

KENYA: DROUGHT

30 July 1997

appeal no. 05/97 (revised)

situation report no. 3

period covered: 1 June - 25 July 1997

The operation is proceeding well, thanks in large part to the experience of Kenyan Red Cross staff and excellent collaboration between the Red Cross and others involved. Due to a slower than expected response from donors and improvement with the drought situation in the area, the Federation/KRCS decided to modify the programme, by reducing the overall budget including administrative costs, supplies and delegates cost. However, cash contributions are still needed to cover operational costs.

The context

Some 60 per cent of Kenya is affected by severe drought with north-eastern and eastern provinces among the hardest hit. A recent Food and Agricultural Organisation assessment indicates that 1.6 million people require relief assistance until the next harvest later this year.

North-eastern Kenya undergoes regular five-to-ten year drought cycles, leading to food deficits and livestock reduction. Food insecurity in this region has been further compounded by climatic and economic factors, adversely affecting livestock exchange and the population's ability to grow or buy its own food. In fact, the area has not fully recovered from the 1992-1994 drought, when the Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS) and the International Federation mounted a major relief operation for 500,000 people in the Garissa, Mandera and Turkana districts.

On 28 January 1997, the Kenyan Government formally declared a drought emergency and an official appeal for food and non-food assistance for 2.5 million people was presented. Following this initiative, and using data gathered through several assessments, KRCS and the International Federation launched an appeal for CHF 6,185,000 targeting 100,000 people in the worst-affected areas of Garissa district, with particular emphasis on children under five, pregnant/lactating women and the chronically ill. Considerable work lies ahead in addressing the drought's severe impact on rural communities in north-eastern Kenya. With the revised budget of CHF 4,739,000, the response to the revised appeal now stands at 77% coverage; still there is an urgent need for donor support to cover operational costs mainly for transportation and delivery of relief food to the most vulnerable.

Latest events

The entire country is normally dry during June, but the first two weeks of June this year have been exceptionally so, with hot weather conditions in most of the districts. Virtually no rain fell between the start of May and the end of June. This has caused considerable concern, especially in the maize producing districts of the Rift Province and in the lower areas of the marginal agricultural districts of Eastern Province. The absence of rainfall coupled with unusually high temperatures has resulted in significant crop depletion.

The Arid Lands Projects and the Turkana Drought Preparedness and Contingency Unit (Government agencies) report favourable pasture conditions in the previously drought-hit northern and eastern pastoral districts of Marsabit, Garissa, Wajir, Tana River, Mandera, and Turkana. Although it has not rained in these areas since the first week of May, conditions are above normal levels and water availability is good. The resultant increased productivity of livestock accompanied by the reduced number of animals supplied to markets (as there is no need to sell animals) has improved the terms of trade of pastoralists, as has the declining price of maize due to increased availability through Government and NGO distributions. Although conditions for these pastoralists have improved substantially, recovery will be difficult due to the large number of livestock lost. The situation will have to be monitored closely to determine whether or not vegetation, water supplies and adequate pasture will last until the next rainy season.

Despite large commercial imports, the price of maize is still rising and will increase further if there is a continuation of the current poor weather conditions alongside late planting, which would result in a late harvest (August rather than July) yielding lower production levels. Due to the crop failure in the breadbasket districts of Kericho and Bomet, the Government has extended the waiver of import duty on maize from 30 June to 31 August to ensure that adequate stocks are available. To cover the shortfall, the National Cereals and Produce Board and the private sector will have to import 9.1 million bags of maize.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Relief - Food distribution •

The KRCS/Federation food distribution began in April and in most places has progressed smoothly, due in a large part to the good organisation and considerable experience of the KRCS relief teams. KRCS has assigned 45 staff to work on the implementation of drought relief activities.

In June, KRCS/Federation focused on better beneficiary targeting, tighter supervision of distributions, improvement in reporting and reducing transport costs. The following activities and measures were undertaken to improve standards:

- ◆ Registration of beneficiaries in two villages which had not been registered were completed and relief food distributed to 9,942 of the targeted beneficiaries.
- ◆ The needs assessment was completed. Re-registration of beneficiaries took place in four villages where family members were absent during the initial registration.
- ◆ An impact assessment on the targeted population in five villages was conducted. Based on the findings (improved nutritional levels of young children, availability of milk and meat in households, healthy livestock) approximately 25,000 people in Central division were determined to be no longer at risk. In August, the Government will take over distribution of relief food to these villages while KRCS/Federation will concentrate on the remote areas of Shantbak and Baraki.
- ◆ Contractual services for secondary transport were re-negotiated, reducing the overall running cost by 40% .

The second food cycle was completed by 10 July in 51 villages and three feeding centres. Relief food was distributed to 106,014 individuals (24,226 families).

MT	May	June	July
Cereal	571.16	235.41	636.08
Beans	81.36	45.55	79.51
Oil	46.40	18.50	37.62
Total	698.92	299.46	753.21

Logistics •

In mid-June the first consignment (4,000 mt) of cereals donated by the German Red Cross /German government arrived at Mombasa port and has partly been distributed in Garissa. Financial support from donors is critically needed to cover clearance, storage, primary and secondary transport expenses.

Health •

In Garissa the general situation has improved significantly. People are starting to move out of administrative centres and water points and back to traditional grazing areas. Grains continue to dominate the diets of the pastoralists, making up 42.0% of their diets, followed by milk which forms 27.0% and meat 24.2%. The availability of milk is an indication of improved household food security, but some areas still face moderate to severe drought conditions.

In Modogashe, MSF-Spain closed its supplementary feeding programme due to poor attendance of the beneficiaries — after the rains the pastoralist population resumed their lifestyle of constant movement making it difficult to monitor the targeted population. In Central Garissa, the malnutrition rate for under five has dropped to 29.9% from 37.4% (in March), and 12% of this population are severely malnourished compared to 13% in March. However, the total of monthly admissions at MSF supplementary and therapeutic feeding centres remains high: approximately 1,000 children at the end of May.

Budget revision •

Due to a slower than expected response from donors, the Federation/KRCS decided to modify the programme and revise the budget (see Revised Budget Summary, Annex II). The Federation/KRCS have identified the areas where additional economies can be made, reducing logistical investments, supplies, capital assets, delegate numbers and general administrative costs. The overall budget has been reduced by CHF 1,446,000.

A recent operational survey shows positive signs of a reduction in malnutrition in the targeted relief area which supports the decision to decrease the budget. According to the last WFP report, dated 28 July, compared to the previous drought, the vegetative conditions are reported to be above normal levels in the northern and eastern pastoral districts. Although the situation is no longer deteriorating, full recovery of the pastoralist condition is not expected until the end of the year, provided the normal short rains will occur in October/November.

Outstanding needs

To date, 77% of the appeal has been covered by pledges, most of which are in-kind donations of cereals (6,075 mt) from the German Red Cross. Still the most urgent need remains financial assistance to cover the logistics of the operation — clearance, storage, internal handling, primary and secondary transportation costs, (CHF 1,000,000), the purchase of 250 mt of beans and funding to repay ICRC for 1,085 mt. of rice, 135 mt of oil and 225 mt of beans loaned to start the operation.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

In Nairobi inter-agency collaboration between the Government, WFP, Red Cross and NGOs continues to be excellent. Monthly meetings on resource allocation and food/non-food assistance are held which ensures a high level of co-ordination between the agencies on distribution and transport, careful targeting of the most needy and the avoidance of overlapping operations. In the field, support from the authorities is decisive in activity implementation and ensuring security. Close co-ordination and co-operation is maintained with national NGOs.

On 13 June, WFP/CARE started food distribution in southern Garissa, with 400 mt of maize and beans going to 98,000 beneficiaries. CARE, with assistance from UNICEF and OFDA, is implementing a project aimed at rehabilitating boreholes in Garissa and southern Wajir.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

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Conclusion

Overall pastoralist food security has slightly improved, but there is a higher consumption of cereals over animal products, indicating that most pastoralist households have not fully recovered from the drought. Although the recovery outlook is optimistic, exact information about the duration of the operation is not expected to be available before the next few weeks after the nutritional/food economic survey has been completed. In the meantime, it is essential that KRCS/Federation be prepared to participate in the operation as long as required. Therefore, funding is required to ensure timely transport and delivery of relief food to the most vulnerable.

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