

MINOR EMERGENCY



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

ZAMBIA: DROUGHT

**Minor Emergency no.
05ME015
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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

CHF 50,000 (USD 42,822 OR EUR 32,255) HAS BEEN ALLOCATED FROM THE FEDERATION'S DISASTER RELIEF EMERGENCY FUND (DREF) TO RESPOND TO THIS OPERATION. UNEARMARKED FUNDS TO REPAY DREF ARE ENCOURAGED.

For information specifically related to this operation please contact:

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 - *All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organisations \(NGO's\) in Disaster Relief](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.*
 - *For longer-term programmes in this or other countries or regions, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for national society profiles, please also access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>*

The situation

Zambia's Ministry of Agriculture has issued a drought alert following erratic and poor distribution of rainfall in many parts of the country, particularly the low-veldt areas of the southern, western and north-western provinces. According to press reports quoting Government sources, Zambia will face a crop failure of up to 65% this year due to ongoing drought in the current farming season. Last week the Zambian government banned exportation of maize meal to neighbouring countries in a bid to forestall the looming food deficit. The government's food reserve agency (FRA) disclosed that there were only 120,000 metric tons of maize in the state shells countrywide. This falls far short of the country's total maize requirement of 600,000 metric tons.

Following the Government's drought alert warning, the Office of the Vice President coordinated a rapid crop assessment mission in the affected areas. The assessment was coordinated by the government's disaster management and mitigation unit (DMMU) and comprised WFP, the Zambia Red Cross and Federation, FEWSNET, and others.

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While the final assessment report is in preparation, preliminary reports reveal a 100% crop failure in southern and western provinces. Most crops are currently stunted, wilting and have not reached full development. Many households that planted early and whose crops reached tussling and grain filling stage will not mature due to the erratic and localized nature of rainfall. Expected harvest in most fields are near zero since the poor conditions of the crops is irreversible. This applies to all cereals, groundnuts and pumpkins. Household food stocks have run out and the majority of households cannot manage to meet their daily food needs. Households have already started employing various coping mechanisms such as gathering of wild fruits, sale of small livestock, charcoal burning, skipping of meals, and sale of productive and household assets.

This scenario is exacerbated by the devastating nature of HIV/AIDS in the affected areas. Community's coping mechanisms are stressed due the non-availability of safety nets and the high prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS in the region.

The government (through the Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit or DMMU) has established a task force that will coordinate any response to the drought situation in the country. It is anticipated that the government may launch a drought appeal in the 2nd quarter of 2005. An emergency donor meeting will be convened by the Office of the Vice President to discuss the drought situation in the country and explore possible intervention. Donors and the international community at large have been asked to support government's intervention strategy.

As in similar response operations in 2002 and 2003, drought situations often assume regional dimensions, and the Federation emphasizes that future action and the need for external support could very easily expand to other countries as the rainfall conditions affect crops in other areas and regions.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action taken so far

The Federation's support to the national society is planned to improve livelihoods. Lessons learned from the 2002-2003 drought situations is a stark reminder that prompt and targeted intervention saves lives. In addition:

- the CHF 50,000 allocated from the Federation's DREF will support further assessments to determine actual needs and priorities of the communities affected. The Zambia Red Cross will require additional resources to supplement the government's effort to alleviate human suffering expounded by the drought situation.
- the national society disaster management team supported by the Federation participated in the crop assessment in collaboration with WFP and the government.
- The Zambia Red Cross Regional Disaster and Response Teams (RDRT) DRT-trained team have been mobilised and on standby for field deployment.
- Some 65 volunteers have been mobilised in each province affected by drought and already working closely with the local government authorities. They are being trained in beneficiary identification and food distribution methods.
- Zambia Red Cross is actively participating in disaster management coordination meetings convened by the government both at national and local level.
- Zambia Red Cross volunteers are working closely with local government authorities in data collection through the HIV/AIDS home based care programme.

The needs

- Following the findings of the rapid crop assessment, a plan of action will be formulated. A further drought needs assessment is required for effective planning, beneficiary identification and targeting for effective relief and development intervention.
- Organizational capacity building for Red Cross branches in the affected areas.

Coordination

The Zambia Red Cross, supported by the Federation, is working with the following organizations as part of the coordinated effort to respond to the situation:

- Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit (DMMU): DMMU is the government's primary coordinating body for disaster management activities in the country. Zambia Red Cross is a member of the DMMU.
- World Food Programme (WFP): WFP participated in the rapid crop assessment and will provide food for distribution to targeted beneficiaries. The Zambia Red Cross and Federation is negotiating agreement with

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WFP for food intervention. The HIV/AIDS home-based care programme is the entry point for food interventions. Food for work projects will also be encouraged.

- **FEWSNET:** the Famine Early Warning System Network (FEWSNET) is a major partner for early warning monitoring and data collection. Zambia Red Cross volunteers will continue to work closely with FEWSNET at field level to assist in data collection.

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