

WEST AFRICA REGIONAL PROGRAMMES

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A fully-funded appeal has allowed the entire West Africa Regional programme to be effectively implemented over the September-November period, with positive achievements realised in most areas. The favourable donor response has also promoted productive collaboration between the respective National Societies and the International Federation, providing a sound basis for growth in 2000.

The context

For most of this decade the 16-country region covered by the Regional Delegation in Abidjan has been affected by conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Senegal's Casamance region, and more recently in Guinea Bissau - resulting in hundreds of thousands of internally displaced and causing a refugee influx into neighbouring countries. The region continues to experience significant political instability. Related to health, mortality rates due to epidemics remain high in the region. The most common among them include cholera, meningitis, yellow fever and hepatitis A. The spread of HIV/AIDS is constantly rising in the region, with sub-Saharan Africa accounting for 68% of the world's total number of people infected by HIV in 1997.

West Africa is prone to recurring disasters such as floods, droughts, famine and epidemics, as well as political instability and armed conflicts. To better cope with these challenges, the Federation and National Societies are pursuing a policy of regional co-operation. It calls for the use of human resources from the region, as well as for support to so-called "priority" National Societies that receive the least partnership support: Mali, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mauritania, Niger and Nigeria.

Objectives:

- To contribute to building the capacity of all National Societies in the region through institutional and resource development measures, with an emphasis on effective governance and management.
- To improve the National Societies' ability to meet health threats through the promotion of community-based first aid, and prevention of and response to epidemics, including HIV/AIDS.
- To co-ordinate relief operations in the region (except the Liberian, Guinea and Sierra Leonean operations).

- To improve National Society capacity in disaster preparedness and response.
- To contribute to the integration of women into regional Red Cross/Red Crescent structures and programmes.
- To provide regional services in information, reporting, finance, and logistics to all National Societies in the region.

Latest events

The third quarter of the year saw widespread flooding as tropical storms and torrential rains hit Benin, Burkina-Faso, the Gambia, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Mauritania, and Senegal. The floods affected hundreds of thousands of people who lost their homes, property, crops and livestock. An Appeal was launched in mid October to seek support for assistance in the form of food and non-food items, including tool kits, to over 30,000 of the most vulnerable flood victims sheltering in public buildings or with host families.

On July 7, the Lomé Accord was signed between Ahmad Tejan Kabbah and the RUF/AFRC rebels, paving the way towards peace in Sierra Leone. This breakthrough was somewhat offset by the reluctance of Foday Sankoh, the RUF leader, to return to Sierra Leone throughout the summer and by sporadic outbreaks of fighting. The situation remained tense during the quarter with incidents of hostage-taking and difficulties in carrying out the disarmament campaign. Serious shortages of food and medicines affected the north of the country, in particular, where precarious security hindered humanitarian action. There were constant fears of epidemics of cholera and dysentery following serious outbreaks in Port Loko and in Freetown.

In August, skirmishes took place in northern Liberia (Upper Lofa County) on the border with Sierra Leone and Guinea. Conflict between government troops and dissidents escalated in late August and September, resulting in the evacuation of humanitarian agencies and movements of large numbers of displaced made up of inhabitants of the region and Sierra Leonean refugees. The Liberian National Red Cross Society (LNRCS) Relief Department, with Federation support, dispatched relief goods to victims of the fighting in Lofa County to 3,394 vulnerable persons. By the end of September, UNHCR was able to transfer some 15,000 refugees to a transit camp in Tarvey, Lower Lofa. Relations between Liberia and Guinea were further strained as a result of reported incursions into the Guinean border villages of Diomandou and Kotizou in the region of Guéckédou, resulting in thirty deaths and destruction of numerous homes.

Nigeria continued to witness waves of ethnic clashes, threatening stability. Flooding and pockets of drought brought outbreaks of cholera, meningitis and measles in Nigeria. Guinea-Conakry was also beset by cholera. A climate of unrest prevailed in Côte d'Ivoire as a result of allegations that the leader of the main opposition party, the RDR, was not of Ivoirian nationality and therefore not eligible to stand for the Presidential elections.

On a brighter note, as preparations for elections went ahead, Guinea-Bissauan refugees appear to be more inclined to return home. The small population of refugees in Boké, North of Conakry, has benefited from awareness sessions and has expressed the wish to return to Guinea-Bissau before the end of the year.

Follow-up on the Kampala Declaration

Implementation of resolutions which make up the Kampala Declaration was followed up regularly within the various Delegation programmes. The three sub-regional groups (Praia, Lomé, and Sahel) reinforced co-operation through youth exchanges, women's training workshops and evaluation of joint activities. The sub-regional Appeal launched for the flood operations offers a renewed opportunity to reinforce co-operation within the region.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Regional Relief Co-ordination •

Goal: to co-ordinate relief operations in the region (with the exception of operations which benefit from country delegations) and to improve National Society capacity in disaster response.

Implementation: During this period, the disaster response programme for 2000 and 2001 was drawn up and presented to the National Societies in the region during the Planning Meeting held in July.

Achievements: Contacts have been made with several National Societies to improve needs assessments in connection with floods which have occurred in nine countries of the region. The methodology used by the National Societies needs to be improved and standardised.

Visits to Ghana, Togo and Benin revealed the need to train more staff in relief work since, although the National Societies have competent, trained staff, they are not sufficiently numerous. This will form be one of the major challenges for 2000.

A regional approach towards the collection of information and presentation of an Appeal was adopted for the flood relief operations.

Regional Governance Programme •

Goal: The goal of this programme is to ensure efficient representation of the West African region in the Federation's statutory bodies in order that the West African perspective is reflected in Federation policy.

Implementation: During the reporting period, a main focus of work was the Planning Meeting held between the 12th and 14th of July in Abidjan, gathering representatives from all 16 National Societies in the region. During the meeting, the National Societies approved the draft of the regional assistance strategy submitted by the Regional Delegation which outlines support for the National Societies in the year 2000 and beyond in the core areas defined in Strategy 2010.

Achievements: The Head of Regional Delegation (HoRD) and several delegates met with a team of consultants who were conducting a review of the African Delegations. The aim of this review is to draw up a feasible workplan to implement a new or revised structure for future Federation support to Africa to cover the core areas outlined in the Federation's Strategy 2010. The HoRD was invited to become a member of the Steering Committee which will analyse the results of the review.

The HoRD visited Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, the Gambia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal during a familiarisation mission in the region and held useful discussions with the leaders of the respective National Societies. During his mission in Burkina-Faso, the HoRD met with the Secretary General of the Burkinabé Red Cross Society to discuss the organisation of the 5th Panafrican Conference, to be held in Ouagadougou in September 2000, and to prepare for the meeting with the African National Societies on this subject, planned during the General Assembly in Geneva.

Regional Capacity-Building Programme •

Goal: To strengthen National Society institutional and resource development capacities, including financial self-sufficiency in order to create more effective programmes.

Implementation: Discussions on the Regional Strategy for 2000 - 2001 which took place during the Planning Meeting in mid July provided an opportunity for an exchange between Africa Department, representatives of the National Societies and the regional Delegates. A regional strategy was defined which facilitated the drawing up of strategies at individual National Society level.

Achievements: During the reporting period, two sub-regional workshops on the pre-selection and evaluation of potential candidates for regional and international missions were organised. The first

workshop was held in Abidjan in early July for 8 of the region's National Societies, and the second for the remaining 8 National Societies, was held in Dakar in early September. Apart from introducing the National Societies to the Federation evaluation and recruitment systems, they provided tools which the National Societies can utilise to strengthen human resource management.

Continued support was given to the Red Cross Society of Guinea Bissau towards the organisation of its General Assembly. A proposal has been drafted to support the National Society in strengthening its governance and management structures.

A mission was undertaken to Mali Red Cross to evaluate the development plan, an activity scheduled for the first and second quarter 1999, as well as to discuss the preparations for the General Assembly to be held in November 1999. Due to internal constraints, it has been agreed that the development plan will be drawn up in 2000.

The Burkinabé Red Cross Society and the Senegalese Red Cross Society which began work on their development plans during the last quarter, finalised the plans in Burkina-Faso during a workshop which took place between 23rd September and 3rd October.

Two workshops were organised by the Red Cross of Benin on 22nd and 23rd of July in order to promote understanding of the Seville Agreement at Branch level. A similar workshop also took place on the 4th of September in Kpalimé in Togo. The organisation of such national workshops is in line with recommendations from the workshop on the Seville Agreement held in Accra on 4th and 5th May.

The Lomé Group organised an international youth camp between the 7th and 16th of August which was held in Togoville, Togo, with the theme "the power of youth" and the promotion of the fundamental principles and humanitarian values.

A workshop for women leaders of local branches was organised by the Mauritanian Red Crescent for five days in August, with the support of the Regional Delegation. The workshop focused on Red Cross/Red Crescent knowledge and financial management of micro-projects. A total of 30 women leaders attended the workshop.

The Secretaries General and Development Programme Officers from the National Societies of Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Niger, Senegal and Togo participated in a workshop focusing on capacity building which took place in Douala from the 13th to 17th of September. This workshop, organised jointly by the Institutional and Resource Development (ID/RD) Department in Geneva and the Federation Delegations for West and Central Africa, enabled participants to improve their knowledge of the capacity-building process within the National Societies.

Follow-up was carried out of the Red Cross Society of Cape Verde's development plan for 1998 - 2000 between 26th August and 4th September.

Red Cross Society of Côte d'Ivoire: Community Health •

Goal: To decentralise the system of follow-up and supervision of the community health programme benefiting 600,000 people.

Implementation: The Community Health Programme continued to be hampered by lack of funding over the quarter. Nevertheless, the operational health posts continued to function, as did the CPS in Danané. Increasing numbers of the surrounding population are benefiting from the health structures.

Achievements: The CPS in Danané is functioning efficiently; in July 330 consultations took place, with 519 in August and 415 in September. The majority of consultations are with children under fifteen, with children between the ages of one and four making up 43 percent of patients.

The CPS also carries out vaccination, HIV/AIDS awareness sessions, nutrition, family planning and training of health agents and first aid volunteers.

Regional Health Programme •

Goal: To improve the health status of the most vulnerable in West Africa through a health programme focused on epidemics, HIV/AIDS and CBFA.

Implementation: The regional bi-annual health meeting took place from the 7th to 11th of July with the objective of conducting a mid term evaluation of the 3 year health strategy in terms of implementation, achievements and constraints. The Regional Health Programme 2000-2001 was revised with the active involvement of all national health co-ordinators during the meeting. The meeting held between the 11th and 14th of July in relation to the ARCHI 2010 process resulted in a document defining health priorities, the areas of intervention of the National Societies and recommendations to move the process forward. The participants were convinced that implementation of the meeting's recommendations will result in increased impact of health programmes on the communities. The full ARCHI 2010 Sub-regional meeting report is available from the Regional Delegation.

Achievements: Concerning epidemics, it was acknowledged during the discussions in July that the surveillance team needs further logistical support to improve and implement the programme; the Regional Delegation, with the support of the Secretariat, is working on this.

In Togo, Senegal, Ghana, Nigeria, Liberia, Guinea, the Regional Delegation supported the National Societies and provided leaflets and other materials in relation to outbreaks of disease. Partners (GTZ, Action Contre la Faim) were contacted at regional level to support the volunteers in their awareness campaigns.

HIV/AIDS: With the objective of maintaining the network and promoting exchange of experience between the different members of the network, the Regional Delegation funded implementation of activities in Ghana, Burkina Faso and Benin and enabled 3 people from Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone to attend the XIth International Conference on HIV/AIDS/ STDs held in Lusaka from the 12th to 16th of September. The project co-ordinator organised a ghanet (Ghana HIV/AIDS Network) and was designated to provide technical assistance to CEDEP, the organisation that has been tasked to mobilise and promote networking in the country. Exchange visits were facilitated between Burkina Faso, Ghana and Mali, involving the project co-ordinator of Rany-Wa, 4 youth delegates and the project co-ordinators in Burkina-Faso and Mali. Regional newsletters on HIV/AIDS activities were prepared and financial and technical support provided to the nine National Societies which are members of the HIV/AIDS network. The Health Department participated in the meeting on HIV/AIDS in the region in collaboration with UNAIDS.

Basic health care services: Analysis of the projects put forward to the Regional Delegation and feedback to the National Societies selected (Senegal, Mali, Benin, Liberia and Niger) was carried out. Focus on the prevention of epidemic diseases and the improvement of the capacity of the local community will be taken into consideration according to the recommendations of the ARCHI 2010 meeting. All the approved projects will start in November as planned in the 1999 regional health programme.

Community-Based First Aid (CBFA): The evaluation of the regional CBFA Programme remains pending. Some PNSs, including British and Swedish Red Cross, have indicated an interest in supporting future CBFA activities through the Federation.

Exchange visits between Health co-ordinators (Benin - Mali, the Gambia - Sierra Leone, Ghana - Nigeria) took place; Training of Trainers (ToT) workshops and CBFA training courses for HQS staff and branch officers were organised in Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Guinea Conakry, Liberia, Mali and Togo.

Several training sessions in CBFA which involved 180 volunteers and 16 monitors were organised for all Branches in Guinea Bissau between July and September. Arrangements was handled by the Technical Commission in collaboration with WFP, the Regional Delegation and ICRC.

The Togolese Red Cross Society organised a National Camp in CBFA at Kpalimé from the 23rd of August to the 5th of September, with the financial support of the Regional Delegation.

The annual CBFA ToT camp in Burkina Faso took place this year in Koudougou (100 Km from Ouagadougou) from the 15th to 28th of August. In addition to the 74 national participants who took part in this camp, the Regional Delegation facilitated the attendance of 12 representatives from the region.

The Benin and Liberia Red Cross Societies have been requested to prepare a project proposal related to First Aid. Activities aim at developing National Societies' resource capacities, and proposals are being studied by the Health Delegate. Consultants will be recruited at a later stage to conduct feasibility studies. The intention is to provide funding from the Regional Delegation in December, in accordance with the consultants' recommendations.

The Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger and Senegal National Societies are working actively on the final draft of the CBFA Manual. The draft is to be illustrated and sent to the Regional Delegation and the Secretariat for final comments before printing in December 1999.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM): Material which deals with FGM as an aspect of reproductive health has been developed by the Regional Delegation to create awareness on the part of volunteers and populations of the health consequences of these practices. This manual for training will be incorporated into the CBFA modules for the volunteers.

Regional Disaster Preparedness Programme •

Goal: To improve the disaster preparedness capacity of National Societies at a regional and national level in West Africa.

Implementation: For the second half of 1999, the Disaster Preparedness Delegate who joined the Regional Delegation in late June, prepared a revised implementation plan. The Regional DP strategy for 2000 and 2001 has been developed. The Programme takes full account of the needs expressed by the 16 National Societies during the Planning Meeting of the 16 Secretaries General on Regional and Country assistance held in Abidjan from 12th to 14th July 1999.

Achievements: The food security programme involving 8 Sahelian National Societies has begun to take shape with the DFID/Federation partnership programme support. The National Societies of Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Cape Verde have each received a computer with a modem, printer and UPS supplied by the DP Programme. Mauritania and Mali are now linked to the internet and Senegal is in the process of completing arrangements.

The EWS (DP) training workshop was held between the 3rd and 5th of August 1999 with 8 participants from the Sahelian Countries of Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Senegal, the Gambia, Cape Verde, Burkina Faso and Guinea Bissau. Training was provided by a professional institute on the use of internet and on basic skills to access and interpret information provided by early warning systems. All the National Societies prepared plans of action to be effectively involved in food security monitoring in concert with their governments and other partners to determine the level of food security and respond appropriately in a timely manner.

The DP programme has designed the model for a data bank for the West African region. This model includes basic data, the disaster profiles, National Society capacity, types of hazards in the country. Contingency plans for violence have been put in place and VCA pilot studies have enabled four National Societies to proceed to the organisation of national studies on the existing hazards and

capacities of communities. This represents a major shift from traditional National Society programming based on what are felt to be the needs of the vulnerable to more realistic plans based on the findings of the VCA studies.

The Mali Red Cross conducted a national training workshop on Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA) from the 16th - 20th of August in the town of Mopti, some 800 kilometres from Bamako. The objectives were to train the National Society and other partners in preparation for a national VCA, to draw up assessment tools and test them to determine their appropriateness for a country-wide VCA. MRCS plans to use the results of the national VCA to determine its long term programming strategy.

The Red Cross Society of Niger conducted a VCA workshop in Filingue, north of Niamey, from the 28th September to 2nd of October. Early in the next quarter, the Mauritanian Red Crescent will start a regional VCA in the southern part of the country and the Ghana Red Cross Society will also organise a training workshop in the Eastern Region (Koforidua) for the HQ and branch staff. Part of the training will be to design and field test assessment tools.

The Gambia Red Cross Society has now completed its national VCA study and is in the process of using the results to design the NS's three year strategy in line with the four core areas recommended in Strategy 2010.

Regional Support Services •

The Regional Information and Reporting Service: was established to improve the visibility of the Red Cross/Red Crescent traditional activities and operations in the region, thereby raising the profile of the Federation/National Societies in West Africa, reinforcing credibility and increasing funding. During the third quarter, the Information and Reporting Service supported the Red Cross Society of Côte d'Ivoire in the launch of the World Disasters Report. The Service participated in the Planning Meeting and was responsible for co-ordinating the drafting of the Regional Assistance Strategy. Representatives of local and international media followed the launch of the World Disasters Report and several articles were published. The national radio also covered the event. The Information and Reporting Service participated in the celebrations organised by the ICRC and the Red Cross Society of Côte d'Ivoire to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Geneva Conventions. There was much media interest in the ARCHI 2010 meeting, as well as considerable coverage in the national and international written press.

The Information Officer helped facilitate the workshop organised in early August by the Disaster Preparedness Programme which concentrated on the use of internet as a monitoring tool. The Information and Reporting Service contributed to holiday classes for school children organised by the youth department of the Red Cross Society of Côte d'Ivoire by providing an introduction to the Federation. Limited participation in the Regional Information Network remained a problem, nevertheless, the Bi-Monthly Update was produced regularly over the quarter.

Regional Logistics Centre (RLC): the RLC was established to provide professional logistics support for both Delegations and National Societies in the region and to ensure application of Federation standards and procedures. The RLC continued its work to support operations in the region, mainly in Guinea and Liberia. The RLC received twelve requisitions which were dealt with either through local purchase or forwarded to Geneva. Several quotations were also requested for operations in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea-Bissau.

Regional Telecommunications Service (RTS): the RTS was established to provide support in telecommunications and computers to all programme sectors, through needs assessments, installation, maintenance and training. The Telecom Delegate undertook an evaluation mission to Liberia in early July in order to assess telecommunications equipment required. As a result of the tense socio-political situation in Abidjan and Côte d'Ivoire in general, delegates and key local personnel were provided with radios in order to ensure rapid exchange of information. The Telecom Delegate installed a small network within the Delegation and a separate cc: mail address was allocated to the Information and Reporting Service, the DP and ID/RD Departments which will greatly facilitate communication.

Outstanding needs

With the appeal fully covered, there are no outstanding needs for 1999.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

Co-operation •

The Regional Delegation maintained regular dialogue with the Guinea-Conakry and Liberia Delegations, and has become more involved in the work carried out by the Nigeria Delegation, assisting in the drawing up of the country assistance strategy and the six-monthly situation report. The Regional Delegation also improved contacts with the regional early warning institutions with regard to the Sahel region. The Health Department maintains close links with WHO representatives. There is, however, full recognition of the need to increase the visibility of the Federation and to seek new partnerships in the region.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

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