

WEST AFRICA: REGIONAL PROGRAMMES

25 August 1999

appeal no. 01.04/99

situation report no. 1

period covered: 1 January - 30 June 1999

A positive response to the Appeal has allowed the Regional Capacity-Building and Health Programmes to progress in line with the Plan of Action. The Disaster Preparedness Programme (DPP) was hampered by personnel constraints, but with a DPP Delegate now in place work has begun on an ambitious Plan of Action. Longer-term funding from Great Britain's Department for International Development (DFID) has enabled the Regional Delegation to undertake more effective planning in areas such as Delegation management and co-ordination, capacity-building and disaster preparedness, including a better use of resources. With the arrival of a new Head of Delegation in early June and the move to new premises in May, the Delegation is anticipating more progress for the remainder of 1999.

The context

The Regional Delegation for West Africa was established in 1990 and currently covers 16 West African countries, coordinating activities of country Delegations in Guinea-Conakry, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. Since 1996, the Delegation has followed a regional strategy seeking to guide a process of co-operation and partnership between National Societies. The work of the Delegation focuses on three major areas: capacity-building, health (including CBFA), and disaster preparedness and response. Seven "priority National Societies" were designated as those most appropriate for assistance and guidance.

The region is affected by political instability and social unrest. Civil conflicts have caused large refugee flows and population displacements. The fierce fighting which broke out in Sierra Leone at the beginning of the year brought the total refugee caseload in neighbouring Guinea-Conakry to a staggering 600,000. Liberia is now enjoying a precarious peace, but conditions remain extremely harsh for refugees returning to the country where the infrastructure was almost totally destroyed. During the reporting period, the President of Guinea-Bissau was ousted by opposition forces and Nigeria continues to experience a wave of violent ethnic clashes. Natural disasters and disease including cholera, meningitis and malaria, with high morbidity and mortality rates, also characterise the region where large percentages of the population live below the poverty line.

Latest events

The Partnership Meeting held in late April 1999 concluded that the Regional Delegation should consolidate its regional strategy, reinforcing links between National Societies and encouraging the exchange of human resources, experience and information. At the Planning meeting which took place in mid July, the participants looked at directions for the years 2000, 2001 and beyond.

In mid May, the Federation, together with the ICRC, returned to Freetown, Sierra Leone in order to support the work of the National Society which faces overwhelming problems of food and medicine shortages, and a critical situation relating to shelter as thousands of homeless crowd into makeshift camps in Freetown alone. The Plan of Action for the last six months of 1999 for the Disaster Preparedness Programme has been revised as a result of changes in personnel and related delays in programme implementation.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Development Programme w

Governance

- { The Regional Working Group met between February 8-10 to finalise the report for the period 1997 - 1998 on implementation of the regional process. The Group also met between April 22-24 to prepare for the Partnership meeting which was organised by the Regional Delegation at the end of the month. A report on the meeting is available from the Regional Delegation.
- { The Regional Delegation is working towards the next Panafrican Conference to take place in Burkina Faso in the year 2000, and took part in the preparatory meetings organised by the Africa Department in Ouagadougou from 13 to 16 February.
- { A briefing was given by a member of the Strategic Planning Commission during the Partnership meeting attended by PNS and ONS representatives, on the draft Strategic Plan 2010.

Capacity Building including Resource Development

- { An evaluation workshop was held on 2 to 4 February on the application of recommendations on good governance by the Red Cross Society of Guinea. A mission was carried out on 2 and 3 February by the President of the Red Cross of Cape Verde as a resource person to assist the Red Cross Society of Guinea in the analysis of its structures with a view to improving governance.
- { The Mali Red Cross organised a Central Committee meeting at the end of June with the aim of moving forward following the difficult situation which the National Society had experienced. Internal rules and regulations were adopted and a resolution clarifying roles and responsibilities within the Executive Committee as well as between governance and staff members was also adopted. The Regional Delegation assisted in the organisation of the meeting with a resource person from the Red Cross of Benin.
- { The Regional Resource Development Delegate facilitated a workshop on good governance and management with the Gambia Red Cross Society. The objectives of the workshop were a) to create a better understanding between governance and management and b) to adopt a plan of action for dissemination on governance and management issues. This included possible changes to be undertaken in order to achieve better defined roles and responsibilities. A low representation of women in governing bodies was identified as a weakness, an issue which would be addressed in the plan of action.
- { Various exchange visits were organised including that of the Secretary General of the Red Cross Society of Guinea who visited the Red Cross Society of Cote d'Ivoire between 1 and 8 May to exchange information on structures and organisation of the National Society.

- { The Resource Development Delegate co-ordinated a mission to Guinea-Bissau by two resource persons from the region to evaluate the capacity of the National Society in relation to its structure and human and material resources, following the civil conflict. Recent changes in the governance of the National Society will now ensure that the long overdue General Assembly will take place. A project to support the Red Cross Society of Guinea-Bissau will be developed based on the findings of the mission.

- { On 22 February in Lomé the sub-regional "Lomé Group" made up of Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo was arranged. Planning of the Lomé Group activities for 1999 and 2000 took place at a meeting held between 22 and 26 February.

- { A joint workshop was organised on 4 and 5 May by the Regional Delegations of the Federation and the ICRC on the Seville Agreement for Presidents, Secretaries General and dissemination officers from the National Societies of Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo, and members of the Lome Group.

- { On 20 March in Ouagadougou, a decision was taken to set up the Sub-regional Sahel Group made up of Burkina-Faso, Mali and Niger, and planning was carried out for activities to take place for the remainder of 1999.

- { Preparatory work was carried out towards the evaluation of the 1994 - 1998 development plans of the Burkinabe Red Cross Society and the Senegalese Red Cross Society. Working documents to carry out the evaluation and to prepare the new development plan were drawn up and forwarded to these National Societies.

- { Work is on-going to establish a pool of resource persons in the region skilled in institutional and resource development together with a team of trainers in gender issues.

- { The seven National Societies of the Praia Group (Cape Verde, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea-Conakry, Mauritania and Senegal) organised an evaluation and planning meeting at the end of May with the assistance of the Federation and the ICRC. A plan of action for 1999 - 2001 was developed and adopted. The group intends to establish a development fund for funding of community projects. A fund-raising event to be organised within all National Societies every year will contribute with capital towards the establishment of the fund.

Resource Development

- { A workshop was organised with the Nigerian Red Cross for their branch fund-raising advisers in collaboration with the Federation Delegation in Nigeria. 26 of the total 37 branches participated in the workshop which aimed to improve resource development skills amongst branch fund-raising advisers and to develop frameworks for branch resource development plans.

- { The Regional Resource Development Delegate facilitated a resource development workshop with the Nigeria Red Cross Society.

- { Together with Mali Red Cross, the experience and qualifications for an efficient resource development committee were identified as well as the potential members of such a committee. Training of the resource development committee is planned for the second quarter of 1999.

- { Follow-up discussions were held with the Gambia and Guinea Red Cross on their resource development programmes.
- { The mechanisms to establish a regional development fund are currently under consideration.
- { Preparations were made for the first workshop on pre-selection and assessment of candidates for Basic Training Courses (BTCs) and possible delegate assignments. The workshop is scheduled from 5 to 7 July and preparations have also begun for a second workshop to take place in September in Dakar.
- { A circular letter was sent to all National Societies to follow up on the regional resource development plan of action. Three National Societies have responded: those of Ghana, Mali and Senegal. The Mali Red Cross can now be added to the National Societies organising fund-raising events. A media fund-raising campaign and a concert were successfully organised in connection with the week of 8th May.
- { The West Africa region will also take part in the global review of the Resource Development Programme. Four National Societies from the region will be requested to respond to the questionnaire developed (Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana and Senegal Red Cross Societies). In addition, the questionnaires will be followed by case studies on successful resource development programmes in two National Societies during the latter part of the year.

Health Programme (including CBFA) w

Epidemics/ARCHI 2010

- { The Health Programme co-ordinated with the Regional Logistics Centre in order to ensure that appropriate equipment and medicine was available in the event of an outbreak of cholera.
- { The regional epidemics health surveillance team (7 members) received training as scheduled in the plan of action. The objectives of this training were a) to provide participants with information relating to disaster preparedness, b) to improve the method of analysing the potential of politico-socio-economic solutions towards resolving health problems, c) to inform and train participants on the new methods of management of childhood illnesses (IMCI) and d) to supply participants with progress reports on ARCHI 2010 in West Africa.
- { The regional project proposal on epidemics presented by the Federation to the German and Spanish Red Cross Societies is still under discussion. A meeting is planned between the two PNS and the Regional Delegation; furthermore, other partners such as the GTZ and the Ministry of Health have also indicated interest in this project.
- { Since Guinea-Conakry has received a total of some 600,000 refugees from Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea-Bissau, the Regional Delegation arranged for training of the Guinea Red Cross Society's Health Co-ordinator in Côte d'Ivoire.
- { Four evaluation missions were made as planned in the ARCHI 2010 programme: the evaluation team visited Cote d'Ivoire, Niger, Senegal, and Togo.

HIV/AIDS

- { The Regional meeting of the HIV/AIDS Peer Education Network took place from 22 to 24 March 1999. This was the third co-ordination meeting for the network member countries to review activities in 1998, the plan of action for 1999 and to assess the performance of National Societies, the Regional Delegation and the Secretariat. In addition, the meeting creates a platform for members and other partners to share ideas. All 9 member countries agreed to continue to reinforce Peer Health Education activities.

- { An exchange of experience relating to health in general and HIV/AIDS in particular was carried out between the National Societies of Nigeria and Ghana and between the Societies of Benin, Mali and Togo.
- { The National Societies of Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana and Togo have strongly improved their integrated activities relating to HIV/AIDS in collaboration with other partners such as GTZ, UNICEF and local NGOs.
- { In-country fund raising remains a challenge. The Secretariat and the Regional Delegation are working closely to support the HIV/AIDS Network activities both technically and financially.

Basic Health Care Services

- { The National Societies of Benin, Ghana and Niger continued to receive support from the Regional Delegation for the Community Health Programme in the form of basic drugs and materials.
- { Technical assistance in promoting maternal support and family planning was provided to the National Societies of Cote d'Ivoire and Togo.

Community-Based First Aid

- { In collaboration with the ICRC, 30 emergency mobile team leaders from Red Cross Branches throughout Togo were trained over a three day period in Kpalimé, 115 km from Lomé, by three members of the CBFA technical Commission. The number of emergency mobile team leaders trained within the National Society has now reached some 150. A follow up session for trainers trained in Togo took place from 7 to 21 June 1999.
- { A CBFA training course for 10 Branch Members from each of the three Divisions of North Bank, Lower River and Western Divisions of the Gambia Red Cross Society was jointly organised from 17 to 25 March 1999 at Jenoi in the Lower River Division.
- { Twenty-six members of Headquarters staff, Executive Committee members and Branch Officers, including five women, from the Gambia Red Cross Society were trained in CBFA at the YMCA centre from 21 to 31 January 1999. A CBFA Training Course which involved 21 trainers from the Society was also organised at the agricultural centre at Jenoi in the Lower River Division from 21 to 31 May 1999. These training sessions have reinforced the number of first aiders in the communities of three Divisions of the country.
- { Three members of the CBFA Technical Commission of the Togolese Red Cross conducted a two-day study visit to the Ghana Red Cross to study fund-raising initiatives which it is hoped may be introduced in the Togolese Red Cross.
- { Financial support was given to five NSs (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Togo) to celebrate the World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day (8 May) which included demonstrations of first aid in the community.
- { Simulation exercises depicting the importance of CBFA continue to be organised by National Societies in the region.

- { A follow up session for trainers trained in Guinea Conakry took place from 11 to 25 May 1999. The objective was to evaluate the performance of the CBFA trainers of the following administrative regions: Labé, Boké, Farannah, and Kankan. In addition, the technical CBFA commission undertook a Training of Trainers (ToT) for the administrative regions of Kindia, Conakry, Mamou and N'zérékoré in June 1999. A total of 33 persons were trained.
- { Training for Emergency Team leaders from the 10 new local Committees was held in Ouagadougou from 6 to 10 June and in Bobo from 13 to 17 June 1999. The objective was to increase the number of trainers in these two towns in order to reinforce the intervention capacity of the NS.
- { The National Red Cross Societies of Guinea-Conakry, the Gambia and Mali continue to promote awareness-raising amongst public authorities.

Disaster Response w

- { Since the Regional Relief Co-ordinator completed his mission in mid February and was replaced by the current Regional Relief Co-ordinator/Logistics Delegate in mid April 1999, few activities were carried out over the first quarter. However, a significant achievement was the staging of an evaluation of the Sahel 1998 operation which gathered representatives from the eight National Societies involved in the operation. Conclusions highlighted the beneficial nature of sub-regional co-operation whereby each National Society learned through shared experiences and challenges. The ONS agreed that strategies should be sought in the future which accorded more importance to developing sustainable, local capacity and reinforcing coping mechanisms, rather than resorting to food distributions on a recurrent basis. A detailed report on this workshop is available from the Regional Delegation. The Regional Relief Co-ordinator conducted a mission to Guinea-Conakry and worked with the Delegation on the proposal for the setting up of a social welfare programme for refugees/vulnerable populations in Guéckédou and for assistance to newly-arrived Sierra Leonean refugees in Forécariah. During the second quarter, with the arrival of the Regional Relief and Logistics Delegate (the two functions having been combined), the following activities were concentrated upon: a) Closure of the Cote d'Ivoire relief operation, and preparation for the final closure of the relief operations in Benin, Ghana and Togo; b) Co-ordination of forthcoming needs for the drought situation in the coastal Sahel zone: Mauritania, Cape Verde, Senegal, the Gambia and Guinea Bissau. Since the DPP Delegate left the Delegation at the end of February and was replaced at the end of June, the Relief Delegate also took responsibility for certain aspects of DPP during the interim.

Disaster Preparedness w

- { A significant achievement in the first quarter was the staging in early February of a workshop on vulnerability and capacity analysis which was attended by representatives from 13 National Societies in the region and which sparked much interest and discussion. The Workshop was intended as an introduction to Vulnerability Capacity Assessment (VCA) methodology in order to form a nucleus of experts in VCA techniques who would assist National Societies in the region to carry out assessments.
- { The Regional Relief Delegate attended a regional conference in Yamoussoukro in early May which looked at the use of military and civil defence assets in humanitarian operations. The Conference highlighted a willingness to mobilise the region's resources and to seek to avoid external assistance in times of disaster.
- { Between 10 and 12 June, the Regional Relief Delegate attended a workshop held in Dakar which concentrated on anticipated rainfall and prospects for harvests in the Sahel. The workshop was attended by representatives of the FAO, the WFP, CILSS, FEWS and AGRYMET. An early assessment of the situation provided information which indicated that food production would be improved in respect of last year in the inner Sahel, but that harvests would be lower than last year in the Gambia, Mauritania and Senegal. Harvests in Guinea-Bissau are also expected to be poor,

but this is a result of the civil war and the lack of opportunities for planting crops, rather than climatic influences.

- { Five National Societies in the Sahelian belt (Cape Verde, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Senegal) have now received computers with internet connections. As a result, they may easily obtain information in anticipation of potential drought and flooding as well as other natural disasters which have their roots in climate patterns.
- { A detailed plan of action has been prepared for the second semester of the year which emphasises the importance of VCA.
- { It is planned to hold a training session for representatives of the eight Sahelian National Societies on use of the internet and to create a data base at the level of the Regional Delegation with information on all aspects of disaster preparedness, including human resource expertise and means of communication available. These initiatives will take place over the next quarter.

Gender Programme w

- { With a view to integrating an action plan relating to gender issues in the National Society's development plan, the Red Cross Society of Guinea organised a workshop to raise awareness of the concept of gender between 16 and 18 March 1999. The Regional Delegation financed the workshop and also carried out the training. Following an analysis of the National Society structures in respect of gender considerations, the participants unanimously favoured revision of the statutes in order that these should become gender sensitive.
- { The Red Cross Society of Ghana which already has a plan of action in relation to gender issues began activities by the organisation of a gender awareness workshop. Members of the Executive Committee, the Executive Board, regional secretaries, regional programme officers and Headquarters personnel were invited to attend. Participants agreed that gender awareness had been raised in the National Society, but that it was necessary to review official texts which did not specify the need for the inclusion of women in decision-making structures. It was also proposed to reinforce women's groups in order to increase visibility and promote the contribution of women to National Society activities. The Director of Finance with the Red Cross Society of Sierra Leone (and member of the team of gender trainers) facilitated the training session in Ghana together with a member of the region's team of gender trainers.
- { The Regional Delegation obtained the agreement of the Red Cross Society of Ghana for the Co-ordinator of the Health Programme, to act as a resource person for the Mothers' Club project in the region. Mothers' Clubs have proved a huge step forward in raising awareness and positive results have been achieved in community health, reproductive health and primary health care.
- { An official meeting was scheduled from the 4 to 9 April between the Minister of Social Action and Solidarity of Burkina-Faso and the Gender Programme Officer in order to officially hand over the integrated curriculum on reproductive health which makes reference to the practice of female genital mutilation. This document will help to raise awareness and has been made available to the Health Department.
- { With the departure of the Regional Gender Officer in June (due to a lack of funding), Delegates will ensure that gender considerations are integrated into their Programmes.

Support Services w

Information and Reporting Service

The Information and Reporting Service ensured contact with media representatives in Cote d'Ivoire and various local and national journalists attended the press conference in connection with the Partnership Meeting, 8 May celebrations organised by the Red Cross Society of Cote d'Ivoire, and the launch of the World Disasters Report. Links with the UN's Information Resource Network (IRIN) were strengthened. The Service worked towards reinforcing the regional information network, encouraging National

Societies to forward contributions to the "Weekly Update" and to exchange information amongst themselves. At the close of the second quarter, it was decided that it would be preferable to issue a "Bi-monthly Update" in the expectation that contributions may increase. This, in fact, has been the case, however, much work remains to be done in order to further exploit the potential of the network.

The Regional Reporting Delegate conducted a mission to Guinea-Conakry in April and undertook training of National Society staff in report-writing.

Regional Finance Unit

The Unit continued to process field returns from the country Delegations and National Societies having already received advances. Training sessions for National Society staff are scheduled for the second half of the year.

Regional Logistics Centre

The Regional Logistics Centre carried out procurement and purchase of relief goods and equipment for country Delegations, provided advice and training of use of the TMS fleet management system, re-located the Delegation's warehouse and ensured maintenance and repair of telecommunications equipment throughout the region.

Outstanding needs

Funding difficulties for the current year are mostly related to Support Services, particularly the Regional Logistics Centre and the Information/Reporting Service.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

The Regional Delegation, through the Health Programme, maintained contact with the Ministry of Health and the WHO. The DPP Programme promoted links with the FAO and the institutions dealing with early warning in the region. Media liaison was ensured by the Information Service through the issue of press releases and invitations to press conferences.

The Delegation acknowledges that particular efforts should be made during the second semester to boost external relations and to improve co-operation and information flow with other organisations.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

