

INFORMATION BULLETIN



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération Internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

NIGERIA: ASSISTANCE TO LIBERIAN ASYLUM SEEKERS

31 March 2004

The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 181 countries.

In Brief

This Final Information Bulletin (no. 02/2004) is being issued for information only. The Federation is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time. With the support of the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF), the Nigerian Red Cross society provided immediate assistance to the refugees upon their arrival by making available non-food items. This action demonstrates the Society's readiness and capacity to provide assistance during emergencies and builds confidence on the National Society as a reliable partner to humanitarian agencies, including UNHCR.

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The Situation

Liberian civilians were forced to flee Liberia in 2003 when conflict broke out between LURD insurgents and government forces in Liberia. With the intervention of the Nigerian government, President Charles Taylor was asked to leave the country for peace to reign. However, on 17 June 2003, the UNHCR Lagos office received 1,986 asylum seekers from Liberia, who were seeking protection and assistance.

The asylum seekers included 858 women, 564 children and 564 men, all of whom were sheltered in the Oru refugee camp jointly managed by the [Nigerian Red Cross Society](#), UNHCR and the National Commission for Refugees (NCFR). The UNHCR office received an additional 1,078 asylum seekers between 17 June and July 2003.

An assessment by the national society indicated that food and non-food items were urgently required. Although there were no immediate or serious health problems, open refuse disposals and the non-maintenance of latrines

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posed some health risks to the asylum seekers. In September 2003, after an assessment by the national society, the UNHCR Lagos office provided sanitation items and mobilized the refugees to carry out a clean-up campaign.

Lack of accommodation resulted in the use of class rooms within the camp to accommodate asylum seekers. In addition, the Nigerian Red Cross provided 35 big tents and 38 rolls of plastic sheeting for the construction of shelters for the refugees from its limited preparedness stocks in the Lagos warehouse. The national society also provided malaria tablets and analgesics prescribed by Lagos clinic medical staff.

Red Cross and Red Crescent Action

With help from the Federation, the Nigerian Red Cross has been the major operational partner of the UNHCR in Nigeria assisting the asylum seekers since their arrival in the country. The clinics at the Oru Camp and Lagos have been strengthened with the recruitment of additional nurses to give medical assistance to the Liberian refugees in the camp.

Fifteen volunteers are currently helping the Liberians in the camp. Health and sanitation campaign programmes are carried out. UNHCR supported by the UNICEF provides water and sanitation (WatSan) assistance. Save The Children (UK) have visited the camp with particular focus on the needs of children.

Government and UNHCR Action

The Nigerian Government, through the NCFR and Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) has the responsibility for the overall coordination and the general management of the refugee camp, including determination of the refugee status, protection, security and accommodation. There is no agreement signed between the government and the national society for the care and maintenance of refugees. However, the national society is a statutory member of NEMA, whose national disaster response plan assigned the responsibilities of mass care, emergency health, search and rescue, among others, to the Nigerian Red Cross.

In the absence of a 'crisis committee' to deal directly with the Liberian refugees, the UNHCR office in Lagos liaises regularly with the above governmental bodies and humanitarian agencies (Red Cross, UNICEF, etc.) to coordinate assistance to the refugees.

The Government provided space for the Oru refugee camp, previously used as a school compound. UNICEF donated non food items, including medical supplies and WatSan assistance, while UNHCR is now constructing houses to be used by the refugees.

Nigerian Red Cross Society and the Federation

The Nigerian Red Cross has been the main operational partner of UNHCR in Nigeria for the care and maintenance of refugees. A written agreement between the two organizations provides for a project agreement, which has been in existence since 1990. The agreement stated areas of responsibilities reviewed and renewed annually.

The national society has been responsible for food and non food distribution through the Red Cross volunteers, who are providing health education to the refugees. UNHCR funded the distribution of relief items, transport and maintenance costs for Red Cross volunteers. Previously, UNHCR provided a vehicle and covered maintenance costs to enable the national society provide assistance to refugees.

The Federation Secretariat allocated CHF 10,000 from its DREF and released the fund immediately for the procurement and distribution of non-food items for 2000 Liberian asylum seekers to cover the gap in the emergency phase. The Federation Lagos Sub-Regional Office supported the Nigerian Red Cross in the local procurement of the non-food items while the distribution was carried out by the national society volunteers.

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Non-food items distributed to 400 families

Non Food Item	Quantity
Blankets	1,200 pieces
Nylon Mats	800 pieces
Cooking pots	800 sets
Buckets	800 pieces
Stoves	400 pieces
Plastic plates, cups and spoons	167 dozens

Distribution: blanket, 3 pieces per family, nylon mat, bucket and cooking pot each 2 units/family for 400 families. Stove 1 unit/family)

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