

IN THE RED CROSS WORLD

REGIONAL TRAINING INSTITUTE IN WEST AFRICA

The League of Red Cross Societies organized, from 8 to 29 April, 1971, at Greenhill, near Accra (Ghana), a seminar of the Regional Training Institute for English-speaking National Societies in West Africa.¹ The League was represented by Mr. A. Schmid, Regional Services Director and Miss T. Ohashi of the Junior Red Cross Bureau, and the ICRC by Mr. S. Svikovsky. The seminar followed on the one held in November 1970 at Dar-es-Salaam, an account of which appeared in our February 1971 issue. The Regional Training Institutes are the instruments made available by the League to National Societies in order to meet the needs of the Red Cross world where the training of senior Red Cross staff is concerned. The participants are selected from among career staff and volunteers, who want to get more efficient in their own work and to be a factor in the progress of their National Society, and who are ready to develop their aptitudes for participating in Red Cross action and development on national and international levels.

Taking part in the Accra session were twenty-six delegates, selected from among leaders and volunteer members of the National Societies of the following countries: Botswana, Cameroon, Finland, Gambia, German Democratic Republic, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, Norway, Sierra Leone and the United States. The items on the agenda of the working sessions included various topics related to specific duties and resources of Red Cross Societies in West African countries. The social and cultural structures of the countries concerned, as well as their medico-social and economic programmes, were examined. The participants also studied, in the context of a better adaptation to the needs of the inhabitants, National Societies' work programmes such as: blood transfusion, first aid and

¹ *Plate.*

nursing, disaster preparedness and relief, youth in Red Cross, information and public relations, fund-raising campaigns, elements of planning and co-operation between the Red Cross, governments and voluntary organizations. Subjects of a still more general character were also studied: the Geneva Conventions, the Red Cross Principles, education and social development, and assessment of progress.

In his opening address, the Hon. Mr. Justice Nii Amaa Ollennu, Speaker of the Ghana Parliament and Vice-President of the Ghana Red Cross, stressed, in a striking speech, the need for the Red Cross to contribute still more efficiently to the development of the African continent. He declared that it could not limit its effort to rendering first aid and to sending relief in disaster operations. The Red Cross, he said, could and should extend its field of action. He then went on:

The time is now ripe for the Red Cross to make the organizational arrangements and the operational plans which will put Red Cross Societies into the mainstream of social welfare developments. It is necessary for the Red Cross to accept a total community approach; not the "atomistic" efforts which still dominate today's picture, but one based on motivation within the community from those directly concerned.

This, of course, represents a tremendous challenge to our movement, for our National Societies, for our leaders and members, in fact, a challenge to us all.

The most necessary innovation might have to do with youth. Youth as participants, not only with some leaders as hostages at big meetings but as real colleagues in planning and execution! But are our National Societies readily willing and able to meet this challenge? In the past, Red Cross has always been a pioneer in developing new approaches, new methods towards meeting, through the work of volunteers, the ever-changing needs of humanity.

I strongly believe that today we are able to produce the bold efforts demanded from us by our people in a fast integration world.

To achieve this challenging goal, to maintain our role as a pioneer, we need an increasing number of fully dedicated dynamic leaders who will provide guidance and appeal to our communities.

The Red Cross movement needs an international corps of far-sighted volunteer leaders and executive staff willing and able to clearly identify the problems, to conceive and plan in connection



Accra: Regional Training Institute organized by the League. A working session...

... in which a Nigerian participant in the Seminar explains pre-disaster relief planning.

Photos M. Häggblom



with the authorities the sort of service programmes which will have a real impact on the community's development.

These people must have the skills to find new approaches and new methods to make the Red Cross totally relevant to the life of the nations and mankind.

The purpose of this Institute is precisely to help training this sort of leader.

The seminar was directed by the eminent Ghana sociologist, Professor K. E. de Graft-Johnson; lectures were given and discussions conducted by nine teachers, doctors, specialists in social and cultural problems and other experts, not all of whom belonged to the Red Cross. The participants themselves took an extensive part in the discussions, describing their own experiences and sharing the actual responsibility of the Institute's work. Several papers on subjects of considerable interest for the understanding of Red Cross problems in this part of the world were read by leaders of African National Societies. These included Disaster Preparedness (*Nigerian Red Cross Society*)—Nursery Project (*Gambia Red Cross Society*)—Public Information (*Sierra Leone Red Cross Society*)—Fund Raising (*Liberian Red Cross Society*)—Welfare Programmes (*Ghana Red Cross*). Carefully prepared practical exercises were demonstrated in the institute building and outside.

The fact that the matters discussed were all concrete problems, and the assiduity of all participants, were sufficient to ensure full success for the seminar. A forthcoming session will be held from 1 to 22 September 1971 in Dakar (Senegal) for the French-speaking National Societies in West Africa.