

WEST AFRICA

REGIONAL PROGRAMMES

CHF 3,082,000

Programme no 01.04/99

Introduction

Since the 1990s, the 16-country region covered by the Regional Delegation in Abidjan is affected by conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Senegal's Casamance region, and more recently in Guinea Bissau - resulting in hundreds of thousands of internally displaced and causing a refugee influx into neighbouring countries. In 1998, the region again saw a lot of political instability, with presidential elections in Togo and Mali. Healthwise, mortality rates due to epidemics remain high in the region. The most common among them include cholera, meningitis, yellow fever and hepatitis A. The spread of HIV/AIDS is constantly rising in the region, with sub-Saharan Africa accounting for 68% of the world's total number of people infected by HIV in 1997.

West Africa is prone to recurring disasters such as floods, droughts, famine and epidemics, as well as political instability and armed conflicts. To better cope with these challenges, the Federation and National Societies are pursuing a policy of regional co-operation. It calls for the use of human resources from the region, as well as for support to so-called "priority" National Societies that receive the least partnership support: Mali, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mauritania, Niger and Nigeria.

Objectives

- To contribute to building the capacity of all National Societies in the region through institutional and resource development measures, with an emphasis on effective governance and management.
- To improve the National Societies' ability to meet health threats through the promotion of community-based first aid, and prevention of and response to epidemics, including HIV/AIDS.
- To co-ordinate relief operations in the region (except the Liberian, Guinea and Sierra Leonean operations).
- To improve National Society capacity in disaster preparedness and response.

- To contribute to the integration of women into regional Red Cross/Red Crescent structures and programmes.
- To provide regional services in information, reporting, finance, and logistics to all National Societies in the region.

Programmes

Development

Governance

The objectives of the Regional Governance Programme, established by the 16 National Societies and co-ordinated by the Regional Delegation, are to add West African priorities to the new Strategic Work Plan of the Federation; to assist West African member Societies to participate in the Federation's statutory bodies more effectively; to follow-up on the Regional Plan of Action; and to assist the West African National Societies to prepare for the next Pan-African Conference in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.

Plan of Action

- Conduct two preparatory meetings for regional members of the Executive Council, and follow-up on the General Assembly and the International Conference during meetings/missions in 1999.
- Collect from senior National Society staff feedback and suggestions on regional priorities for the Strategic Work Plan during meetings and missions held throughout the year.
- Hold three Regional Working Group meetings to review the Regional Plan of Action. Hold a Regional Partnership Meeting.
- Set priorities for the Pan-African Conference via the Regional Working Group, starting in 1999; assist the Burkina Faso Red Cross to organise the meeting in the autumn of 2000.

Capacity Building

The objectives of the Regional Capacity Building Programme are to strengthen the National Societies' human and institutional resources with an emphasis on gender aspects; to follow up on the implementation of national development plans of National Societies; to develop their resource development capacities to increase their financial self-reliance; to provide assistance on development aspects of disaster preparedness and response programmes and relief operations; to promote sub-regional co-operation and information exchange between National Societies and with other organisations; to establish a pool of resource persons in the region on institutional and resource development; to assist in the regional co-ordination of development co-operation between West African National Societies and sister Societies, as well as other partners (NGOs, UN etc.); and to establish a regional development fund through contributions from National Societies in the region and partner Societies.

Plan of Action

- Use human resources from the region to conduct Good Governance assessments. Facilitate exchange visits between National Societies. Provide technical assistance to them in training, self-assessment and national development plans. Specific attention will be given to six priority National Societies during 1999.
- Ensure that each national development plan includes a gender component to be monitored by the respective "gender contacts" by end of 1999. Promote the representation of women in local branches.
- Follow-up on implementation of national development plans with specific attention to four National Societies in 1999. Co-ordinate assistance provided by sister Societies to West African National Societies and by the development delegates based in 10 Societies.
- Provide technical assistance in resource development, including financial management. Specific attention will be given to six National Societies in 1999. Develop an information tool illustrating successful resource development programmes.
- Establish a regional development fund aiming at supporting pilot revenue generating projects. Establish indicators to measure progress of local funding and of National Society self-reliance. Establish and maintain contacts with private companies and organisations in the region to promote sponsorship.
- Provide, with the Regional Finance Unit, technical assistance for the elaboration of administrative/financial procedures in three priority National Societies and organise two workshops on financial management for accountants of National Societies.
- Organise a marketing workshop for National Society information staff and provide technical support to fund-raising events. Assist National Societies in producing and selling first aid kits.
- Support the establishment and/or reinforcement of local Red Cross/Red Crescent committees, based on needs set by disaster preparedness and relief operations.
- Facilitate an evaluation meeting with the members of the Praia group. Promote the development of a sub-regional network between national Societies of Togo, Ghana and Benin.

Health

In health, the regional priorities are epidemics, HIV/AIDS and Community-Based First Aid (CBFA). As the common practice of female genital mutilation in West Africa often causes serious health problems, this gender issue is integrated into the Regional Health Programme. Specific objectives include to continue to: prepare for and respond to epidemics at regional and national levels; to provide and/or expand the awareness campaigns on the prevention of HIV/AIDS; to provide support for basic health care services of National Societies; to facilitate and co-ordinate the implementation of national CBFA programmes; and to contribute to reducing and eventually eradicating female genital mutilation in order to combat the related health issues.

Plan of Action

- Train and update the Epidemics Surveillance Team for emergency intervention in collaboration with the Regional Logistics Centre. This team will in turn conduct training on prevention and response in countries most exposed to epidemics.

- Facilitate six exchange visits between members of the HIV/AIDS network to give National Societies technical support in their activities against HIV/AIDS and to extend this network from six to 16 National Societies in West Africa by the year 2000. Organise one workshop on HIV/AIDS and reproductive health.

- Conduct two training workshops to support National Society health staff in five countries on basic health care activities, drug administration and case management. Hold a meeting to evaluate the Regional Health Programme in 1999. Provide support to community-based primary health education to promote mother and child health care and family planning.

- Continue to support the development of the CBFA programmes of 12 National Societies. Give overall assistance to three National Societies now in the early stages of their CBFA programme development. Promote the promulgation of first aid laws with governments in the region. Promote the first aid theme for Red Cross/Red Crescent Day with five National Societies.

- Organise a workshop for the regional gender trainers' team on reproductive and environmental health, emphasising female genital mutilation. The trainers will in turn disseminate information and undertake workshops within their National Societies on health hazards related to the issues.

- Use the Regional Logistics Centre to support National Society health programmes in collaboration with partners like WHO, UNCHR, UNICEF, AMP, UNAIDS. Provide support for two years to communities in four countries in their water/sanitation projects.

Relief coordination

In 1999 the Regional Relief Programme seeks to strengthen regional relief co-ordination and operation management; to improve regional relief capacities by using regional human resources in relief operations; to improve needs assessment capacities; and to include capacity building activities in relief operations.

Plan of Action

- Provide operational support in relief co-ordination and management training; operations finance/accounting; logistics; reporting/information; to assist National Societies and delegations to design and manage operations from needs assessments to final evaluations.

- Initiate and/or reinforce contacts with potential donors to raise funds for Red Cross/Red Crescent relief operations.

- Use and contribute to the disaster preparedness data bank for relief information and regional human resources.
- Use relief and first aid capacities at the local level, and include development objectives in local relief operations.
- Integrate income-generating projects and capacity building activities into relief operations targeting vulnerable women. Integrate family planning, social counselling, gender education, hygiene/environmental health and nutrition.

Disaster Preparedness and Response

Strengthening Disaster Response Capacities

As West Africa is a region susceptible to natural disasters, political instability and conflicts, the Regional Delegation seeks to support National Societies to increase their disaster preparedness and response capacities. The objectives are to identify potential disasters by risk-mapping and by developing a National Society capacity data bank; to improve National Society preparedness while building their response capacity; to continue Vulnerability & Capacity Assessment (VCA) training; and to establish a regional disaster preparedness plan by the end of 1999.

Plan of Action

- Continue to develop a region-wide data bank on potential threats and National Society capacity, in co-operation with all regional programmes and other organisations. Enlarge data bank with regional Red Cross/Red Crescent human resources, logistics and other elements essential to disaster response.
- Provide six National Societies with technical assistance to establish a disaster preparedness plan. Establish sub-regional co-operation between National Societies facing the same threats.
- Organise a VCA in three countries with 10 trained resource persons from the region and an expert team leader. Support and follow-up VCAs in other countries.
- Co-ordinate the development of a regional disaster preparedness and response plan, and integrate it into other regional programmes.
- Draw up a new regional disaster preparedness and response policy in general. With the Secretariat and PNSs, negotiate to integrate disaster preparedness into the 5th Lomé Convention.

Gender Programme

Gender issues in West Africa focus primarily on women and development, as financial and decision-making inequalities significantly contribute to women's vulnerability. This programme addresses the differences in needs, opportunities and responsibilities between

genders through awareness building and gender integration in National Societies. Female genital mutilation, performed in 15 of the 16 countries, remains a key issue. The primary objectives of the gender programme are to continue promoting gender awareness among senior National Society staff and to integrate the women and development in their programmes and structures; contribute to reducing and eradicating female genital mutilation (see Regional Health).

Plan of Action

- Assist Gender Trainers to conduct six national gender training workshops for National Society staff on gender awareness and integration. Adapt existing gender training tools available from external sources.

- Ensure that each National Society has a Plan of Action on gender issues for integration into their development plans.

- Develop indicators on gender issues within the relief needs assessment process by the end of 1999, linked to the Regional Relief Programme.

- Conduct case studies on gender integration within National Societies, as well as on female genital mutilation.

- Co-ordinate the regional strategy on female genital mutilation with nine National Societies conducting pilot projects on the issue.

Support Services

Information/Reporting Service

The Regional Information/Reporting Service seeks to build a greater public awareness and visibility of the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement; to strengthen the Regional Information Network; and to promote the quality of reporting on Federation operations in the region.

Plan of Action

- Provide information on Red Cross/Red Crescent activities to the media through press conferences, media advisories and press releases. Launch World Disasters Report and emergency appeals regionally. Produce the West Africa Regional Bulletin, Regional Information Network Bulletin, and contribute to Weekly News, Direct From The Field (Federation Website) and Red Cross/Red Crescent Magazine.

- Organise one workshop on marketing strategies for National Society information officers.

- Produce reports on Federation operations covered by the Regional Delegation. Provide reporting technique training to Federation and National Society staff.

Regional Finance Unit

The Regional Finance Unit, established in 1998, collects financial data on Federation operations for budget control at regional and Secretariat levels; provides training and technical assistance to the delegations and National Society staff; and ensures the exchange of financial information between the field and the Secretariat.

Regional Logistics Centre

The Regional Logistics Centre in Abidjan provides advice and training on logistical aspects of programmes; promotes efficiency through decentralised procurement and dispatch of goods; promotes use of Federation fleet management standards; and provides support in telecommunications and computer issues.

Guinea-Bissau, National Society Support

Guinea Bissau Red Cross Society is one of seven Societies prioritised within West Africa as most in need of assistance. In a country challenged by war and regular epidemics such as cholera, the Society struggles to deliver services to disaster victims through its community-based first aid programme which the emphasis on preventing water-related diseases. To enable these programmes and the Society's change process to continue in 1999, the Federation seeks to provide basic water and sanitation materials and first aid supplies, health training, and general support to the Society, as well as maintaining the presence of one delegate for technical and institutional development support. Should access to the most vulnerable improve with the holding of the peace agreement signed in the fall of 1998, the Federation, in line with the 1997 Seville Agreement, will pursue in a shift in roles with the ICRC, the current lead agency in Guinea-Bissau.

The Regional Delegation

The delegation currently has 12 delegates, a level to be maintained in 1999.