

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

ERITREA: IMPROVING FOOD SECURITY

11 March 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

Appeal no. 33/02

Launched on 3 December, 2002 for CHF 7,865,000 (USD 5,282,274 or EUR 5,322,949) to assist 41,500 beneficiaries for nine months.

Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) allocated: CHF 15,000

Beneficiaries: 41,500

"At a glance"

Appeal coverage: 19.9%

Related Appeals: 2003 Annual Appeal for Eritrea (01.04/2003)

Outstanding needs: CHF 6,302,609

Summary: An initial slow donor response to this appeal caused a delay in starting implementation of the operation and planned activities, but several pledges made over recent weeks have enabled procurement to begin of an additional three months of food for 25,000 people. Further support and contributions are needed to ensure food for the planned case load (41,500 people) for the total duration of the programme period (9 months), and for the activities in the health, water and sanitation sector to move ahead as planned.

Operational Developments

Rainfall has been very poor in Eritrea since October 2001 resulting in a series of poor agricultural seasons. The limited availability of drinking water has negatively affected the health and well-being of people and animals. The current drought could not have come at a worse time. Eritrea has just started to recover from a devastating border war, a large number of people are still displaced and thousands of soldiers are still to be demobilized. In its Consolidated Interagency Appeal for Eritrea the UN estimated that 2.3 million people were in need of assistance. Of these, 1.4 million are directly affected by the drought due to cereal and water shortages.

The Red Cross Society of Eritrea (RCSE) and the Federation, coordinating closely with the governmental Eritrean Relief and Refugee Commission (ERREC), the ICRC, the UN and other humanitarian actors, have launched an appeal in December 2002 to set up an assistance programme in Hagaz, a sub-zoba in Anseba. The intervention includes free food distribution for 41,500 people, completed by a number of health and water and sanitation activities in the same region.

Despite a slow response to the appeal, preparations for the implementation of the programme were undertaken. The first distribution of a general ration should start in the first half of March, due to a limited response so far only 25,000 people will be targeted. The water trucking started on 21 February 2003, and in addition a number of water projects aimed at improving availability and quality of water for the community have been identified. These additional projects will be detailed in a revised appeal, which will be issued in a few weeks.

Convinced about the need to alleviate the strain on the population in the drought prone areas the Federation reiterates its appeal for resources to fully implement the planned programme.

Update on the Water/Sanitation situation

The water table has fallen dramatically, in some cases falling as much as 10 meters below the pumping level. Many communities are responding by deepening wells, trekking long distances for water and moving their animals to non-traditional grazing areas in search of water and fodder.

Livestock losses due to starvation have been reported to be at around 10% in most areas, and up to 20% percent in others. Only in Northern Red Sea Zone, UNICEF is reporting approximately 90,000 livestock deaths, more than 5% of the zonal herd. Further more, roughly 80 % of livestock are at risk of death by disease and starvation. Terms of trade for pastoralists are deteriorating and this deterioration is ruinous for those that must purchase their food staples in the marketplace and for those whose income depends on livestock.

Update on the Agricultural situation

Shortage of labor is another hampering factor related to agricultural produce. Due to the fact that a large portion of the labor force is being mobilized to undertake national service, the capacity within the agriculture sector is severely limited with implications for the food security.

Update on the Health Situation

One of the most dominant health problems in the country is malnutrition and related diseases. According to surveys made recently 15 to 20 % of children under 5 years (at least 88,000 children of those surveyed) are currently malnourished and 10,000 are severely malnourished, requiring immediate nutritional support, according to FEWS.

Coordination

The Government of Eritrea has formed a new National Drought Coordinating Committee with the task to coordinate the activities of all governmental and non-governmental agencies and organizations engaged in relief work related to the drought. This coordinating committee has commenced its work in January 2003 and is chaired by the Ministry of Labour and Human Welfare whereas other members are Ministry of Health and the Head of Macropolicy and International Co-operation.

Within the Red Cross a taskforce comprising senior staff of the RCSE and Federation delegates has been created. The taskforce meets weekly and is making all operational decisions related to the drought programme.

Red Cross Objectives and Related Activities ●

Food component

Objective 1: To provide general food rations for 9 months for an average of 41,500 people to ensure their livelihood until the next harvest (November 2003).

Activity 1: Targeting of beneficiaries

The beneficiaries for the food distribution are identified by the local community council, consisting of village representatives. The Red Cross is monitoring the selection process through its branch office staff assisted by staff from the headquarters in Asmara.

Due to a limited response, so far, the number of beneficiaries will be limited to 25,000 people. However, all attempts will be made to support the original number of 41,500 people appealed for in December 2002.

Activity 2: Purchase, transport, storage and distribute 6,387 MT of grain, pulses, oil.

Through standard Federation tendering procedures, and with the support of the regional Logistics Unit in Nairobi, the best bids for these food commodities have been selected. As a result, the first procurement of food items have been made, consisting of 750 MT of wheat, 60 MT of lentils and 45,000 liters of sunflower oil. These food commodities are covering the needs of 25,000 beneficiaries for a period of two months. The food is currently being shipped. However, to ensure a first distribution in March, arrangements are being made with the Eritrean Grain Board to borrow up to 750 MT of their wheat.

Upon arrival of the food in Massawa port, the trucks of the RCSE take care of the in-country transport. The RCSE volunteers from Keren branch, in coordination with the community councils, will handle the food distribution to the beneficiaries. The training for these volunteers will take place in early March. The RCSE headquarters and Federation staff will support the branch during the distribution process when necessary.

Activity 3: Monitor the impact of food distribution on market behavior and household economy.

Preparations are made to monitor the prices of key food and non-food commodities in the market in the region where the distribution will take place. Regular market survey will allow detecting whether the food distribution influences the local market.

Activity 4: Monitor the nutritional status of the severely affected population who benefit from general food distribution by growth monitoring through trained outreach RCSE volunteers.

A nutritional survey of children under five years is planned for March in Hagaz region, in connection with the first food distribution.

Health, water and sanitation

Health

Objective 1: To strengthen the provision of health services through outreach programs, volunteer mobilization and training, and provision of an integrated health sanitation education.

No activities have yet taken place within the health sector.

Water and Sanitation

Objective 1: To reduce water stress by provision of safe water supply through water trucking.

Activity 1: Improve the access to potable water through water trucking for initial six months for a population of 10,000 persons. In the second phase, improve the supply of water through the rehabilitation of water points and improve the quality of existing water sources.

Water trucking for 2,000 beneficiaries in Shebek village in Hagaz sub-zoba started in the second half of February. Emergency water storage and distribution equipment has been ordered and received through the regional Health and Care Unit in Nairobi. The administration and population of the village surrounding Shebek have requested a similar support in water trucking. Providing sufficient funds are available, this emergency activity will be extended to reach more beneficiaries.

Objective 2: Improving the sanitation behavior of the population.

No activities have started in the sanitation sector.

Advocacy

Objective 1: Ensure that the needs and rights of the most vulnerable in relation to the drought situation are secured.

Activity 1: Advocate on behalf of the most vulnerable to influence policy, commitment and allocation of resources by government, donors and other agencies.

Eritrea and the plight of its people affected by the drought, is not well known outside of the country. In an attempt to improve the awareness of what is going on in Eritrea a number of human interest stories have been written by a journalist contracted by the Red Cross. The stories are available on the Federation's website. Furthermore, a professional photographer under Red Cross contract will arrive end March with the same objective of raising awareness of the precarious situation in Eritrea. In due course, his pictures will be made available on the Federation's website.

Activity 2: Monitor closely the development of the food security situation in the country.

The National Drought Coordinating Committee is firmly in charge of the coordination of all relief activities related to the current drought. The RCSE and Federation are ensuring to be involved in different fora and working groups monitoring the development of the food security situation in the country, e.g. sectoral working groups within water and sanitation, health and nutrition and food security.

To keep donor and international partners up to date in regular but informal way, a special section has been created on the Federation Disaster Management Information System (DMIS) website.

Activity 3: Collect primary data in the areas of health, nutrition and water/sanitation from high-risk areas in order to monitor and ensure that the people most in need will be attended timely.

Only preparatory work has been done so far. Actual data collection has not yet started.

RCSE Capacity Building

Objective 1: To strengthen the capacity of the RCSE headquarters and the Anseba branch in disaster preparedness and disaster management operations. Although several RCSE staff and volunteers have previous disaster response experience, the scope of this proposed relief operation requires the building of further knowledge and skills. Particularly before the start up of the action, RCSE staff and volunteers will receive extensive training and coaching.

Activity 1: Undertake dissemination sessions on Red Cross principles and relief policies for involved staff and volunteers. The need to improve the knowledge of Red Cross policies and capacities to fully implement a relief operation according to Red Cross standards has to be ensured, particularly with the employment of temporary staff and the involvement of additional volunteers.

This activity is planned for March prior to the first distribution.

Activity 2: Increase the capacity of RCSE staff and volunteers in areas of relief and logistics.

The Federation recruited a logistics and relief delegate who arrived mid January in Asmara. He is working with staff of the RCSE on the procurement of food and preparations of food distribution.

Activity 3: Increase the capacity of RCSE staff and volunteers in areas of finance and narrative reporting.

A delegate was recruited to support the RCSE with the reporting, administration and finance, related to the drought operation. He arrived at the end of January and is working in cooperation with the Head of the finance department of the RCSE.

Activity 4: Increase the capacity of RCSE staff and volunteers in participatory community activities in the areas of PHAST/ARCHI, support the development of the water and sanitation unit and their emergency response capacity.

A water and sanitation delegate arrived in the beginning of January. He started with the identification of additional projects to improve the availability and quality of water in Hagaz. The selection of his counterpart has been delayed due to the unavailability of qualified and experienced persons.

Activity 5: Support networking with relevant Government, UN and humanitarian partners.

The RCSE and Federation are ensuring to be included in all relevant fora and working groups dealing with the current drought.

Outstanding needs

Donor support to this appeal was slow to start, but several pledges made over recent weeks have allowed the start of procurement of an additional three months of food for 25,000 people. More contributions are needed to ensure food for the planned case load (41,500 people) for the total duration of the programme period (9 months) and for the activities in the health, water and sanitation sector.

For further details please contact: Josse Gillijns, Federation Desk Officer, Phone: 41 22 730 4224; Fax: 41 22 733 0395; email: josse.gillijns@ifrc.org.

All International Federation Assistance 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.

In line with the Minimum Reporting Standards, the first operations update on this appeal will be issued within 30-days of the launch and the second will be issued over the course of the operation; a final narrative and financial report will be issued no later than 90 days after the end of the operation.

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 website.

For support to or 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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Eritrea food security

ANNEX 1

APPEAL No. 33/2002**PLEDGES RECEIVED**

11.03.2003

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
CASH						
REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->				7'865'000		TOTAL COVERAGE 19.9%
BRITISH RC		25'000	GBP	57'708	16.12.2002	
DANISH - RC		462'500	DKK	90'650	27.01.2003	
FINNISH RC		150'000	EUR	219'960	19.12.2002	RELIEF ITEMS + TRANSPORT
INDONESIA - COMPANY		10'000	USD	13'905	30.01.2003	
JAPAN RC		160'500	USD	234'683	16.12.2002	
KUWAIT - RC		100'000	USD	135'750	04.02.2003	
NETHERLANDS - GOVT		278'075	EUR	404'738	23.01.2003	FOOD DISTRIBUTION
SWEDISH GOV'T		300'000	SEK	48'420	17.12.2002	
SWEDISH RC		500'000	SEK	80'700	17.12.2002	
SWEDISH - GOVT		500'000	SEK	79'500	16.01.2003	
SWISS - GOVT/RC				5'038	08.01.2003	
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				1'371'052	CHF	17.4%

KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL)

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SWISS - GOVT/RC				77'500	08.01.2003	
DENMARK	DELEGATE(S)			38'275		
SWEDEN	DELEGATE(S)			36'796		
SWITZERLAND	DELEGATE(S)			38'768		
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES				191'339	CHF	2.4%

ADDITIONAL TO APPEAL BUDGET

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED				0	CHF	

