

GABON:

EBOLA FEVER

Request for Assistance

22 October 1996

The context

The Federation information bulletin of 18 October highlighted the outbreak of the Ebola haemorrhaging fever in Gabon. Although the progress of the disease is just manageable, some actions must be taken immediately to contain it.

Latest events

Since the Ebola virus reappeared in Gabon in July, a dozen people have died. According to a WHO report, the situation as at 21 October was as follows:

19 cases
12 deaths, i.e. 61% fatality
2 convalescing
5 sick

The Gabonese authorities have reacted quickly and firmly, and are ensuring general co-ordination of the operations, in close co-operation with WHO.

Objectives

The Federation Regional Delegation in Brazzaville, together with the Gabonese Red Cross Society, has fixed the following operational objectives:

- Training of trainers so that they acquire the knowledge and basic techniques to combat the epidemic based on an Information, Education and Communication (IEC) programme.
- Forming a sanitation team to disinfect both places and dead bodies in order to limit the spread of the epidemic
- Providing psychological and moral support to the families and friends of the persons who are sick or who have died of the epidemic.

Red Cross/Crescent Action

As mentioned in the previous information bulletin and following the request from the Gabonese Red Cross, the Federation's Regional Delegation in Brazzaville is dispatching a doctor who, together with the NS, will liaise with the country's health authorities.

This delegate will be involved in the activities of the National Committee to combat the epidemic, alongside the Gabonese Red Cross. He will assist the Gabonese Red Cross in the following tasks:

At national level

- Training of trainers in awareness. Ten Red Cross volunteers will be trained at Libreville and will form the national core of volunteers, for the short, medium and long term. Their role will be to assist operations in the event of an epidemic.

At local level

- A group of three persons selected from among the ten persons trained in the capital will accompany the Federation delegate to Boué, epicentre of the current outbreak. They will together be responsible for training the Red Cross facilitators from the localities affected by the epidemic.

The Regional Delegation is preparing posters and leaflets to be dispatched this week to Libreville for use in the awareness programme.

Urgent needs

Following consultations with Gabonese Red Cross the Regional Delegation prepared the following list of needs:

1. Protective equipment (to be purchased abroad)
2. Vaporisers (to be purchased abroad)
3. Calcium hypochlorite disinfectant or Cresyl (local purchase)
4. Megaphones to increase public awareness (local purchase)
5. Printing health and education posters and leaflets

In light of the urgency of this action, the Federation has released CHF 50,000 from its Disaster Response Emergency Fund to launch the operation. Part of the contributions from PNSs will be used to replace the funds taken from DREF.

In addition, there are serious communications and logistics problems. Very large distances are to be covered in the field as the teams will work in both the urban and the rural zones. Four wheel drive vehicles would enhance the effectiveness of the action.

Consignments should be sent to

Mrs Maïté Mapangou
 President, Gabonese Red Cross
 Annexe de l'Hôtel Dialogue Porte 417 & 418
 Boîte Postale 2274
 Telephone (241) 75.31.75 / 73.59.73
 Fax (241) 73.59.73 / 77.32.53
 Libreville GABON

Budget

See attached

Conclusion

The Gabonese Red Cross is a young and growing Society. It recently held its General Assembly and is clearly determined to play its full role as auxiliary to the public authorities. It was already active in the previous assistance operation in the country. The Africa Department wants to continue providing the GRC with support so that it can continue to fulfil its humanitarian mission and urges donors to react quickly and positively to this request for assistance. Should the situation get worse, the Federation will launch an appeal for Gabon.

Richard Hunlédé
Desk Officer
Africa Department

Bekele Geleta
Director
Africa Department