

ZIMBABWE: DROUGHT RELIEF

appeal no: 06/99
22 February 1999

***THIS APPEAL SEEKS CHF 480,000
IN CASH, KIND AND SERVICES
TO ASSIST 40,000 BENEFICIARIES FOR 4 MONTHS***

The Disaster

Since 1991, southern Zimbabwe has been affected by a series of droughts. The most recent agricultural season (1997-1998) was characteristic of the last several years, with short and insufficient rains resulting in very low food production. Because of the impact of the drought, on 21 August 1998, the Government of Zimbabwe declared Matabeleland South Province a Disaster Area, appealing for urgent assistance to cover the immediate nutritional needs, as well as for agricultural inputs for the new season. The worst affected areas are Matobo South, Gwanda South, and Beitbridge Districts in Matabeleland South Province; as well as Chiredzi and Mwenezi Districts in Masvingo Province.

The effects of last year's drought, with communities still not fully recovered from the serious droughts 1991-1992 and 1995-1996, have created serious food shortages according to assessments carried out by the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare (MoH), the Ministry of Public Service and Social Welfare, and the Ministry of Agriculture (with technical support from USAID's Famine Early Warning System (FEWS), Zimbabwe's National Early Warning Unit (NEWU), UNICEF, and other organizations.

Given the cumulative affects of the low rainfall and the critically dry conditions, food availability is at all-time low levels, and with few animals remaining to sell for food, the situation is desperate for many families in communal lands. Under these conditions, the immediate provision of short-term assistance in the form of supplementary food assistance, as well as longer-term planning and drought mitigation measures, is essential if the situation is to improve in the future.

Zimbabwe Red Cross, with Federation assistance, has responded by implementing water and sanitation programmes and by starting supplementary feeding of the under-five age group of children.

To respond to the continued urgent needs for which resources are still needed, this Appeal seeks to provide assistance for a period of four months to provide supplementary feeding for up to 40,000 vulnerable persons in the under-five age group.

The Response so far

Following the first severe drought which occurred in 1991-92, the Zimbabwe Red Cross Society (ZRCS) responded by carrying out a supplementary feeding programme focused on the under-five age group, and pregnant and lactating mothers. A second severe drought occurred in 1995-96, forcing the ZRCS to assist once again.

Government Action w

- { Since 1992, the MoH has carried out a Child Supplementary Feeding Programme (CSFP) for the under-five age group in most rural areas of the country, essentially consisting of a wet-feeding programme (this has however been discontinued in most areas due to a lack of funds).
- { Since 1997 a 'Grain Loan Scheme' has been available to farmers, providing the means for a seed grain loan of up to 10 kg grains per family member per month, to be re-paid after the next harvest. This programme has encountered difficulties and delays due to logistic problems primarily related to limited transport.
- { The Government declared a State of Disaster, on 21 August 1998, covering the communal resettlement and small-scale commercial farming areas of Matebeleland South Province and has appealed to the international community for assistance.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action w

- { In September 98, the ZRCS initiated a needs assessment in the affected areas, supported by the International Federation. Based on the conclusions, the ZRCS asked for donor support, through the Federation, to assist in organizing a wet-feeding programme similar to that carried out in 1991-92, complemented by a water and sanitation programme. As a result, since October 98, nine new water boreholes have been drilled, 25 boreholes rehabilitated and 25 latrines (VIP), in the proximity of feeding centers, have been built in both Matabeleland South and Masvingo Provinces. This programme, funded by German Government through German Red Cross, benefits 30,000 people. In addition, from the beginning of February 99, 13,000 under five children are receiving a daily supplementary meal in Matobo South District with the support of Netherlands Red Cross and UNICEF.
- { The attention of most agencies is focused on Matabeleland South, though similar problems exist in Masvingo Province. The Red Cross is attempting to address this situation (even though a state of disaster has not been officially declared by the government for Masvingo Province).
- { The ZRCS will ultimately utilize 400 Red Cross Branch volunteers in the affected areas to carry on continuous nutritional surveys of at-risk children; provide assistance to mothers of the beneficiaries in food preparation; maintain the water and sanitation programme; and ensure ongoing monitoring. To strengthen capacity in the community, these volunteers will all be trained in first aid.

Other Agencies' Action w

- { UNICEF, together with the Provincial Administrator, has co-ordinated NGO meetings in Matabeleland South, resulting in the operational NGOs having been allocated responsibility for three Districts in Matabeleland South (ZRCS having been given responsibility for feeding of under five in Matobo South District).
- { Some religiously-affiliated NGOs are providing food to their congregations in needy areas. Other NGOs, including Plan International and World Vision, are implementing on-going long-term projects such as dams and small-scale vegetable gardening. The Alliance Church of Zimbabwe, funded by the Swedish Government, is implementing a primary school feeding programme in Chiredzi District (Matibi II area).

The Intended Operation

Assessment of Needs •

Following extensive field visits in the worst affected areas of Masvingo and Matebeleland South Province by a joint ZRCS and Federation assessment team, the present acute food shortages and problems

associated with the lack of reliable potable water and adequate sanitation have been clearly identified. At the time of the assessment, the team estimated that the percentage of under-weight children in the under-five age group in some areas is as high as 17%. By end of November, in Matobo South, this figure had risen to 20% according to District officials. The situation will deteriorate further unless there is prompt intervention. According to the assessment, and subject to final agreement in the case of Masvingo Province, the Red Cross intends to establish a supplementary feeding programme in 12 geographical Wards with 18,530 under-five in Chiredzi and Mwenezi Districts in Masvingo Province, as well as in 19 Wards with 17,450 under-five in Matobo South District in Matabeleland South Province.

Immediate Needs •

- { Local procurement of additional 330 tonnes of nutra-meal porridge;
- { Provision of one vehicle to assist monitoring.

Needs already covered

- { Nine new water boreholes, 25 rehabilitated boreholes and 25 VIP latrines have already been provided by German Government via German RC.
- { 158 tonnes of nutra-meal porridge have already been provided by Netherlands Government and UNICEF directly to Zimbabwe Red Cross.

Anticipated Later Needs •

- { Drought mitigation activities to improve food security and community health;
- { Capacity building of local branches by training volunteers and the communities in first aid and primary health care.

Red Cross Objectives •

- { To supplement the low food quantities currently available locally. A supplementary meal will be provided seven days a week for four months for approximately 40,000 children of the under-five age group;
- { To carry out systematic spot-weighing, monitoring, and data collection;
- { To improve the drought mitigation capacity of the ZRCS.

Objectives already met:

- { To assure the supply of water to 30,000 people through the rehabilitation of existing boreholes and the construction of new ones;
- { To construct latrines at feeding points to reduce the danger of the spread of diseases;

National Society/Federation Plan of Action

Supplementary Feeding Programme

In order to ensure that the food reaches the intended beneficiaries, the ZRCS/Federation will procure food as close as possible to the supplementary feeding points, provide transport of the supplies, and organize the wet feeding system in accordance with the MOH recommended minimum daily supplementary ration for under-five: 100 grams of nutra-meal porridge.

This ration provides 600 kCals (or 1/4 of the daily energy requirement), and has been adapted as the standard for the UN-funded under-five age group supplementary feeding programme in Matabeleland South. Supplementary feeding centers will be established for a four month period at schools and clinics. A trained Red Cross volunteer will supervise each feeding center and provide nutritional and health guidance. Within the feeding centers, feeding points will be set up for a maximum of 100 children to assure appropriate levels of control. There will be a Red Cross volunteer at each feeding point to supervise and co-ordinate a roster of mothers of the under-five to cook and distribute the meals. The setting-up of feeding points and training of 140 volunteers is completed in Matabeleland South Province

and can be in place within weeks once funds for Masvingo Province are secured. The main distributions will take place from two central distribution stores, one located in each Province, managed by the ZRCS staff, and with Federation technical assistance.

To date, a cash grant from the Netherlands Government and food in kind and cash from UNICEF at a total value of CHF 122,000 has enabled the start of the programme for 13,000 beneficiaries in Matobo South District.

Water and Sanitation Programme

Due to the drought, a large number of boreholes are producing less water than normal, or are completely dried out. There was therefore an urgent need for the rehabilitation of existing boreholes, as well as the construction of new ones. Funding for the water and sanitation programme was made available from the German Red Cross, and the work has been completed. The choice of borehole sites was made in coordination with plans and locations for the feeding programme. Ten new boreholes were planned to be constructed in this phase of the water and sanitation programme and nine were successfully completed. A total of twenty five boreholes were rehabilitated, and 25 VIP latrines constructed during the course of the 3-month water programme. Training has been given to local communities to maintain the water points.

Monitoring and Exit Strategy

Monitoring will be carried out by the ZRCS National Programme Co-ordinator and a Finance Officer. There will be monthly reports on the feeding programme. At this point, there are strong indications that with the rains this season, the May harvest will produce sufficient to eliminate the need for a supplementary feeding programme. It is understood by all parties that this assistance is to bridge the gap till food supplies are once again available after the harvest.

The Federation is also planning to make a study to explore possible other ways to address the continuing food security difficulties in Zimbabwe and elsewhere in the Southern Africa Region.

Budget summary

See Annex 1 for budget details.

Conclusion

The immediate response by the Red Cross to the disaster now needs additional resources to provide supplementary food to all the targeted beneficiaries. This will prevent the risk of having a large number of severely under-nourished children. With the present economic climate in Zimbabwe, the resources for drought relief are restricted. Donors are encouraged to support this short-term drought assistance programme by providing un-earmarked funds so that a maximum degree of flexibility can be applied in allocating resources to where they are most needed.

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