

# ***KINGDOM OF MOROCCO: FLOODS***

*16 April 1997*

*appeal no. 02/96*

*situation report no. 2 (Final Report)*

## ***The context***

During the months of December 1995 and January, February and March 1996, the Atlantic coastline of the Kingdom of Morocco was hit by successive waves of torrential rain which caused severe flooding. According to the Ministry of the Interior, some 60,000 people were directly affected by the flooding, with a number of deaths being registered. Many shantytowns were devastated and several thousand hectares of agricultural land inundated. The final official statistics on the floods are as follows:

7,187 houses destroyed

132,400 hectares of agricultural land flooded

8,508 animals killed

substantial infrastructural damage, put at 468,374,000 dirhams (approximately CHF 65 million)

From the beginning of January 1996 the Moroccan government put the 'ORSEC' plan (the National Disaster Response Plan) into operation in the following prefectures:

- \* Ain Sebâa Hay Mohammedi (Wilaya of Casablanca);
- \* Derb Soltan (Wilaya of Casablanca);
- \* Hay Hassani Ain Chock (Wilaya of Casablanca );
- \* Mechouar Casablanca (Wilaya of Casablanca);
- \* Mohammedia (Wilaya of Casablanca);

and in the provinces of Benslimane, Taounate, Taroudant, Chaouen, Essaouira, Kénitra, Larache, Safi, Sidi Kacem, Skhirat-Témara and Tangiers. A commission was created to follow up the emergency measures.

## ***Red Cross/Red Crescent action***

### **The Operation**

On 26 January the International Federation launched an appeal for CHF 1,265,000 to assist the Moroccan Red Crescent Society in meeting the needs of the affected population. The appeal sought support for the distribution of 1,535 mt. food, shelter materials and other relief items to 18,000 of the most vulnerable among an estimated 60,000 victims in seven prefectures and eleven provinces.

The objectives of the operation as outlined in the appeal were the following:

- For the Moroccan Red Crescent Society to assist in rescuing victims isolated by the flooding
- To distribute food and shelter material to the most vulnerable, particularly those made homeless by the flooding.

The following was the planned phasing of the operation:

**Emergency Phase: *January 1996* ●**

- Rescue and evacuate flood victims.
- Purchase and distribute food and non-food items.

**Phase Two: *February-March 1996* ●**

- Purchase and distribute food and non-food items.

The Federation appeal generated a swift and generous response which covered all cash and in-kind requirements. Financial contributions included a grant of ECU 200,000 from the European Union.

From 21 February onwards a Relief Administration delegate was assigned to assist the Moroccan Red Crescent (MRC) with the management of the operation and the administration of supplies. His expenses were covered by the ECHO grant.

The MRC created an emergency unit within its headquarters in Rabat to co-ordinate actions during the emergency and rehabilitation phases. The provincial committees of the MRC were also mobilised to provide volunteers and first aid workers to assist in the rescue operations and provide the manpower for the distributions of relief food and supplies.

The MRC was charged by the government with the responsibility for food and shelter distribution in the three worst-affected coastal regions: the two provinces of Essaouira and El Jadida, and the prefecture of Derb Sultan Al Fida in the city of Casablanca. This western region registered the highest levels of damage during the three months of rains. For the most part, the other regions affected by the floods are located in the rural areas where reconstruction poses fewer problems. The three areas in which the MRC operated had in common several factors: the complete destruction of housing especially amongst a poor, and mostly urban population suffering from high levels of unemployment. The number of affected was also very high in comparison to the number of families. The priority requirements of this population were supplementary food assistance and shelter (tents and blankets). In the longer term the population required permanent housing.

In total, 6,000 families (approximately 30,000 people) benefited from Federation-funded assistance, divided in the following manner:

Casablanca: Prefecture of Derb Sultan El Fida

Some 2,000 families were affected by the floods and were relocated in public buildings, mainly schools, far from their homes. Most of their homes had been built in the 1930s and were consequently quite old and overcrowded. The provisional housing of this population in schools perturbed the educational system in the prefecture. Government authorities are still searching for solutions to the problem, but the cost of either rebuilding the damaged homes or constructing new ones is extremely heavy.

Food aid was intended to supplement the scanty food basket available to the people and favoured basic foodstuffs such as wheat flour, sugar, tea, and oil. Blankets were provided, as were some tents to alleviate overcrowding in the early stages of the operation. Health conditions were under the supervision of the government authorities. The local branch of the MRC assisted in the distribution of the goods.

#### El Jadida

Conditions in this province were similar to those mentioned above, but damage caused by flood waters was more serious. The overflowing Fefel river submerged a number of villages. Most houses were completely destroyed. Two thousand families were relocated into hangars under tents provided by the MRC. In this province, however, local authorities were in a position to provide flood victims with construction materials which allowed most of them to reconstruct their homes.

#### Essaouira

The 2,000 families in this province suffered similar conditions. However, the abundant rain triggered other damage, such as the erosion of the foundations of their homes, caused by the large size of waves from the Atlantic Ocean during the storms. The emergency measures taken in this province to rescue and relocate families were, fortunately, much more effective than in the other provinces.

The purchases of food and other relief supplies provided by Federation funds were made in each of the three provinces by the MRC provincial branches. The price of foodstuffs is uniform throughout the country. The Central Committee at the National Headquarters in Rabat took responsibility for the purchase of the relief supplies (tents and blankets) as well as providing the logistical support.

A number of articles appeared in the local press mentioning the MRC/Federation action in favour of the flood victims. A video was also produced by the MRC detailing the operation.

#### Implementation

While the emergency phase of the operation ended relatively quickly after the initial flooding and subsequent appeal, the rehabilitation phase was long and drawn out. In fact, as of the date of issue of this report, it has not yet ended since, despite a major rehousing effort by the government, many of the affected population are still living in temporary accommodation, mainly schools, and no long term solution to their problem has been found. Fortunately, most of the students normally using the school facilities occupied by the flood victims have been moved to other schools in the neighbourhoods of the affected areas. The MRC has no immediate plans to become involved in longer-term rehabilitation programmes.

Another constraint in implementing this operation was the long delay experienced in transferring funds from Geneva to Rabat. Transfers were effected on a monthly basis but in some cases it took several weeks before the funds could be located and cleared at the bank in Rabat.

Because the purchase of food supplies was decentralised to the branches of the MRC in the affected areas, it was not possible to adhere strictly to the quantities agreed upon in the initial budget. While the prices of the food supplies stayed within a 10% margin of the budget, there was substantial variation between the quantities of sugar, wheat flour, oil and tea actually purchased and what was agreed upon between the Secretariat and the MRC in the budget. These variations are explained by the unpredictable arrival of other supplies of food from other, mostly government, sources during the budget period, MRC not being the sole agency providing food assistance. For some items, for instance oil, it was necessary to increase the total amount purchased because of shortfalls from other sources, while in the case of wheat flour, because of

an abundant supply from other sources, less was purchased than planned. However, despite some variation in the amounts purchased on an item by item basis, the total amount allocated under the budget heading "Foodstuffs" was respected.

The MRC/Federation operation terminated September 1996.

## *Contributions*

See Annex 1 for details.

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