INFORMATION BULLETIN

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération Internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

SOUTH AFRICA: DROUGHT

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The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 181 countries. For more information: www.ifrc.org

In Brief

This document is being issued for information only. The Federation is not seeking any funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

The Situation

An estimated three million farmers in communal areas produce their own food primarily for household consumption. In essence, this sub-sector produces food for domestic consumption for about 15 million people in rural areas. Approximately four million people require immediate assistance and 15 million are at risk if nothing tangible is done to replace the food annually produced by these three million farmers. On 16 January 2004, the president of the Republic of South Africa declared six provinces disaster zones with as many as four million South Africans at risk of food shortages due to a drought.

The affected provinces are KwaZulu Natal, Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga, North West, Free State and Northern Cape. The most affected provinces have been the maize growing regions of Free State, KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga. Free State province, the leading maize producer, only half of the usual crop had been planted by December[1]. Limpopo province was earlier declared as a disaster area bringing the number of affected provinces to seven. In addition, Taung in the North West has been declared a disaster area due to thunderstorms which occurred in the area.

In October 2003, the South African government approved an allocation of ZAR 250 million[2] for drought relief; this targeted flood rehabilitation, emergency water supply, salvaging timber in state farms affected by fires and providing fodder assistance to both communal and commercial farmers.

[1] Source: AlertNet, 27 January 2004 (www.reliefweb.int)
[2] ZAR – South African Rand; ZAR 250 million is approximately CHF 50 million at rate of 5:1.

As the drought intensified, the government later commissioned an analysis on the impact of the drought and the development of a national drought mitigation plan. The analysis report indicated that some areas in the seven provinces were experiencing drought. South Africa is currently experiencing three types of drought being; reduction in water resources, significant reduction in the rainfall, and reduced crop yields and livestock losses. The developed drought mitigation plan instructed government to act in an integrated way to reduce the impact of drought by:

- providing emergency relief to vulnerable rural communities;
- providing fodder and water for both communal and commercial farmers;
- providing water for human consumption; and,
- preventing communicable diseases, with special emphasis on malaria and cholera.

Last week the government increased the allocation for drought relief assistance by ZAR 250 million:

- ZAR 60 million for emergency relief to vulnerable rural communities;
- ZAR 30 million for the provision of fodder to established and emerging farmers;
- ZAR 100 million for water for human consumption;
- ZAR 20 million for water for livestock;
- ZAR 5 million for the safeguarding of boreholes; and,
- ZAR 35 million for the prevention of communicable diseases in affected poor rural areas.

The total allocated to date is ZAR 500 million. A further allocation of ZAR 500 million would be considered in the next financial year for longer-term interventions.

The ministry of social development issued a media release on 30 January 2004: the minister of social development appealed to the NGO community and other religious-based organisations for assistance in mobilizing committees and monitoring the food emergency programme. The minister urged the government and communities to form food emergency forums to help ensure that the government's food emergency scheme is appropriately implemented among the most vulnerable. The press release further stated that the distribution of food parcels is a temporary measure instituted to assist the poor spending less than ZAR 300 per month on food. Food parcel distribution is focused on vulnerable children, child and/or female headed households with insufficient or no income, people with disabilities, and households affected by HIV/AIDS and people affected by TB[3].

Food emergency scheme introduced by the government in 2002 has assisted over a million of the most vulnerable people in communities so far. The media release further states that ZAR 360 million has been used for food parcels at the cost of about ZAR 300 per food parcel per household. Government has allocated ZAR 1.2 billion for the food emergency scheme to be used in 2003 to 2006.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Following the emergency situation in the newly affected six provinces, the South Africa Red Cross Society has actively communicated with the departments of provincial and local government, offering assistance and partnership in the following areas:

- **To conduct assessments and identify beneficiaries** (or confirm previous assessments/beneficiaries identified) in accordance with criteria for assistance already documented by the government in the areas as agreed on between South Africa Red Cross and the government.
- **To establish joint committees** comprising of government, communities, civic leaders, South Africa Red Cross and other relevant stakeholders to monitor the process in the affected areas.
- **To develop** food distribution plans of action to ensure accurate and equitable distribution of food parcels. The plans of action may vary between areas depending on environmental, logistical and other factors.
- **To procure** food supplies if necessary. It is assumed that the government will procure the food parcels supplies and deliver them at a time and to a point agreed on between the government and South Africa Red Cross. However, if the government encounters difficulties, South Africa Red Cross will have to procure the food supplies as well.

[3] TB - tuberculosis

- **To distribute** the food parcels according to the plans of action.
- **To maintain** a database of beneficiaries and assistance provided.
- **To build capacity** in communities through relevant training and education.
- **To distribute** agricultural starter packs at community level.
- **To monitor** implementation on agreed activities, keep accurate records and provide regular reports to all stakeholders.

The South Africa Red Cross headquarters has mobilized the provincial managers to working closely with the government and NGOs gathering in the affected provinces. The national society is already negotiating with the department of social development for implementation of disaster response in KwaZulu Natal.

The South Africa Red Cross secretary general and the Federation representative in South Africa met with the disaster management department of provincial and local government to discuss possible partnership arrangement between Red Cross and the government in relation to this disaster. The Federation also met with the ministry of foreign affairs, other foreign missions and UN agencies and consulted the ICRC in gathering information on the impact of the drought.

The national society has presence throughout the country through their provincial, branch, local committee and volunteer network. The following table summarizes the international training South Africa Red Cross staff has received on disaster management related issues:

Table: International trained staff on disaster management

Sector	Type of training	Number of trained staff	Training Institute
Health emergencies	Health Emergencies in Large Populations (HELP)	3	Pretoria University/ICRC
Disaster assessment	Field Assessment and Coordination Team (FACT)	1	The Federation and Finnish Red Cross
Disaster response	Regional Disaster Response Training (RDRT)	6	The Federation Regional Delegation (Harare)
Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA)	Assessment skills	3	The Federation Regional Delegation (Harare)
Disaster management	General training in disaster training	26 staff members and volunteers from Region 1 (Gauteng)	The Federation Regional Delegation (Harare), and the South African Red Cross

The Federation continues to monitor the situation and has offered to assist the South Africa Red Cross to coordinate the possible International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement assistance in response to the drought, as needed. The regional delegation disaster management and communications departments are on stand-by should the national society need assistance in assessments, development of a plan of action for implementation of disaster response, media relations and related issues.

For a full description of the National Society profile, see www.ifrc.org

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All International Federation Operations seek to adhere to the Code of Conduct and are committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE Project) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For support to or for further information concerning Federation operations in this or other countries, please access the Federation website at http://www.ifrc.org

For longer-term programmes, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeals.

- South Africa, 2004 Annual Appeal no. 01.17/2004
- Southern Africa regional programmes, 2004 Annual Appeal no. 01.21/2004

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