

# ***KENYA: SEVERE FOOD INSECURITY***

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## ***Information Bulletin N° 1***

### ***The Disaster***

Three successive years of poor rainfall in some parts of Kenya have consequently resulted in poor harvests. The relief expected from the long rainy season (March - June) did not materialise as the poor and erratic pattern of rainfall persisted into the year 2000. This further weakened and stretched communities local coping strategies, reduced their main means of livelihood in terms of agricultural production and livestock thereby increasing their level of vulnerability. In response to the creeping disaster and with the assistance of humanitarian agencies who have maintained a long-term presence in these areas, the Government of Kenya (GOK) jointly with WFP, had been distributing food in the four arid and pastoral districts of Turkana, Marsabit, Moyale and Mandera as far back as at the end of July 1999. However, with the failure of the long rains, by mid-April WFP reported that an estimated 1.7 million people were in need of food assistance.

In response to this new turn of events, the on-going food relief activities were stepped up and an Emergency Operation (EMOP) launched to include fourteen more districts which previously, had not been considered too badly affected. Among these districts was Machakos with an estimated total population of 915,000, of which approximately 93,750 were considered in desperate need of food assistance.

### ***Red Cross/Red Crescent Action***

As early as the beginning of the year, the Federation and Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS) had been monitoring the situation with the National Society actually involved in a small way by assisting the Catholic Church, active in the Government of Kenya programme in Turkana, to move locally donated food commodities from Nairobi to the district.

With the announcement of the launching of the WFP EMOP, the Federation commissioned a desk study in order to obtain a clearer picture of the situation. The results indicated that the worst affected districts were Machakos, Mwingi, Makuani and Kitui understandably, because these districts had not been part of the on-going Government programme and they are not served by a variety of NGO's as is the case with the other affected districts. In enlisting these districts as beneficiaries of the EMOP and in view of the fact that the KRCS through one of its strongest Branches is the most active humanitarian agency in the district, the National Operations Co-ordinating Unit in the Office of the President designated the Red Cross as the lead agency in Machakos District.

The Federation and KRCS immediately started negotiations with WFP on the modalities of the operation. At the same time, work on the ground started, in preparation for an emergency relief operation which

would involve food distribution starting from the beginning of July, seeds and fertiliser distribution, as well as the provision of tools, the implementation of which is scheduled to coincide with the onset of the short rainy season (September/October).

### **Progress to date**

As at the time of this Bulletin, negotiations with WFP had been concluded, and the agency will be providing the food commodities and meeting all the transport and distribution costs. An agreement to this effect was signed on 24 July 2000.

The Government and WFP have indicated their desire for the operation to be implemented under the concept of Community Based Distribution Systems, where the communities themselves play an active role in the actual distribution. To this effect, the process of community sensitisation and the establishment of Community Relief Committees had been completed by the first week of July. By the end of the second week, at least half of the Committees had submitted the lists of the beneficiaries within their communities, identified in accordance with the Government and WFP criteria. At the same time, food supplies started arriving in Machakos and the first distribution is expected during the week beginning 24 July.

An operational framework has been signed between the National Society and the Federation in which, due to the change in management at KRCS Headquarters and restructuring priorities, the Federation assumes responsibility for the managerial aspects of the operation. The KRCS, through its Machakos Branch, will be responsible for the implementation. To this effect, a Relief Co-ordinator has been hired for a period of one month on a consultancy basis pending the recruitment of a Delegate, and a member of the Regional Delegation local staff has been re-assigned to the Kenya Operations as Logistics Co-ordinator for three months. The two officers together with support staff are based in Machakos.

## ***Needs***

The total budget for this operation is CHF 5,006,325 however, as pointed out before, WFP will be providing the food (cereals, pulses, oil and salt) as well meeting the transportation and distribution costs. There is, however, a need for support for some administration components. In addition, there is a need for funding for the second phase of the operation (seeds/fertiliser and tools) procurement, transportation and distribution as well as administration. This phase is of critical importance in order to assist the communities to break out of the food aid cycle and to re-establish independence in food security as soon as possible. Details of outstanding needs including specific types of items and quantities will be communicated in the next update expected to be issued in the course of August.

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