

# ***THE GAMBIA: REFUGEE INFLUX***

*07 November 1997*

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## ***The Disaster***

The Gambia is experiencing a further influx of refugees as hostilities continue in the southern part of Senegal, between government forces and the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MDFC). From mid to end October, more than 1,000 people fled from the three Casamance villages of Jibara, Tambui and Kurami.

The refugees arrived with virtually nothing except bundles of personal effects on their heads and children on their backs. Some travelled by commercial vehicles, while others walked.

**The Casamance refugee influx into The Gambia, 15-29 October 1997**

<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Children</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>278</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>639</b>	<b>1,028</b>

The civil intimidation generated by the 15-year conflict is increasing and has resulted in mass displacements, as clashes take place between the MDFC and the Senegalese soldiers in Casamance. In September, The Gambia experienced a similar influx of 460 refugees to Soma in the Lower River division. On arrival in the country, the refugees were received by the local Red Cross in Soma and later relocated to the Pakalinding junior secondary school in Mansakanko

If the fighting intensifies, future influxes are foreseen, also affecting the inhabitants of villages in which the refugees take shelter.

### **Government action/coordination •**

The government of The Gambia, through the office of the President, has set-up an emergency coordinating committee, chaired by the country's vice president, and comprising representatives from appropriate ministries and national/international non-governmental organisations, including the Gambia Red Cross (GRCS).

The Society is also working closely with the relevant western division authorities, which provided a truck to transport emergency food to the refugees, while the divisional health team assisted with medical care.

A task force, established under the western division commissioner's office - and also comprising representatives from the security agencies, the divisional health team, and the GRCS - is responsible for supervising and coordinating the affairs of the refugees locally.

## ***Red Cross/Red Crescent Action***

The Gambia Red Cross western division branch, through its action team, has been involved since the onset of the refugee influx and is now registering, feeding and providing material support to the refugees. Staff and volunteers also remain on stand-by for any required follow up activity.

The Society's national headquarters has provided 70 bags of rice and second-hand clothes to the refugees, but these reserves are nearly exhausted. A team, comprising the Secretary General and accounting officer, visited villages where the refugees are temporarily settled - noting particularly that if faced with a new influx, local communities, currently providing short term assistance to the refugees, will themselves come under pressure.

Over the coming three months, working in close collaboration with the appropriate government ministries and agencies, priority objectives for the National Society will be:

- To provide the refugees with food (rice, sugar and oil) and non food items (tents, blankets).
- With the influx likely to continue, to increase the National Society's disaster preparedness and management capacity.

## ***Needs***

In the wake of this emergency relief operation, the National Society is expected to remain involved in the reception, registration, temporary accommodation, feeding, medical attention and evacuation of refugees.

***It will be necessary also to increase GRCS capacity and replenish emergency stocks - please see attached summary.***

## ***Conclusion***

As GRCS acts as an essential auxiliary to government authorities both at the national and local level, revitalisation of its emergency wing is crucial, coupled with improved material support. While the Society's human resource base remains active and alert, from past experience, delays in immediate response to disaster have been due predominantly to lack of appropriate facilities.

In the wake of events outlined in this bulletin, the International Federation is releasing CHF 100,000 from its disaster relief emergency fund (DREF). Donors are requested to underpin this emergency action through rapid reimbursement of this grant, which is just a first step in enabling the Gambia Red Cross to maintain essential support to the refugees. For further information, please contact Richard Hunlédé, West Africa Desk Officer at the Secretariat in Geneva.

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**THE GAMBIA REFUGEE INFLUX****NEEDS IN CASH AND KIND****(Budget Summary)**

<b><u>DESCRIPTION</u></b>	<b><u>Unit Price in CHF</u></b>	<b><u>Quantity for 3 months</u></b>	<b><u>Total CHF</u></b>
<b><u>Relief items</u></b>			
Tents	223.00	200	44,600.00
Blankets	6	2000	12,000.00
Rice (50 kg bags)	30.	1050	31,500.00
Sugar (50 kg bags)	50.	270	13,500.00
Oil (20 l drums)	20.	600	12,000.00
<b><u>Capital expenses</u></b>			
Vehicle 4X4	37000.	1	37,000.00
Computer	4500.	1	4,500.00
<b><u>Transport/Storage</u></b>			
Transport			2,200.00
Fuel			2,200.00
Secretariat Support Costs			10,500.00
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>170,000.00</b>

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