

NIGERIA: HEALTH, CAPACITY BUILDING, DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

*1 December,
1999*

Special Report - Communal Clashes

appeal no. 01.06/99

situation report no. 2

period covered: 1 August - 29 November

Situation Report No. 1 (dated 31 August, 1999) provided an update on the sporadic communal clashes which have afflicted Nigeria since April, 1999, and included a revised budget to provide additional assistance to vulnerable groups. Unfortunately, the response to the revised budget has not been as forthcoming as hoped, and with an additional 3,274 vulnerable persons identified, donors are encouraged to renew support to provide assistance to the intended beneficiaries.

The context

The Nigerian Red Cross (NRCS) and the Federation have worked together on the following three major programme objectives in 1999:

- Capacity-building: to strengthen the headquarters as service providers to the 37 Branch network, establish Branch capacity with full-time secretaries, communications and volunteer programmes.
- Health: to implement an extensive preventive health programme; and
- Disaster Preparedness and Response: to pre-position relief items, provide food to 600 Liberian and 1,350 Sierra Leonean refugees, and in each Branch to respond in a planned, timely and appropriate manner to disasters.

Latest events

Since the last Situation Report, Nigeria has continued to experience a series of widespread communal clashes culminating in recent serious outbreaks of violence and displacement in the Delta Region and in

the capital Lagos. In Bayelsa, one of the Delta States, the Branch has been acting with its own resources so far to assist the displaced with food and shelter relief. However due to insecurity in the area they are not yet able to reach the affected areas of Sampou, Opkuma and Sabagriea where most of the victims and casualties have fled from the conflict town of Odi. It is expected that as soon as an assessment can be carried out to confirm reports, some 5,000 people will need relief support beyond that which the Branch has already provided.

In the Kosoke area of Lagos ethnic conflict between the Hausa and Youraba communities has resulted in many deaths, with 600 injured. Some 500 families have been made homeless, and commercial activity in the major Lagos market has been severely disrupted.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

The Federation has allocated CHF 50,000 from the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to initiate assistance to the latest victims. The Red Cross Bayelsa State Branch is in the process of delivering food relief and giving medical evacuation assistance to the displaced while at the same time seeking access to the worst affected areas to carry out needs assessments in the Delta region. The Red Cross Lagos Branch mobilised 52 Red Cross volunteers and, assisted by Headquarters staff, worked throughout the emergency to give first aid and drinking water to the injured, and provide evacuation for 150 serious cases to the Gbagada and Ikeja General Hospitals. Six boxes of dressing materials were provided to several hospitals which did not have had the means of treating the injured. Volunteers subsequently carried out a needs assessment in the affected area.

Outstanding needs

Based on a detailed needs assessment carried out by Lagos Branch volunteers and supervised by headquarters staff, food and material relief will be provided to 3,274 most vulnerable people (women, children, aged, and the disabled) who remain homeless, and who due to prevailing insecurity and fear have congregated in the nearby areas of Ajilogo, Maidan, Akiliti, Mile 12, and the Ketu police station compound. There is further need for medical assistance for the over stretched hospitals, and sanitation assistance for the displaced which is to be provided by the ICRC. The Federation will provide assistance to the NRCS in the form of blankets, polythene mats, water jerrycans and cooking pots for 655 families and food rations of rice, beans, gari, and oil.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

The NRCS have been operating in close contact with State and Local Government officials. The ability of the Red Cross staff and volunteers to work in the difficult circumstances prevailing and over this prolonged violent period was highlighted by the news media reports.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

Assessments carried out by the Nigerian Red Cross management staff and volunteers and confirmed by the head of delegation Nigeria indicate an urgent need for assistance to 3,274 of those most affected in the Lagos city conflict. This assistance will allow them to persist through the immediate aftermath of the

conflict and, as the security situation improves, enable a return to their homes. The relief operation will also have an important stabilising affect on the affected population in Lagos, and contribute to creating an environment more conducive to promoting ethnic co-existence. The need to assist some 5,000 people most affected in the Delta Region conflict may be confirmed within the next few days. Due to the capacity building undertaken over recent years by the National Society, Branches have been strengthened, and it is considered possible to carry out this limited relief assistance operation without disrupting the other important programmes underway.

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