

LAGOS

Regional delegation (Nigeria)

Nigeria experienced its first full year of civilian democratic rule in 2000 after 15 years of military government. Potential threats to political stability and internal security were effectively contained, while political and economic reforms and an anti-corruption drive initiated by the government received general support from Nigeria's international partners. The armed forces remained an important guarantor of stability, but also had a major external role as part of the UN peace-keeping force in Sierra Leone. Compulsory retirement of senior officers brought new faces into the military leadership but did not change the good working relationship with the ICRC which had prevailed since the Nigerian civil war over 30 years before.

Internal flash points

Serious riots in Kaduna in February and May resulted in the loss of hundreds of lives and the displacement of several thousand people. These disturbances, linked to the controversy in Nigeria over the introduction of Sharia law in some states of the federation, took on religious overtones. The loss of life, looting and destruction of property, including mosques and churches, prompted the intervention of the police and army to restore order.

In what appeared to be a reaction to the events in Kaduna in May, intercommunal fighting broke out in three south-eastern states and forced 20,000 people to seek the protection of the security forces. In the west, violent clashes continued between two communities in Osun state, and in October clashes again broke out in Lagos between Yoruba- and Hausa-speaking communities. The 200 dead made this a more serious incident than the one that occurred the year before.

The ICRC supported the Nigerian Red Cross Society in its response to these violent incidents, providing non-food assistance for the victims and medical supplies and water for several hospitals treating the wounded. The Nigerian Red Cross is present in all 36 states and is well respected by the population. It strengthened its institutional base in 2000 to improve its response capability.

While these violent clashes were serious, they affected a relatively small number of people. For the overwhelming majority of Nigeria's estimated 110 million population, the first full year of democracy was peaceful.

Political and economic challenges

The new democratic structures also stood the test of political and social pressure in 2000. A major constitutional and political crisis was averted by the leadership of the ruling People's Democratic Party when it resolved a serious rift between two of its factions. The nationwide strike in June against fuel price rises, during which a number of people died in violent clashes, was also resolved when the government agreed to moderate the increases.

Oil continued to dominate the national economy, but although Nigeria was still the fourth most important OPEC* producer in 2000, its huge population put it well down the per capita national wealth list according to the UN's human development index. In fact poverty increased in 2000, with an estimated 60% of the population below the UN poverty line. The sheer numbers involved make this situation one of Africa's most important social and humanitarian challenges.

Stable relations

Nigeria faced no destabilizing external problems in 2000. The decade-old maritime border dispute with Equatorial Guinea was settled when the Presidents of the two countries put their signatures to a treaty in Malabo in September. The border dispute with Cameroon over the Bakassi peninsula was awaiting a ruling from the International Court of Justice. More widely the Nigerian army provided troops for ECOWAS* and UN peace-keeping activities in Sierra Leone, and signed a military agreement with the United States which will provide training for five Nigerian battalions in peace-keeping roles.

Defence and security issues emerged as significant factors in Nigeria's growing relationship with South Africa. Visits by high-ranking officers were followed by talks on joint ventures in arms manufacture.

* OPEC: Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries

* ECOWAS: Economic Community of West African States

Red Cross initiatives

The ICRC worked closely with both the government and the Nigerian Red Cross in 2000. In May a refresher course on the law of armed conflict was held at the Defence Academy in Kaduna. Presentations were also made at the air force training centre and the police staff college in Jos. It was decided to adapt the ICRC's publication *To Serve and to Protect* for use by the Nigerian police.

The ICRC and the Nigerian Red Cross organized workshops in Lagos on alternatives to violence and a conference on "Weapons and international humanitarian law: mines, arms availability and new weapons" in Abuja in June. The Abuja conference aimed to promote Nigeria's accession to the Ottawa treaty and ratification of the UN Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. It was attended by most ECOWAS countries and provided a useful sounding board for the ICRC's plans for a cooperation agreement with the organization. Negotiations with the ECOWAS secretariat in Abuja progressed well, opening up the possibility of widening the ICRC's mandate in West Africa.

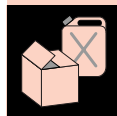
ICRC support was also given during the year to Nigerian Red Cross dissemination activities and its emergency preparedness department. Relations between all components of the Movement worked smoothly in 2000 with both the ICRC and the International Federation sharing premises in Lagos with the National Society.

Media activities included a special briefing for journalists in Abuja on the ICRC's mandate and on the "People on War" project in Nigeria. The project revealed how the experience of the civil war, 30 years before, still profoundly affected Nigerian attitudes to war.

IN 2000 THE ICRC:



- gave support to the Nigerian Red Cross for its hygiene activities in 56 prisons throughout the country;



- provided, through the National Society, items such as cooking implements, blankets and soap to over

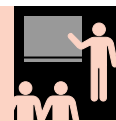
10,000 people affected by the communal violence in Kaduna, the south-east, Osun, Kwara and Lagos states;



- evacuated more than 60 victims of the violence to hospital and provided medical supplies and 16,000 litres of water for 2 hospitals;



- ran a dissemination workshop with the Nigerian Red Cross for training officers from 30 of its branches;
- gave the National Society financial and material support, particularly for its emergency preparedness programmes;



- ran a course on the law of armed conflict for 45 instructors at the Nigerian Defence Academy in Kaduna, and gave

presentations to 130 cadets and officers at the Academy, to 1,100 officers and airmen at 2 Nigerian air force training centres and to 100 officers at the Police Staff College in Jos;

- ran workshops with the Nigerian Red Cross as part of the "alternatives to violence" programme;
- organized, in association with the National Society and a local NGO, a conference in Abuja on "Weapons and international humanitarian law: mines, arms availability and new weapons" which also promoted Nigeria's accession to the Ottawa treaty and ratification of the UN Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.