

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

WEST AFRICA: CIVIL UNREST

07 December 2004

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 181 countries.

In Brief

This Information Bulletin (no. 3/2004) is being issued based on the needs described below reflecting the information available at this time. CHF 100.000 has been allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF). Based on further updates and details from assessment reports, or should the situation deteriorate, the Federation may consider international support through an Emergency Appeal.

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

- In Senegal: Hanna Schmuck, Federation Disaster Management Coordinator, West and Central Africa Regional Delegation, Dakar; Email ifrcsn24@ifrc.org; P hone 221.869.3641; Fax 221.860.2002
- In Senegal: Alasan Senghore, Federation Head of West and Central Africa Regional Delegation, Dakar; email ifrcsn21@ifrc.org; Phone 221.869.3641; Fax 221.860.2002
- In Geneva; Christophe GrosPierre, Federation Acting Regional Officer for West and Central Africa, Africa Dept.; Email christophe.grosPierre@ifrc.org; Phone 41.22.730.43.13; 41.22.733.03.95

All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the Code of Conduct and is committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for a full description of the national society profile, please access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

The Situation

Following civil unrests in Côte d'Ivoire 6-8 November 2004 that led to over 64 deaths and nearly 2000 injured, anti-foreigner sentiments resulted in 6,000 western nationals fleeing the country. African nationals living in Côte d'Ivoire and some Ivorians also crossed the border into Liberia, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Mali and Guinea. A recent IRIN¹ report estimates that about 19,000 people have crossed the borders into these countries.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Federation regional delegation in Dakar, Senegal led an assessment mission and support Teams to five neighbouring countries of Côte d'Ivoire, namely, Ghana, Liberia, Guinea, Mali and Burkina Faso. The team members were composed of Federation staff, one national society staff, one RDRT² member and other Movement partners. The Mission had meetings with government representatives, Red Cross leaders and representatives of UN and other agencies based in those countries for useful information and support.

¹ IRIN – UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Integrated Regional Information Network

² RDRT – Regional disaster response team(s)

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Though population movements are not yet taking place in a massive scale like in 2002 and 2003, the Missions were very useful in the following areas:

- assess the humanitarian needs and to support the national societies already providing assistance to refugees and returnees.
- support the national societies in their preparedness measures in case of an influx (this is a likely scenario, see analysis below).
- facilitate information gathering and provide operational guidance for effective coordination with all Movement partners (ICRC, PNS³ representatives).
- ensure cooperation and coordination with the governments, UN and other agencies (WFP, UNHCR) and thereby increasing the visibility and presence of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

The feed-back from the missions has been very positive with all team members being very enthusiastic about the exercise. Individual reports have been submitted with situation analysis, short term Action Plans and draft contingency plans for the medium and longer term action. These individual draft country plans and budgets are presently being reviewed at the Regional Delegation with final drafts expected by 10 December. These final country Action Plans will capture current work of the NS in providing assistance to those that have already crossed the Ivorian borders and how the Federation can support them.

Based on information received through the regular coordination meetings held in Dakar and from some political analysts as well as information received from the assessment teams, the situation in Côte d'Ivoire is unlikely to improve in the coming weeks and months, but will instead remain in a state of uncertainty or even deteriorate - if not by an outbreak of conflict, but by a massive economic decline. Consequently, citizens of the five neighbouring countries living and working in Côte d'Ivoire may leave for their home-countries. Ivorians are also anticipated to cross the border in search of employment and security.

The Federation Regional Delegation, apart from providing support to the national societies in their activities for the refugees and returnees, will also assist them to review and update their contingency plans to better prepare themselves for the different scenarios. In summary, these activities are refresher trainings for existing volunteers who have worked in the last population movement crisis (2002/2004), training of new volunteers along the border areas, provision of basic equipment and relief material.

In an evaluation and planning workshop organized by the Regional Delegation in Dakar on 8-9 December, the plans will be aligned to the different roles and responsibilities assigned to the Red Cross by their respective governments in close coordination with the ICRC and UN Agencies. Based on the country-specific plans of actions and contingency plans, a comprehensive regional contingency plan will be developed to ensure a harmonized and coordinated response to the crisis.

The following details the different situations in the affected neighbouring countries.

Ghana⁴

The situation along the border is calm. An average of 100 people are entering Ghana from Côte d'Ivoire each day, but mostly they are in transit to their home countries (mainly to Burkina Faso – see below); however, some asylum seekers are expected. If the situation in Côte d'Ivoire⁵ deteriorates, increased population movements are expected.

On the background of the experience in 2002/2003, the Ghana Red Cross Society is very alert of the situation and takes preparative measures (in cooperation with the Government, UN and other organizations), such as establishing or re-activating registration posts, reception centres and creating emergency stocks for the arrivals. Support is needed for the Ghana Red Cross to carry out these activities.

³ PNS – Partner National Red Cross and Red Crescent Society/Societies

⁴ Ghana country page - <http://www.ifrc.org/where/country/check.asp?countryid=73>

⁵ Côte d'Ivoire country page - <http://www.ifrc.org/where/country/check.asp?countryid=182>

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Mali⁶

The situation here is calm, but might deteriorate. Thirty injured people had crossed the border and were treated, but later returned. In case the situation in Côte d'Ivoire deteriorates, a very tense situation along the border is likely, as experienced in 2002. There are not enough trained volunteers to deal with any possible emergency situation. Furthermore, the respective branches and their volunteers need urgent support for preparative actions.

Guinea⁷

No arrivals are officially reported, but are likely if the situation in Côte d'Ivoire deteriorates. ICRC is active in the border area and for this reason the mission stayed in Conakry for up-dating the contingency plan of the national society and developing a plan of action. The contingency plan has also been given to the ICRC Delegation in Conakry for input and comments.

Of big concern is the fact that the radio network of the Guinea RC is not working properly anymore. Therefore, the Regional Delegation immediately sent its IT Officer to re-establish the network to enable proper and efficient communication in the region, between Conakry and the border areas in case the situation deteriorates.

Another main recommendation from the mission is to re-activate the very successful and efficient GAPU system (Groupes d'Alerte et de Première Urgence) and support the needs of the brigades. The GAPU system is well-known and appreciated, and also replicated by UN agencies. Financial support for this is urgently required.

Liberia⁸

Internet connectivity has been poor, and this has impacted the ability to communicate the situation. Nonetheless, the Federation Representative has communicated that possible Red Cross interventions are for registration, health, and water and sanitation.

Burkina Faso⁹

Officially, only a few hundred people have entered Burkina Faso; however, the mission found that several thousand have crossed the border, most of these being returnees. This difference in numbers due to the responsible government taking little action to address this issue; as well, returnees are crossing the border by foot and in an "invisible" way (not registering themselves at the police posts/check-points etc.).

The local Burkinabe Red Cross branches are very aware of the situation and have developed their plans of action. The main constraint to cope with the situation is the lack of well-trained volunteers, equipment and means of communication between the border area and the head quarters. Consequently, the draft national society plan of action includes refresher trainings of existing volunteers, formation of new volunteers, provision of basic equipment and relief materials.

Further immediate action:

The Regional Delegation will organize an Evaluation and Planning Workshop in Dakar on 8-9 December, with the members of all five assessment and support teams. The objectives of the workshop are:

- To present, share and analyse the results of the assessment and support missions to the five neighbouring countries of Côte d'Ivoire
- To develop a comprehensive medium-term Plan of Action to prepare for and respond to the situation (based on mission findings, proposed national societies' plans of actions, contingency plans, etc.).

Representatives of the Red Cross of Côte d'Ivoire and ICRC will also participate and give an analysis of the situation in Côte d'Ivoire and Red Cross activities.

The DREF allocation enabled the deployment of the Assessment and Support Missions to the five neighbouring countries of Côte d'Ivoire; DREF funds will also be used for the above-mentioned two-day workshop. Urgent action is needed now to prepare and respond to the crisis: re-establishment of the radio network in Guinea, financial and technical support for more comprehensive preparedness and response in providing training and material support for the national societies.

⁶ Mali country page - <http://www.ifrc.org/where/country/check.asp?countryid=112>

⁷ Guinea country page - <http://www.ifrc.org/where/country/check.asp?countryid=77>

⁸ Liberia country page - <http://www.ifrc.org/where/country/check.asp?countryid=103>

⁹ Burkina Faso country page - <http://www.ifrc.org/where/country/check.asp?countryid=181>

Coordination

The Regional Delegation will assist the national societies to develop and implement contingency and action plans as well as develop a regional contingency planning with clear strategies. It will coordinate with UN agencies, ICRC and other partners and monitor the situation whilst exploring the possibilities to launch an Emergency Appeal.

All International Federation Operations seek to adhere to the Code of Conduct and are committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE Project) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For support to or for further information concerning Federation operations in this or other countries, please access the Federation website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

For longer-term programmes, please refer to the following Federation Annual Appeals:

- Côte d'Ivoire, 2005 Appeal no. 05AA019 - http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_Appeals.pl?annual05/05AA019.pdf
- Guinea, 2005 Appeal no. 05AA021 - http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_Appeals.pl?annual05/05AA021.pdf
- Liberia, 2005 Appeal no. 05AA022 - http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_Appeals.pl?annual05/05AA022.pdf
- Ghana, 2005 Appeal no. 05AA025 - http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_Appeals.pl?annual05/05AA025.pdf
- Burkina Faso, 2005 Appeal no. 05AA026 - http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_Appeals.pl?annual05/05AA026.pdf
- Mali, 2005 Appeal no. 05AA029 - http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_Appeals.pl?annual05/05AA029.pdf
- West and Central Africa regional programmes, 2005 Appeal no. 05AA039 – http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_Appeals.pl?annual05/05AA039.pdf

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