

GUINEA-CONAKRY: SIERRA LEONEAN REFUGEES

11 June 1998

Alert

The Disaster

Fighting between West African Peacekeepers (ECOMOG) and the AFRC/RUF in north-eastern Sierra Leone has led to a flood of refugees crossing into the prefectures of Gueckédou, Kissidougou and Faranah in southern Guinea. Since March UNHCR has registered 77,000 new arrivals at Gueckédou. The flow continues at a rate of 1,000 people per day, adding to the existing caseload of 121,000 refugees registered before March. By the end of August the number of Sierra Leonean refugees in the Gueckédou are expected to reach 250,000.

The majority of the refugees are grouped in 40 sites housing between 100 and 23,000 persons each. The largest camps are Fangamadou (20,300), Kilomba (21,300), Nyaédou (14,900) and Massakoundou (15,000). Many of the refugees have injuries and all have lost personal possessions.

The region affected by this new influx has already taken in 132,000 Liberian refugees since December 1989, only 25,000 of whom have returned since the beginning of the spontaneous, voluntary repatriation this year.

UNHCR is in charge of co-ordinating assistance to the refugees and has maintained pre-existing partnerships and distribution of tasks to cope with this new influx. WFP provides food, Action Contre la Faim organises the make-up of the food-basket and SECADOS takes care of distribution. Water and sanitation needs are in the hands of GTZ, ACF and SNAPE, the health field is dealt with by the Prefectoral Health Directorate and social assistance by SECADOS.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

The current situation is as flagged by the International Federation in its Emergency Appeal for Liberia and Region (Programme 01.07/98). It warned "It is quite possible that Guinea will have to face a further massive influx of refugees. Guinea Red Cross/Federation must be ready to get involved in relief activities."

None of the camps has a partner responsible for the co-ordination of services (camp management, sanitation, water, latrines and food distribution). The International Federation and the Guinea Red Cross Society (GRCS) are very familiar with the area and have both the structures and human resources to take on this role.

A recent GRCS/Federation assessment mission in Guékédou confirmed the need for immediate action, with the following objectives:

- { To to guarantee basic survival conditions for 200,000 persons;
- { To help the refugees distribute food made available by the WFP and to provide social assistance to the most needy;

- { To mobilise a team of first aiders for the 40 camps, under the supervision of a national co-ordinator and a field delegate;
- { To strengthen the social and health environment through social programmes with greater involvement of young people and women: sanitation of water sources and wells, disinfecting latrines, training in health education, reforestation, and medium and long-term micro-projects.

GRCS has been assisting Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees for eight years and is well qualified to ensure co-ordination of the present operational plan. Its Gueckédou branch can provide 40 experienced first-aiders to manage food and non-food items and has furnished premises that can serve as a basis for the operation.

Needs

Immediate cash/in kind support of CHF 1,500,000 is needed to supply 16,000 tarpaulins, 48,000 blankets, 48,000 mats, soap supplies for six months, transport, personnel, communications and other equipment. For detailed information donors are requested to contact Richard Hunlede, team leader for West Africa on ++4122 7304314, email: hunlede@ifrc.org

A revision of Appeal 01.07/98 will be made to reflect the adjustment to the relief budget for Guinea.

Peter Rees-Gildea
Director
Operations Funding and Reporting Department

Bekele Geleta
Director
Africa Department