

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

25 February 2002

This Ops Update is intended for reporting on emergency appeals.

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. 4 Period covered: 19 December 2001 - 20 January 2002.

Final report expected 30 March 2002

“At a Glance”

Appeal coverage: Covered

Related Appeals: Sri Lanka (01.29/2002), South Asia regional programmes (01.24/2002)

The Disaster/Situation: The Sri Lanka Red Cross Society - with Federation assistance - has mounted an effective response to the drought that has affected the south of the country for several harvests. Donor support has been strong and the active involvement of the National Society has improved its capacity to deal with future emergencies.

Operational Developments:

The southern Sri Lanka has been affected by the effects of a prolonged drought for more than two years. Several crops have been lost and local people have described the drought as the worst in 50 years.

In response, the Federation launched an emergency appeal to assist the relief efforts of the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (SLRCS).

The National Society has completed its third six-week distribution of food rations to the first 2,297 families in the Lunugamvehera and Sooriyawewa Divisions. It has also covered - between 30 November and 2 December 2001 - a further 1,419 families in Hambantota Division in a second cycle of distribution. In early January the SLRCS felt it appropriate to conduct a detailed survey of 50% of the total beneficiaries to assess whether a final distribution (as originally planned for January/February 2002) would be required.

The house to house survey was conducted between 10 and 15 January and the results showed a continuing need for the majority of the original beneficiaries. The lack of rainfall has continued to affect the poorest chenna cultivator families, whose marginal lands did not receive enough rainfall for crops to mature.

A further distribution to a slightly reduced and reassessed number of families was set for 18-20 February. Thanks to a further generous contribution from the Japanese Red Cross Society, together with the budget balance of the Appeal to date, the SLRCS has been provided with the required funds to make this next distribution. The tendering and logistics planning activities to complete the distributions are under way. Rations for the targeted families will be maintained at the level of 25 kgs rice, 20 kgs flour, 10 kgs dal, and 4 kgs sugar for an average family size of six persons for 45 days to each family.

Local Government Agents, who have attended all the Red Cross drought relief distribution operations, have continued to work in close cooperation with the Hambantota District Branch of the Red Cross to ensure assistance for the most vulnerable families. The situation regarding water needs is also being closely monitored by the Red Cross and Government Agents. The water bowser (distribution tanker) donated to SLRCS by SCF (UK) may be put into operation.

Red Cross Red Crescent action w

The Federation assisted SLRCS's drought relief co-ordinator at headquarters to draw up - along with the Hambantota branch - a questionnaire to assess the situation of drought-affected beneficiaries.

The Federation and UN Coordinator's Office have continued to share the lessons learnt from the drought relief operation to various institutions including the Consortium for Humanitarian Action's emergency preparedness focal group. A national level workshop is being planned for early March 2002. Its aim is to use this and other learning to develop ideas for a national inter-agency supported Disaster Preparedness Plan for Sri Lanka. Government and other local and international NGOs will also be invited. The workshop will provide an opportunity to use the learning from this drought operation to influence more effective disaster preparedness and management planning.

Red Cross Society w

The Sri Lanka Red Cross Society national drought relief coordinator and the district level coordinator in Hambantota - the most affected district - completed an assessment of ongoing needs of the beneficiary families from information of earlier distributions.

The house to house survey was conducted in three AGA Divisions. The number of families surveyed were 468 in Lunugamvehera, 490 in Sooriyawewa, and 520 in Hambantota AGA Divisions; a total of 1,478 families surveyed out of a total beneficiary list of 3,718 families. The survey was conducted by 32 Red Cross branch volunteers (15 male and 17 female) between 10 and 15 January, taking 1,728 person hours of volunteer time.

The survey form recorded new trends in family circumstances including:
 whether the Red Cross food relief package had proved adequate for the family needs;
 when the family had started cultivation and of which crops;
 what the progress in the cultivation was and when the next crop was expected;
 any final comments as beneficiaries on the Red Cross relief programme to date.

In this latter context, the survey followed the Sphere standard guidelines for involving beneficiary perspectives in reviewing relief programmes and assisting in further relevant planning of services to them in a participatory way.

The results showed that when the initial rains started in early November, farming families had begun their cultivation. Approximately 40% of targeted families in the Red Cross distribution lists owned up to 2 acres of paddy lands and 3-4 acres of chenna cultivation (marginal) land. Specific interviews were held with marginal farmers in interior areas. The general analysis shows that there has been no rain once since 20 December in almost all drought-affected areas of Hambantota District.

Many farmers had decided to take the risk of further loans from local banks and money lenders to purchase plant seeds. However, because of the lack of rain, the majority of these crops dried up. Others earned approximately 5,000 rupees income from a first crop, but feared that without rain they would earn nothing more from the annual harvest. One farmer stated: 'I tried to commit suicide during the drought season due to the hardship. At that point the Red Cross stepped into our villages and luckily I could feed my children with your assistance and now - thanks to the Red Cross - I am well off.'

The Government has also begun distributing more food rations in response to continuing needs in Hambantota District in early February. The Government Agents have been closely co-ordinating with the SLRCS and have distributed 25 kgs of rice only for a one month ratio of food relief in a co-ordinated way so as not to overlap with the Red Cross beneficiaries.

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) families until the first harvest of crops due in January/February 2002.

Relief distributions

Objective: To procure and provide repeat relief distributions of food rations to 3,716 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 remains. No relief distributions have taken place in this reporting period but logistics planning, budgeting and tendering have been completed to prepare for the next distribution between 18-20 February. This will be the fourth and final distribution as per the original plan of action for Lunugamvehera, Sooriyawewa, and half of Hambantota AGA Divisions, and the third distribution for the second half of Hambantota Division.

An assessment after the latest distributions in the January survey of beneficiary families confirmed that they would continue to need the relief package as previously identified (i.e. representing 50% of calorific intake per family of 6 for 6 weeks as per Sphere standards).

Health w

There were no specific health objectives in the original Appeal, but volunteers noted a general improvement in the health of the 1,478 families they visited in the house to house surveys in January.

Objective 1

To regularly exchange information on health trends - gathered via house to house Red Cross surveys - with other Government, UN and INGO institutions.

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

The SLRCS volunteers noted there was no increase in disease due to lack of nutrition or water borne causes after the rains had ceased in December. They also conducted a basic assessment of the condition of children in the beneficiary communities and found them to be more active. The children were going to school and working on farm sites engaged in family cultivation support activities.

The Government Social Services ministry has informed SLRCS that it has begun distributions of drinking water in Galweva, Maha Ara, Divulgamawa, Badagiriya, Kelyapara, and Gonnoruwa. SLRCS and is reassessing the use of its water bowser donated by SCF (UK). It will also begin distribution to targeted villages soon. Close co-ordination will be maintained with the local Government officials to avoid duplication.

WFP has responded to health trend indicators by seeking to co-ordinate programmes with the Federation and SLRCS for supplementary nutritional feeding of pregnant and lactating mothers and children under 5 in the

most affected areas. The Federation is still awaiting decisions from WFP on what role it can play to assist the WFP in nutritional education programmes for drought-affected communities.

National Society Capacity Building w

The SLRCS has undertaken the house to house survey to assess the needs of the most vulnerable. This has improved its capacity to deliver targeted and appropriate relief in a timely manner.

The credibility of the SLRCS has been strengthened in the eyes of both the community and the local Government Agents at District and Divisional levels. This is due to the SLRCS' engagement with vulnerable communities and the transparency shown in asking beneficiaries - during the January survey - their perceptions of the RC relief programme and activities. The latest planned relief distributions and preparatory planning exercises will continue to increase the co-ordination, logistics and resource mobilisation skills of personnel in headquarters and branches.

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 headquarters assigned to co-ordinate the project. Daily co-ordination meetings are still taking place between the Federation and SLRCS to oversee progress against specified activities.

Co-ordination

The Federation had earlier taken the initiative to convene a widely attended national level inter-agency coordination meeting. This was to enable all agencies, key Government Ministries, and ICRC where appropriate to share assessments, coordinate sectoral responses, and plan to maximise the collective use of available resources. The local Federation representative has continued to use every opportunity (for example as a member of the Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies' Emergency Preparedness Focal Group) to use the lessons learned from this high profile emergency to advocate for more effective co-ordination and a change in policies and practices of all institutions.

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 early November reached 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 January that the rain might not be consistent enough to provide the high yields farmers need to generate enough income to recover debts and investments, but the SLRCS is monitoring the situation.

Although the families assessed in the January survey for their latest income trends (compared to their earlier statistics given) were asked whether a reduced ration would be more appropriate, if at all needed, it appears that the existing levels of calorific intake will still be needed.

The funds balance in the Appeal are sufficient to cover the full and final distribution cycle to 3,716 families in the two phases of 18-20 February, and mid-March as projected.

For further details please contact: Ewa Eriksson, Phone : 41 22 7304252; Fax: 41 22 733 03 95; email: eriksson@ifrc.org.

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>.

John Horekens
Head
Relationship Management Department

Hiroshi Higashiura
Head
Asia Pacific Department

Sri Lanka drought						ANNEX 1
APPEAL No. 25/2001		PLEDGES RECEIVED				19.02.2002
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
CASH						TOTAL COVERAGE
REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->				495'307		100.2%
CANADIAN - RC		25'000	CAD	27'235	20.09.2001	
DANISH - RC		185'000	DKK	37'574	10.08.2001	
JAPANESE - RC				63'000	18.12.2001	
NORWEGIAN - GOVT/RC		1'000'000	NOK	182'500	11.10.2001	
PRIVATE ON LINE				729	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				496'470	CHF	100.2%
KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL)						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES				0	CHF	0.0%
ADDITIONAL TO APPEAL BUDGET						
DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SPANISH - RC		12'000	EUR	18'228	13.09.2001	BILATERAL DONATION
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED				18'228	CHF	