

OPERATIONS UPDATE



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

Sri Lanka: Drought

9 November 2001

Appeal No. 25/2001

Launched on 13 August 2001 for CHF 1,258,427 for 6 months. Budget was revised in October to CHF 495,307 to cover the same original 6 months period.

DREF Allocated: CHF 100,000

Beneficiaries: The original target of 39,000 beneficiaries was revised to 21,000 beneficiaries with the revised budget in October 2001.

Operations Update No. 2 Period covered: 13 September - 30 October 2001. Next Ops Update No. 3 expected 15 December 2001

“At a Glance”

Appeal coverage: 87.4%

Related Appeals: South Asia regional appeals 01.33/01; Sri Lanka 01.39/01

Outstanding needs: CHF 62,317

In Summary: Rain has still not reached the most vulnerable areas of Hambantota district and the Red Cross continues to monitor other affected areas, in particular Moneragala and Ratnapura districts. If rain does not reach these areas this month the crisis will worsen. The Federation continues to appeal to donors so that it can scale up its response to families in need.

Operational Developments:

The Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (SLRCS) has completed a second six-week distribution of food rations to 2,297 families in the Lunugamvehera and Suriyaweva Divisions and 1,419 families in Hambantota Division.

This was possible thanks to contributions to the Federation from the Norwegian Government and the Norwegian Red Cross Society, the Canadian Red Cross Society, CORDAID and local contributions in Sri Lanka. Rations have been maintained of rice, flour, dal and sugar for 45 days to each of the 3,500 families who have been individually assessed. Local Government agents who have attended all the Red Cross drought relief distribution operations have continued to publicly thank the Red Cross for ensuring assistance for these families.

The second SLRCS distributions took place in three phases on 19, 20 and 21 October. It addressed families in the Devuramvehera, Angunakolaweva, Pahalamattala, and Weerail Ara Gram Niladari (GN) Divisions of Lunugamvehera; Wediweva, Andaraweva and Mahawelikada Ara GN Divisions of Suriyawewa Division; and Bellagasweva, Galewa, Gonnoruwa, Elalla, Ketawnewa, and Keliyapura GN Divisions of Hambantota Division in Hambantota District.

Vulnerability assessments of the 1,419 families Hambantota Division had taken place during October through further house to house surveys conducted by local Red Cross volunteers. The assessment criteria had been modified and enlarged to continue to provide more detailed information about the water and medical needs of the families as well. The potential changes to the survey form was also discussed with the Government AGA's office in Lunugamvehera to add their views on effective selection criteria for beneficiaries.

The national level interagency coordination forum initiated by the Federation has continued to meet to share operational plans between responding UN and international NGO agencies. This has improved coordination. For example, the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society and Save the Children Fund (UK) are working together to enable SCF's water tankers to supply the most vulnerable families, who were surveyed by Red Cross volunteers. The SCF (UK) has also donated a water bowser to the SLRCS for three years to enable them to transport water to the most vulnerable families receiving food rations. The SLRCS will raise the funds for maintenance and transportation of the bowser (i.e. tractor hire costs) from local fund-raising.

Another example of coordination has been the discussions between the Federation and WFP about the latter providing food supplies to the most vulnerable families identified by Red Cross surveys. These are families who may not be able to benefit from the Government and WFP sponsored food for work programmes due to inability of family members to work (women-headed households, or those families with disabled heads of household, for example).

Coordination has continued with ICRC, which has assessed drought zones in conflict-affected parts adjoining the most affected parts of Ampara District. The assessment is spreading to include families from Moneragala and Ratnapura Districts whose Red Cross branches are following up surveys in areas also reporting high levels of families in distress because of drought.

Red Cross Red Crescent action w

The Sri Lanka Red Cross Society has continued to facilitate quality coverage of its drought relief operation, and therefore act as a source of information to other actors. The Society's Information Officer accompanied electronic media and press journalists to the distribution programmes between 19-21 October and a high level of interest and coverage was generated. There was senior level attendance by editors of national newspapers, and representatives from Sinhala and Tamil press, TV and Radio institutions. This resulted in TV coverage, and further high profile media articles.

The priority has continued to be to bring media coverage and attention to human interest stories highlighting the plight of the most vulnerable families, particularly those living in interior areas away from main roads. These families have still not been assessed by any other agency. They have continued to miss the now declining number of ad hoc roadside distributions conducted by local NGOs and private companies donating goods.

The Federation has been asked to make a presentation on the drought to the UN's Donor Forum meeting on 1 November, which will be a key opportunity to link the existing operation to longer term advocacy messages on disaster preparedness and drought mitigation strategies. Meetings have also continued to take place separately between the Federation and UN agencies such as WFP, as well as with the Government Secretary at the Ministry of Social Services, to ensure a sharing of all assessments and maximisation of resources.

Red Cross Society w

The Sri Lanka Red Cross Society national drought relief coordinator as well as the district level co-ordinator in Hambantota, the most affected district, have participated in a large number of meetings, including with the visiting Federation Relief Delegate. The aim was to modify and improve the survey assessment form used to identify the most vulnerable families in house to house surveys.

On 9 October the SLRCS national coordinator and Hambantota district branch secretary conducted a training for 53 volunteers (24 female and 29 male) from Lunugamvehera, Suriyawewa, and Hambantota AGA Divisions. The purpose of the training workshop was to: learn from the first vulnerability assessment survey process; improve the survey questionnaire better screen and select the most vulnerable families; and to plan the next assessment. Training was held at the NORAD Training Centre in Hambantota and involved role plays and small group discussions. The NORAD director and the SLRCS branch secretary conducted sessions on communications skills and disaster preparedness.

After this orientation meeting the 53 volunteers conducted the next phase of the survey, undertaking house to house visits between 10-16 October in the most affected areas of Galweva, Bellagasweva, Ketanweva, Keliyapura, Gonnoruwa, and Elalla GN Divisions of Hambantota District. As before the survey was conducted in places inaccessible to many other agencies (remote areas away from the public highways).

Discussions were held with the government agents in each affected district and division to cross check against government information so that the survey could identify the most vulnerable families.

The following are the details of the survey:

GN Division	No. of families surveyed	Selected families
Galweva	510	464
Ketanweva	201	153
Keliyapura	210	175
Bellagasweva	144	120
Gonnoruwa	280	229
Elalla	312	278
Total	1'657	1'419

All families identified as the most vulnerable were, as before, given a personalised ration number and told of the venue of the forthcoming food distribution. At the distribution itself the number was checked against the list of families identified, and the household representative's signature was confirmed prior to the relief supplies being released.

Relief distributions w

Objectives and Activities planned

The overall goal of the SLRCS operation is to provide supplementary food support to the most vulnerable of those affected by the drought until the first harvest of crops due in January/February 2002.

Relief distributions

The earlier commitment to meet half of their food needs, as measured against Sphere minimum standards of calorific intake, until the next harvest of the worst affected families continues. An assessment after the first distributions found that families were still managing to meet 50 percent of their food requirements based on the Sphere minimum nutritional standards and using locally acceptable staples of rice, flour, dal and sugar.

On 9 October, SLRCS called for tenders to be able to purchase in phased instalments all the food items required for distributions to 3,500 families until the end of December 2001. In fact the total number of families reached by these distributions is 3,716, due to the average size of family calculation of six

persons per family not always being the exact number. Because some families have only three members, the rations can reach a larger number.

The successful suppliers are two cooperative agencies, again providing pre-packaged, high quality local goods. This also enables the cash to be recirculated into the local farmers' economy. Again, the suppliers will include the costs of local transportation and delivery, saving SLRCS warehousing and other logistics costs, such as packaging. The distributions carried out on 19, 20 and 21 October were further divided into four village locations per AGA division to enable the community to have the rations delivered directly to the villages. This has facilitated easy distribution via Red Cross volunteers from trucks close to interior areas where most of the vulnerable families are located.

Discussions are under way between the Federation and the World Food Programme about whether the Federation and SLRCS can come to an agreement to distribute WFP food rations to the remaining 2,785 families from the Federation's earlier total of 6,500 intended beneficiary families. Discussions are continuing and are dependent on the donor response to the WFP's own appeal that has just been launched from Rome.

Table 1 - Continuing Original Food Requirements (Kgs) for 6 months

Item	Ration person/day (Kgs)	Total Ration /person	Total required/ 6 person family for 6 months	Total required for 6,500 families for 6 months
Rice	0.125	22.5	135	877'500
Flour	0.075	13.5	81	526'500
Dal	0.04	7.2	43.2	280'800
Sugar	0.015	2.7	16.2	105'300

Specific objectives and activities already conducted against these are as shown below:

Objective 1: To provide one initial food distribution to 1,000 families in one district for 3 months utilising available disaster relief emergency funds (DREF) funds.

Activity 1 : Personnel and trained disaster preparedness volunteers from SLRCS headquarters, Hambantota district and divisional branches and a Federation delegate conducted a rapid assessment to identify 1,000 of the most vulnerable families in one division. This was completed on time before the end of August and families received the full amount for 45 days of 25 kgs of rice, 20 kgs flour, 10 kgs dal, and 4 kgs sugar (for a six person family). The villages covered were Bogahaweve, Padavgama, Devranwehera, Ranawaranawa, Ilukpalassa, Una Athweve, and Uda Mathala of Lunugamvehera Division of Hambantota District.

The full distribution was made to 1,293 families. Another 293 families could be accommodated as not all the most vulnerable families had six members on average, and those families with fewer members received reduced rations. This enabled the saved rations to be spread among a further 293 families.

For each house to house survey form the vulnerability criteria assessed by the Red Cross volunteers included main sources of income of households and how this income has been affected; what survival strategies families used to find work, income and food and water. The form also included any family members currently employed; numbers of children in the 0-5, 5-12, and 12 and over age groups; monthly income, including from government or non-governmental sources (e.g. Samurdhi assistance); sources of drinking water; details of pregnant and lactating mothers. Each survey form also contained the verification signature of the Gram Niladari (Village Headman).

Activity 2 : Procure and distribute food to the identified 1,000 families by first week in September.

The SLRCS tender process decided upon purchasing all food items for the distributions from the state cooperative agency as the quality was consistent and high, and pre-packaging arrangements saved on warehousing and packaging costs.

The SLRCS organised a second distribution on 9 September to 962 families out of a total list of 1,055 families (with the balance being delivered within five days to those who did not attend the distribution itself). The families had been assessed through house to house surveys. They came from the villages of Maha Ara, Namadagasweva, Suriyawewa, 8th Mile Post, Beddavadiya, Andaragaswewa, Usgala from three Divisions of Andarawewa, Mahawew Kada Ara, and Wediwewa. This distribution was conducted using local donations of food items mobilised in Sri Lanka for the Red Cross Society from the public and business sector sources. In this second distribution, 832 families received the full six person ration for 45 days and 223 received the reduced ration for smaller family sizes.

Objective 2: To provide one food distribution to an additional 5,500 families and a second distribution to all 6,500 families

Activity 1: Personnel and trained disaster preparedness volunteers from SLRCS headquarters and Hambantota district and Divisional branches conducted a second assessment to identify a further 1,419 vulnerable families in the Hambantota division. The survey, conducted by 53 specially trained volunteers, was completed between 10-16 October. However, after discussion with the Federation disaster relief delegate, the local Federation delegation helped the SLRCS develop a plan of action to assist 3,500 of the most affected families for the next five months if the Appeal reaches 50 percent of its target. Identifying the most vulnerable beneficiaries has been improved to maximise the effective use of available resources.

The budget for the total appeal was revised in October and the target number of beneficiary families was reduced to 3,500 (subsequently increased to 3,716 due to the change in the average family size making more rations available to distribute). Committed donor funds have been identified to enable the Federation and SLRCS to support this number of families through the six month projected cycle.

Activity 2 : Procure and distribute food to the 5,500 families identified, by mid-September.

The second distributions took place during the six week cycle from mid-October (a month later than scheduled because of the vulnerability assessment exercise and availability of funds). SLRCS used the same procurement procedures as for the first distribution. The number of families was reduced to 3,716 in line with funding projections for the full six-month distribution cycle.

30 youth volunteers (17 male and 13 female), as well as the Red Cross Branch volunteer officials worked to distribute the rations on three consecutive days, ending at 3 am in some cases.

Activity 3 : Repeat the procurement and distribution to the first 1,000 families after 45 days, and subsequently to all 6,500 families in mid November.

As mentioned in Activity 2 - regarding the revised number of beneficiaries, and in keeping with the earlier action plan - the Federation and SLRCS maintained the six week ration distribution schedule for the first two areas and added the first six week cycle in the most vulnerable areas of Hambantota division on 20 October. This will make the next six week distribution cycle due to start at the end of November. This is in order to take the most vulnerable families into a further six week cycle ending in mid-January, when harvesting begins enabling poor rural workers to earn income.

Health w

There were no specific health objectives in the original Appeal, but the Federation and SLRCS have coordinated closely with other agencies and institutions that have agreed to assume a health monitoring role.

Objective 1

To establish regular exchange of assessment information with other government, UN and INGO institutions on the prevailing health trends in the affected areas as gathered through house to house Red Cross surveys.

Activity 1: Contribute to coordinated efforts to raise health issues with other institutions.

The Federation has convened a regular interagency meeting where sectoral issues can also receive more coordinated attention. It has exchanged monitoring information with WHO, UNICEF, and INGOs such as SCF (UK), and World Vision. Assessments of morbidity trends, possible health promotion campaigns, supplementary nutrition programmes for pregnant and lactating mothers and children under 5 years old will continue. Other water and sanitation and hygiene related issues have been included in a coordinated response, while the Red Cross focuses on food relief supplies.

UNICEF and WFP have responded to health trend indicators by seeking to coordinate programmes for supplementary nutritional feeding for pregnant and lactating mothers and children under 5 in the most affected areas. The Red Cross surveys have helped to identify which divisions have a higher percentage of potential beneficiaries in these categories.

Water-sanitation w

Although there were no specific water and sanitation related objectives in the original Appeal the Federation and Sri Lanka Red Cross have also decided to continue to assess future options, including further advocacy on behalf of those with limited access to water and other emergency provisions.

SCF (UK) have provided SLRCS, and the Hambantota branch in particular, with a water bowser under a memorandum of understanding for three years. This will help the branch (and other drought-affected branches) with the opportunity to supplement water supplies to communities in need if they cannot access adequate supplies from the government or other sources.

Objective 1

To assess the water access issues and projections for supplies for the most vulnerable families through the revised vulnerability assessment survey process.

Activity 1: Use of the revised questionnaire to identify villages which have a chronic water shortage.

The new questionnaire asked families about their water sources. One outcome is that the new SCF provided bowser will be used to provide those in most need with regular water (which meets Sphere minimum standards) from end of October

National Society Capacity Building w

The SLRCS has experience in relief operations and has a substantial number of available volunteers. Many of the younger volunteers have received valuable first time, as well as refresher training in disaster preparedness and vulnerability capacity assessments. The SLRCS has also networked with other institutions and has used resource persons from agencies such as NORAD and Government to supplement and widen the scope of their training.

The initial two distributions have already significantly increased the coordination, logistics and resource mobilisation skills not only of personnel in the NHQ and drought-affected branches, but also in branches, such as Colombo which undertook widespread communications and fund-raising work, and finally sent 40 volunteers to participate in the second food relief distribution itself on 9 September.

The SLRCS information officer has also increased her capacity to work with the media in a strategic way and, overall, the SLRCS response has helped it to understand the roles of advocacy more realistically. As a result of each press release and effective community-based set of activities, the

SLRCS has succeeded in keeping the drought issue in the forefront of the media and public's eye. It has also improved its positioning as an effective relief and response institution with a wide range of actors.

Federation Delegation w

The programme is being managed by the Federation representative in Sri Lanka, with the earlier assistance from a disaster relief delegate. The delegation has maintained close coordination with the SLRCS and with the ICRC delegation, which had deployed an agronomist to assess the areas in the conflict affected parts of Ampara District.

The responsibility for day to day monitoring of the operation will be with the SLRCS, primarily at branch level but supervised closely by an officer at headquarters, specifically assigned to coordinate the project. Daily coordination meetings are taking place between the Federation and SLRCS to oversee progress against the specified activities.

Coordination

As explained above, the Federation has taken the initiative to convene a widely attended national level interagency coordination meeting. This is to enable all agencies, key government ministries, and the ICRC to share assessments, coordinate sectoral responses, and plan to maximise the collective use of available resources.

At the district level, the Ministry of Social Services has requested all agencies to coordinate relief assessment and distribution activities through the local government agent. The SLRCS has been following this protocol, and local government agents have expressed satisfaction with Red Cross cooperation.

The SLRCS will continue to work closely with the Hambantota and other districts local government agents to ensure that there is no duplication of effort and that the most vulnerable families are identified. The SLRCS has nevertheless ensured that it acts independently in the final selection of beneficiaries.

Outstanding needs

The initial funds raised by contributions from the Swedish Government and Red Cross, and from the Danish Red Cross, enabled the first 45-day distribution to be completed on time to targeted families as per the original plan of action. Further hard pledges from the Norwegian Government, Norwegian Red Cross, Canadian Red Cross and CORDAID have enabled the Federation and SLRCS to underwrite the procurement of food items in a phased manner to provide the six weekly rations required by 3,716 families through the six month cycle.

The Federation continues to appeal to donors for the full original amount to be able to scale up its response to the intended 6,500 families, even though it can currently address the needs of 3,716 families. Soft pledges had been received earlier from a few other National Societies, but there is an urgent need to mobilise further funds to enable the further distributions to take place for the next three months to the projected 6,500 families in total.

The Spanish Red Cross had made a bilateral donation of approximately Euros 12,000 to the SLRCS and this has been utilised in the second distribution earlier in Suriyawewa. The SLRCS will be reporting bilaterally to the Spanish Red Cross on the successful completion of that distribution.

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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.

This operation seeks to administer to the immediate requirements of the victims of this disaster. Subsequent operations to promote sustainable development or longer-term capacity building will require additional support, and these programmes are outlined on the Federation's website.

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

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