

ETHIOPIA: DROUGHT

19 June, 2000

appeal no. 08/ 2000

situation report no. 01/ 2000

period covered: 15 March - 10 June, 2000

Despite some initial delays, the operation is now being successfully implemented. The Ethiopian Red Cross Society (ERCS) has shown considerable ingenuity in overcoming constraints related to procurement and logistics, demonstrating its skill and experience during an efficient first distribution in South Wollo. Despite the recent rains, there is a critical need for continued emergency relief support amongst the population in the northern Highlands and the south of the country, underlining the relevance of the joint ERCS and Federation assistance programme. A lack of further funding for the operation will have repercussions on the extent and level of ERCS and Federation interventions.

The context

Four consecutive years of poor rainfall in Ethiopia have led to drought conditions and minimal harvests. This has had a cumulative impact on households in both pastoral and agricultural communities, undermining coping strategies and leading to greater vulnerability to drought. Many households have been forced to sell their livestock and other assets and some have migrated from their land in search of income and food.

The International Federation issued a preliminary appeal on behalf of the Ethiopian Red Cross Society (ERCS) on 8 April and a revised appeal on 4 May. The revised appeal was for 10.3 million CHF for two operations, one in *South Wollo* to support 77,000 people and one in *North Borena* to support 50,000 people, with a combination of bulk and supplementary food and a range of agricultural, health and water inputs.

Latest events

The drought ended in many parts of Ethiopia in April and May with a reasonably substantial rainfall. While this was too late for many farmers who depend on the *belg* rains which normally fall between February and April, the rains were very useful for the *maher* farmers who were able to prepare their land for the main *kiremt* rains, which began in June. Some of the water scarcity problems around the

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country were solved by these rains although the Drought Monitoring Centre has emphasised that in areas that were severely affected by drought over the last year or more, “the rainfall deficits may not be offset even if normal rainfall conditions are experienced between May and September”.

The local grain market in Ethiopia has been able to supply procurement orders put in by agencies and the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (DPPC). The DPPC has already procured 77,000 MT out of the 100,000 MT tender initiated in March. However, the government’s food security reserves are still low with the Ethiopian Food Security Reserve (EFSR) reporting stocks of 62,000 MT with outstanding loans still to be repaid of 217,000 MT. However, shipments of food aid into the country have increased dramatically over the last two months with WFP reporting that they have received or are about to receive 400,000 MT out of the year’s total of 1,100,000 MT. The daily offloading capacity at Djibouti has been increased to 5,000 MT. The problems encountered lately have been of a logistics nature related to the infrastructure of the country and availability of suitable transport. Nevertheless, daily deliveries from main warehouses to distribution points of sub-warehouses are in the order of 3,500 MT per day. The new National Transport Control Commission (NTCC) has been assigned to regulate the transport rates and secure the availability of trucks for emergency relief operations. So far there is a good deal of confusion amongst NGO’s who are tending to go around the system and thus push up the transport rates and there is generally deep concern regarding these tariffs, especially for short-haul trips.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Preparations for the intervention in South Wollo were started at the beginning of April. Local procurement of 970 MT of wheat by ERCS was completed on 20 April. An order for 140 MT of famix food supplement was placed on 10 April, but because of considerable competition between a number of agencies for supplies the order was not fulfilled until 18 May, causing a delay in transportation to the sites and distribution.

The commodities were transported between May 18 and 31 to the distribution sites at Kutaber and Wuchali in Ambassel for the first round of distributions. Again there was some delay in transportation resulting from the NTCC requisitioning some vehicles for other relief duties from the transport company contracted by the ERCS. A two hundred square metre rubbhall was erected in Kutaber, and the second is being established in Wuchali for storage. A 500 square metre warehouse in Wuchali and 300 square metre store in Kutaber were made available by the DPPC.

In preparation for the distribution, the local branch carried out a nine-day field operation for beneficiary identification purposes with the assistance of 20 Red Cross youth volunteers. In association with the local authorities, meetings were organised in 26 kebeles in both of the woredas with the Red Cross representatives monitoring every meeting. The meetings were also used to run dissemination sessions on Red Cross principles. Lists were then updated correcting the discrepancies in the old DPPC lists. An additional 3,900 beneficiaries were identified as affected and included in the lists for the next distribution.

The first round of distributions began simultaneously in Kutaber and Ambassel on 28 May and was completed on 3 June. The total of 77,594 belg-dependent beneficiaries (31,907 in Kutaber and 45,687 in Ambassel) were targeted, receiving 12.5 kg. of grain per person for the month with a total of 969.6 MT being distributed. From this population, 23,478 (9,592 in Kutaber and 13,886 in Ambassel) identified as the most vulnerable received an additional 6 kg. (two months supply) of Famix supplementary food. Distributions were carried out at three sites, two at Kutaber and one at Wuchali/ Ambassel, with the assistance of 38 Red Cross volunteers, 20 in Ambassel and 18 in Kutaber, who were divided into teams undertaking various tasks.

The distribution plan covered different kebeles each day with the kebele representative present throughout the distribution. The heads of household were registered before receiving their ration which was then transferred from the 50 kg bags into bags brought by the beneficiaries used to transport the

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The distribution plan covered different kebeles each day with the kebele representative present throughout the distribution. The heads of household were registered before receiving their ration which was then transferred from the 50 kg bags into bags brought by the beneficiaries used to transport the

grain to their villages. About 5% of the head of households did not come to the sites due to incapacity and it was agreed with the kebele representative that their rations be carried to them by another person from the same village.

The distribution was efficiently managed by the branch staff and volunteers, under the supervision of the ERCS Senior Relief Officer as well as the Federation Relief Delegate who selectively visited the distribution sites. The number of volunteers involved in the distribution will be increased in time for the next distribution to increase the efficiency of the operation. All head of households will be given registration cards at the next distribution which is planned to start on June 20.

A nutritional baseline survey planned for May was delayed for a number of reasons. However, a nutritionist has now been hired and the survey will start in Kutaber and Ambassel in South Wollo and Shakiso in North Borena in the next week and last a maximum of 30 days. Terms of reference for the Employment Generation Scheme (EGS) consultant have been drafted. The consultant will undertake preparatory and planning work for the cash for work schemes to be run between September and December.

The local procurement of 970 MT of wheat for the next distribution on June 20 has nearly been completed. The order for the 140 MT of Famix (funded by the German Red Cross) for July and August distributions has been placed at the local Famix factory. A shipment of 4,000 MT of wheat donated by the Latter Day Saints Church through the American Red Cross has started arriving at the port of Djibouti; 2,700 MT will be transported to South Wollo and the rest to Addis Ababa for the North Borena intervention. A consignment of 360 MT Unimix (initially funded by the British Red Cross but now covered by OFDA through the American Red Cross) is being shipped from South Africa to Ethiopia. The available British Red Cross funds will be used to support the cash for work intervention in South Wollo and the health aspects of the North Borena operation. A Federation Logistics Delegate in Djibouti is facilitating the arrival of the consignments through the port.

An initial distribution of 9 MT of High Energy Biscuits and 81 MT of Wheat Flour to 6,514 beneficiaries in Shakiso in North Borena will be carried out in the next fourteen days. This follows a further ERCS and Federation assessment of the situation both in Shakisso and Hagere Mariam conducted at the end of May. The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), through a local partner, is carrying out distributions in Hagere Mariam, allowing the ERCS and Federation to concentrate on Shakisso. In addition, the Iranian Red Crescent has provided 50 MT of wheat flour, washing powder, and soap; and the Malta Red Cross has contributed various medicine for health treatment. Both shipments have arrived in Ethiopia. These donations will be reflected in the List of Contributions in the next situation report.

Outstanding needs

While the appeal has enjoyed a positive initial response in terms of in-kind contributions and has more than necessary bulk and supplementary food consignments, un-earmarked funds to cover operational and transport costs as well as costs related to the cash-for-work schemes, the agricultural inputs in South Wollo and the health and water inputs for the North Borena operation are seriously inadequate. Nearly 4 million CHF is still needed in un-earmarked funds to support the operation, and based on the donor response a decision may have to be taken in the next few weeks to concentrate efforts in South Wollo and withdraw from North Borena.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

The Ethiopian Red Cross Society enjoys excellent relations with the Government, while maintaining its full independence. There is close co-operation between the ERCS, the Federation and the ICRC with regular meetings organized. A joint Red Cross Movement press conference was held in April. The

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From late March to early May, the world's media attention focused on Ethiopia. There was high profile coverage of the ERCS and Federation operation in the international media and local newspapers and television. Several donors and PNS teams, including SIDA, Swedish Red Cross, German Red Cross, Danida and Danish Red Cross, have visited Ethiopia over the last two months and travelled to the affected areas.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

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