

GUINEA: INFLUX OF REFUGEES FROM SIERRA LEONE

26 April 1999

appeal no. 01.05/99

situation report no. 2

period covered: April 1999

Given the renewed hostilities in Sierra Leone in early January and the evolving situation, it has been necessary to revise the plans outlined in the 1999 Emergency Appeal relating to the caseload of Sierra Leonean refugees in Guinea. A return to Sierra Leone is considered impossible in the near future, and with the constant influx of refugees to Guinea since the renewed outbreak of fighting on 6 January, the numbers of refugees in the camps has swollen, putting pressure on the already inadequate infrastructure in the area. Further funding is urgently required if assistance is to continue.

The context

Fierce fighting in Sierra Leone which broke out in early January has resulted in large population displacements within the country and refugee flows towards neighbouring Guinea. The situation remains confused in Sierra Leone, as government/ECOMOG forces strive to oust rebel troops and recover territory. Freetown is now considered a safe area with government troops having regained control. The Sierra Leone Red Cross Society is doing its utmost in the capital to assist the sick and the wounded, including amputees, and those whose homes were destroyed in the fighting. Reports state that there are drastic food shortages outside Freetown, especially in the regions of Bo and Kenema, and the risk of outbreaks of disease remains high, particularly with the approach of the rainy season. UNHCR estimates that over 12,000 refugees have fled to Guinea since the beginning of the year.

Latest events

In Guinea, refugees have been arriving constantly since the outbreak of conflict, fleeing either to Conakry by boat, or on foot to the Forécariah region and to Guéckédou where, prior to the current influx, some 400,000 Sierra Leoneans had already taken refuge since 1993, most fleeing to Guinea during the summer of 1998 as a result of the civil war.

National Society teams of volunteers have been actively involved in assisting newly-arrived refugees, distributing food and water, referring the sick to Medecines Sans Frontieres (MSF), and assisting with registration procedures.

There is currently a lull in arrivals since the border area is unsafe and Guinean authorities have temporarily closed the border with Sierra Leone. Once it is possible to pass the border in safety, massive arrivals may be anticipated.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Guéckédou Region •

The Red Cross Society of Guinea/Federation has been working in coordination with UN agencies and NGOs to provide assistance to refugee camps of the Guéckédou region since 1998. The Red Cross Society of Guinea/Federation is responsible for the construction of latrines and the sinking of wells in certain camps, and has initiated garbage collection (designed as a revenue-generating activity). As the number of refugees in the area have put enormous pressure on the existing infrastructure, sanitation facilities are also provided for Guéckédou town and for villages located in proximity to camps .

In Guéckédou, recent refugee influxes have been lesser than in Forécariah, but have nevertheless affected life in the 92 camps. Many of the refugees arriving in this area reached Guéckédou on an individual basis and were therefore not registered by UNHCR. This has posed problems, particularly with distributions of food and non-food items and it is hoped that a survey which is currently being carried out by UNHCR will help to resolve these difficulties. In the camp of Gbengbe, for example, where the National Society/Federation implemented a sanitation programme and which has housed some 3,500 refugees since 1998, none of the refugees had previously been recognised.

Proposed National Society/Federation Activities in 1999 •

Social and community services are inadequate to meet the growing needs of the large numbers of refugees, despite the fact that a number of organisations are combining efforts and working to provide schooling for children, medical services, assistance for abused women, and vocational training in several camps.

In order to work towards further covering the needs of the refugees, the Red Cross Society of Guinea/Federation proposes, in collaboration with UNHCR and with the local authorities, to provide social and community services including personal and family counselling, and cultural and recreational activities in some 40 camps covering a population of 200,000 refugees.

Social services aim to provide advice and guidance to refugees to help them find longer-term solutions to their problems. Activities will be carried out through five counselling offices (four in Guéckédou and one in Macenta) manned by social workers who will form a link between the camps and the offices. Services will include explanation of the policy of assistance to refugees in Guinea, identification of the most vulnerable including non-accompanied children, and support for the sick. Training will also be available for social workers in order to give them an understanding of post-traumatic stress as large numbers of the Sierra Leonean refugees fled their country in dramatic circumstances, have lost family members, or are without news of their family.

Sites for practising sport will be set up near refugee schools and in camps which are densely populated. A community hygiene programme will be reinforced, focusing on prevention of illness, nutritional and environmental education and support for sanitation activities within the camps. A Logistics Delegate has recently been assigned to Guéckédou to work with the Field Delegate.

Forécariah Region •

In the Forécariah region, there are 9 refugee camps, the largest of which, Kalia, houses 14,000 refugees. The total refugee caseload in Forécariah now stands at 58,297, including some 12,000 new arrivals.

Activities - 1999 •

With the new refugee influx, the Red Cross Society of Guinea/Federation has taken on responsibility for certain programme components in camps in the Forécariah region: awareness-building to incite refugees to offer accommodation to new arrivals, consciousness-raising in relation to community services offered in the camps, and distribution of food and non-food items provided by WFP and UNHCR. In addition, National Society teams of volunteers are assisting refugees to construct their houses with materials provided by GTZ.

The National Society/Federation began working in Kalia camp one month ago and has provided 170 tents for newcomers, carried out awareness work and provided some second-hand clothing. The Red Cross Society of Guinea/Federation is carrying out most of its activities in Kalia and Farmoriah camps, and is responsible in the seven remaining camps for distributing non-food items provided by UNHCR. The local National Society Branch in Forécariah has just been created, and is made up of an enthusiastic team. The Branch will be in need of support from the Headquarters and the Federation. A Relief Delegate has now been assigned to Forécariah in order to support the Programme.

Outstanding needs

In order to set up the social welfare programme in the Guéckédou region, an experienced Social Welfare Delegate is urgently sought. Contributions for Red Cross Society of Guinea/Federation assistance to Sierra Leonean refugees in Guéckédou and in Forécariah are much needed. The budget for the Forécariah region totals CHF 280,410, and for Guéckédou region CHF 798,055. Further funding for programme support and equipment is vital to ensure the success of the operations.

Detailed budgets and plans of action are available through the Desk Officer for Guinea, Geir Andreassen, telephone: +41 22 730.34.71, or by e-mail Andreass@ifrc.org

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

Both the National Society and the Federation Delegation, through its offices in Conakry, Guéckédou and Forécariah are working in close co-operation with the local authorities, particularly in the field of health, and with UN and NGO partners who are working to assist the large refugee populations in Guéckédou and Forécariah. Co-ordination meetings are held on a regular basis with all concerned, particularly UNHCR, WFP and GTZ. The local branch offices work hand-in-hand with the local authorities and, as a result of this co-operation, the Forécariah branch now has office premises provided by the Prefecture.

Conclusion

The return of Sierra Leonean refugees seems improbable, at least in the short to mid-term future, particularly given that the frequency and violence of rebel incursions into refugee camps resulted in the recent decision to transfer 50,000 refugees from the border area to a new camp - Katkama - in the Guéckédou area.

Large numbers of refugees have been living in Guinea for over five years. It is therefore essential to assist the refugee population to become more self-reliant and to enhance their ability to integrate into the local community by providing adequate infrastructure (shelter, wells and latrines) and the provision of social and community services.

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COTE D'IVOIRE, GUINEA, LIBERIA AND SIERRA LEONE

ANNEX 1

APPEAL No. 01.05/99 PLEDGES RECEIVED 04/28/99

DONOR	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
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CASH

REQUESTED IN APPEAL			12,959,383	01/01/99	17.24%
BRITISH - RC	50,000	GBP	115,785	03/12/99	REFUGEES IN FORECARIAH
BRITISH - RC	30,000	GBP	71,523	04/01/99	RELIEF ADMINISTRATOR COSTS
ICELANDIC - RC	200,000	ISK	4,066	03/27/99	GUINEA
NETHERLANDS - RC/GOVT	958,000	NLG	694,998	03/08/99	LIBERIA
NORWEGIAN -RC	200,000	NOK	37,534	03/31/99	LIBERIA AND SIERRA LEONE
SWEDISH - RC	145,000	SEK	24,114	01/15/99	IVORY COAST
SWEDISH -RC	37,000	SEK	6,153	01/18/99	GUINEA
SWEDISH - RC/GOVT	4,818,000	SEK	867,240	04/21/99	
UNDP	37,396	USD	53,233	02/25/99	LIBERIA
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH			1,874,646 CHF		14.47%

KIND AND SERVICES (INCL. PERSONNEL)

DONOR	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SWEDISH -RC/GOVT	2,000,000	SEK	360,000	04/21/99	
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES			360,000 CHF		2.78%

SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED			0.00 CHF		
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