

# ***ETHIOPIA: DROUGHT***

*3 September, 1999*

*appeal no. 15/99*

*situation report no. 1*

*period covered: 1 July - 15 August*

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*Responding to drought and the resulting urgent nutritional needs, the food and seed assistance programme jointly implemented by the Ethiopian Red Cross Society (ERCS) and the Federation has received an initial positive donor response, and the procurement and distribution activities have been effectively initiated. Further contributions are required to cover activities currently underway, and to complete the entire programme.*

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## ***The context***

Following the total failure of the *belg* (secondary) rains in the northern Ethiopian highlands, the food security situation of the most vulnerable has deteriorated dramatically over the past three months. This has followed post-harvest losses during the 1998 *meher* (primary) season. For those farmers who are solely dependent on the *belg* season, the situation has reached critical proportions. Following the July launch of the Federation Appeal for the South Wollo Zone, the significant impact of the drought has been assessed in other parts of the country. According to the Ethiopian government, the country is facing its highest level of need since 1994.

## ***Latest events***

The Ethiopian Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Commission (DPPC) has, for the third time in as many months, revised upward its estimate of food aid requirements, from 4.6 million people to 5.3 million as of the end of June. This revised document calls specifically for the provision of supplemental food to at-risk individuals in certain parts of the country, including South Wollo, this Appeal's target area. The precarious food supply situation in the country as a whole, has been further exacerbated by refugee flows from the neighbouring countries of Kenya and Somalia. Poor rainfall throughout the Horn has caused famine conditions in the latter two countries, and large population movements are being witnessed - estimates indicate that as many 200,000 individuals have crossed Ethiopia's southern border in search of food. Moreover, the unresolved conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia continues to cause internal displacement and destabilisation.

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

Responding to the situation, the Federation launched an Emergency Appeal on behalf of the Ethiopian Red Cross Society (ERCS) on 8 July to supply supplemental food to 40,000 at risk individuals in the South Wollo Zone of the Amhara Region. Pregnant and lactating mothers, children under five and elderly and handicapped persons are the targeted beneficiaries.

The Plan of Action calls for the provision of food assistance for a six month period followed by the procurement of seeds which will be distributed to the *belg*-dependent farmers in the same areas. The table below provides updated information on the procurement and distribution carried out to date:

Item	Opening Stock	Received in Period (MT)	Distributed in Period (MT)		Total Distributed	Closing Stock	Target Distribution (Appeal)			Benef. Reached
			Ambassel	Kutaber			Ambassel	Kutaber	%	
FAFA/Famix	0	420	60		60	360	296,592	182,916	13	24,937
Chick pea seeds	0	48				48				
Barley seeds	0	0								
Wheat seeds	0	0								
Totals	0	468								

### **July Distribution •**

Sixty mt of supplementary food was distributed to 24,937 beneficiaries in the Ambassel locality from 20 July as follows:

- ◆ Children under 5: 50%.
- ◆ Pregnant and Lactating mothers: 28%.
- ◆ Elderly and Handicapped: 22%.

In addition, anticipating logistics difficulties due to the rising level of the river which must be crossed in order to reach the distribution point, over 5,000 beneficiaries from the Gishane area in Ambassel were also supplied with a two month ration. While the ERCS planned to make funds available prior to the launch of the Appeal in order to undertake a timely distribution, due to financial limitations food sufficient only for Ambassel could be purchased. A two month ration will be supplied shortly to the Kutaber beneficiaries (to cover their July ration), while the Ambassel target group will rations for the month of August only. Thereafter each locality will receive a two month ration during September and October.

### **Revised Rations •**

As a result of the DPPC-revised Appeal and the mounting crisis throughout the country, extreme pressure has been put on the local market's supply of fortified blended cereals, or "supplements". Whereas FAFA (a wheat-based blend) had previously been the sole product available for purchase, an additional corn-based blend (Famix) is now being sold at CHF 671 per mt, or CHF 445 less per mt than the FAFA product budgeted in the Appeal. Although Famix is slightly lower in nutritional value than FAFA, the lower cost will allow the ERCS to provide a higher ration of 3 kg (rather than 2 kg) to all the beneficiaries beginning with the August distribution which is currently underway. This higher ration will in fact increase the daily nutritional content from 240 kcal and 13 g of protein to 402 kcal and 14.7 g of protein. Moreover, after taking into account the transport costs there will be a potential cost savings of roughly CHF 70,000.

**Procurement and Logistics •**

In spite of heavy pressure on the supplies of fortified cereals in Addis, 240 mt of Famix have been purchased and transported to the ERCS warehouses in Addis and Dessie town. Additionally, an in-kind donation of 120 mt of Famix has been provided by the Catholic Relief Service and has been transported to the final distribution points to supply the August food requirement.

**Rehabilitation •**

Due to market pressures, the price of chickpea seeds has risen by roughly 25%. Forty-eight mt of seeds have been procured and are currently being distributed to the *belg-meher* farmers in conjunction with the August food ration. During the next visit of the Regional Relief Delegate, contracts for the procurement of wheat and barley seed will be negotiated to avert a similar supply problem at that more critical point in the programme implementation.

***Outstanding needs***

The initial response to the Appeal has been positive, allowing the first round of procurement and distributions to proceed. In order to complete the food distribution operation and to exert a longer term effect on the food security situation as planned, it is imperative to initiate the second phase of food and seed distribution.

***External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media***

The local DPPC representative of the Ambassel locality was present during the July distribution and provided useful beneficiary targeting information. The DPPC as well has provided temporary storage facilities at the distribution points. The ERCS was able to fully and independently manage the distribution and maintain its own records of beneficiaries.

***Contributions***

See Annex 1 for details.

***Conclusion***

The situation of the most vulnerable in South Wollo, and other parts of the country, has continued to deteriorate. Due to the increasing scope of the need, bulk food rations in the country are stretched and are not reaching all those in need. Careful monitoring of the situation and timely delivery of rations, particularly in this period before the *meher* harvest, is imperative if a more serious humanitarian disaster is to be averted.

Peter Rees-Gildea  
Director  
Operations Funding and Reporting Department

Bekele Geleta  
Director  
Africa Department