

IN THE RED CROSS WORLD

APPEAL FOR VICTIMS OF NIGERIA CONFLICT

The International Committee of the Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies have launched a joint appeal for a total of more than Sw. Frs. 24,000,000 (US \$5,581,000) needed to finance four months of humanitarian operations for the victims of the conflict in Nigeria.

The appeal was addressed to National Red Cross, Red Crescent and Red Lion and Sun Societies, Governments, governmental and non-governmental organisations. It covers all aspects of Red Cross programmes on both sides of the front—programmes operated directly by the ICRC and by the Nigerian Red Cross with the assistance of the League.

A total of Sw. Frs. 16,932,000 (US \$3,938,000) is needed to finance ICRC operations for four months. These include: conventional tasks on both sides of the front (assisting prisoners-of-war, tracing missing persons, re-uniting families); a medical relief action in the secessionist zone; maintenance of an air-base and nucleus fleet of aircraft at Cotonou in the hope of a resumption of Red Cross relief flights under a negotiated agreement on daylight operations; medical care for combat casualties in Nigeria.

The League for its part is asking its member-Societies to contribute Sw. Frs. 8,080,000 (US \$1,879,000) to a Nigerian Red Cross programme supplying food, other relief assistance and medical care for some 500,000 displaced persons. This programme was taken over by the Nigerian Red Cross from the ICRC on 1 October, and the Society has appealed to the League for assistance.

The appeal, dated 19 December 1969, was as follows:

The situation of the victims of the conflict which is tearing Nigeria apart remains a grave preoccupation for the entire international community. While awaiting a peaceful settlement, which all hope will be reached soon, every day brings new and indescribable sufferings.

On each side of the front assistance of ever increasing dimensions

is necessary. The Red Cross, as well as other organisations, is engaged in obtaining and distributing relief to those who need it.

National Societies who have so generously supported this operation have frequently expressed the wish to receive jointly from the ICRC and the League—the latter in the name of its member Society in Nigeria—an overall picture of the situation, setting out the different programmes devolving on the Red Cross and the needs in cash and in kind required to carry them out.

The present appeal, which covers a period of four months, meets this wish. In transmitting it today to National Societies, Governments and governmental and non-governmental organisations interested in supporting the efforts of the Red Cross, the ICRC and the League hope that it will be sympathetically received and that it will secure for the Red Cross the resources that it so urgently needs to continue and develop its humanitarian and neutral action in the spirit of Resolution XXVI adopted at Istanbul by the XXIst International Conference of the Red Cross.

The ICRC and the League will respect wishes which donors might express as to the particular assignment of relief in cash or in kind which can be made available. Undesignated gifts will be allocated, according to the urgency and the needs, between the different programmes outlined in the attached documents, in order to ensure their simultaneous development.

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The ICRC and the League are aware of the magnitude of the effort which is once again requested of National Societies. However, they are certain that, ever mindful of the distress of the conflict victims and convinced of the necessity for the Red Cross to reinforce its action in this troubled region of the African continent, Societies will generously furnish the resources required to carry out the proposed programmes of assistance, and for this they express their thanks in advance.

For the League of Red Cross
Societies
Henrik Beer
Secretary General

For the International
Committee of the Red Cross
Marcel-A. Naville
President

Two explanatory notes were released and are quoted below. The first is from the International Committee, the second from the League.

IN THE RED CROSS WORLD

A. In the distressed areas, on either side of the conflict lines, the ICRC is continuing the mission assigned to it by the Geneva Conventions; assisting the POW's, handling thousands of tracing cases and reuniting families under particularly difficult conditions. It maintains its indispensable staff and delegates to protect the civilian population and attend to their most urgent needs, with a particular accent on medical aid.

In the secessionist zone, a delegation of 50 members is running 7 hospitals and 64 sickbays, including 3 leper clinics, with a total of about 15,000 sick and wounded; it is caring each month for some 200,000 out-patients. An artificial limb workshop and re-education centre has recently been set up. The ICRC is also responsible for 6 orphanages. An extensive vaccination campaign is being actively pursued: 2,500,000 persons, mostly children, have now been inoculated against smallpox, 850,000 against measles, and 300,000 against TB. Medical assistance to a weakened population saves countless lives and prevents deadly spreading epidemics.

All the efforts, by so many, to bring the conflict to an end, and the unremitting negotiations conducted by the ICRC for the resumption of Red Cross relief flights, may result in a situation where the ICRC could suddenly be called upon to start daylight operations, which remain the most straightforward and efficient means to bring immediate relief in sufficient quantities. Therefore, and in order to be prepared for any emergency, it is a must for the ICRC to keep minimum airlift facilities in readiness on its base in Cotonou.

In Nigeria, since June 30th when its role as co-ordinator of relief was terminated, and until the end of September, the ICRC has gradually turned over its responsibilities to the Nigerian Red Cross, together with 20,000 tons of relief supplies, and with 400 vehicles on loan or in property. The approximate value of the assets transferred amounted to more than 2,100,000 N£.

Since October last, the ICRC delegation in Lagos has focused its efforts on its traditional duties under the Conventions. Its work will be extended, in the northern and southern zones of the conflict, with the installation of two sub-delegations. It is also planned to recruit two surgical teams, to care for combat casualties.

In order to face emergency situations, the ICRC and the Nigerian Red Cross have agreed that the latter shall keep an emergency

stock of 5,000 tons of foodstuff at the disposal of the ICRC delegation; the necessary steps have also been taken to solve certain distribution problems.

On November 1st, the total financial means of the International Committee for the whole operation amounted to 624,000 Swiss Francs. Although actual expenses over the last two months were kept somewhat under the budgeted figures, the ICRC's operation showed, by the end of November, a deficit of about 4,500,000 Swiss Francs.

A prompt and generous response to this appeal will enable the ICRC to continue its impartial mission on both sides of the conflict, and pursue its fundamental objectives which are those of the Red Cross throughout the world.

B. ASSISTANCE TO NEEDY DISPLACED POPULATION IN NIGERIA

On the 1st October 1969 the Nigerian Red Cross Society took over from the International Committee of the Red Cross operational responsibility for the relief action in Federal Nigeria. In the fulfilment of this responsibility some 1,200 Nigerian Red Cross Society workers, assisted by relief and medical teams, are caring for approximately 500,000 displaced needy persons.

The Cabinet Office of the Federal Government of Nigeria recognised the unique position of the Red Cross in a letter dated 9th December 1969 addressed to the President of the Nigerian Red Cross Society reading as follows:

" I wish to refer to recent discussions and correspondence on your relationship with the National Commission for Rehabilitation and to inform you that the Federal Military Government has decided that the Nigerian Red Cross Society be exempted from the provisions of the National Commission for Rehabilitation Decree, 1969 with immediate effect.

" The Federal Government has also decided that the Cabinet Office will be responsible for relations with the Nigerian Red Cross Society. Accordingly, all matters on which the Society is expected to seek the authority or the views of the Government will now be referred to that Office.

IN THE RED CROSS WORLD

“ The Federal Government has no objection should you decide to convey this information to any other organisation. A copy of this letter has been forwarded to the Commissioner for Rehabilitation.

(signed) H. A. Ejueyitchie
Secretary to the
Federal Military Government ”

The role of the Nigerian Red Cross Society is now clear and the Society will be able to continue to give relief to the needy in accordance with Red Cross principles. On the 7th December the Nigerian Red Cross Society appealed to the League for support from sister Societies to assist it to carry out the relief programme described in this circular.

The Nigerian Red Cross Society is at present assisted by several voluntary agencies and National Societies which are providing the services of 15 medical teams operating in the four war-affected States. The Society in turn provides them with the following services:

- a. the collection and distribution to the teams of all basic food, medicaments and other relief requirements;
- b. servicing, maintenance and repair of all team vehicles;
- c. administrative and executive organisation for the relief operation;
- d. radio communications connecting all areas.
- e. logistic facilities.

Role and Programme of the Nigerian Red Cross Society. The Society is responsible for distributing food, other relief assistance and medical attention to approximately 500,000 people in need. For this they have appealed to the League for assistance for a four month period: 1st December 1969 to 31st March 1970.

Role of the League. The role of the League will be that of counsellor to the Nigerian Red Cross Society in matters of their relief programme, and representative of the donor National Societies.