

Rwanda: Food Security

**Appeal no: 12/98
30 March 1998**

***THIS APPEAL SEEKS CHF 1,114,000
IN CASH, KIND AND SERVICES
TO ASSIST 82,000 BENEFICIARIES FOR 9 MONTHS***

Summary

For the last several years the Prefecture of Gikongoro, situated in the South West of Rwanda has suffered chronic food shortages. The land is inherently difficult to farm, with high acidity levels in the soil and low use of fertiliser or other agricultural aids. The 400,000 people in the region are extremely poor and unable to upgrade their farming methods to cope with the challenges posed.

The Government of Rwanda launched an appeal in October of 1997 for food support in Rwanda, identifying Gikongoro as one of the most needy regions. In February a Federation/Rwandan Red Cross Society assessment mission found visible evidence of serious malnutrition among children and adults. To counter this, the Federation seeks, through this appeal, to assist 82,000 people in the rural Communes of Mudasowa, Musebya, Muko and Musange with 504 mt of foodstuffs, 726 mt of cuttings and seeds, appropriate farm implements, fertilisers and soil dressing products.

The Disaster

At the end of 1996 Gikongoro Prefecture was struck by severe drought conditions which continued in 1997 until rains finally arrived in October. Unfortunately the rains came on too strongly and the resultant flooding washed away recent plantings of beans and sweet potatoes, forcing families to eat their seed crops to survive.

Numerous factors conspired to reduce food production across the country and drive the prices of staple foods even higher. Production is still not back to 1990 levels, while insecurity in the Northwest, Rwanda's most fertile region, has greatly reduced the amount of land under cultivation. People are fleeing the area and hectares of farming land beside roads have been cleared to deny cover to paramilitaries. Food prices rose dramatically in 1997, doubling for beans and increasing ten fold for sweet potatoes. The lack of food has devastated the 13 communes of the prefecture and a recent FAO/WFP report estimates 70% of the households in Gikongoro are in urgent need of emergency aid.

The malnutrition in the area is further aggravated by a mounting number of malaria cases that is being reported throughout the country. People weakened by hunger are proving more vulnerable to malaria and as food crops are diminished, people have less cash to buy medicine to fight the malaria. As a result the disease has made a virulent resurgence throughout the country.

The Response so far

Government Action w

Co-ordination w

The project will be co-ordinated by the Ministry of Agriculture, RRCS and the Federation Delegation in consultation with the WFP office in Kigali.

The Intended Operation

Assessment of Needs •

The findings of the RRCS/Federation assessment are supported by the FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment Report issued on February 16. Insufficient food production, late rains followed by flooding and high malnutrition rates all point to the need for quick intervention. By way of illustration, in one area visited by the assessment team, 119 people were reported to have died from lack of food, and both children and adults were visibly malnourished. There is an urgent need follow food distributions with agricultural inputs to promote sustainability. Using government figures, some 82,000 people from 20,000 families are at risk, representing 62 % of the population of the communes targeted.

Immediate Needs •

Beans, maize and palm oil are needed to meet the immediate food requirements of the population. The cost of the first distribution will be CHF 328,000.

Anticipated Later Needs •

Given the need for quality seeds in the country the second phase of the programme will involve the purchase of wheat and bean seeds and cuttings for manioc and sweet potatoes, which will be used to provide more seeds, promoting sustainability and possibly even resulting in income generation in the long term. To address the problem of poor soil, lime and fertiliser will be supplied. Agricultural tools will also be distributed.

With this assistance, the population in the communes will begin to get back on their feet in 1998 and will be able to continue improving the region's agricultural productivity through seed multiplication, using profits to finance further purchases of fertiliser.

This second phase will be accompanied by a further distribution of foodstuffs to tide families over to the next harvest. This distribution of food as "seed protection" is in line with WFP recommendations for intervention in Rwanda for 1998.

Red Cross Objectives •

- { To provide food security to 82,000 people in Gikongoro Prefecture;
- { to support, improve and help to stabilise agricultural production in the area;
- { to train RRCS volunteers in the Prefecture in disaster response and agricultural assistance;
- { to reduce ethnic tensions in the country by reducing competition for food resources.
- { In conjunction with Rwandan Red Cross CBFA program, to reduce suseptability to Malaria through public education on preventative and curative health measures.

National Society/Federation Plan of Action

Emergency Phase: April-July 1998 •

Red Cross action will include:

- { Distribution of emergency food rations to the most vulnerable population (orphans, elderly, disabled and ill);
- { rehabilitation of existing agricultural infrastructure (water source protection, fertiliser inputs, anti erosion systems) utilising a Food for Work programme with the region's farmers.

Phase Two: July - September 1998 •

- { Distribution of seeds, agricultural inputs and farm tools;
- { continued rehabilitation of agricultural infrastructure;
- { planning and planting of crops;
- { continued distribution of emergency food to the most vulnerable;
- { continuation of food for work schemes as a form of seed protection.
- { monitoring the progress of crops.

Phase Three: September - December 1998

- { Continued monitoring of the programme;
- { analysis of the September harvest;
- { planting for the next season.

Capacity of the National Society •

RRCS was commended for its assistance to refugees returning from the Democratic Republic of Congo and Tanzania at the end of 1996. In the past few months it has assumed camp management responsibilities in Mudende and Byumbu, and it has sufficient numbers of volunteers at headquarters and prefecture level to assist with this programme. Its logistics department, with the support of the Federation Delegation, will handle logistical needs, and a consultant agricultural engineer working with FAO will provide technical support.

Present Capacity of the Federation in Rwanda•

The Federation Delegation numbers 15 delegates, and agricultural expertise will be brought in on a short term basis as mentioned. The Head of Delegation and the Finance Delegate will assist in the areas of management reporting and financial administration. The Regional Logistics Centre in Nairobi will provide logistics support.

Evaluation •

RRCS and the Federation Delegation will monitor the distributions. Evaluations will take place and reports will be issued at the end of each phase of the operation, i.e. in July, September and December.

Budget summary

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

As in many parts of Africa, weather conditions have caused severe damage to agricultural infrastructure and output in Rwanda. The immediate needs of the population must be covered, while simultaneously addressing the need for rehabilitation of the economy, especially in the agricultural sector.

The prefecture of Gikongoro is one of the hardest hit in the country. With timely and appropriate interventions of seeds and other agricultural inputs, there is a prime opportunity to achieve a good harvest.

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