

# 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

## ***ETHIOPIA: IMPROVING FOOD SECURITY***

10 April, 2003

*The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in 178 countries. For more information: [www.ifrc.org](http://www.ifrc.org)*

*Appeal No. 28/02*

*Launched on 08 November 2002 for CHF 16,163,000 (USD 10,802,700 or EUR 11,010,218) for 14 months for 120,500 beneficiaries.*

*Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) Allocated: CHF 80,000 (reimbursed to DREF)*

*Operations Update No. 2; Period covered: January to March, 2003; Last Update: January 2003; Next Update expected: May 2003*

### **IN BRIEF**

*Appeal coverage: 33.9%*

*Related Appeals: 2003 Annual Appeal for Ethiopia (no. 01.05/2003)*

*Outstanding needs: CHF 10,690,120; Please refer to the list of contributions for this appeal on the Federations website at the following page: [http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf\\_appeals.pl?02/1-2-3%20-%20ap2802.pdf](http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.pl?02/1-2-3%20-%20ap2802.pdf)*

*Summary: Donor support to the Federation appeal has been reasonably positive with regard to the distribution component in West Harerghe. However, after another increase in beneficiary numbers a total of six months food needs or 7,800 MT are still to be covered in order to allow this project to continue until the next harvest in December 2003. The health and water/sanitation components can partly be covered through non-earmarked contributions. However, support for the cash for work intervention in South Wollo has been disappointing with only four months of funding secured so far. If the programme is not financed beyond its fourth month, the responsibility for relief response in the concerned kebeles would have to be handed back to DPPC at a time of their foreseen maximum stress. This could lead to the non-targeting of beneficiaries and result in accelerated household instability, possible abnormal migration, malnutrition, increased morbidity and, in extremis, mortalities. The trust and working relationship between the Red Cross movement (and the Ethiopian Red Cross in particular) and the Government at both central and local levels as well as with the local communities could be severely compromised as well.*

### **Operational Developments**

The Ethiopian Red Cross Society (ERCS) and the International Federation, co-ordinating closely with the governmental Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (DPPC) and the UN and other humanitarian actors and agencies, have launched an appeal in November 2002 to set up an assistance program in South Wollo and West Hareghe, Ethiopia in response to the drought affecting the country.

The intervention initially foresaw a cash for work component in Kutaber and Ambassel woredas in South Wollo, Amhara Region for a total of nine months targeting a total of 45,000 particularly vulnerable people who depend on the mid-year belg harvest. Furthermore, the ERCS and the Federation planned to supply 50,000 beneficiaries in West Harerghe, Oromiya Region with general food rations and an additional particularly vulnerable 25,000 beneficiaries with supplementary dry rations targeting mid- and lowland populations. The ERCS/International Federation operation also comprises health and water/sanitation components.

The current assistance is provided on the basis of the multi-agency meher assessment carried out in November 2002. Of the 14.5 million drought-affected people in 2003, 11.3 million require immediate food assistance and the rest remain under close monitoring. These figures are based on the assumption that the 2003 belg season will be normal. Actual food needs are to be determined throughout the course of 2003. A current on-going re-assessment of food needs by the Government of Ethiopia (GoE) for 2003 is expected to result in a further increase in beneficiary numbers. It is estimated that some of the three million Ethiopians needing close monitoring will shift to the category of population in immediate need for assistance if the belg rains fail. The Red Cross is prepared to react on this possible further increase in needs. Precise information on the current belg season as well as its implication on the relief operation will be provided in the next operations up-date.

During the reporting period different components of the appeal have been adjusted in order to respond to increased needs as well as react to changed conditions on the ground. Specifically, the following changes occurred:

### **West Harerghe, Doba woreda**

Initially, the Red Cross response focused on 50,000 beneficiaries in West Harerghe. After streamlining with other humanitarian actors in the weeks following the appeal, it was decided that the Red Cross response would only cover Doba woreda, which was not assisted by any other agency apart from DPPC. Only the 21 kebeles in the lowland part of the woreda were targeted as these were the most affected. However, as the planned support by the DPPC to those kebeles not covered by the ERCS/IFRC did not materialize, the ERCS/IFRC agreed to provide food rations to beneficiaries in all 33 kebeles of Doba woreda from March 2003 onwards, including highland and midland kebeles. Furthermore, the number of beneficiaries for supplementary food distributions had to be reduced according to the needs of Doba woreda only.

### **General Food Rations**

- Distribution of general food rations (15 kg maize, 1.5 kg lentils, 0.5 litres vegetable oil per beneficiary) to 50,000 beneficiaries in January and February 2003 (21 kebeles).
- Increase to 64,400 beneficiaries for the period March and April 2003 (33 kebeles).
- Further increase to 82,900 beneficiaries planned from May 2003 onwards. This number is pending official notification of the Government of Ethiopia's (DPPC) results of the re-assessment of needs.

### **Supplementary Food Rations**

- Distribution of 11,600 supplementary food rations (4.5 kg corn-soya-blend, CSB, per beneficiary) in a blanket coverage to children under 5 years of age, pregnant and lactating women, elderly out of the recipients of general food rations from January to March 2003
- Distribution of approximately 15,000 supplementary food rations in targeted coverage of malnourished children under 5 years of age, pregnant and lactating women, elderly as well as chronically ill persons from April 2003 onwards.

### **Food for work**

Currently Employment Generation Schemes (EGS) projects are prepared by the ERCS in close cooperation with the woreda administration and respective technical departments. It is planned to change from gratuitous food distributions to food for work (and possible cash for work at a later stage) in order to establish a link of relief and development activities. This will be part of the revision of the appeal presented with the next operations up-date.

### **Seeds Distributions**

In order to complement the ERCS' and International Federation intervention outlined in the appeal, an additional proposal for the provision of seeds and fertilizers was developed in January 2003 to enable farmers to re-invest in agricultural production. This proposal has been supported by the Swedish Red Cross. In total 43.5 MT of maize and 99.4 MT of sorghum seeds, as well as 60 MT of DAP and 40 MT of UREA fertilizers

are currently distributed to farmers in Doba woreda. Purchase orders for 38.5 MT wheat and 10 MT haricot bean seeds have been placed to have these available for the meher planting season from June onwards.

### **South Wollo, Kutaber and Ambassel woreda**

- Distribution of cash for work as part of an employment generation scheme to 45,500 beneficiaries in January 2003.
- Increase to 48,520 beneficiaries of cash for work component from February 2003 onwards.
- Funding for cash for work currently secured for four months only, planned for at least eight months.

The programme addresses short term food needs through providing cash for food purchase as well as allowing households to restore assets lost such as livestock. The work element of the programme consists of community based projects such as terracing to prevent soil erosion as well as spring water protection and harnessing. An increase in beneficiary numbers was agreed on from February onwards in order to cover the total population of Kutaber woreda requiring assistance.

### **Red Cross Objectives and Related Activities**

#### **Food component**

**Objective 1:** To provide general food rations for 64,400 (82,900 estimated from May to December 2003) people and supplementary food for 15,000 of the most vulnerable segments of the population in West Harerge to ensure their livelihood until the next harvest.

- **Activity 1:** Targeting of beneficiaries.

This activity as described in detail in the last up-date is continuously on-going due to the increase in beneficiary numbers and monthly revision of existing beneficiary needs.

- **Activity 2:** Purchase, transportation, warehousing and distribution of 15,693 MT of maize, lentils, oil and supplementary food.

A total of 7,893 MT of food has been donated so far in response to the appeal, leaving 7,800 MT to be covered. The distribution system is running to allow regular distributions on a monthly basis. Purchase and transportation are co-ordinated by ERCS HQ and the IFRC Logistics delegate in the country. The goods are stored in the main ERCS warehouse in Hirma and transported to the three distribution sites regularly. Although the disadvantages of having only three distributions sites are obvious, the difficult and for most parts inaccessible terrain does not allow the distribution sites to be moved further inland. However, for Debesso distribution site a new location off the main road has been found, Wojin, which reduces the walking distance for the beneficiaries for at least one hour. In order to allow stockpiling in preparation for the meher rainy season starting (hopefully) in June rubhalls will be erected at the distribution sites within the next month.

#### **Cash for work component**

**Objective 2:** To provide cash for **35,000** people in Ambassel and **13,520** people in Kutaber woredas of South Wollo, based on Employment Generation Schemes (EGS), with the aim of securing the livelihood of the farmers and their families and to stimulate their purchasing power through the injection of cash on the local market. Activities include water spring protection, latrine construction, terracing, construction of check dams and roads and footpath maintenance (aimed at environmental improvement), and soil and water conservation.

First of all the implemented activities provide cash to 48 520 people to at least the value of gratuitous relief which might otherwise have been offered and, in so doing, prevent hunger, the destruction of household assets as well as the depletion of communal assets and the natural resource base. The outputs will build and maintain community assets, which will improve soil fertility (bunds etc), provide improved market integration (roads/footpaths), and aid soil and water conservation (re-forestation etc). Furthermore, the money earned enables some households to purchase productive assets and so rebuild their economic sustainability.

Calculation of cash for work payments and gratuitous relief are based upon a monthly ration of free food aid per beneficiary as follows:

Maize	15 kg/person	@ <b>Birr 200/Q<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Birr 30</b>
Beans/lentils	1.5 kg/person	@ <b>Birr 200/Q</b>	<b>Birr 3</b>
Oil	0.5 litre/person	@ <b>Birr 10/litre</b>	<b>Birr 5</b>
			<b>Birr 38/person/month</b>
			<b>=====</b>

The official GoE labour wage rate for an area such as Ambassel/Kutaber is **Birr 7.6/day**. The number of CfW working days allocated per person per month is **5** (in order to enable their release for normal farming and other activities). The wage thus corresponds with the cost of one month's ration.

Gratuitous food aid allows for a maximum of **5** persons per family and accordingly **5** persons per family are allowed to work on the programme. The maximum value of GR or CfW is thus: 5 x **Birr 38 = Birr 190/family/month**. The CfW budget allows for up to 20% of the beneficiaries to be classed as 'social' (or particularly vulnerable) cases and so receive additional relief, although the allocation to this sector is currently only 10% in Ambassel and Kutaber.

While ERCS/IFRC manages the financial aspects of the programme and monitors progress and adherence to plan, the Woreda administration is responsible for technical design and implementation of the projects within the GoE Policy Framework and agreed payment scales. Geographic intervention is designated by the GoE Disaster Prevention Unit.

Regarding cash for work, some concerns exist as to the availability of food and the risk associated with the use of cash transfer as a means of intervention. The main concern is whether the injection of cash could result in price inflation. Discussions suggest that traders have stocks from the previous years surplus. The ERCS has put into place a market price monitoring system in order to monitor price fluctuations. It should also be noted that food distributions are undertaken by the DPPC in adjacent woredas allowing for exchange of cash for food commodities and reducing the risk of food price inflation.

Table 2. Comparison of advantages and disadvantages of cash transfers:

<b>Advantages of Cash interventions</b>	<b>Disadvantages of Cash interventions</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fungible (providing choice)</li> <li>• Low Distribution costs</li> <li>• Shorter response time</li> <li>• Flexible</li> <li>• Regeneration of local economy</li> <li>• Cost-effective beneficiaries receive greater proportion of donated money</li> <li>• Can improve status of women and marginalised groups</li> <li>• Can reduce social disruption as a result of economic migration</li> <li>• Agricultural production incentive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversion (Fuelling conflict)</li> <li>• Inflationary pressure</li> <li>• May be abused e.g. purchase of alcohol/cigarettes</li> <li>• May not address the objectives of programme</li> <li>• Only of use in cash economies</li> <li>• Higher security risk</li> <li>• Women may not retain control over income</li> <li>• Difficult to target individuals when compared to food</li> </ul>

### Monitoring

Both the food and the cash for work component require close monitoring of the impact of food/cash distributions on household economy, local market behaviour as well as on the nutritional status of the beneficiaries. Setting up and streamlining appropriate monitoring mechanisms has been one of the major activities implemented during the reporting period.

With a view to supporting the cash for work approach rather than gratuitous relief, the Red Cross must ensure that it does not create distress through a 'cash-based dogma'. Such distress can only be avoided by very close monitoring of the market (price in particular but also supply) through weekly market price analysis and close

<sup>1</sup>Q = Quintal = 100 kg.

attention to supply reports. Due to previous experience with cash for work based interventions, the ERCS South Wollo branch in Dessie is well equipped with experienced staff to allow close monitoring of market supply and price development. By now, the monitoring system is set up and well functioning. There have been no reports on price inflation or lack of supplies on the markets, which would put the cash for work approach into question.

As far as monitoring of the nutritional status of the population – particularly in Doba woreda, West Harerghe is concerned, the nutrition survey implemented during the reporting period provided helpful insight into the appropriate system to be set up. The process has identified the important initial steps that will lead to developing the capacity of the ERCS to successfully carry out nutrition surveillance in the future as well as simultaneously developing technical capabilities to monitor and evaluate program performance.

The food distributions are monitored at the distribution sites and at household level to ensure that all intended beneficiaries receive their ration. Monitoring at household level looks into the use of distributed food; the number of meals consumed per day; the staple food consumed, the assets available at the respective households and the coping strategies. Furthermore, ERCS West Harerghe branch includes data on these distributions in their regular monthly narrative and financial reporting.

Two ERCS volunteers per kebele monitor the nutritional status of the beneficiaries in their respective kebeles on a monthly basis. In order to strengthen the links between the community level and the government health system, ten health staff (health assistants) based at five health posts in Doba woreda will collect and check the monthly data. Close co-operation and co-ordination will be established between these health staff, the volunteer team leader who is equally health staff based in Doba town and the ERCS Field Officer based in ERCS West Hareghe branch in Asebe Teferi. Several additional training courses are planned for ERCS volunteers and government health staff for the coming months. Thereby, the relief operation can contribute to improve the regular monitoring and data collection of the nutritional status of Doba woreda population and to improve the outreach activities of the health posts by establishing better links between communities and the government health system.

## **Health**

All objectives and activities regarding the health component remain valid. During the reporting period, particular focus has been placed on volunteer training and mobilisation. In both project areas 2 health volunteers per kebele have received initial basic training in Community Based First Aid, PHAST and nutrition. These volunteers have begun to provide health education in the communities. In order to allow the collection of baseline nutrition data in the project areas and in preparation for the nutrition survey implemented in February and March 2003, the volunteers have conducted growth monitoring in January and February 2003.

## **Nutrition survey**

A nutrition survey was conducted in both project areas during February and March 2003. The survey had the following objectives:

- To measure the prevalence of acute malnutrition of children under 5 years of age.
- To create a baseline set of nutritional data for future comparison in the respective woredas.
- To collect baseline household information on mortality, morbidity and food security and recommend the method as well as indicators for subsequent food security monitoring.

The report of the results for both project areas is currently prepared and the results for South Wollo will be published soon. However, for West Hareghe it was found out at a later stage, that certain methodological procedures in the selection of households and therefore children in the highland areas had been compromised. Therefore it had to be questioned whether the results were truly representative of the nutritional status of the area surveyed. Although the results of the lowland area were higher than originally anticipated, 20% GAM, the results were deemed plausible and no significant errors or concerns regarding the methodology were observed at that time. Unfortunately, the concerns over methodological implementation for the second highland assessment could only lead to also question the validity of the lowland assessment. It was therefore necessary to repeat both surveys for West Harerghe to ensure the quality and credibility of results. The repeat survey will be implemented during April 2003 in order to publish the results and establish baseline data latest at the beginning of May 2003. A comprehensive report on the results of the survey in South Wollo as well as the repeat survey in West Hareghe will be published in the next operations up-date.

## Water and Sanitation

All objectives and activities remain valid. During the reporting period, the following activities have been implemented:

### South Wollo

A feasibility study for the construction of six hand-dug wells and 10 springs has been conducted in Ambassel and Kutaber by the ERCS water and sanitation engineer and branch and woreda staffs. In accordance with the results of the study, the design for the hand-dug wells (3 for Kutaber and 3 for Ambassel) and springs (3 for Kutaber and 7 for Ambassel) has been finalized. The ERCS South Wollo branch is following up on the construction work.

### West Harerghe

The design for the construction of 2 springs has been accomplished and the purchasing of construction material is under way. Two water committees composed of three women and four men have been established at both spring sites, Ifarahemeta and Urji Pas. The communities at each site have begun to collect stones for construction on cash for work basis.

A geophysical feasibility study has been agreed on between the ERCS and the West Harerghe Zonal Water Office and will be conducted soon for the construction of a borehole in Doba woreda.

### Outstanding needs

Donor support to the Federation appeal has been positive so far with regard to the gratuitous distribution component in West Harerghe. However, after another increase in beneficiary numbers a total of six months food needs or 7,800 MT are still to be covered in order to allow continuation of this project until the next harvest in December 2003. The health and water/sanitation components can partly be covered through non-earmarked contributions.

However, support for the cash for work intervention in South Wollo has been disappointing with only four months of funding secured so far. If the programme is not financed beyond its fourth month, the responsibility for relief response in the concerned kebeles would have to be handed back to DPPC at a time of their foreseen maximum stress. This could lead to the non-targeting of beneficiaries and result in accelerated household instability, possible abnormal migration, malnutrition, increased morbidity and, in extremis, mortalities. The trust and working relationship between the Red Cross movement (and the Ethiopian Red Cross in particular) and the GoE at both central and local levels as well as with the local communities could be severely compromised.

In addition to this, with the proven success of cash-based EGS intervention in the 2001 intervention, it would seem to be a retrograde step to revert to gratuitous relief or even FFW which would not lead to longer term solution of recurrent drought and structural resource poverty in the intervention area and thus Red Cross rejection of these options.

For further details please contact:

- (for operational issues): Cecilia Brunnstrom, Head of Delegation; phone: +251 1 51 45 71; e-mail: [ifrcet01@ifrc.org](mailto:ifrcet01@ifrc.org)
- Josse Gillijns, Federation Desk Officer, Phone: 41 22 730 4224; Fax: 41 22 733 0395; email: [josse.gillijns@ifrc.org](mailto:josse.gillijns@ifrc.org).

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