

Information bulletin



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Côte d'Ivoire: Population Movement

Information bulletin n° 1
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This bulletin is being issued for information only and reflects the current situation and details available at this time. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is finalizing plans to support National Societies in the region to prepare for and respond to population movement. The IFRC will accept direct assistance to provide support to the affected population.

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The political stalemate in the West African nation of Côte d'Ivoire since the re-run of the presidential election on 28 November 2010 is posing humanitarian concerns not only in Côte d'Ivoire but in the region as well. The country's Independent Electoral Commission had declared the opposition candidate Alassane Ouattara the winner of the run-off on 2 December 2010 but the result was overturned by the country's Constitutional Council. It announced the incumbent President Gbagbo as the winner although the international community and the UN had recognized the victory of the opposition candidate. The two candidates took oaths of office in different locations on 4 December 2010 and have formed parallel governments in Côte d'Ivoire. There have been protests in the country both before and after the presidential election run-off.

The Situation

The political stalemate has affected movement of people and goods within the country, leading to increase in cost of living as prices of food ingredients have soared. The fear of violence has also led to the movement of some people into neighbouring Liberia and Guinea Conakry. An estimated 5,000 people had entered Liberia with new arrivals reported in villages along the border on the basis of around 150 people per day. Meanwhile in Guinea, the number of newly registered Ivorian refugees in the southeast of the country is increasing from day to day reaching 338 people as of 18 December. As a political solution is being sought to the stalemate, there is the fear of increased population movement from Côte d'Ivoire into Guinea, Liberia, Burkina Faso, Ghana and Mali to some extent in the coming days and this may lead to humanitarian needs in these countries.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Burkinabe Red Cross Society has conducted an assessment mission in the early hours of the crisis and has submitted to the IFRC a request to support its emergency response action plan for 500 families. The gaps identified include logistics and telecom equipment, emergency equipment (survival kits for 500 households) and protective equipment for volunteers. This list of needs is being reassessed given the limited number of refugees and returned crossing the border per day.

The Ghana Red Cross Society (GRCS) has been monitoring the situation in coordination with the regional managers as per the contingency plan of the National Society. An IFRC delegate is supporting GRCS in resource and capacity mapping exercise and liaising with the other humanitarian organizations in the country. There are 20 volunteers trained in Brong Ahafo and monitoring the border posts of Badukrom and Gonokrom while 20 volunteers are in Bole in the Northern region as these are the main entry points in the event of population movement. Another set of 20 volunteers are also monitoring the situation in the Western region border towns of Elubo, Osei Kojokrom, and Wharf. Since September 2010, about 60 Red Cross volunteers have been trained and put on standby under the provision of contingency planning for population movement from Côte d'Ivoire.

In Liberia, an assessment team from the headquarters led by the Secretary General of the Liberia Red Cross Society (LRCS) was deployed to Nimba chapter. Reports from the field of the last two weeks indicated that as of 17 December 2010, 5,204 people have crossed into Liberia and are seeking humanitarian assistance. The figure was announced by the Assistant Superintendent for Development of Nimba County. The national headquarters sent out a comprehensive report, which identified needs. A plan of action to address priorities is being drafted. The LRCS is proposing to intervene immediately in the following areas:

1. Construction of latrines in communities;
2. Provision of water guide to the host population and asylum seekers (the health care department will make available 6,000 bottles of water guide);
3. Tracing for reunification of family links (RFL) in the area.

Constraints facing the LRCS include lack of building materials for latrines; logistics challenges that restrict movement within the chapter; and funding for the proposed activities. Nonetheless the Nimba Chapter has 81 trained staff and volunteers available to carry on any task, and the chapter is a member of the Nimba County Disaster Management Committee.

The Guinea Red Cross has also deployed volunteers to the border areas to conduct surveillance, early warning and daily information updates. As of December 18 2010, some 338 asylum seekers were registered in Bossou, N'zoogouéla and Nyon. About 138 arrived on December 18 via Bossou. A transit center is created to provide shelter for these refugees. The UNHCR is assessing the former camps to see how to conduct a relocation in one of them (Lainé, Kouakan 1, Kouakan 2 and Kola) in the short and long term if the number of refugees increases. The Guinea Red Cross (GRC) local branch has 14 operational volunteers. A joint ICRC/Guinea Red Cross mission is planned next Tuesday to reassess the needs, identify priorities and then submit an updated request for support to Federation. The GRC, with the support of the Federation and ICRC, will activate an emergency response plan along all the points of entrance of Guinea with Côte d'Ivoire. About 150 volunteers will be deployed during a period of three months with the provision of the adapted logistic means. As of now 20 volunteers have been deployed in Lola and are actively monitoring the situation.

The IFRC through its Sahel and West Coast Regional Representations has been working closely with the National Societies of the countries sharing borders with Côte d'Ivoire (Guinea Conakry, Mali, Burkina Faso, Liberia and Ghana) as well as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to regularly monitor the population movements. Even if there is not significant movement towards Mali and Burkina Faso, these two countries remain on alert and have planned for response. The contingency plan for population movement of the five countries bordering Côte d'Ivoire is being updated at IFRC Dakar Office with the support of the IFRC West Coast Office in Abuja.

Given that the situation is deteriorating in Côte d'Ivoire, IFRC is now planning a regional intervention through the launch of an Emergency Appeal. The priorities at the moment consist in strategically pre-positioning non-food items stocks, telecommunication and logistic means to reach the displaced population who are crossing the borders through entry points that are very difficult to access, particularly in Guinea and Liberia. IFRC is also deploying five surge capacity staff (experienced Regional Disaster Response Teams) to support deployed volunteers first responders who are already responding to the humanitarian situation at the borders. IFRC will regularly monitor and evaluate the situation to adjust the humanitarian assistance to this kind of situation often rapidly changing.

Finally in close collaboration with ICRC and the National Societies, IFRC is actively contributing to the overall coordination of the humanitarian assistance in the five countries bordering Côte d'Ivoire, both at regional and country levels. Meanwhile in Côte d'Ivoire, the ICRC is working with the Côte d'Ivoire Red Cross in addressing the humanitarian consequences of the unfolding political crisis. The IFRC supported the ICRC in its contingency planning for the elections with first-aid equipments and financial support to the volunteers.

How we work

All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) in Disaster Relief and the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (Sphere) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The IFRC's vision is to inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by National Societies, with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

The IFRC's work is guided by Strategy 2020 which puts forward three strategic aims:

1. Save lives, protect livelihoods, and strengthen recovery from disaster and crises.
2. Enable healthy and safe living.
3. Promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace.

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