

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

8  
7 November 2000

### ***Information Bulletin N° 2***

### ***The Disaster***

Three successive years of poor rainfall in some parts of Kenya throughout 1999 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 local communities coping strategies, reduced their main means of livelihood in terms of agricultural production and livestock, and thereby increased their level of vulnerability. In response to the creeping disaster and with the assistance of humanitarian agencies who have had a long-term presence in these areas, the Government of Kenya (GOK), jointly with WFP, began distributing food in July 1999 in the four arid and pastoral districts of Turkana, Marsabit, Moyale and Mandera. However, with the failure of the long rains, by mid-April 2000 WFP reported that an estimated 1.7 million people were in need of additional food assistance, putting Kenya second after Ethiopia on the list of the worst affected drought countries in eastern or the Horn of Africa. By the end of September, WFP reported an estimated 3,000,000 people in need of food assistance in Kenya, an increase of 76% in a period of five months.

The deteriorating situation prompted the GOK and WFP to carry out a review of the situation countrywide resulting in corresponding caseload increases in districts in which the Emergency Operation (EMOP) had already been running as well as the inclusion of two more districts which had previously not been part of the operation.

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

Since July, the Kenya Red Cross Society, with technical support from the Federation and food from WFP, have been involved in a general food distribution programme in the Machakos District with a beneficiary population which until the end of October stood at 125,632. The programme had been in operation in six of the twelve divisions which make up the Machakos District. However, since the end of October the caseload has increased to 260,497 with the programme now covering the entire District.

The programme involves the distribution of a monthly food basket consisting of cereals, pulses and oil to each of the beneficiaries, and is being implemented by the local branch of the KRCS with technical support by a Federation field based team consisting of locally hired staff under the leadership of a consultant relief co-ordinator who was appointed in September. With the increase in the caseload,

corresponding increases in the human resource base are inevitable and plans are under way to recruit more staff to meet the new and increased demands on the programme.

Following an appeal from the local Ministry of Health on the plight of children under the age of five, the German Red Cross under a bilateral arrangement with the KRCS, responded with emergency relief support. In this short-term programme the high protein compound Unimix is being distributed to a targeted population of under-fives numbering 8,300 in six divisions of Machakos identified by the District Health authorities, the KRCS, and the German Red Cross.

Preparatory work on the seeds and fertiliser distribution for the original caseload of 25,000 families in six divisions was successfully completed and the actual distribution was ongoing at the end of the October. This component of the programme was made possible through financial support from the American Red Cross, again under a bilateral arrangement with the KRCS. The distribution was timed to coincide with the onset of the short rains and is targeting households in the first six divisions of the operation, understandably, because the increase in the caseload and spread to the other six Divisions was unforeseen at the time that the programme component was planned.

While the programme was started as an emergency in which the Red Cross intervention was planned and based on the WFP, Government of Kenya, and NGO joint assessment carried out in late 1999, given the evolving situation the Federation intends to conduct an assessment in November which will include examining medium to long-term rehabilitation needs in areas such as agriculture, health, water and sanitation, as well as a review of emergency needs. Terms of Reference for this assessment have been developed, and the Norwegian and Swedish Red Cross Societies have indicated an interest in supporting the assessment.

The Machakos Operation will be used as a case study by participants in the Nairobi Regional Basic Training Course for Delegates (BTC) being held from 5-10 November. The potential future delegates, originating from all the African regions as well as the Netherlands and Yugoslavia, will conduct site visits and meet with beneficiaries, community targeting committees, WFP, local authorities, KRCS Red Cross representatives, the Federation, and bilateral partners as they learn and apply relief concepts such as assessment, beneficiary selection, operation planning and implementation, and transitioning from the emergency phase to rehabilitation and development.

## *Needs*

WFP has confirmed that they will continue to provide the food commodities and meet the costs of distribution and related administrative cost. However, additional financial support of CHF 33,000 is essential for the planned needs assessment. A special appeal may be launched to respond to the needs identified from the assessment.

***For more information on this programme, interested National Societies are advised to contact Josse Gillijns, Programme Officer, (tel. 41-22-730-4224, email gillijns@ifrc.org) at the Federation Secretariat in Geneva or Esther Okwanga, Kenya Programme Co-ordinator (tel 254 2 60 24 66, e-mail ifrc31@ifrc.org), at the Federation office in Nairobi.***

Peter Rees-Gildea  
Head  
Operations Funding and Reporting Department

Bekele Geleta  
Head  
Africa Department