

UGANDA: HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

17 January 2001

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period covered: 1 June - 31 December 2000

2000 continued to be a challenging year for humanitarian activities in Uganda. The nature of the regional conflict in the DRC and internal insecurity in Uganda had a considerable impact on vulnerable groups. The Ugandan Red Cross Society (URCS), with the support of the Federation and ICRC, responded effectively by delivering timely assistance while undertaking measures to improve its management capacity. The donor community has expressed increased confidence in the URCS, and 2001 has begun with optimism for further donor support.

The context

The Federation strategy for 2000 was formulated on the assessment that the Uganda Red Cross Society (URCS) is capable of mounting an effective disaster response operation virtually in any part of the country or to respond to different types of disaster with the effective use of volunteers from the branches; but what is less clear is the Society's capacity to carry out regular Red Cross programmes across the country. For this reason, the Federation and the National Society agreed to make efforts to ensure that all programme and institutional development support is consistent, complementary, and within the strategic parameters of the Federation and the URCS.

With Federation support, the URCS has radically changed its institutional development strategy following the restructuring exercise carried out in 1998-1999, resulting in a professional, manageable and cost effective organization focusing on strengthening the governance and management through human resource development, membership recruitment, fundraising, and revenue generation, decentralization, and branch development. Programmes were designed to focus on emergency preparedness and response, and health, with a special emphasis on first aid, blood donor recruitment, and community based health care. Lastly, Red Cross youth and gender awareness and sensitization activities also formed strong cross cutting elements to be integrated in each programme.

The URCS, with Federation support, also emphasized support to the refugee operations as well as strengthening disaster preparedness capabilities. In the Institutional Development and Programme Areas, the Federation, through its country and regional delegations, provides technical support as required. It is anticipated that the Federation will continue to play a supportive role in resource mobilization and external relations as well as continued support to improving the Society's human and financial resource management.

Latest events

Presidential and parliamentary elections are tentatively planned to take place in March and June 2001, and there will be a degree of uncertainty as these approach. Uganda's involvement in the internal conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo remains an issue in the country and in the region. Rebel activities in the north and west of the country continue to have a negative impact on populations in those areas, increasing the need for humanitarian action and leading to a deteriorating security situation. Real GDP growth is forecast to increase to 6.4% in 2001 and to 6.8% in 2002 due to a recovery in agriculture and to large inflows for donor-funded infrastructure projects. Higher volumes of coffee exports will help offset the negative effects of lower coffee prices in 2001. Total debt-service payments are expected to fall from USD 111m in 2000 to USD 102m in 2001, owing to debt reduction under the heavily indebted poor countries initiative.

Uganda CAP 2001

On November 29, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) launched the 2001 Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal and Common Humanitarian Action Plan (CHAP) for Uganda in Kampala, London and eight other capitals around the world. In Uganda, a total of 18 agencies are appealing for US \$78.7 million and targeting 1.2 million vulnerable people mainly in the West Nile region, Gulu, Kitgum in the north, Kotido and Moroto in the northeast, and Bundibugyo, Kasese and Kabarole in the southwest. The appeal focuses on the provision of basic social services, alleviation of human suffering, protection and advancement of human rights, restoration of livelihoods and infrastructure, and resettling of former combatants and returnees. Food aid assistance will comprise the major share of the appeal, representing 53% of the total.

Small numbers of refugees continue to arrive in southwest Uganda. The refugee population in the Mbarara district and the camps of Nakivale and Oruchinga increased to a total of 14,000, with 5,000 new arrivals in December. In December a large influx of approximately 3,000 new refugees from Tanzania was reported, and the URCS is responding in co-operation with UNHCR. The good weather conditions and sufficient rain during the last month are expected to have a positive impact on the food security situation.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Ebola operations •

In response to an outbreak of Ebola Haemorrhagic Fever reported on 14 October 2000, the URCS, the Federation and the ICRC commenced information dissemination activities and case tracing in the affected and vulnerable communities in Gulu district in northern Uganda. A local appeal was launched in late October 2000 and the URCS has received contributions in-cash, kind and services towards the ongoing operation.

The focus of Red Cross action has been on providing appropriate relief in the affected districts, including volunteers to disseminate information about the disease (identification and prevention), support to volunteers and district health workers with protective wear and some urgently needed medical supplies, logistical support to the operation (vehicles, fuel and communication), psycho-social support and limited non-food items in relief to families of victims of ebola and for reintegrating individuals who have recovered from the disease back into their communities. The Federation

(courtesy of Danish Red Cross) provided the services of an ebola specialist to train Red Cross staff and volunteers in social mobilization for ebola prevention. Representatives of the URCS branches from neighbouring and vulnerable districts have received training in ebola preparedness and have been provided with a manual for ebola operations and IEC materials for dissemination. Blood collections in northern Uganda were stopped during the ebola operation.

The joint URCS, Federation, and ICRC task force is co-ordinating its activities well with the National Task Force, the Ministry of Health, the World Health Organization and other key stakeholders in the operation. The emergency phase of the disaster is continuing and the operation will probably not end before April 2001. Updated information on the disaster and copies of the latest updates are available through the Federation web site listed at the end of this situation report.

Disaster Response •

In accordance with its contracts with UNHCR and WFP, the URCS continued to provide ongoing relief, care and maintenance assistance to the refugee communities in Mbarara district. The Federation formally completed the hand-over of management responsibility for the relief operation in early February 2000, although delegates continue to provide limited technical support.

The relief operation has experienced problems with financial management and with the delivery of some services, particularly water, sanitation and community services. This has been largely due to staff and financial resource shortages. The operation also came under pressure from a sustained influx of new arrivals throughout the year - the refugee population in the two camps has grown from around 9,000 in January to over 14,000 in December 2000. The ability of the URCS to provide water and sanitation services to sphere minimum standards has been undermined by the size of the increase in the camp population and a Government of Uganda decision to allocate land for the new arrivals away from existing water facilities - this has been done to discourage further encroachment on refugee land by local Ugandans. The URCS disaster relief policy was finalized with support from the Federation and has now been approved by the URCS Central Governing Board.

Disaster Preparedness and Response (DPR) •

The URCS has made effective progress throughout the second half of 2000 with strengthening its disaster preparedness and response capacity in strategic branches, primarily through the training of Red Cross Action Teams and through stock piling some non-food items in strategic locations to enable a rapid response to local emergencies. Extensions to the VHF radio network, the deployment of mobile phones, and regional disaster preparedness and response workshops have greatly enhanced the URCS's capacity for early warning and effective net working in times of disaster.

A stronger capacity in key URCS branches will enable the DPR programme to expand into the other vulnerable districts including Moroto and Kotido (Karamoja region) in 2001. Planning has commenced for vulnerability capacity assessments and the introduction of community based disaster management and disaster mitigation projects in four communities in 2001.

The URCS and the Federation Delegation hosted a regional exchange visit by a delegation from Rwanda (the Rwanda Red Cross and the Federation's Rwanda Delegation) in early December to share knowledge about disaster preparedness and response, including Ebola.

The URCS and the Federation have been major contributors to the updating of a disaster contingency plan for southwest Uganda. The plan has drawn together representatives from UNHCR, the Government of Uganda, WFP, NGOs and the Red Cross movement to present a framework for responsibility and co-operation in the event of a humanitarian crisis in the south west of Uganda in the districts bordering the DRC, Rwanda and Tanzania.

Health •

The American Red Cross and the URCS have finalized the work plan and budget for a new project in support of routine vaccinations in three districts of Uganda. The project will draw on the net works of Red Cross volunteers in the community and work closely with the Ugandan Ministry of Health at the district level to encourage mothers to vaccinate their children and reduce the incidence of diseases such as measles in Uganda. The project has been developed by the URCS as part of its participation in the Africa Red Cross and red Crescent Health Initiative 2010 (ARCHI).

The URCS received funding through the Ministry of Health for social mobilization activities in support of a mass measles vaccination campaign held in the vulnerable districts of Moroto and Kotido (Karamoja region) in December 2000.

The URCS hosted a planning visit from the American Red Cross and the Centre for Disease Control (CDC) in early October 2000 and will seek to benefit from American Life funding for its integrated HIV/AIDS and blood donor recruitment activities in 2001. The URCS health programme continues to play a key role in the ongoing ebola operation.

Capacity building

The Federation continues to provide technical advice to strengthen governance and management, improve financial systems, mobilize resources and strengthen branch capacity within the URCS.

A successful partnership meeting took place on 16 and 17 November, with the agenda focusing on the URCS strategic planning process, financial development, country situation updates on the ongoing ebola operation, and appraisals of the health, DPP, youth, branch capacity building, communications, and tracing workplans. On 24 and 25 November, the URCS National Council elected a chairman, vice-chairman, and treasurer. A first training course on good governance has been conducted.

The delegation has played an active role in facilitating an evaluation of the corporate partnership programme of the URCS serving as a case study for corporate volunteering in Africa.

In a follow-up to the URCS Management Retreat conducted in early August 2000, the URCS management team has pursued an agenda for improved branch-headquarters communication, greater integration of programmes (inter-programming), enhanced gender mainstreaming within programmes, and has planned a process for the development of a decentralization strategy.

Branch capacity continues to benefit from the financial assistance provided through twinning and through a close working relationship with the ICRC's sub-delegations throughout the country. Planning for 2001 has highlighted the need to harmonize the various demands placed on branch resources by the various programmes and a concerted effort is being made to co-ordinate scheduling, particularly for branch staff and volunteer training in 2001.

Finance Development •

The Federation has continued to support the development of the URCS accounting system with specific support from the ICRC and the British Red Cross in addition to general support through the URCS's core and programme budgets. ICRC funded programmes have now been successfully incorporated into the URCS accounting systems. Programme management and partners within and outside the Movement are now benefiting from improved financial reporting. A systematic and transparent approach to programme and core budgeting has been put in place, contributing to two successful partnership meetings during the year.

Following the handover of management responsibility to the URCS for the care and maintenance operation for refugee communities in Mbarara district, monitoring missions have been conducted, with a follow up of management issues and procedural improvements. New personnel have been appointed to key finance positions. A standard financial reporting format has been designed to further enhance

the financial reporting and move the URCS towards a monthly financial reporting regime. It is anticipated that this will be up and running in early 2001. The URCS financial control systems have been reviewed by USAID and it is anticipated that clearance will be given for the URCS to be given responsibility for managing donations from USAID.

Outstanding needs

The ongoing relief operation related to the ebola outbreak requires additional funding to implement the activities planned until April 2001. A local fundraising initiative mobilized approximately USD 150,000 and an updated budget is available focusing on the training and mobilization of volunteers for the information campaign, case tracing and social support to contact persons and cases which are excluded from the rural communities, and logistical and technical support to the Ministry of Health. The ebola operation will be documented as a case study for internal capacity building in the Federation.

It is still difficult to attract funding from traditional donors for ongoing care and maintenance activities in the refugee camps in southwest Uganda, and the URCS is accountable to its main partner UNHCR to meet its commitments as a local agency. Minimum standards for disaster response to new arrivals are not being met.

The URCS DPP programme requires additional funding to ensure effective planning and training related to the insecurity in the Great Lakes region. The institutional and resource development support to the URCS provided by the Delegation will prove essential in 2001 during the strategic planning process and the design of a new country assistance strategy. The URCS will require continuous technical assistance through monitoring and coaching for programme and management support.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

Related to the ebola operation, a number of diplomatic missions were visited with the Secretary General. UNHCR, DFID, GTZ, UNDP, World Bank were also visited to maintain a close dialogue and explore new opportunities for support especially for National Society capacity building.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Peter Rees-Gildea
Head a.i.
Relationship Management Department

Bekele Geleta
Head
Africa Department

This and other reports on Federation operations are available on the Federation's website: <http://www.ifrc.org>

Uganda						ANNEX 1
APPEAL No. 01.13/2000		PLEDGES RECEIVED			01/16/01	
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
CASH						
REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->				2,596,000		TOTAL COVERAGE 64.2%
Balance carried forward from 1999				184,829		
BRITISH - RC		10,000	GBP	25,300	15.12.00	DELEGATION COSTS 2000
GERMANY - RC		50,000	DEM	40,195	28.03.00	REFUGEE RELIEF OP
GERMANY - RC				100,000	22.08.00	HOD MISSION COSTS
JAPANESE - RC		10,000,000	JPY	155,720	26.06.00	
NORWEGIAN - GOVT/RC				40,000	14.07.00	SUPPORT TO DELEGATION
SWEDISH - GOVT/RC		70,000	SEK	13,272	30.05.00	DP
SWEDISH - GOVT/RC		30,000	SEK	5,688	30.05.00	COORDINATION & MANAGEMENT
SWEDISH - GOVT/RC		300,000	SEK	56,880	30.05.00	MBARARA REFUGEES
AMERICAN GOVT (PRM)		220,000	USD	374,000	14.07.00	COORDINATION & MANAGEMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				995,884	CHF	38.4%
KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL)						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
UNHCR (DH02)		588,586,200	UGX	608,598	04/01/00	Direct contract with Uganda RC
Australia	Delegate(s)			31,047		
Great Britain	Delegate(s)			29,897		
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES				669,542	CHF	25.8%
ADDITIONAL TO APPEAL BUDGET						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED				0	CHF	
THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS ARE LINKED TO THIS APPEAL:						
PUG160, PUG510, PUG515.						