

ETHIOPIA: DROUGHT

26 February 1998

Successive good harvests and reasonable stability have prompted many humanitarian organisations to scale down operations in Ethiopia. Now climatic factors (drought and floods) have placed 1.2 million people in need of immediate food aid, while a further 1.6 million need close monitoring. The International Federation is preparing an emergency appeal for Ethiopia, which will seek to assist 102,000 people in Tigray and Amhara with food, seeds and health assistance, as well as strengthening the Disaster Preparedness role of the national Red Cross Society.

The Context

Due to the failure of the short rains between March and May (Belg), and the main harvest rain (Kiremt) in many parts of the country, the food situation in Ethiopia gradually deteriorated during 1997. More than 1.2 million people are now reported to be in urgent need of food assistance, while another 1.6 million require close monitoring. Based on these figures, the national Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (DPPC) has asked for 572,835 mt of food aid for Ethiopia in its 1998 Appeal, released 28 November 1997.

WFP/FAO released their findings from the December Crop and Food Supply Mission, which concluded that the overall production is down 26% from the 1996 bumper harvest. Total production is estimated at 8.8 million tons. Nationwide grain deficit was estimated by the mission to be 530,000 tons.

Outstanding needs

The ERCS/Federation has prepared a drought appeal requesting support to assist some 102,000 people in Tigray and Amhara. The final document will be circulated to donors in the near future.

The ERCS/Federation plans to concentrate on:

- { the provision of food and seeds in exchange for work on environmental rehabilitation;
- { the supply of emergency drugs and supplementary food to local health offices;
- { the training of Community Health Agents and Traditional Birth Attendants;
- { strengthening the emergency response capacity of the National Society at headquarters and branch levels.

The nine-month programme, covering 102,000 people, will concentrate on South Tigray, South Wollo and North Shoa, where the Red Cross has been actively involved in past relief operations.

ERCS is already assisting 5,000 families through the Federation's regional flood rehabilitation and food security appeal (No. 29/97), catering for the most pressing short-term needs of emergency food, non-food and medicine. Seeds and farm tools will later be distributed to the most destitute, who lost their harvest and their farm implements during the floods.

The Disaster Preparedness Response Coordination (former Relief Department) is seriously understaffed, and needs immediate strengthening to co-ordinate the programmes under its responsibility. A relief co-ordinator and additional administrative assistance are needed.

External relations

The Delegation is represented at regular meetings held by the EU, WFP and DPPC on the drought situation. It facilitated the research team working on the joint Danida Programme in North Wollo and assisted ERCS contacts with the EU Delegation in an application to mobilise support for the National Society's Blood Service. The Delegation has regular contacts with Norwegian, British and Danish Save the Children, Lutheran World Federation and Mecana Yesus on matters of mutual interest.

Ann Naef
Acting Head
Appeals & Reports Service

Bekele Geleta
Director
Africa Department