

NIGERIA: LIBERIAN & SIERRA LEONEAN REFUGEES

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The Disaster

Last month the UNHCR office in Nigeria informed the Nigeria Red Cross Society (NRCS) that food distributions to 1,240 Sierra Leonean refugees and 1,875 Liberian refugees would be cancelled as EU food stocks had deteriorated and were not fit for human consumption. UNHCR has requested the Federation to assist as new EU resources will not be available until August. The Liberian refugees should have been repatriated by the end of May, but logistical arrangements fell through. Alternatives are being looked into, including transport by a ship, by the end of July. No arrangements have yet been made for the repatriation of the Sierra Leoneans.

The NRCS and the Federation have received letters and delegations from the refugees appealing for assistance. Representatives from the National Society visited the Oru refugee camp last weekend and reported that the health of some of its inhabitants was being affected by the lack of food. Additionally, a store had been broken into and relief supplies looted. The situation is expected to deteriorate if a distribution is not carried out within the next few days.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

NRCS has been providing assistance to Liberian refugees since 1990. At first it distributed food and non-food items from its own stocks and was later provided with relief supplies by UNHCR. It also located a site for the refugee camp at Oru where it manages a clinic and runs welfare activities. Since the influx of Sierra Leonean refugees last year, the Society has distributed non-food items and extra food supplies provided by the Federation. As an emergency, one-month measure the Federation released CHF 41,000 from its Disaster Relief Emergency Fund to supply 1,447 bags (50kg) of rice, 230 bags (90kg) of beans and 43 drums of oil.

Needs

Food needs are expected to exceed the current NRCS/Federation intervention, which is an emergency measure while UNHCR and ECHO seek a permanent solution. National Societies are requested to replenish DREF. More information can be obtained from João Zita, desk officer, on ++4122 7304440, email: zita@ifrc.org.

Peter Rees-Gildea
Director
Operations Funding and Reporting Department

Bekele Geleta
Director
Africa Department

