

19 April, 2000

NIGERIA: RELIEF FOR DISPLACED PERSONS

Information Bulletin N° 02

The situation

The adoption of strict Islamic Sharia law in areas of northern Nigeria provoked an eruption of religious violence and waves of unrest in which hundreds died. Although Islamic Sharia family law has long been enshrined in Nigeria's Constitution, the Sharia penal code, which allows stoning, amputations and beheading for some crimes, has not. Most recently, rioting flared in ethnic Ibo and Christian Aba on Monday, 21 February in a backlash to the deaths of hundreds of people in clashes between Muslims and Christians in the northern city of Kaduna. The violence continued through the night and the following day when troops were deployed to enforce a curfew and support the police. The clashes resulted in over 400 deaths, and more than 100,000 people were displaced from their homes due to the destruction of their property or from fear of fearing reprisals. The majority of the displaced took refuge in military and police compounds or barracks. A strong military presence reinforced local police authorities and maintained a semblance of calm.

Latest events

While violence directly related to the Sharia issue has been limited over the last weeks, conflicts have occurred in Borno State where 15 people were reported killed due to a dispute over the proposed siting of a church, and in Sueja (close to the capital Abuja) a curfew was imposed in response to a conflict over the appointment of an Emir. A very old land dispute erupted into inter-communal clashes between the Ife and Modakeke communities in Southwest Osun State which has reportedly lead to 80 deaths, with hundreds made homeless. In the southeast of the country only some 400 families remain sheltered in the refugee military camps, but a considerable number of people return at night seeking safety and shelter. The future of these people remains unclear as military and police authorities have provided shelter only on a temporary basis, and now threaten eviction. The Government has not provided any indication of rehabilitation assistance. All curfews are scheduled to be lifted.

In the Kaduna area, northern Nigeria, the number of displaced has decreased to just over 25,000 persons, scattered between various military camps. Military authorities appear intent on ending the displaced shelter arrangement. Water and sanitation at these camps is a problem, and there is a well founded concern that water borne diseases will increase in occurrence with the onset of the rainy season. In Kachia (NASA camp), there is a severe lack of safe water. The efforts by the State authorities to relocate homeless people into the Kakuri Rehabilitation Camps has not proved successful as the camp facilities and conditions are considered inadequate.

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Red Cross/Red Crescent action

CHF 100,000 was allocated on March 10, 2000 from the Federations' Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to provide immediate assistance to limited groups of vulnerable people and those injured in the clashes. Phase 2 of the relief distribution operation was carried out by the Nigerian Red Cross Society (NRCS) during the 2 - 8 April period, with the following items procured and distributed:

- 40 mt of rice, 9,980 litres of vegetable oil, 10 mt of red beans, 5,000 sleeping mats, 1,500 buckets, and 7,000 jars of petroleum jelly were procured.
- Based on the items above, 5,641 family rations were distributed in 14 refuge camps in the Kaduna and District area.
- 1,264 and 687 family rations were distributed in Imo and Abia States respectively, southeast Nigeria.
- 625 family rations were distributed in Enugu and Anambra States, south-eastern Nigeria.
- Medical dressing materials (ICRC provided) were distributed to Kakuri General Hospital and the Specialist Nursing Home in Kaduna.
- A balance of 1,158 family rations were provided to the NRCS branches to distribute to needy cases.

Outstanding needs

The immediate relief phase of the operation is over, with no outstanding needs. The NRCS and Federation, if requested, are ready to support other actors or organisations in the rehabilitation phase. Further funding secured from the British Government's Department for International Development (DFID) will be used to re-stock the NRCS emergency supplies and non-food relief items.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

The Kaduna State Government and a private Nigerian company provided field assistance with the provision of truck transportation for distributions. Meetings were held with each of the State authorities. The relief distributions were widely reported and covered by the national press.

Contributions

In addition to the CHF 100,000 allocated from the Federation's DREF, the following contributions were received: CHF 51,800 from the British Red Cross, CHF 39,350 from the U.S. Government, CHF 31,480 from the British Government, CHF 12,950 from the Irish Government.

Conclusion

The operation has been essential in bringing relief to many of the affected displaced persons. With the planned purchase of emergency stocks the relief operation will be concluded and a final report issued in May 2000.

Peter Rees-Gildea
Director
Operations Funding and Reporting Department

Bekele Geleta
Director
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