process is being managed in concert with the Institutional Development Programme and the thrust to develop key pilot branches with integrated programme activities.

The value of a good preparedness was demonstrated by the Lesotho Red Cross which maintained essential first aid services throughout the period of demonstrations and disturbance in Lesotho. The Regional Delegation maintained regular contact, though once the military intervention took place, the ICRC assumed the lead role in support to Lesotho Red Cross. On the South African side of the border, some 4,000 - mostly Indian and Chinese traders - sought temporary asylum. South African Red Cross provided two teams with field kitchens in Ladybrand to take care of up to 1,800 people for several days until the population dispersed and became small enough for local NGOs to manage.

Health •

The Wits University Health management course, with 10 participants from 7 National Societies, concluded with the last study block in August. There has been very positive feedback on the value of this course in building management capacity in the National Societies.

Three seed funding applications have been processed and approved during the period. Experience shows that most of the projects are submitted only after personal contacts with branch level personnel.

The Regional Health Delegate submitted to the South Africa Red Cross General Assembly a proposal for a strategic planning approach to the work of the Society. This was an outcome of an earlier assessment of health and disaster preparedness programming. Well received, the challenge remains to develop further the process and support management to elaborate a clear strategic plan and prioritize implementation.

An evaluation of a Bavarian/German Red Cross Community Health Project in Malawi helped in clarifying issues on project management for the National Society. While the design of the project was judged to be sound, the implementation failed on several counts.

Institutional and Resource Development •

The Regional ID RD Programme completed its pilot year in July and evaluation by Secretaries General from nine National Societies took place. The outcome was positive though Programme Purpose, Objectives and Strategies were modified to take effect from the beginning of 1999. In particular, there was support for the Regional Delegation's approach of targeting selected National Societies with financial and technical assistance and for the need to strengthen the integration of ID RD activities with other programmes to optimize the impact on capacity building and sustainability. National Societies are also being encouraged to make their own budgetary allocations to fund capacity building initiatives.

Planning was in place by the end of the quarter for a series of eight provincial, one national and one National Executive workshops on governance for Zimbabwe Red Cross. These will take place during the fourth quarter, extending orientation for governance right down to district level. It is planned that this will become a learning exercise with exchanges with other National Societies.

In August, a Regional Good Governance Workshop was held for all Presidents and Secretaries General of the SAPRCS National Societies. Facilitated by a consultant from Britain and with inputs from the Geneva Secretariat, British Red Cross and a South African NGO development organization, the Workshop proved to be both a learning exercise and an occasion for formulating plans at a National Society level to strengthen governance and management relationships and better define roles and responsibilities.

The Head of Regional Delegation led a weekend orientation session for the National Executive Committee of the Namibia Red Cross. Conducted jointly with the ICRC, it is planned to extend this approach to other National Societies, especially with those with new boards.

Branch development activities continued, especially with Malawi Red Cross project to establish functioning pilot branches with a strong activity base. The work of the consultant employed to implement the resource development project for Swaziland began and was on schedule by the end of the quarter.

The work on strengthening financial management continued with Mozambique Red Cross. The Finance Development delegate also spent time in Namibia, introducing and setting up a new accounting software package and training staff in its use. At the end of the period, data was still being inputted for 1998 but the system was capable of generating timely and user friendly reports both for management and for individual donors. The software package will be available for introduction to other National Societies in the Region.

Water and Sanitation •

In Swaziland, the first pilot irrigation project is now operational. Two more are planned before the end of the year. An exchange with a water engineer from Angola Red Cross was planned for October as a means to generate mutual benefits from use of resources in the Region.

In Mozambique, the inability to transfer funds until working advances are cleared has delayed the programme but some funds were released, as an interim measure, under the direct oversight of the Federation to allow planned activities in Niassa, Manica and Sofala Provinces to proceed.

With the support of the Regional Health Delegate, the Regional Water and Sanitation Delegate worked with Namibia Red Cross to review its overall Society strategic plan and to produce a project proposal for the 1999-2000 for the combined Water and Sanitation and Health Education project in northern Namibia. The bi-lateral delegate for the Netherlands Red Cross project in North Kunene left during the period and the Federation is supporting the continuation of the project while negotiations continue on possible Netherlands continued involvement.

Assistance has been given to Zambia Red Cross in preparation for the appointment of a Water and Sanitation Officer to implement a project in the south of the country. A project document (produced in Malawi with help from the Regional Delegation) for the introduction of a two year programme in Malawi is almost complete and will provide for a first phase of six months to rehabilitate existing water points and a second phase of eighteen months for new construction activities. A geo-physical survey for borehole drillings in Midland Province, Zimbabwe, has now been arranged to implement a delayed drought follow-on project halted until previous drought accounts were satisfactorily furnished.

A Federation Water and Sanitation trainee, Sian Abdullah, from the Kuala Lumpur Regional Delegation spent four weeks in the Region. She was given the opportunity to learn more about development orientated approaches to Water and Sanitation activities and to practically apply her skills.

Mozambique •

Sadly, the Secretary General of MRCS, Mr. Celestino Dingongo, died in September. Mrs. Fernanda Teixeira has been Acting Secretary General for much of the year, as well as covering her responsibility as Director of the Institutional Development Department. The capacity of the Society has been further

stretched by the fact that the Director of Programmes has been on three months maternity leave and the Health Programme Co-ordinator has been serving as a Federation delegate in Guinea-Bissau.

The General Assembly planned for the end of July had to be postponed till the end of the year for lack of funds necessary to hold the meeting, including covering travel expenses for provincial representatives.

The problems associated with reconciliation and liquidation of outstanding working advances to Mozambique Red Cross continued to hold up project implementation. The Regional Delegation's Finance Development Delegate continues to work with MRCS to solve this problem. In the meantime further transfers of funds have had to be held up. In an attempt to find a way forward and recognizing that some MRCS project managers are well able to report on funds advanced, a proposal for dealing with cash requests and advances on a project by project basis was submitted to Geneva. The Cholera Operation, funded by the Federation Appeal, was completed during the period, except for funding received towards the end of the operational period.

Work on the identification and verification of indemnities and arrears owing at the end of 1997 was completed at the end of the period and attempts are now being made by the Federation to assist the Society in clearing these, both to meet its liabilities and to avoid legal action threatened under the country's labor law.

Outstanding needs

An Information Bulletin for Zimbabwe Drought has been launched and CHF 600,000 are needed to purchase food items from local resources.

The Regional Delegation is urgently looking for a fully funded Development Delegate with IFRC developmental field experience and availability to travel extensively within the region.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

Close co-operation with ICRC Delegations in Harare and Pretoria continued throughout the period though, with commitments to the appeal process in both institutions, the work on exploring ways to strengthen functional co-operation was less structured during the period.

Visits to the Region included representatives of the Australian, British, Danish, Finnish, German, Icelandic and Norwegian Red Cross Societies.

Besides contacts with the EU and UNDP Representatives in Harare, many diplomatic missions were briefed on the Red Cross efforts to assess the drought situation in Zimbabwe, the concern over possible influx of refugees into Zambia and, in both Lusaka and Windhoek, contacts were made with UNHCR.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

Three major events have affected the work of the Regional Delegation in Harare the past three months: the threat of a refugee influx from the DRC into Zambia, the drought situation in the southern provinces

of Zimbabwe and the post-elections violence in Lesotho. Preparations are made to receive a refugee influx in Zambia, an Information Bulletin has been launched regarding the Drought in Zimbabwe and ways to strengthen the capacity of the National Society to manage such events in the future are studied together with ICRC. Finally, the South Africa Red Cross General Assembly was held in August, as well as a Regional Good Governance Workshop for all Presidents and Secretaries General of the SAPRCS National Societies.

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