

# 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**

*19th December 2001*

*Appeal No. 25/2001*

*Launched on 13th 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. 3 Period covered: 1st November - 18th December 2001. Next Ops Update No. 4 expected 30th January 2002*

### *“At a Glance”*

*Appeal coverage: 87.5%*

*Related Appeals: 01.33/2001 South Asia regional programmes*

*Outstanding needs: CHF 61,896*

*The Disaster/Situation: The Sri Lanka Red Cross Society, with Federation support, has completed several food distributions to vulnerable people suffering from the effects of drought. Beneficiaries have been closely involved in the operation, which has received a good, but not complete, response from donors.*

### **Operational Developments:**

The Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (SLRCS) has completed the third 6-week distribution of food rations to the first 2,297 families in the Lunugamvehera and Suriyawewa Divisions, as well as a further 1,419 families in Hambantota Division for their second cycle. These distributions have been made possible by the contributions to the Federation's Appeal from the Norwegian Government and the Norwegian Red Cross Society, the Canadian Red Cross Society, and from CORDAID and local contributions in Sri Lanka.

Rations have been maintained of 25 kgs rice, 20 kgs flour, 10 kgs dal, and 4 kgs sugar. This is for an average family size of six persons for 45 days to each of the 3,716 families who had 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 third SLRCS distributions took place in three phases on 30th November, 1st and 2nd December 2001 to the same families as before in the Devuramvehera, Angunakolaweve, Pahalamattala, and Weeravil Ara Grama Niladari (GN) Divisions of Lunugamvehera; Wediweve, Andaraweve and Mahawelikada Ara GN Divisions of Suriyaweve Division; and Bellagasweve, Galewa, Gonnoruwa, Elalla, Ketawnewa, and Keliyapura GN Divisions of Hambantota Division in Hambantota District.

Another example of co-ordination has been the discussions between the Federation and World Food Programme (WFP) about increasing co-operation mechanisms. In early December the WFP has made a request to the Federation and Sri Lanka Red Cross for SLRCS volunteers to play an important role in the WFP's 16-week nutrition education programmes for families in the drought-affected areas. The outcomes of this programme will be increased knowledge in affected communities about nutrition, low cost preparation of weaning and other food, improved household food security, and special information about nutritional needs during growth.

### **Red Cross Red Crescent action w**

The Federation's joint presentation with the Resident UN Co-ordinator's Office on the initial learning from the drought response to the UN's Donor Forum meeting on 1st November was well received. Participants from the diplomatic and aid missions, Government Ministry of Social Services, UN family agencies, and International NGOs discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the overall drought response at both operational Divisional and District levels, as well as national inter-agency co-ordination levels.

The meeting also recommended that a smaller inter-agency group should develop some early warning indicators for use in disasters in future. In addition it called for clear proposals for better inter-agency co-ordination of assessments and more effective operational response mechanisms between agencies.

### **Red Cross Society w**

The Sri Lanka Red Cross Society national drought relief co-ordinator as well as the District level co-ordinator in Hambantota, the most affected District, have continued to participate in a large number of community, District, and national level planning and monitoring meetings. These included meetings to improve the Society's tendering procedures, the formal signing of contracts with suppliers, and meetings to co-ordinate ongoing responses with other institutions such as local Government Agents at Divisional and District levels in particular.

On 23rd November the SLRCS national co-ordinator on drought, together with the Hambantota District Branch Secretary, jointly facilitated a "Lessons Learned" workshop with the Federation's Regional Disaster Preparedness Delegate and DP manager respectively for a half day. The workshop, which was held in the NORAD Training Centre in Hambantota, was attended by beneficiary representatives from affected communities, local Government, the District and Divisional SLRCS Branch committees, and the volunteers who have taken part in the programme from the beginning.

The discussions held in the workshop with representatives from all affected Divisions, including the Government Agents in each affected District and Division, helped to identify the key strengths, challenges and opportunities of the entire Red Cross drought relief operation to date. It was done in a very participatory and honest manner. The learning exercise included a participatory "time line" exercise which explored the key moments over the past 21 months from multi-agency and community perspectives. This time line was then used to conduct a strengths/weaknesses/opportunities/threats (SWOT) brainstorming exercise.

The results of the participatory SWOT exercise showed that the strengths of the programme so far had included an enhanced and high profile image for SLRCS; RC volunteers being seen by others (especially school children) as a role model of humanitarian service to others; the dedication and quick response by the RC Branch and volunteers; excellent co-operation with Government structures; and sustaining the relief programme through the required 6 month distribution cycle. Here it was mentioned that all other NGOs, INGOs, and institutions had not delivered as consistent a set of relief items as the Red Cross, and most had disappeared after the initial high profile activity in the first few weeks of the drought.

The weaknesses identified, most of which have been subsequently addressed by the SLRCS in the late November relief distribution, included excessively long working hours for the volunteers; not giving communities adequate

notice before assessments (so that all family members could be present during the visits); modifications needed to some of the assessment questions; and lack of storage capacity at the local Branch level.

However, clear opportunities were also identified. Examples are the chance for SLRCS to build on its enhanced profile and positive image by conducting recruitment drives and increased participation of communities in RC activities in future. Other opportunities identified was the experience gained to help in future disaster response programmes and the possibilities of increasing local fund raising activities to attract more support for the Branch's ongoing programmes to the vulnerable.

The main threats identified included the need for the SLRCS to continue and complete its intended relief distributions (for which funds have now been successfully identified); and the need for more sustained rain to ensure that crops planted by marginal farmers germinate and provide adequate produce for sale. Without it, the situation of indebtedness and lack of income to purchase food in the longer term for the most vulnerable will be exacerbated.

The "Lessons Learned" exercise ended with some clear recommendations based on the above SWOT analysis which have already been implemented by SLRCS during the late November relief distributions (e.g. volunteers not working excessive hours, and notifying all community members well in advance before activities take place).

## **Relief distributions w**

### **Objectives and Activities planned**

The overall goal of the SLRCS operation is to provide supplementary food support to the most vulnerable 3,500 (subsequently increased to 3,716) of those families affected by the drought until the first harvest of crops due in January/February 2002.

### **Relief distributions**

***Objective 1:** To procure and provide repeat relief distributions of food rations to 3716 families at 6 week intervals.*

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

On 30th November to 2nd December 2001 SLRCS conducted the next relief distributions of 25 kgs rice, 20 kgs flour, 10 kgs dhal (lentils), and 4 kgs sugar to the most vulnerable families identified through its previous house to house survey of drought-affected families in Hambantota District.

On the first day of the operation there were two distribution centres. At the first at Angunakolawewa (covering three Grama Niladari Divisions) 20 volunteers (12 female and 8 male) distributed for five hours to 310 beneficiary families from Maha Aluthgam Ara and Weheragala. It was noticeable that at this distribution there were far fewer male beneficiaries present as most men were busy in the fields engaged in chenna cultivation with the start of the rainy season.

The second distribution was at Lunugumvehera's AGA office where 859 beneficiary families from the following areas received their relief assistance: Weerawil Ara, Punciappu, Jambura, Devramvehera, Bogahaweve, Ranawarnawa, and Pahala Mattala. Here 30 volunteers contributed 360 person hours. Learning from previous distributions, the operational time was reduced by increasing the numbers of queues for those reporting with their ration numbers.

On 1st December the relief distribution was made at Andaraweve in the Suriyawewa AGA Division to 735 beneficiary families. The SLRCS experienced a very positive attitude from both the men and women in the

communities who participated actively in helping the SLRCS volunteers to unload the goods and make up the correct number of food parcels. A second distribution was carried out later that day at Wediweva temple, where 393 beneficiary families received their supplies. Again 30 volunteers (17 female and 13 male) contributed 375 person hours at both of these distribution centres.

On 2nd December two distributions took place. The first distribution to 584 beneficiary families took place at Maha Ara school. 10 volunteers (4 female and 6 male) conducted the distribution. Later that day 835 beneficiary families from Gonnoruwa, Ketanweva, Keliyapura, and Elalla Gram Niladari Divisions collected their relief distributions from the Hambantota AGA's office compound. 30 volunteers contributed 420 person hours to complete this later distribution.

The successful suppliers were two Co-operative Agencies, again providing pre-packaged, high quality local goods, and to enable the cash to be re-circulated into the local farmers' economy. Again, the suppliers included the costs of local transportation and delivery, saving SLRCS warehousing and other logistics costs such as packaging. However, due to a national increase in the price of rice and dhal, the prices of these items increased and the Co-operative Agencies, as they purchase only on demand from the local farmers, had been unable to supply the goods at the original price. As a result, the Logistics Department in the Federation's Secretariat in Geneva approved an increase in the procurement costs of these items of a total of CHF 10,342 on 29th November to enable to procurement and distribution to proceed.

### **Health w**

There were no specific health objectives in the original Appeal, but the Federation and SLRCS have co-ordinated closely with other agencies and institutions who 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 the house to house Red Cross surveys.*

**Activity 1:** Contribute to co-ordinated efforts to raise health issues with other institutions

The WFP has responded to health trend indicators by seeking to co-ordinate programmes with the Federation and Sri Lanka Red Cross Society for supplementary nutritional feeding for pregnant and lactating mothers and children under 5 in the most affected areas. The Red Cross are concluding discussions by the end of December on what roles they can play to assist the WFP in nutritional education programmes for drought-affected communities.

### **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 appropriate responses.

SCF (UK) had very kindly provided SLRCS, and the Hambantota Branch in particular, with a water bowser under a Memorandum of Understanding for 3 years. The Branch has already used the bowser to good effect to bring water to those communities who were still experiencing water shortage even after the first rains came in the Hambantota District.

### **National Society Capacity Building w**

The SLRCS has taken many steps to continue to strengthen its capacity at Branch and NHQ level after initiating effective "Lessons Learned" exercises. More importantly, it has also made operational changes as a result of the recommendations made by affected communities (beneficiaries) and other key stakeholders such as local Government Agents. This has improved its capacity to deliver targeted and appropriate relief in a timely manner.

The Society used the "Lessons Learned" exercise and papers to make a presentation to a national SLRCS Disaster Preparedness workshop held in Sri Lanka on 24th and 25th November 2001. The Branch officials and volunteers were able to share their experiences and learning with the 24 other District Branches in the country, and this has helped other Branches to begin more effective Disaster Preparedness plans.

The participants in the “Lessons Learned” exercise also encouraged the SLRCS to take up the many positive opportunities that its excellent relief operation has brought. Examples are the possibility to increase local fund raising activities for its long term work, recruit new youth and adult members more actively from vulnerable communities who are so impressed with the Red Cross’s work, and increase publicity for its ongoing work.

SLRCS also conducted a separate national workshop in November for representatives from all 25 Branches to learn about new fund raising and local resource mobilisation techniques. The Hambantota Branch presented a case study for other Branches to learn from, covering the topic of “public fund raising opportunities at times of emergencies”. They helped other Branches to learn from techniques to create strong and positive public positioning through regular and transparent media coverage, as well as to make public appeals. The corporate sector response to SLRCS was encouraging during this programme and offers SLRCS a good platform to follow up further activities in 2002.

The latest relief distributions have continued to significantly increase the co-ordination, logistics and resource mobilisation skills not only of personnel in the NHQ but also at Branch levels.

### **Federation Delegation w**

The programme is being managed by the Federation Representative in Sri Lanka. The Delegation has maintained close co-ordination with the SLRCS and with the ICRC Delegation and other actors.

The responsibility for day to day monitoring of the operation has continued to be with the SLRCS, primarily at Branch level but supervised closely by an officer at NHQ specifically assigned to co-ordinate the project. Daily co-ordination meetings are still taking place between the Federation and SLRCS to oversee progress against the specified activities.

### ***Co-ordination***

As explained above, the Federation had earlier taken the initiative to convene a widely attended national level inter-agency co-ordination meeting to enable all agencies, key Government Ministries, and ICRC where appropriate to share assessments, co-ordinate sectoral responses, and plan to maximise the collective use of available resources.

At the District level the Ministry of Social services had requested all agencies to co-ordinate relief assessment and distribution activities through the local Government Agent. The SLRCS and Federation have continued to follow this protocol from the earliest discussions. During the “Lessons Learned” exercise in November local Government Agents expressed high satisfaction with the Red Cross co-operation. At the same time, they have stated positive words on the role the Red Cross has played to bring attention to the most vulnerable, particularly those in the interior areas, through its well co-ordinated house to house surveys and targeted relief distributions.

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 all identified. SLRCS has nevertheless ensured that it acts independently in the final selection of beneficiaries.

### ***Outstanding needs***

The rains in November did reach the most vulnerable areas of Hambantota District and the Red Cross continues to monitor all the affected areas. The affected families were still concerned in mid-December that the rain might not be consistent enough to provide the high yields farmers need in order to generate enough income to recover their debts and investments, but the SLRCS is monitoring the situation carefully.

It has been decided that a survey will be conducted by the Hambantota District Branch volunteers in the first 10 days of January. This will be done to assess whether the fourth and final distribution to the existing beneficiaries will be necessary in the middle of January at the next and final 6 week distribution cycle point. The house to house survey to be conducted in early January will check with a 50% random sample of the total beneficiary

families from all affected areas as to whether they still identify a need for supplementary food rations. Families will be assessed for their latest income trends (compared to their earlier statistics given) and will be asked whether a reduced ration would be more appropriate, if at all needed.

The funds balance in the Appeal are sufficient to cover the full and final distribution cycle to 3,716 families in mid-January, if needed.

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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 web site.*

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

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Sri Lanka drought						ANNEX 1
APPEAL No. 25/2001		PLEDGES RECEIVED				19.12.2001
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
<b>CASH</b>						
REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->				<b>495'307</b>		<b>TOTAL COVERAGE 87.5%</b>
CASH CARRIED FORWARD						
CANADIAN - RC		25'000	CAD	27'235	20.09.2001	
DANISH - RC		185'000	DKK	37'574	10.08.2001	
NORWEGIAN - GOVT/RC		1'000'000	NOK	182'500	11.10.2001	
PRIVATE ON LINE				670	02.10.2001	
SWEDISH - GOVT		700'000	SEK	114'590	23.08.2001	
SRI LANKA - PRIVATE		290'185	LKR	5'255	11.10.2001	DIRECTLY TO DELEGATION
SRI LANKA - PRIVATE		40'386	USD	65'587	19.10.2001	DIRECTLY TO DELEGATION
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				433'411	CHF	87.5%