

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

BURKINA FASO, MALI, MAURITANIA AND NIGER: FOOD INSECURITY

25 October 2005

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 over 181 countries.

In Brief

Appeal No. 05EA015; Operations Update no. 2; Period covered: 9 September to 22 October, 2005; Appeal coverage: 55.7%; ([click here to go directly to the attached Contributions List, also available on the website](#)).

Appeal history:

- Emergency Appeal launched on 22 July 2005 http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.pl?05/05EA015.pdf for CHF 18,243,483 (USD 14,211,607 or EUR 11,642,754) in cash, kind or services to assist 44,400 families (some 220,000 beneficiaries) in four countries¹ for six months (until 22 January 2006).
- A revised Plan of Action was submitted on 8 August 2005, specifying assistance to 76,067 families or 532,000 beneficiaries over the next six month period. Phase II activities (22 October 2005 to 22 January 2006) are currently being finalised.
- Operation Update no.1 dated 27 Aug. 2005 http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.pl?05/05EA01501.pdf
- Fact Sheet no. 1 dated 14 Sep. 2005 http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.pl?05/05EA015OpsFact01.pdf
- Fact Sheet no.2 dated 24 Oct. 2005 http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.pl?05/05EA015OpsFact02.pdf
- Disaster Relief Emergency Funds (DREF) allocated: CHF 280,000. Funds have been reimbursed.

Outstanding needs: CHF 8,082,279 (EUR 5,136,717)

Related Emergency or Annual Appeals: N/A



Operational Summary: Three months after the launch of the Appeal, the Federation along with French, Spanish and Qatari RC have assisted 35,234 children under five and their families (approximately 211,404 beneficiaries²) through their supplementary feeding programmes for moderately malnourished children in Niger. By mid-October, children were being discharged from the programme and the number of new referrals has gradually been diminishing. A final family protection ration is being provided upon discharge.

The Federation has completed the two rounds of general food distribution in Tillabéri (Fillingué / Abala) and Agadez Provinces in Niger as planned, and in line with the onset of the current harvesting season. Food distributions assisted over 23,673 households per round (130,308 beneficiaries) in often remote pastoralist communities. Plans for a cash distribution project in the Tanout area (Zinder Province) are well advanced and will be getting underway within the next weeks.

¹ For more about the national societies responding to this crisis, please click on links below:

Red Cross Society of Niger ó <http://www.ifrc.org/where/country/cn6.asp?countryid=127>

Mauritanian Red Crescent - <http://www.ifrc.org/where/country/cn6.asp?countryid=114>

Mali Red Cross - <http://www.ifrc.org/where/country/cn6.asp?countryid=112>

Burkinabe Red Cross Society - <http://www.ifrc.org/where/country/cn6.asp?countryid=181>

Federation action in Mali and Burkina Faso has concentrated on providing funding and technical support. In Mali, a first round of food distributions has reached 2,846 households (or approximately 17,076 beneficiaries) with two more rounds planned before the end of the year. The programme is being coordinated by Spanish Red Cross with the participation of Mali Red Cross volunteers and support from four Federation staff members – most of whom are part of the Regional Disaster Response Team. In Burkina Faso, the Federation has provided EUR 99,000 out of a budgeted EUR 275,000 from the Appeal in support of National Society food distributions. To date, distribution has reached 2,902 households (approximately 17,412 beneficiaries) out of a planned 23,280 HH. Based on a proposal developed by an RDRT Health member temporarily based in Mauritania, the Federation is intending to provide financial support to the cholera response in this country.

Overall, activities undertaken as part of the Appeal have reached more than 376,000 beneficiaries to date.

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Background

The 2004-2005 harvest in the Sahel region was seriously affected by the worst locust invasion in twenty years, compounded by low rainfalls. Crops were greatly reduced, as was the availability of grazing land in pastoralist areas. This resulted in serious food shortages in a region already suffering from chronic malnutrition and endemic poverty. The 'lean' period or 'soudure', which occurs between April and October - when the harvest from the previous year has been exhausted and the current year's production is not yet ready - is always difficult in the Sahel, and has proved particularly lengthy over this past season, leading to the current food security crisis.

Indeed, the 'normal' degree of vulnerability is such that people cannot cope with shocks. For example, Niger has the second-highest under-five mortality rate in the world (85.8/00 live births³) and only 46% of the population has access to potable water. Family food reserves in the most affected areas were all but depleted by July, cereal prices had sky-rocketed and cash reserves were non-existent. Coping mechanisms among agro-pastoralist and pastoralist communities have included foraging for wild plants (as the main source of food), selling off basic household goods, the exodus of households or breadwinners across international borders in search of new livelihood, as well as depletion of valuable livestock in order to survive.

Of the four countries suffering from food insecurity, Niger has been the most affected – with over 2.6 million people estimated to have been at risk. Although the general situation in Mali, Burkina Faso and Mauritania is broadly similar to that in Niger, it is on a smaller, more localized scale. According to WFP, 1 million Burkinabe were in need of food assistance, having lost up to 90% of their harvest and resorting to selling up to 75% of their cattle. In Mali, where 1.2 million people were considered at risk, the price of animals had plummeted, while the

² Unless exact beneficiary numbers are available, a multiplier of six has been used as the average number of family members per household.

³ According to UNDP's Global Report on Human Development (2005)

price of grain had more than doubled. However government interventions early on, distributing free or subsidized food in the most affected areas of Mali and Burkina Faso, appear to have limited the overall impact of food shortages in these countries.

Despite estimations that this year's harvest is 'normal', there are indications that not all areas have benefited equally and that potential pockets of food insecurity may re-emerge during next year's 'soudure'. The problem may be compounded by the fact that many families have had to deplete their resources in order to survive the current year, leading to high levels of indebtedness - with the most vulnerable families sinking ever deeper into a perennial vicious cycle: selling their crops at low prices to repay debts, and buying again in order to survive, when need is greatest and prices have risen to their highest levels.

The Red Cross Movement's response to the food crisis in Sahel has focused primarily on Niger, with on-going assistance in the form of human resources and funding being provided to food distribution operations in Mali and Burkina Faso. The Federation has anticipated reaching over 500,000 people overall through its various programmes within the Appeal. As of mid-October, relief distribution in Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso had reached approximately 164,796 beneficiaries, while the supplementary food programmes in Niger have assisted some 35,234 children and their families – an estimated 211,404 beneficiaries. Overall, the Sahel Operation has provided assistance to over 376,000 beneficiaries to date.

Overall, there are still grave concerns for the longer-term impact of the 2004-2005 food crisis, given that the livelihoods of many - most especially in Niger - have been eroded by last year's crisis: people have had to liquidate their assets (in particular livestock) and have incurred significant debts. It is anticipated that this will impede their ability to reconstitute their households on an even economic footing and may well lead to an earlier than usual onset of the 'soudure'. FEWS is anticipating that the hunger season will begin in April 2006 - at least one month early.

Indeed, the 'real' impact of the food security operation is difficult to measure in countries such as these, where malnourishment is endemic and where food security issues are not only conjectural, but structural in nature – linked as they are to broader local and regional economic pressures, the impact of environmental degradation on agro-pastoralist lifestyles in the Sahel and the lack of education with its associated problems of malnutrition, lack of proper hygiene and poor health.

Looking ahead, the Federation is currently working on its longer-term strategy for Niger with a view to strengthening on-going National Society capacity, building on existing health initiatives to establish more solid community-based health activities, and integrating water and sanitation support. Given that much of the malnutrition encountered is rooted in problems of a structural nature, the Federation is seeking on-going donor support for integrated, practical and viable community based activities – most particularly in the health and WatSan sectors – in order to have a real and longer-lasting impact.

Operational Developments

In Niger, the focus of Phase 1 emergency activities (covering the period from end July to mid-October) has been three-fold:

- (1) Providing supplementary feeding to moderately malnourished children and their families, through the establishment of 56 CRENAM and mobile centres, which has benefited 35,234 children at 15 October – representing 147% of beneficiaries targeted by the Appeal.
- (2) Undertaking two rounds of general food distribution, in cooperation with WFP and the government of Niger, in Tillaberi (Filingue / Abala) and Agadez Provinces. Federation distributions have assisted over 130,000 beneficiaries in each of two rounds of commodity provision. The Federation contribution represents approximately 8% of all general food distribution undertaken by the humanitarian community as part of the food crisis operation.
- (3) Cash distribution in the Tanout area: A Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of Niger, the Niger RC and the Federation was signed on 20 October regarding the cash distribution project in Tanout. The Federation team has worked very hard to reach this mutually acceptable accord with the authorities without compromising the aims of the project and all parties are now fully on-side.

Despite some delays, the timing of the project is still considered to be appropriate, given that harvesting in the region in question will not be completed until the end of November.

With the onset of the 2005 harvest in mid-October, general food distribution in Niger was terminated as per agreement with the Government and WFP, so as not to impact on market prices. In general, food security conditions are seen to be improving across the country, as the harvesting season progresses. FEWS reports that staple food prices have decreased substantially and that livestock conditions have vastly improved – thus increasing pastoralists' ability to buy grain and consume milk. An analysis of prices shows steep decreases over the past five weeks, with millet prices close to the five-year average. There is now some concern that if prices fall too far, farmers will be unable to get a reasonable return on their crops and will have difficulties repaying their debts.

In Mali, the Federation has been providing financial and human resource support to the Mali RC and Spanish RC coordinated distribution activities. To date, a first round of distributions has been completed in the Tombouctou Region. Two more rounds are planned before the end of the year. In Burkina Faso, 2,902 households have been assisted in Oudalan, Soum and Seno Provinces. Due to lack of resources, actions undertaken in Mauritania under the current Appeal have been limited to financial support for a cholera response initiative.

Red Cross and Red Crescent Action - Objectives, Progress, Impact

Goal: Provide support to the affected Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies in order to decrease and further prevent vulnerability to food insecurity and malnutrition by immediately responding in the form of livelihood interventions for 76,571 families over a six-month period (as per revised Plan of Action of 8 August 2005).

Phase 1 (July-October 2005)

Objective 1 – General Food Distribution

Distribute a monthly general food ration to 532,000 people (76,067 families) in Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso and Mauritania (as per Objective 1 in revised Plan of Action of 8 August 2005).

Progress/Achievements

Burkina Faso:

To date, 2,902 households, or approximately 17,412 beneficiaries, have been assisted in Oudalan, Soum and Seno Provinces of Burkina Faso. As per initial assessments and the Federation Plan of Action of 8 August, it was foreseen that 23,280 households would form the caseload.

Although only 12.4% of projected households have been assisted, the Burkina Faso National Society and Federation still intend to pursue food distributions. Fortunately, the timeframe for action is not as strict as in Niger due to the lack of an official deadline and varying harvest times that allow for greater flexibility. The discrepancy, however, between planned and actual number of beneficiaries can be largely attributed to constraints such as the distances between the capital, Ouagadougou, and areas of operation making purchasing, transport and general programme implementation a challenge.

Reports from the field indicate that markets are plentiful and prices for millet, sorghum and wheat are coming down. The situation in the north-east of the country is, however, not as hopeful since the rains have been insufficient. There are still no reports of severe malnutrition and cases of moderate malnutrition are seen to be endemic rather than linked to the current situation.

The Federation is currently supporting the operation with EUR 275,000, from the Appeal – of which EUR 99,000 has been transferred to date.

Mali: A first round of distributions has been completed in the Tombouctou Region. Two more rounds are planned before the end of the year. To date, the distribution efforts have reached a total of 2,846 households (approximately 17,076 beneficiaries).

The current programme is being coordinated by the Spanish Red Cross with the participation of Mali Red Cross volunteers and support from four team members from the Regional Disaster Response Team. A vaccination program, also in the Tombouctou Region, is being carried out concurrently with the food distributions. A total of 535 children under five years of age have been vaccinated to date.

According to the most recent details received, with the first round of distributions completed in the Tombouctou Region, Mali and Spanish Red Cross delegates are reviewing results of the relief efforts and planning for additional rounds.

Mauritania: While a proposal was developed by an RDRT-Health Member temporarily based in Mauritania, it has been determined that the Federation does not currently have the finances or human resources available to undertake food assistance activities in the country.

Niger: The Federation has undertaken two rounds of general food distribution in Tillabéri and Agadez Provinces. Given the immense distances involved both within and between distribution areas, two logistical hubs were established for each distribution centre – one in Filingué and one in Agadez. A dedicated group of Niger RC volunteers were recruited and trained for the operation (130 in Tillabéri and 50 in Agadez), and teams worked in close cooperation with village heads and local leaders in identifying and confirming beneficiaries.

Rations were allocated as follows:

Rations for General Food Distribution - Niger			
No. of family members	Cereals	Pulses	Oil
1-4 people	25kg	7.5 kg	2.5 L
5-8 people	50kg	15 kg	5 L
9+ people	75kg	22.5 kg	7.5 L

First round distributions of 1,934.80 MT, which reached over 23,673 households were completed at mid-September. Second round distributions, targeting the same beneficiaries, with some adjustments to cover under-registrations and ‘gap’ villages, were completed by 15 October – slightly later than the original target date of 10 October, due primarily to commodity pipeline disruptions. The somewhat extended period was however not deemed to have adversely impacted local markets, given that targeted areas are chiefly pastoralist and, as such, have not overtly benefited from the current harvest.

Results to date from the general distribution are presented below:

First Round of Distribution (To end September 2005)						
Locality	Goods distributed⁴ (MT)				Beneficiaries	
	Cereals	Pulses	Oil	TOTAL	HH ⁵	Beneficiaries
Agadez	662.77	93.45	9.91	766.13	9,048	46,435
Tillabéri (Abala)	1064.40	80.04	24.23	1168.67	14,625	83,873
TOTAL	1727.17	173.49	34.14	1934.80	23,673	130,308

An internal transitional plan was recently developed by the Federation Relief Coordinator to guide the immediate post-distribution period at Filingue-Abala and Agadez. Currently, staff members are finalising distribution figures, ensuring final payments for commodity transporters and support personnel and monitoring the use of goods distributed as the harvest season gains momentum.

Eventually some relief delegates will be re-oriented toward supporting the distribution aspect of the supplementary feeding programme of the health sector. Broader relief-assistance, or livelihood, efforts will be determined according to the results of the assessments. Supporting the Relief Coordinator, a delegate from the Irish Red Cross and select Regional Disaster Response Team Members are already based at Agadez to pursue programme options.

⁴ NB: Does not include data for (gap) villages.

⁵ Households

Of primary importance is reinforcing the capacities of the local Red Cross Branches in the region. Volunteers and staff played a valuable role in the recent distributions but their expertise needs to be reinforced, broadened and working environments improved.

Impact:

- The general food distributions in Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali have assisted some 164,796 beneficiaries to date - of which 130,308 have received two rounds of commodities in Niger, and with activities still on-going in the other two countries. In Niger, field delegates report that beneficiaries were satisfied with the process, as per the preliminary results of monitoring. They felt well informed as to procedures, quantities, timing of distributions and criteria for beneficiary eligibility. The results of the monitoring are currently being compiled and will be shared with Niger RC, to form the basis for on-going training and marketing.
- In both regions, there was active participation of Niger RC volunteers, who had been trained in relief procedures at the start of the operation. The positive effect of this training and field experience was apparent in the improvements between first and second round distributions, which proceeded ever more smoothly. The two field offices will remain operational until the end of November, focusing on follow-up assessments – with particular emphasis on monitoring effects on pastoralist communities - to feed into the transition plan, which is currently being elaborated.
- RDRT resources proved invaluable in filling crucial gaps and providing the necessary continuity both in the field and at the operations base in Niamey.

A broader famine seems to have been averted and it is to be hoped that the timely distribution of food may have also had an effect in preventing a premature harvest and in enabling the most vulnerable to exercise somewhat more control over their management of this year's crops. These issues will be addressed in Recovery Phase programming

Constraints:

- Targeting and initial estimates of numbers of beneficiaries were based on government census figures. Beneficiary numbers were generally under-estimated, and members of semi-nomadic communities were not always included. Furthermore, relief teams identified a number of 'gap' villages, neighboring on target villages and with equivalent needs, which had not been included in the original lists. A degree of 'on-the-spot' diplomacy and flexibility was therefore demonstrated by Federation relief teams, in allocating rations and adapting second round distributions in order to meet the needs of the most vulnerable.
- The huge distances and remote nature of many villages created some logistical challenges in relief distribution. In Agadez Province, the team had originally planned to establish 4 or 5 distribution centres. However, this would have incurred costs for the beneficiaries, already sorely lacking in resources. Village by village distribution was therefore carried out – sometimes via donkey train, in order to reach the more inaccessible areas of the Bagzane Valley in particular. A one-off distribution was also carried out in Bilma / Djado, a two-day cross-desert journey from Agadez. Due to such logistical constraints and the limited amount of human resources initially available to the operation, beneficiary numbers are somewhat lower than anticipated in the Appeal.
- Lack of clearly identified team leaders in each of the hubs created some unnecessary confusion between logistics and relief requirements on the ground.
- The limited levels of literacy amongst volunteers, combined with some language constraints within the Federation team (lack of French and Hausa speakers), provided some challenges in effective communications. The RDRT members proved invaluable in this, as in many other respects.

Objective 2 – Health – Supplementary Feeding:

Provide emergency basic health services with emergency supplementary feeding for targeted vulnerable children under five to a total population of 24,500 people children in Niger (as per objective in revised Plan of Action of 8 August 2005)

Progress/Achievements

RCRC Supplementary Feeding Programmes (SFP) have been operational in Niger since 1 August in response to the present food crisis⁶. Some 56 feeding centres (CRENAMs⁷) plus mobile clinics have been established throughout the country, in cooperation with French, Spanish and Qatari RC. The primary focus of the operation has been to stabilise a target population of 24,500 moderately malnourished children less than five years of age in and around Maradi, Tahoua, Zinder, Tanout and Agadez – with over 35,000 children treated through the programme to date. The programme has also been supplying ‘protection’ rations to the families of the malnourished children – for a total estimated beneficiary population of 211,404 people. Acute cases of malnourishment are being referred to therapeutic feeding centres and RCRC operations are working in close coordination with MSF.

The rations for children consist of 3 kg UNIMIX and 0.3L of fortified oil, supplemented by the family protection ration of 25-30kg cereal, 5-6 kg beans and 2-3L oil. Child rations are distributed every two weeks and family rations once a month. Children are also monitored on a bi-weekly basis, to assess improvement in relation to established target weights and ensure onwards referral or discharge, as appropriate. Upon programme discharge, families receive a final protection ration. Overall, the number of discharged/recovered children is increasing – although the number of children entering SFP in Maradi continues to rise.

A 6,000MT donation⁸ of regionally procured food items intended to support supplementary feeding centre activities has been routed through the Birni N’ Konni warehousing hub, for onward distribution to Maradi, Tahoua and Zinder SFPs. The Federation has been sharing commodities with PNSs, most notably the French Red Cross, as stocks run out. With the slow arrival of Federation commodities, logistics and health staff have been coordinating closely with NS counterparts to finalise the division and transport of any incoming goods on a needs basis. All food stocks, with the exception of 400MT of beans, have now been received.

The table below lists principal results regarding supplementary feeding centres in Niger.

RC/RC Society	Report Date	Province	# Centres	Children Treated Cumulative	Current Caseload
Qatar ⁹	29 Sept.	Zinder + Tanout	1 (+19 mobile 1 for both)	3,896	TBC
Spain	15 Oct.	Maradi	9	10,049	8,012
France ¹⁰	28 Sept.	Zinder Agadez Arlit	15 6 4 + 2 mobile	11,720	TBC
Federation Direct	15 Oct.	Tahoua	18	9,569	6,012
GRAND TOTALS			56 + mobile	35,234	TBC

Efforts over the past weeks have focused on quality control of nutritional measurements and standardisation of reporting procedures, with increased emphasis being put on providing additional training to volunteers in best practices. Niger RC volunteers have played a key role in nutritional activities over the course of the emergency operation: over 200 have been trained in basic nutrition and the management of acute malnutrition, forming the core of all field activities.

At the same time, RCRC teams are increasing cooperation with local health structures, including provision of education and training, in order to facilitate the transfer of cases to state care and supervision. The reduction in the number of supplementary feeding centres and complete handover process is expected to last until the close of December 2005. Training and monitoring of services and health conditions will continue during the opening months of 2006.

⁶ French RC already had an established bilateral programme in Niger.

⁷ CRENAM: Centre de récupération nutritionnelle ambulatoire pour modérés.

⁸ Funded by British RC.

⁹ Up-to-date figures are not available at this time. Qatari RC is in the process of verifying and consolidating statistics.

¹⁰ French RC is currently verifying and consolidating its statistics.

The prospect of unreliable access to food, exacerbated by higher than average commodity prices and household debt, combined with limited public education, lack of preventive health measures and possible barriers to treatment within the state system, all suggest a fragile future. As a result, the Federation is looking to adopt a preventive stance, in order to be able to signal the emergence of another crisis should one appear and to support a response before conditions become as overwhelming as they were in 2005. RCRC assistance is expected to continue in the post-emergency phase, focusing on primary, community-based healthcare with water and sanitation support.

Impact

- At 15 October, over 35,234 children under five years of age had been treated through the RCRC supplementary feeding programme. This is 147% above the original target. New cases are still being admitted, although the overall caseload is diminishing at most centres, as greater numbers of recovered children are released from the programme. It is however to be noted that the number of children entering the programme in Maradi continues to rise.
- RC volunteers and Health Centre staff have received training in identification and management of moderate malnutrition, weight control standards and procedures and food distribution. Material for management of moderate malnutrition has been provided to health centres. Furthermore, vaccination coverage has been increased through the existing SFP programmes.

Constraints

- A higher than planned caseload has resulted in a very high workload for delegates and RC volunteers in SFPs. To ensure quality of programming, on-going training and supervision of volunteers must be ensured.
- Ensuring regular supply of food commodities for all supplementary feeding centres has been a challenge. It is worth noting that all aid agencies have been experiencing difficulties in procuring the necessary food commodities, due to on-supplied markets and increases in prices, both in Niger and more generally in the sub-region. The problem was recently compounded by newly adopted tonnage limits set by the Government at no more than 25MT per truck, with substantial fines being levied on additional tonnage - thereby potentially greatly increasing Federation operating costs. The Federation Logistics team has managed to obtain a one-off exemption for some SFP commodities in the pipeline.
- Malnutrition in Niger is not solely nor primarily food related. It is the subsequent and unavoidable result of the extreme poverty of the country, with lack of accessibility to potable water and highly inadequate sanitation forming the sorry cornerstones. Health care is out of the reach of most people and communicable diseases (e.g. diarrhoea) play a large part in malnutrition. As a result, emergency response through the provision of SFP is just one aspect to a more comprehensive approach for a lasting and sustainable solution to malnutrition. The Federation is therefore looking to develop longer-term, community-based health care and water and sanitation programming.

Objective 3 – Cash Distribution

Cash voucher distribution to 20,000 people (4,000 families) to targeted severely affected communities in Niger and Mali (*as per revised Plan of Action of 8 August, 2005*).

Progress / Achievements

The Federation's pilot cash distribution project in the Tanout area aims to assist families at a critical juncture in the yearly cycle, by providing them with the means to manage their immediate economic needs and reestablish their households on a more secure footing. An initial assessment undertaken in August and early September concluded that a cash distribution project would be beneficial given prevalent conditions and should therefore be undertaken by the Federation, with support from British and Swiss RC, in the Tanout area (north of Zinder) – recognized as having been seriously affected by the food insecurity crisis. The area was chosen in close consultation with the relevant governmental authorities and the Niger Red Cross Society. According to the latest

analysis of 29 September from the coordination cell of the government's Early Warning System (SAP¹¹), the area remains at risk. This year's harvest, which is not expected to be completed until late November / early December, is only moderate and the resources of most families have been depleted.

The amount of CFA 120,000 (approximately USD 200 / Euro 152) is to be distributed to 4,000 households in the most severely affected 90 villages in the Tanout area. The amount in question is the equivalent of CFA 3,000 / day for 40 days – the daily subsistence rate required to feed a family of seven. The aim is to provide the most vulnerable households with a one-off injection of cash, to enable them to get out of debt and / or buy food and other basic necessities, in response to emergency needs resulting from the current crisis. Pre-distribution sensitisation to best use of funds and post-distribution monitoring will form an integral part of the programme

The distribution is to take place on a village by village basis. All households in the selected villages - identified according to a GPS reference – will receive the same amount and funds will be disbursed to the female heads of each household. All beneficiary villages are beyond the 70% food production deficit threshold used by the governmental early warning body (SAP), as a location-crisis indicator. A team of more than 30 youth volunteers from the Niger Red Cross Society has been recruited, after an intensive process of screening. Volunteers have undergone training on census taking, distribution processes, communications, as well as RC principles – stressing in particular the neutrality, impartiality and independence of the Movement, as well as the humanitarian imperative guiding this project.

A Memorandum of Understanding between the government Red Cross Society of Niger and the Federation was signed on 20 October, and the programme is now moving ahead after some unexpected delays. The Ministry of Community Development will be providing 'awareness-raising' teams, working in parallel with the Federation and Tanout Branch Niger RC volunteer cash distribution teams, to promote wise use of the money.



A final census and GPS identification of village households began on 4 October and has been resumed after a short suspension. A total of 1,900 households, or approximately 12,000 beneficiaries, have already received their registration coupons, entitling them to subsequent receipt of funds. The process was done in close cooperation with heads of villages who were advised of the final stage registration by messenger-delivered letter the day before teams arrived.

The actual cash distribution is set to take place over the coming weeks. The Federation team has worked very hard to reach a mutually acceptable accord with the authorities without compromising the aims of the project and all parties are now fully on-side. The timing of the

project is still considered to be appropriate, given that harvesting in the region in question will not be completed until the end of November or early December.

Impact

- High visibility of RCRC with government authorities at the most senior levels, as well as with international organizations and NGOs. Good collaboration has been established at all levels (national, regional and local authorities).
- Motivated and trained group of over 30 volunteers within the Tanout Branch of Niger RC. Increased comprehension of the RCRC Movement and its principles.

Constraints

- Opposition to cash distribution in principle, on the part of some NGOs and international organizations, coupled with unclear support from the authorities led to a degree of confusion which came close to

¹¹ Système d'alerte précoce (SAP) de la Cellule de Crise Alimentaire du Gouvernement du Niger.

derailing the project. However, following extensive briefings, formal agreement with the relevant authorities has been reached, sanctioned at the highest levels and with full support from Niger RC.

- Lack of banking facilities in Tanout and the surrounding remote villages have led to some logistical and security challenges which are being addressed.

Objective 4 – Logistics, Administration, Telecoms

Immediately augment the existing RC/RC national societies with logistical, administrative and telecommunications infrastructure in the four different countries. (*Originally Objective 6 in the Appeal*)

Logistics have been concentrating on standardising tracking and reporting procedures in all Federation field operations: Fillingué, Birni N’Konni, Tahoua and Agadez. Most commodities through the pipeline from Nigeria have now been received and the situation is normalising. Ongoing food requirements for supplementary feeding are being assessed. The Federation has managed to negotiate limited exemptions from the newly adopted road tonnage limits but the current arrangement is a one-time deal for trucks already in the pipeline from Cotonou.

As of 10 October, the Federation fleet consists of 29 IFRC and 11 rented vehicles. Efforts over the past weeks have concentrated on reducing the number of rented vehicles, thereby dramatically reducing costs, and centralising fuel supply arrangements. Fleet operations have now been streamlined and standard operating procedures put into place at all operating bases. The Federation Fleet is currently being augmented with 15 motorbikes, primarily for use in the field, where road conditions make this a more viable and efficient transportation option. The number of rental vehicles continues to decrease, with substantial cost savings achieved.

Although not formally part of the Federation Appeal, significant attention has been focused on the actions and longer term feasibility of the Transport Support Unit (TSU) in Niger. Providing distribution transport services to the Federation and wider humanitarian community, the TSU has held a pivotal role in the current operational context – providing approximately three quarters of overall humanitarian fleet capacity for the relief operation. At the end of September, the Federation’s TSU had transported 4,191.4MT over 128,694 kms of often remote and difficult terrain to assist 1,408,455 beneficiaries. Stewarded by the Norwegian Red Cross and the Federation, discussions are now turning to the prospect of a permanent logistics base in Niger.

Impact

- The Federation logistics operation has provided support for the Federation operations, as well as PNS programmes, concentrating its activities on the general food distributions and supplementary feeding programmes. The enormous distances, compounded by an often unreliable supply chain, have posed some challenges. Despite this, beneficiary needs have been met in a timely and regular manner, and at times competing needs have been successfully balanced.

Constraints

- Receipt of commodities through the pipeline from Nigeria has been difficult with sometimes limited information being provided from freight forwarders on expected deliveries. Discussions were underway with freight forwarders and others to improve the current situation. Most goods have now been received.
- An additional difficulty has been the recently implemented limits on tonnage around Niamey. Shipments of a number of organisations, most notably the Federation, WFP and UNICEF, were blocked in transit due to the new regulations which levied fines of CFA10, 000 / ton on cargo exceeding 25MT. The Federation sought and received a temporary exemption for its food commodities on a one-off basis only.

PHASE II ACTIVITIES (20 October 2005 – 20 January 2006)

Objective 6: Livestock Interventions for Mali & Niger

Provide livestock support to 5,000 pastoralists in Niger and Mali (*Objective 5 in the Appeal*)

No activities planned at this moment.

Specific Objective 7: Cereal Bank Support for Mali & Niger (*New objective as from revised PoA*)

Placement of cereal banks in 250 of the worst affected communities in Mali and Niger

No activities planned at this moment.

Specific Objective 8: Post-Emergency Health for Mali & Niger (*New objective from revised PoA*)
Sustainable health intervention to promote the resilience and improve the longer-term health of those most vulnerable to this emergency response.

Over the past few weeks, Federation Health Delegates have held several meetings with Regional Health Directors and representatives of UNICEF and NGOs in order to come to a common understanding of the present crisis, the overall health sector situation and the future roles of each in the implementation of the National Protocol for the Management of Acute Malnutrition.¹² Different implementing Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies have established different designs for their supplementary feeding programmes. These differing models vary from partial integration into existing health services to almost completely independent, parallel systems. It has become clear that RCRC actors needed to develop a common vision and this has become a primary task of the last few weeks. Details below outline future steps and the manner it is hoped they can be implemented.

As a starting point, it is important to note that volunteers of the Niger Red Cross have played a key role in all nutritional activities. Over two hundred have been trained in basic nutrition and the management of acute malnutrition. They have been the basis of all Red Cross field activities.

The food and nutritional elements of the supplementary feeding programme are now more firmly established and the programme is moving towards a larger community health component, which would focus on the following components:

- (1) Provide assistance in the establishment of the National Protocol for the Treatment of Malnutrition, focusing primarily on training activities and the provision of basic materials to continue supplementary feeding activities.
- (2) Assist health authorities to:
 - Train and supervise community health workers in appropriate nutritional practices and promotion of good hygiene,
 - Implement communicable disease control measures through the CSI.
- (3) Networking for Emergency Preparedness
 - The newly-established network of CRENAM and community health workers should act not just for the management of acute malnutrition but as part of an early warning system of the government in case an impending food crisis. The task for the Red Cross Movement is, therefore:
 - To facilitate regular reporting to health authorities on nutritional status.
 - To support the government in the nutritional response to any emergency.
- (4) Capacity-building
 - Encourage the establishment of a system of counterparts from the Niger Red Cross in all areas of the current operation as quickly as possible.
 - Train key Red Cross personnel in our areas of intervention in monitoring and rapid evaluation of nutritional problems.
 - Re-enforce the capacity of the Red Cross, especially in the various regions of Niger, to assist the government in the control of communicable diseases.

In addition, a pilot Mobile Health Clinic project is being tested in the Tahoua area – with positive results to date. This would use existing logistics resources, coupled with Niger RC volunteers and local health authority staff, to

¹² The National Protocol for the Management of Acute Malnutrition was established by the Government of Niger with assistance from UNICEF and WHO and the collaboration of many local and international NGOs. Unfortunately, the final version of the document was only published in August by which time many actors, including Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, had already established supplementary feeding programmes as part of their emergency responses. The protocol establishes that the Government of Niger accepts the care of acutely malnourished children as its responsibility. In turn, external health actors are aiding the government in the acute stage of the current crisis, but it is recognised that longer term responsibilities remain with the Ministry of Health.

deliver much needed basic health care to remote communities with no access to even the most basic health services. Based on the outcome of this pilot project, a more formal programme proposal will be developed.

The basis of the overall programme, described above, is for six months and National Societies inclined toward longer term commitments in Niger may be interested in further planning to forward the elements or ideas listed.

Finally, following an assessment mission undertaken in September, a final report has also been received with recommendations on possible water and sanitation activities in Niger. Most are intended to complement current and planned health initiatives. The Federation is seeking support for a WatSan Coordinator for 6 months to 1 year, providing technical support and coordination for the Niger National Society and others active in the operation as well as approximately CHF200, 000 as a start-up for an operational budget. WatSan interventions will initially be 'low-key' so a consolidated longer term intervention can be planned in detail. Counterparts at Geneva and among National Societies are being contacted regarding programme interests and potential involvement, with a view to forming a possible consortium for activities in this sector.

Federation Coordination

Throughout the operation, the Federation has collaborated closely with the humanitarian community and UN bodies. An effective working relationship has also been established with the main governmental bodies involved in the food crisis response (such as the CCA and SAP¹³) as well as with key Government of Niger ministries, in association with Niger RC, such as the Ministry of Health for the SFP and Ministry of Community Development for the cash distribution project. The latter project has generated interest at the very highest levels, including the President of Niger, and the Federation is continuing to cultivate the contacts developed as a result of these activities.

At regional and local level, relief distribution and supplementary feeding activities were undertaken in collaboration with provincial and local authorities – whilst underlining and ensuring respect of the Federation's Fundamental Principles. Heads of villages have, in particular, been closely linked to the process due to their pivotal role within local communities. Furthermore, close coordination and mutual support (in terms of logistics, commodities and programming support) was established early on between Federation operations and PNSs – in particular French, Spanish and Qatari Red Crescent – for the supplementary feeding programme. RC/RC has also worked hand in hand with MSF for the onward referral of severely malnourished children identified through the CRENAMs.

Finally, it must be stressed that the Regional Disaster Response Teams have played a crucial and most valuable role from the earliest stages of the Sahel Operation. This has proved to be a significant and on-going contribution by African NSs to the overall international operation in the Sahel. Thirteen RDRT members and 3 staff on-loan from the Regional Delegation at Abidjan from eight African countries have played an integral and invaluable role in the areas of logistics, relief, health and nutrition, administration and finance. Of these, 9 RDRT members have been based in Niger, 4 in Mali and 1 each in Burkina Faso and Mauritania – with relocation as needed.

Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement -- Principles and initiatives

A number of national staff have been recruited as part of the operation in Niger, receiving the necessary training in operational matters, enhanced by knowledge of RCRC principles. Their commitment and understanding has been observed on numerous occasions. Furthermore, seventeen RC volunteers involved in the distribution of relief goods in the Agadez-Tabelot area were trained on Movement Principles and undertook a review of the relief operation in Niger.

National Society Capacity Building

In Niger, a cadre of more than 360 volunteers have been selected and trained as part of the overall Emergency Operation in the areas of relief, health care and communications. Furthermore, their knowledge of and commitment to the RCRC Movement has been enhanced.

¹³ CCA: Cellule de Crise Alimentaire / SAP: Système d'Alerte Précoce.

Communications – Advocacy and Public Information

The Federation Information Delegate has held interviews with international and regional media, accompanied camera teams and briefed journalists interested in the relief operation. In Agadez, Sahel TV, the public TV channel in Niger, filmed NRC and Federation distributions in two villages in the valley of Djado, Bilma. A camera crew was hired to take video footages for the elaboration of a video news release on the food-crisis operation. Images from general food distribution in Fillingue and of CRENA distributions in Tahoua were taken.

A total of six articles have been published on the Federation website and a dedicated Sahel Food Crisis section has been created on the Federation website, supplemented by a photo gallery published and the issue of three press releases. Key documents such as questions and answers, photographs and fact sheets have been developed and shared with participants, as well as National Societies interested and/or involved in the operation.

The Sahel Operation Information Delegate has also been training the Dakar Regional Information Officer on the professional role foreseen within the Federation, focusing on information gathering during disasters. Training on reporting issues was also provided by the Sahel Operation Reporting Delegate.

[Contributions list below; click here to return to the title page.](#)

Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger: food security

ANNEX 1

APPEAL No. 05EA015

PLEDGES RECEIVED

18/10/2005

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
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CASH

REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->				18,243,483	TOTAL COVERAGE 54.7%	
AUSTRALIAN - RC		200,000	AUD	195,700	10.08.05	CSB
AUSTRALIAN - RC		130,000	AUD	128,115	06.10.05	CEREALS, OIL, SURROUNDING COSTS
AUSTRIAN - RC		15,000	EUR	23,250	20.09.05	
BRITISH - RC		100,000	GBP	226,000	25.07.05	FOODS & SEEDS, NATIONAL/ REGIONAL STAFF
BRITISH - RC		150,000	GBP	338,925	11.08.05	
BRITISH - DEC/RC		404,651	GBP	916,940	21.09.05	LIVELIHOODS CASH DISTRIBUTION PROJECT
BRITISH - RC/GVT		316,198	GBP	720,299	05.10.05	
BRITISH - PRIVATE DONOR		500	GBP	1,130	02.08.05	NIGER
CANADIAN - RC		25,000	CAD	26,138	22.07.05	
DANISH - RC				47,338	02.08.05	
DANISH - RC				133,905	12.09.05	
DANISH - RC				153,715	20.09.05	
DANISH - RC				230,822	23.09.05	BURKINA FASO, MALI
FIJI - PRIVATE DONOR		5,000	FJD	3,750	10.08.05	
FINNISH - GOVT		248,000	EUR	386,136	28.09.05	
FINNISH - RC		100,000	EUR	155,700	28.09.05	
ICELANDIC - RC		3,000,000	ISK	59,700	08.08.05	
ICELANDIC - RC		250,000	ISK	4,900	26.08.05	
IRISH - RC		100,000	EUR	154,800	25.07.05	NIGER
IRISH - RC		290,000	EUR	452,545	22.08.05	
ITALIAN - GOVT		500,000	EUR	775,000	13.09.05	MALI, NIGER
JAPANESE - RC		30,000,000	JPY	348,000	03.08.05	
LIECHTENSTEIN - RC				21,020	29.08.05	
MONACO - RC		30,000	EUR	46,815	02.08.05	BURKINA FASO, NIGER
NETHERLANDS - RC		50,000	EUR	78,025	04.08.05	
NETHERLANDS - RC		7,487	EUR	11,683	04.08.05	LIAISON DELEGATE
NETHERLANDS - RC		100,000	EUR	156,050	12.08.05	
PRIVATE DONORS ON LINE				48,783	11.08.05	
SWEDISH - GOVT		3,600,000	SEK	605,880	28.07.05	
SWEDISH - GOVT		240,000	SEK	39,840	05.09.05	LOGISTIC DELEGATE
SWISS - PRIVATE DONORS				1,849	09.08.05	NIGER
USA - PRIVATE DONORS		1,444	USD	2,296	05.09.05	NIGER
USA - PRIVATE DONORS				444	23.09.05	MALI
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				6,495,493	CHF	35.6%

Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger: food security

ANNEX 1

APPEAL No. 05EA015

PLEDGES RECEIVED

18/10/2005

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
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KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL)

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
BELGIUM - RC FLANDERS		38,070	EUR	59,009	22.08.05	402 BAGS CSB, TRANSPORT
BRITISH - RC				279,974	22.08.05	LOGISTICS ERU
BRITISH - RC				420,128	22.08.05	MEDICINES & MATERIAL, 8 PCES SUPPL. FRY FEEDING EQUIP, CSB, OIL, TRANSPORT
BRITISH - RC				343,725	22.08.05	2 TOYOTA LANDCRUISERS, 4 RUBBHALLS, 30 MOTORBIKES, TELECOM EQUIP., FIRST AID KITS FOR CAR,TRANSPORT
DANISH - RC				66,974	22.08.05	ERU TELECOMMUNICATION
FRENCH - RC		18,023	EUR	27,997	22.08.05	1'440 BAGS CSB, 3'840 L. OIL
GERMAN - RC		67,035	EUR	104,132	22.08.05	15 T. RICE BEANS, LENTILS, OIL, 2 15T. BEANS, LENTILS, RICE, 15'000 L. OIL, 600 BAGS CSB
IRELAND - RC				176,982	28.09.05	RENTAL & TRANSPORTATION LANDCRUISERS
NETHERLANDS - RC				298,290	28.09.05	RENTAL & TRANSPORTATION
NORWEGIAN - RC				1,235,545	22.08.05	3 TRANSPORT SUPPORT UNITS
AMCROSS	DELEGATE(S)			18,400		
BELGIUM	DELEGATE(S)			18,200		
CANADA	DELEGATE(S)			29,400		
GREAT BRITAIN	DELEGATE(S)			55,600		
FINLAND - RC	DELEGATE(S)			29,400		
GERMANY - RC	DELEGATE(S)			30,400		
ICELAND - RC	DELEGATE(S)			8,600		
IRELAND - RC	DELEGATE(S)			31,600		
NEW ZEALAND	DELEGATE(S)			7,600		
NETHERLANDS - RC	DELEGATE(S)			7,800		
NORWAY - RC	DELEGATE(S)			173,200		
SPAIN	DELEGATE(S)			18,400		
SWEDEN	DELEGATE(S)			37,800		
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES				3,479,156	CHF	19.1%

ADDITIONAL TO APPEAL BUDGET

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SAUDI ARABIA - RC		170,034	SR	56,740	15.08.05	DIRECT ASSISTANCETO MALI: TENTS, BLANKETS, CARPETS, MEDICINE, FOODSTUFF
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES - RC		148,560	USD	188,671	19.09.05	DIRECT ASSISTANCE: FOOD SUPPLIES, CLOTHES
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED				245,411	CHF	