

# INFORMATION BULLETIN



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies  
Fédération Internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge  
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja  
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

## **NIGERIA: ASSISTANCE TO LIBERIAN ASYLUM SEEKERS**

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**Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) Allocated: A DREF application is in process.**

*The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 180 countries.*

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### ***In Brief***

**This document is being issued for information only. The situation in Nigeria is rapidly evolving, and a second Information Bulletin will be issued shortly.**

**At the end of June, the Nigerian Red Cross Society and the Lagos Regional office of the Federation received an official request to provide urgently required humanitarian assistance to asylum seekers from Liberia. The Nigerian Red Cross Society, supported by the Federation plans to undertake a one-time distribution of non-food items to 2,000 Liberian asylum seekers in the Oru Camp.**

### **The Situation**

On 17 June 2003, the UNHCR office in Lagos, Nigeria, received a total number of 1,986 asylum seekers from Liberia, where internal conflicts continue to intensify. Several civilians were forced to flee the country. The asylum seekers include 858 women, 564 children and 564 men, who have been sheltered in Oru refugee camp jointly managed by the Nigerian Red Cross Society, UNHCR and the National Commission for Refugees (NCR). The UNHCR office reported that more asylum seekers are expected since the situation in Liberia has not yet stabilized.

An assessment by the Nigerian Red Cross Society indicated that food and non-food items are urgently required.

Although there are no current health problems open refuse disposals pose some health risks to the asylum seekers. The sanitation facilities are inadequate, and the refugees lack hygiene materials. More so, the need for water and sanitation will become greater as more asylum seekers arrive. The refugees have very limited health services, as the only existing camp clinic lacks essential drugs.

On 23 June, the Lagos office of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies received a letter from the UNHCR office in Lagos, requesting the Federation to assist with food rations for the initial two months, and non-food items in order to help the Liberian refugees.

Prior to that, on 19 June, in a separate letter sent to the Nigerian Red Cross Society, the UNHCR office in Lagos made an appeal to the National Society to assist some 2,000 Liberian refugees for a period of one month.

## **Government and UNHCR Action**

The Nigerian Government, through the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and in particular the National Commission for Refugees (NCFR), has the responsibility for the overall coordination and the general management of the refugee camp, including status determination, protection, security and accommodation (site). As such there is no agreement signed between the Government and the Nigerian Red Cross Society for care and sheltering of refugees. However, the National Society is a statutory member of NEMA, whose National Disaster Response Plan for the country has assigned the responsibilities of mass care, emergency health, search and rescue, etc. to the Red Cross.

A 'Crisis Committee' is not established to deal directly with the Liberian refugees. However, the UNHCR office in Lagos liaises regularly with the above mentioned governmental bodies and humanitarian agencies (Red Cross, UNICEF, etc.) to coordinate the assistance to the refugees.

The Government provided the Oru refugee camp, which was previously used as a school compound. UNICEF donated some non-food items, including medical supplies and water/ sanitation assistance, while UNHCR is preparing for a site planning on 8 July 2003. Furthermore, UNHCR has prepared a provisional assistance programme for an estimated 2500 persons for one month comprising both food and non-food items.

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

The Nigerian Red Cross (NRCS), with assistance from the International Federation, has been the only major operational partner of the UNHCR in Nigeria, assisting the asylum seekers since their arrival in the country. NRCS clinics in Lagos and Oru camp have been providing medical assistance to the Liberians in the camp.

The NRCS conducted a rapid assessment of immediate needs in the camp, and provided the following items to the asylum seekers from its limited preparedness stocks in its Lagos warehouse:

- Ten large tents;
- Eight rolls plastic sheeting;
- Malaria tablets and analgesics prescribed by the Lagos clinic medical staff.

Six volunteers are currently working in the camp to provide temporary assistance to the Liberians. Health education programmes are also being carried out. UNICEF supported by the UNHCR is providing assistance with water and sanitation. Save The Children (SCF-UK) have also undertaken camp visits, with particular focus on the needs of children. The ICRC office in Lagos distributed more than 100 Red Cross Message forms to be completed for tracing purpose.

## **Nigerian Red Cross Society**

The NRCS has been the main operational partner of UNHCR in Nigeria for care and maintenance of refugees. A written agreement between the two organizations provides a Project Agreement, which has been in existence since 1990. The agreement stipulates the respective agencies' responsibilities and is reviewed and renewed annually.

The Society has, therefore, been responsible for food and non-food distribution through the NRCS volunteers, who are also helping with health education for the refugees. On its part, the UNHCR provided funding to meet the cost of distributing relief items, transport, and costs for Red Cross volunteers. In the past, it has also provided a vehicle and covered maintenance cost to enable the National Society provide assistance to refugees.

With the official request to the NRCS and the Lagos Regional office of the Federation to provide assistance to the refugees for one month, the UNHCR is preparing its own resources to take over the full responsibility of the assistance programme after this period. The Federation's Lagos Regional Office expressed its readiness to assist the National Society provide assistance to the refugees. The National Society will make available five Red Cross volunteers who will help with the distribution non-food items.

In brief, the capacity of the NRCS in close proximity to Oru refugee Camp is as follows:

**Human Resources:** The Society has a Disaster Management Department at its National Headquarters in Lagos which provides overall guidance, financial and logistics support and monitoring. The Society's decentralised Zonal Office for Lagos and Ogun States provide a direct supervisory function for implementation by project staff and volunteers.

100 First-aid workers that can immediately be called during an emergency.

**Communications:** HF base radios in Ogun and Lagos branch offices linked with HQ in Lagos. There is a communication link between NRCS national headquarters, UNHCR and the refugee camp.

**NRCS Warehouse stock (non-food items):**

- First aid kits (20 units)
- Tents (100 big and small size)
- Stretchers (100)
- Plastic sheeting (100 rolls, size 30m x 10m)
- Disinfectant ( 24 tins/4 liters for watsan)
- Dressing materials (10 boxes)

**Transport:**

- One 4x4 field vehicle donated by the UNHCR
- One Ambulance vehicle
- Two Field vehicles

## Outstanding Needs

The Nigerian Red Cross Society is seeking CHF 30,187 to procure and distribute non-food items to 2,000 Liberians asylum seekers in Oru camp in support of the UNHCR's request to assist the refugees. A DREF application to the International Federation is currently in process to cover these costs.

The major needs of the asylum seekers in the camp include non-food items like mattresses, blankets and cutlery.

Funding is required to cover local hiring of transport to move relief items to the camp.

The Nigerian Red Cross Society supported by the Federation plans to undertake a one-time distribution of non-food items to 2,000 Liberian asylum seekers in the Oru Camp.

The NRCS's Disaster Management staff, Zonal office in Lagos and Ogun States have undertaken a needs assessment in the camp and outlined activities to assist the refugees. Needs have been determined based on the NRCS assessment and the UNHCR's request. Further assessments are planned to appraise the situation and needs of the refugees.

## Summary of Non-Food items required for 2,000 persons

The current Distribution plan includes: blanket (3 pcs. per family), 1 nylon mat, bucket and cooking pot (2 units per family) for 400 families, and 1 stove per family.

### NON-FOOD ITEMS

Non Food Items	Quantity	Cost (In CHF)
Blankets	1,200 pcs	7'500
Nylon mats	800 pcs	3'500
Cooking pots	800 pcs	2'200
Bucket	800 pcs	2'200
Stoves	400 pcs	2'500
Kerosene	20 ltr/family of 400	4'500
Plates and spoons	167 dozen of each	397
Sub Total: Non Food Cost		CHF 22,797

Local transportation hiring cost	500
Volunteer allowance	2'200
National Society running costs	2'000
Core cost (Lagos Regional Office)	1'200
Geneva O/Head	1'490

**Total Funds required: CHF 30,187**

## Contingency plan of the Nigerian Red Cross Society

The NRCS has a plan which is being put in place to provide emergency assistance to an additional 3,000 asylum seekers for one month in the event that the situation gets worse and more refugees arrive in Nigeria. The Society's main assets are its experienced volunteers, its network and ability to readily and quickly mobilize its resources for an emergency phase intervention, while the National Commission for Refugees works together with UNHCR to provide a long term solution.

## Conclusion

The NRCS provided immediate assistance to the refugees on their arrival by providing some food and non-food items from its very limited resources. This action once again demonstrated the Society's readiness and capacity to provide assistance during emergencies and builds confidence in the National Society as a reliable partner to humanitarian agencies, including the UNHCR.

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