

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

NIGER, BURKINA FASO, MALI & MAURITANIA: FOOD INSECURITY

**ME no. 05ME022
15 July, 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

A TOTAL OF CHF 280,000 HAS BEEN ALLOCATED FROM THE FEDERATION'S DISASTER RELIEF EMERGENCY FUND (DREF) TO RESPOND TO THIS OPERATION. BASED ON THE EVOLVING SITUATION AND DISCUSSIONS CURRENTLY UNDERWAY, AN EMERGENCY APPEAL IS UNDER CONSIDERATION.

UNEARMARKED FUNDS TO REPAY DREF ARE ENCOURAGED.

All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for a full description of the national society profile, please access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

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For longer-term programmes, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal.

The situation

In 2004 and 2005, the Sahel region experienced the worst locust invasion since 20 years. Unfavourable weather conditions have left the region with a severe food crisis and malnutrition. The most affected countries are Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali and Mauritania. The crisis has increased the vulnerability of the population despite the intervention of humanitarian organizations and governments in food distribution. The Government of Niger and Mauritania have appealed to the international community for assistance. However, the level of response has been quite low.

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Each country situation differs considerably. As per UN sources the situation is most alarming in Niger with 3.6 million of its 12 million inhabitants directly affected by the food crisis. Over 800,000 children under the age of five are severely affected by the food shortage and 150,000 severely undernourished. In Mali, 20% of the population are threatened to suffer from food insecurity or even famine. In Mauritania about 750,000 people (26% of the population) remain affected by last year's locust invasion. In Burkina Faso, the government estimates that some 500,000 people need food assistance.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action taken so far

The Regional Delegation for West and Central Africa in Dakar has closely monitored the situation since the locust invasions in August 2004¹. Through several assessment and support missions to the concerned countries, the Delegation has been assisting the national societies in disseminating early warnings of an up-coming food insecurity both to the affected communities as well as government, national and international organisations.

As soon as the situation on food security became alarming, the Regional Delegation deployed a 3-member Team (one consultant, two RDRT/NS staff) to carry out a detailed assessment of the food security situation in Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali and Mauritania and to assist the national societies to identify their role in addressing the issue considering their experience and operational capacity. In coordination with OCHA, WFP, FAO and other organisations as well as government organisations, the team developed recommendations for the Federation Regional Delegation on ways to support the national societies and appropriate interventions.

The findings of the mission reveal a serious food crisis, including livestock and calls for urgent action to support the concerned national societies in assisting the most vulnerable. The main activities includes assisting the national societies in providing food to the most vulnerable in targeted communities, support the national societies in operating community-based feeding centres, capacity building of the national societies on food security (also for longer-term), mobilisation of local committees and sensitisation and awareness programmes among the most affected populations.

Following comments from the Regional Delegation and the Secretariat team in Geneva, the assessment report was discussed with the Presidents of the respective national societies at the Sahel Working Group meeting held in Dakar from 28 to 29 June 2005. The national societies of the affected countries requested further assistance from the Regional Delegation.

The French Red Cross has started a programme in Niger and also provided emergency assistance in Mauritania, the Norwegian Red Cross is currently assessing the logistic requirements in Niger, while the Spanish Red Cross is developing programmes for intervention in Niger and Mali. In Burkina Faso, the Luxemburg Red Cross has been looking into possible areas to support the national society.

In a teleconference organised by the Federation Secretariat in Geneva on July 7, 2005 a number of PNS expressed their willingness to assist with support (funding and human resources) in a Federation-led operation.

The needs

The findings of the mission reveal a serious deficit in food and livestock as well as price hikes on food items. The mission concluded that there is an urgent need to assist the most vulnerable. It therefore recommends to launch an operation in Niger for 15,000 beneficiaries (Tahoua), in Burkina Faso for 8,440 (Djibo, Digouel), in Mali 10,000 (Goudame, Douanza) and in Mauritania for 15,000 (Adra, Traza, Tagant) beneficiaries.

Fortunately, national societies, national and international agencies anticipated the emergency and have since started to implement programmes. The Qatar Red Crescent Society and the French Red Cross have started operations in Niger, the Spanish Red Cross is assisting the Mali Red Cross in developing a programme, and the Burkina Faso Red Cross is distributing food provided by WFP.

¹ West Africa: Locust Invasion, Information Bulletin no. 1 (http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.pl?rpts04/wa041010.pdf) and Information Bulletin no. 2 (http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.pl?rpts04/wa041110.pdf)

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The already overwhelming needs in some of the affected countries, the weak or non existence logistic, and lack of experienced human resources is beginning to affect the national societies. Some of the major concerns are transport of relief items and volunteers/staff as well as a proper computer and telecommunication equipment at headquarters and in the branches. Consequently, the most urgent need is to strengthen the capacities of the national societies on logistics, administration and human resources to coordinate, fine-tune and implement the proposed interventions.

The proposed operation

Objectives and activities planned

To ensure effective and timely response and proper coordination between different actors, the Federation's Regional Delegation has deployed its DM team to Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali. The objective is to assist in the implementation of the proposed activities in the field, and to assess the logistics and human resources needs and capacities of the national societies and to further review the plans of action proposed by the assessment mission considering the recent developments and interventions by other actors.

Based on the recommendations from the assessment, and in consultation with other institutions, the following activities are suggested to respond to the situation:

- Support the national societies in providing food to the most vulnerable in targeted communities.
- Support the national societies in operating community-based feeding centres for the severely or moderately malnourished children (0-5yrs).
- Build capacity of the national societies on food security (for longer-term with the affected communities).
- Mobilize local committees and conduct sensitisation and awareness programmes among the most affected populations.

Capacity of the National Society

All the National Societies have difficulties in finding qualified and experienced human resources to properly manage the planned operations. However, they have DM staff and information officers. The national societies plan to develop realistic plans of action and build capacities for possible interventions.

The Red Cross of Niger has trained volunteers in all the localities with possibilities of partnership with WFP FAO while the Red Cross of Mali has necessary infrastructures at the headquarter and sub-divisions. However, it does not have adequate vehicles for transportation of relief items. The Red Cross of Burkina Faso lacks logistics, notably a truck to ensure food transportation while in Mauritania the country's immensity plays a negative role on communication leading to a weak reaction in the implementation of action plans.

Against this background, it is evident that the national societies need assistance in logistics and human resources to enable them respond to the situation and provide assistance to the vulnerable people.

Capacity of the Federation

The Federation has very qualified DM delegates in West and Central Africa who are already deployed in the affected countries. It also has an information team at the Dakar delegation managing all the information. With the collaboration of its traditional partners and the UN agencies it often works with, the Federation would continue to mobilize both material and human resources to help the concerned National Societies respond to the needs. A Federation presence in the affected countries will also focus on strengthening the capacities of the national societies to ensure longer term programming linked to the planned operation.

Coordination

The Federation, represented by the Regional Delegation for West and Central Africa, is working closely with OCHA, WFP, FAO and other organizations based in Dakar to respond to this food crisis in the Sahel. The national societies of the affected countries are also in close contact with their governments and other agencies monitoring the impact of the situation.

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The Federation's Regional Delegation is already supporting the affected national societies to implement some of the activities, as suggested by the team. It will also establish a Movement-coordinated approach in responding to the needs. This will create synergy within the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and compliment the humanitarian efforts of other agencies present in the region. The Regional Delegation has taken the lead in coordinating the activities, monitoring and supporting the national societies with the presence of a team in the affected countries.

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