

TAJIKISTAN: DROUGHT

26 October 2000

appeal no. 26/00

situation report no. 01

period covered: 19 September - 19 October 2000

Special efforts are being made by the Federation, WFP and all other humanitarian actors in Tajikistan to draw donors' attention to an urgent need for assistance, which, if not responded to in the coming weeks, may cause a humanitarian disaster, bringing almost two million people to the edge of starvation. The Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan (RCST) and the Federation have started the implementation of those components of the programme for which funding has already been secured. However, the food component needs to be addressed immediately, in order to avoid the nation-wide famine.

The context

Following the reports of a serious drought that has struck Tajikistan this year after three consecutive years of dramatically reduced rainfall and snowfall, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) and Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) carried out a crop and food supply assessment mission between 3 and 27 July, confirming the dramatic crop failure in the country threatening some 2 million people with critical food shortages in the coming winter. In the period from 27 August to 10 September, the International Federation Field Assessment and Co-ordination Team (FACT) carried out an assessment of the level of vulnerability of the affected population, as well as the capacity of the Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan, and the Federation delegation in Tajikistan, to provide emergency assistance to the most vulnerable. The results of the FACT assessment fully endorsed the WFP/FAO findings. Coming on top of the growing economic decline in the country, the drought has virtually destroyed an extremely limited coping capacity of the majority of the population. In the past two years, people have systematically sold most of their livestock and other belongings, and have no more means to compensate for the failed harvest. Small farmers with the rain-fed plots as the only source of income are considered to be worst affected. However, the urban population is equally struck, having to face the shortage of food on the local market and its rising prices.

The FACT team, in co-operation with the Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan (RCST) and the Federation delegation in Tajikistan, drafted a plan of action on the basis of which the Federation launched an emergency appeal seeking 22.6 million CHF to assist 200,000 people in the Khatlon oblast in the South of the country, and 50,000 in Leninabad, in the North. The emergency assistance programme is comprised of a food component aiming at providing each beneficiary with 100 kg of wheat flour and 8 litres of oil, as well as a food security component providing each family 100 kg of seeds necessary for the planting of 0.5 hectares of private land. In addition to that, health and water and sanitation components of the appeal represent an attempt to address the needs of the population to access clean drinking water and prevent the spread of water-borne diseases and malaria. In view of the Federation's overall strategy to gradually transfer most of its activities to RCST, this emergency operation is considered an opportunity to directly involve the national society in all aspects of the operation, and to put an accent on strengthening the operational branches. This experience will provide them with the necessary knowledge and expertise to successfully manage other disaster response activities in the future.

Latest events

Since the launching of the emergency appeal, the RCST and the Federation have been actively engaged in developing a detailed operational plan, while at the same time pursuing the funding options and trying to secure a sufficient funding base for a start-up of the operation.

The Federation, together with other agencies, is presently exploring the possibilities of participating in the distribution of 10,500 MT of wheat seeds funded by the World Bank. Discussions with the Tajik Ministry of Agriculture on this issue are taking place at the time of writing.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

With reference to the objectives set out in the emergency appeal, RCST and the Federation have been active in the following areas:

Provision of food and seeds (objectives 1 and 2) •

At this stage, the RCST and the Federation are concentrated on securing the funding base necessary to initiate the procurement and distribution of food and seeds. At the present stage, the operation in Leninabad, which will be partly funded by ECHO in collaboration with the German Red Cross, is under preparation. A logistics assessment has just been completed, and the necessary warehousing and transportation facilities ensured. In the southern Khatlon oblast, no funds for food and seeds have been secured to this date; however, detailed negotiations with WFP and Mission East, being the main humanitarian partners operational in the area, are underway to determine the implementing arrangements and prepare for immediate action pending the resources secured.

Repair of water-supply systems as part of food-for-work activities (objective 3) •

This component of the operation is in its early planning stage, and will be reported on in the coming period.

Public health (objective 4) •

The necessary funds for this component of the appeal have been provided by the Swedish Red Cross, together with the health delegate who will join the delegation in the coming weeks. The planning of the training schedule and the public health campaign is currently taking place, and the beginning of the implementation of this component of the programme is expected as soon as the delegate is deployed.

Water and sanitation activities (objective 5) •

The water and sanitation component of the emergency appeal has been fully funded through a DREF allocation as well as the Swedish Red Cross pledge. The project to repair the water-supply systems in

the Kabadian region in the South as well as the chlorination of shallow wells is currently being implemented and is expected to be completed before the end of the year.

RCST capacity building (objective 6) •

The National Society has expressed a strong interest in, and commitment to, playing the key role in the implementation of this operation. The Federation is fully supporting this initiative by involving the RCST counterparts in the preliminary monitoring and logistical preparations of the operation, currently taking place in the North of the country. The goal is to further strengthen the operational branches through on-the-job training which is already taking place, as well as targeted seminars, essentially in beneficiary selection, distribution and monitoring. As this operation is implemented in branches that have no previous experience in disaster relief activities, this is taken as a unique opportunity to provide the National Society counterparts with the knowledge base which will be used for future operations. This approach will be maintained throughout the whole operation, and RCST branches will be strongly encouraged to take the lead in the programme implementation, with the close support of the Federation. A training plan for the RCST preparedness teams is currently being developed aiming at raising the awareness of possible future drought situations. This plan is linked to the existing RCST disaster preparedness programme.

Strengthening of the RCST image and visibility (objective 7) •

The RCST actively participated in the FACT mission, and has joined the Federation in all external relations activities including the discussions with the government, partner-agencies, donors and the media. The goal of this strategy is to stress the key role the National Society is playing in managing this operation, which will facilitate its own strategic efforts towards the reinforcement of the Red Crescent image in the country.

Outstanding needs

The health and water and sanitation components of the appeal have mostly been covered, with the generous support of the Swedish Red Cross. However, the food and seeds, the main elements of the operation, are largely uncovered. The Federation has held discussions with WFP on possible co-operation in the distribution of food, but this arrangement depends to a large extent on the level of response to the WFP donor alert.

The current level of support represents approximately 10% of the total funds sought for this operation. Outstanding needs are enormous, and the gap mainly falls in the food and seeds category. In view of the existing urgent need to provide the food assistance in the shortest possible delay to avoid the starvation of the most vulnerable population, the Federation will review its activities in the coming weeks in relation to the level of funding secured.

An information delegate is urgently needed to support the operation and maintain its high public profile.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

Government •

Since the launching of the request for assistance to the United Nations, the Government of Tajikistan has been closely involved in the planning of the humanitarian operation. It has expressed its commitment to support the agencies with necessary tools mainly related to the logistical facilities such as warehousing and transport. The Federation co-ordinated its assessment and the subsequent plan of action with the Government's geographical prioritisation, among other criteria.

UN and NGOs •

As previously mentioned, co-operation with the UN agencies, mainly WFP, and NGOs has been close and continuous, and particular attention has been given to a proper co-ordination in order to achieve the maximum efficiency in reaching the highest possible number of beneficiaries. Presently, while pursuing all possible funding sources, the agencies are elaborating the division of geographical areas and beneficiaries to be assisted, as well as exact modalities of partnership in implementation (i.e. logistics and distribution of food and seeds).

The RCST and the International Federation are closely liaising with WFP and all other humanitarian organisations active in the drought emergency operation. The magnitude of the disaster necessitates close co-operation and a clear division of specific responsibilities, as well as geographical areas, issues which are being successfully agreed upon among the agencies. The Federation and the National Society are currently discussing the modalities of a possible partnership with WFP in the South of the country. At the same time, final negotiations with other main partners in the operational areas, *Mission East* in the south-eastern regions, and *German Agro-Action* in the North, are underway to establish a balanced approach in the final quantities of food rations to be provided, as well as to ensure that the total vulnerable population is reached.

Media •

In view of the limited world-wide visibility of Tajikistan and the recent low level of donor interest and support to this region, particular efforts have been made by the Federation, WFP and all other humanitarian organisations to draw the attention of the public to this disaster and to the need for immediate assistance. As part of these efforts, the regional information officer joined the FACT mission to ensure that the donor-community, and public at large, are informed of the effects of the drought on the population, but also of the RCST and Federation efforts in this respect.

During the third week of September, the United Nations, in co-operation with all partners, organised a media mission to Tajikistan. The mission was composed of senior journalists from New York Times, Financial Times, Corriere della Serra, National Geographic, CNN, and other major world news agencies. During the same period, the Federation delegation and RCST organised a press-conference to officially launch the Federation's emergency appeal.

Since the launching of the appeal, the Federation delegation has been approached by a number of news agencies such as the BBC and Associated Press. The newly appointed head of delegation participated in the Finnish Red Cross traditional fundraising campaign 'The Hunger Day', and gave a number of interviews to the Finnish radio and newspapers regarding the drought situation in Tajikistan. These efforts have already resulted in a number of pledges towards the Federation operation.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

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This and other reports on Federation operations are available on the Federation's website: <http://www.ifrc.org>

Tajikistan drought						ANNEX 1
APPEAL No. 26/2000		PLEDGES RECEIVED				10/27/00
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
CASH						TOTAL COVERAGE
REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->				22,557,278		3.8%
DANISH - RC		231,250	DKK	47,314	16.10.00	
FINNISH - RC		67,275	EUR	102,783	05.10.00	
ICELANDIC - RC		200,000	ISK	4,295	25.09.00	
JAPANESE - RC		10,000,000	JPY	156,610	26.09.00	
MONACO - RC		50,000	FRF	11,645	19.09.00	
SWEDISH - RC		2,600,000	SEK	473,200	03.10.00	HEALTH & WATER/SANITATION
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES - RC		5,000	USD	8,868	05.10.00	
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				804,715	CHF	3.6%
KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL)						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
IRANIAN - RC		12,250	USD	21,725	17.10.00	WHEAT FLOUR, EDIBLE OIL
SWEDISH - RC				30,000	03.10.00	HEALTH & WATER/SANITATION
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES				51,725	CHF	0.2%
ADDITIONAL TO APPEAL BUDGET						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED				0	CHF	
THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS ARE LINKED TO THIS APPEAL:						
PTJ527						