

Operations update



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Horn of Africa: Exceptional food security crisis

Emergency appeal n° MDR64003

GLIDE n° OT-2008-000196-
DJI/ERI/ETH/KEN/SOM

Operations update n° 1

24 January 2008

Period covered by this Operations Update: 22 December 2008 to 23 January 2009.

Appeal target (current): CHF 113,992,868 (USD 95.4m or EUR 72.8m);

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Appeal history:

- This Emergency Appeal was initially launched on 11 December 2008 for CHF 113,992,868 (USD 95.4m or EUR 72.8m) months to assist 2.2 million beneficiaries over a period of five years.
- CHF 130,000 was allocated from the Federation's DREF to support the assessment activities and mission.
- An exceptional advance of CHF 10 million was extended from the Federation to support the National Societies of Ethiopia, Djibouti, Kenya and Somalia to respond to food crisis.

Summary: The conclusions of the Horn of Africa Multi-disciplinary Assessment Team which were published in December 2008 and led to the launch of this appeal still stand. Larger than normal food production gaps as a result of drought, in certain parts of the affected countries prolonged over several seasons, combined with exceptional spikes in the price of cereals in international markets has led to an exceptional food security crisis that has deeply affected up to 20 million people, mostly urban poor and pastoralists or agro-pastoralists. They could not cope with the unrealistically high cost of staple food, often not even available in sufficient quantities. While they adopted various but desperate coping strategies, including reducing meals to one per day only, eating wild or cheap varieties of traditional food commodities and selling off household assets, they ended up facing severe hunger. As populations at large were forced to cut down on health care and more specifically as abnormally large groups of nomadic families were forced to concentrate around the few remaining functioning water sources, the risk of outbreaks of acute watery diarrhea (AWD) and other water related diseases increased. Global and even severe malnutrition has flared up in several parts of the region, including in the Somali region in Ethiopia and in locations in the pastoral livelihoods of Turkana, Mandera, Samburu, Baringo, Marsabit, Wajir, Moyale and Garissa and the agro pastoral and marginal agricultural livelihoods in Kitui, Mwingi, Makueni, Mbeere, Malindi, Kilifi, Kwale and Tana River in Kenya. Although the arrival of fresh harvests has lessened to some extent the gravity of the situation in parts of Ethiopia, the overall number of people who are in dire need of food and health support has risen sharply since the assessment was conducted as a result of failed rains at the end of 2008 in Kenya.

The Federation appeal has so far only received moderate support from the donor community including the Swedish Red Cross, American Red Cross, Irish Red Cross, Japanese Red Cross, Monaco Red Cross and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). An exceptional advance of CHF 10 million extended from the Federation has nevertheless allowed the Horn of Africa Operations Team to advance rapidly with the final preparation of the distribution of food to 150,000 affected persons in the Liben Region (part of the Guji and Somali Regions of Ethiopia). These distributions are expected to start before the end of February 2009. With the support of the World Food Programme (WFP) to 50,000 urban poor in Balbala district, one of the major informal settlements in Djibouti City will receive partial food rations through a food for work scheme. A CHF

250,000 allocation has been made to the Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS) to support the immediate start of a school feeding programme (corn soy blend and/or unimix) in some of the worst affected areas. Finally, CHF 80,000 was made available to the Somali Red Crescent Society (SRCS) to prepare for the set-up of additional mobile clinics, actually a vital part of the public health system, especially in rural areas. With the full CHF 10 million advance already fully committed, far more support is, now rapidly needed to allow the operation to combat hunger, malnutrition and severe health risks on a more relevant scale. Ongoing assessments in Ethiopia show that more than 5 million people will continue to depend on food-aid on top of those that are served on a longer basis through the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP). In Kenya, the Government has appealed for support to more than 10 million people. Pastoralists in Djibouti and Somalia who have suffered dramatic losses of animals due to prolonged drought are unable to recover without sustained support. The arrival of the produce of recent harvests only creates the illusion that the situation is improving.

All must now be done to ensure that more food is made available to the affected populations before the available harvest runs out by the end of March 2009. Food aid must be balanced by efforts that grant access to additional or alternative sources of income to urban poor and drop-outs from pastoralism. A sustained effort is needed to ensure that more water for human and animal consumption becomes available to populations that remain critically vulnerable. Given the complete destitution of the worst affected by the continuing crisis, more failed rains or a renewed increase in the world's cereal prices even to a far lesser extent than witnessed in 2008, will lead to a crisis of incredible proportions and the inevitable loss of lives. The project is running out of time to get the assistance and efforts in place that will help the populations at risk to be less vulnerable to the next hunger season, expected to start in April 2009. Hunger is not an option, tides can be turned if action is taken now.

The situation

Although Governments of the various countries in the Horn of Africa have shown efforts in better supporting the agricultural sector over the last decade and in improving the aggregate production of food in their countries, they still face an overall deficit in production, in extent varying from one country to another, even in a normal year. Most of the countries manage to bridge their usual production gaps by importing food, mainly cereals, bought in the international markets. The 2008 drought resulted in larger than normal production deficits, not all that exceptional in size but exceptionally expensive to cover as the price of cereals more than doubled in between December 2007 and June 2008, an event that was neither foreseeable nor budgeted for by the Governments of the region. Repeated shocks in the price of oil and thus of transport and major fluctuations in the dollar exchange rate further aggravated the situation. Even in those cases where Governments managed to import reasonable quantities of cereals, all of them hampered by a limited availability of foreign currency, they were forced to transfer a major part of the cost increase to the market. Thus abnormally high prices in the global markets rapidly translated to a similar increase in local markets. The final cost to consumers became just too high for many poor families who already in an average year struggle hard to cope with the cost of living. Malnutrition rates, already chronically high in the region, rapidly rose in at least parts of each of the affected countries. Forced to cut down on all non-food related expenditures in order to cope with the crisis, poor families had to reduce expenditures for health care although they faced additional health risks as the ongoing drought affected both the quantity and quality of the available drinking water.

Pastoralist communities in Kenya, Djibouti, Somalia and the Ethiopian lowlands have been affected by high animal mortality and severe water deficits as a result of multiple, consecutive seasons of failed rains, up to 4 in Djibouti and parts of Kenya. Their insistence to cling on to their traditional livelihood and the lack of sufficient access to markets that could rapidly absorb large numbers of animals, offered for sale before they become too weak to be of much commercial value, resulted in dramatic financial losses for many families. Many of them got little or no compensation for the animals they lost although mortality reached often as high as 70 percent and more. The arid character of large parts of the Horn of Africa imposes high numbers of livestock (at least 4 TLU per AAM) to keep pastoralists above survival levels. Many families are now well below that critical level while large numbers have lost all livestock. The recovery of pastoralists takes time. Depending on the type of animals involved, 50 percent mortality takes from 4 years (goats) to 12 years (camels) to overcome. That is, if sufficient animals are left to allow for normal breeding patterns. As this is not the case for many of the worst affected, a serious effort is needed to help them in developing alternative or additional sources of income since they now simply don't have the means to purchase sufficient quantities of food for their family. Sustained efforts are also needed to protect the remaining herds and flocks and thus to avoid the creation of more pastoralist drop-outs who have very little competitive value in the labor market. It is also worth repeating that the same populations also face increased health risk as the drought forces them to remain concentrated around the few remaining water points. It is obvious that their usual hygiene practices, combined with the low quantity and quality of the drinking water that is available to them, puts them at a high risk to contract diarrhea and other water and sanitation related diseases.

From the time the assessment was done some rain has come to the lowlands. This gives the impression that the drought and thus the crisis might, at least temporarily, be over. But while the rain will help the pastures to recover, it will not help the pastoralists to recover from the animal mortality. Affected families in Djibouti, Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia continue thus to be vitally at risk. Outbreaks of acute watery diarrhea have been reported, for example in Warder (Ethiopia) and were luckily contained with the help of MSF-Holland. The risk of new outbreaks will, however, persist until efforts to improve water and sanitation and of hygienic practices yield to success. The end of the year's harvests also tampered with the severe crisis especially since it also triggered a marked decrease in the price of cereals locally although the price remains above normal levels. This does, however, not allow for complacency. Production gaps remain very real as illustrated by the recent Appeal for assistance by the Kenyan authorities. In Ethiopia it is not yet clear as the conclusions of the DMFSS official assessment have not been made available yet. In the absence of their report, it is generally expected that more than 5.2 million people will continue to rely on food aid for their survival (in addition to those assisted through the Productive Safety Net Programme). There is also a consensus that the needs in parts of the country, including the Ethiopian Somali region which is also partially focused upon by this operation, have remained largely unchanged. Finally, it is crucial to bear in mind that, with the exception of the case of pastoralists in all of the affected countries, the actual crisis is far less triggered by natural causes, including drought than by external factors such as the price of cereals in the world's markets, the cost of fuel and agricultural inputs and the 2008 fluctuations in the dollar exchange rates. Until more research results in an adequate explanation of the severity and speed of the 2008 cereals' price fluctuations, Governments of the region remain at a loss as to what to expect for 2009.

Coordination and partnerships

Although the various Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the various Federation entities of the Region had well picked up the early signals of a major crisis to come and had launched several assessments already in April 2008, followed by initial emergency operations in Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti (and in Uganda which is beyond the scope of this appeal), supported by the Finnish, Austrian, German and American Red Cross, the overall size of the response was deemed insufficient by all and the Federation Secretariat launched a multi-disciplinary assessment team on 19 October 2008 to define the objectives and modalities for a rapid scaling up of the Federation's response to the crisis. The Team included experts in all relevant sectors (food security, nutrition, relief, logistics, health, water and sanitation, livelihood, disaster preparedness and risk reduction, logistics and communication), selected from various host and participating National Societies and from the Secretariat offices in Geneva, Nairobi, Sri-Lanka and the Philippines. They visited Kenya, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan and Djibouti and had extensive discussions with the leadership and technical staff of the Somali Red Crescent Society, brought in for the occasion to Nairobi. Field visits to affected areas confirmed the information that was mainly collected through intense discussions with the concerned Governments, relevant UN agencies and major international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in each of the affected countries in order to ensure the rapid development of strategies and plans of action that would take into account the already ongoing efforts from other actors and thus avoid any duplication of efforts. Several partnerships were identified as highly relevant, including WFP (distribution to 50,000 urban poor in Djibouti and logistical cooperation in Ethiopia), FAO (development of water points and fodder production in Djibouti, alternative income sources in Ethiopia) and WHO cum UNICEF (preventive health efforts in Eritrea).

The Team finalized its report on 7 December 2008 and provided the input for the actual appeal which was launched on 11 December 2008. Several telephone conferences, involving the Team Leaders, were held with more than 30 Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in Europe, Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Northern America to promote the relevance and urgency of the appeal, its proposed objectives and the need for a coordinated approach. Several major potential donors including USAID (Geneva) and ECHO (Nairobi and Addis Ababa) were also visited to discuss the modalities of a coordinated approach to applications while meeting with others, including for example DFID and a large number of embassies are ongoing. The Resource Mobilization teams in Geneva, Nairobi Zonal Office and the field have teamed up to ensure a consistent approach to resource mobilization. A coordinated communication strategy is under development to support this appeal, exceptional in its size and duration (5 years).

The various National Societies of the Horn of Africa, key implementers of the proposed operation, have all been involved from the assessment phase and fully endorsed the Assessment Team's recommendations for their respective countries. They all facilitated the necessary contacts with their respective competent authorities and supported the Team in its visits to field locations. They are all committed to this operation and have made key officers and volunteers available for its implementation. They all add their voice in unison to ours in appealing for support to the donor community.

A Federation Team was deployed to Addis on 22 December 2008 to ensure the immediate preparation of the operation in the various countries. It has received constant guidance from the Federation Secretariat, including its highest levels, in Geneva and from the Zonal Office in Nairobi. Although facing severe restrictions in the availability of basic communication technology, it has kept contact with National Societies in all parts of the world through several phone conferences and received the visits of the Federation's Secretary General and the Head of Zonal Office for Eastern Africa. It has mainly focused on establishing contacts and preparing implementation in Ethiopia and Djibouti so far but visits and discussions are planned involving the National Societies of Kenya, Somalia and Sudan during the first week of February 2009. The team in Addis will also prepare a coordinated application for support to ECHO and DFID on behalf of all actors within the Federation's family in the coming days.

In Ethiopia, which was given priority in view of the number of people in need of food-aid, weekly coordination meetings are held with the ERCS leadership. The leadership of the Red Crescent Society of Djibouti was involved in final discussions with WFP on the drafting of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) guiding the food for work programme in Balbala. Similar contacts with the RC/RC leaderships in Kenya and Somalia will be maintained as soon as funds become available to allow for the implementation of the planned activities in these countries.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Progress towards objectives

There is no specific information in relation to implementing the planned activities so far. Implementation commences in February 2009, therefore progress towards objectives will be reported in the next operations update. The information below captures general achievements up to date. The Operations Team recruited, now comprising a Head of Operations, a Finance and Administration Delegate, a Logistics Coordinator and a Procurement Delegate, have focused on installing their office, establishing close working relationships with key Ethiopian Red Cross Society (ERCS) officers and the ERCS leadership, contacts with the Ethiopian authorities and the preparation of food distributions to an initial 150,000 beneficiaries over a 6 months period.

The Head of the Eastern Africa Zone Office visited Addis Ababa and productive discussions were held to streamline the resource mobilization efforts at local, zonal and Geneva levels. Key messages were identified that capture well the complexity of the actual crisis and better explain the rationale behind the actual, unusual appeal. A plan of action was set in motion to step up visits to potential donors and to improve communication with regard to ongoing efforts. A dedicated resource mobilization officer was added to the Operations Team in Addis for an initial three months period.

Logistics department have also made a lot of progress, an office space was identified and furnished and is now functional. Phone and internet connections are now in place. The Team was well supported by the Federation Representative in Addis and the ERCS with cars and drivers to facilitate its work. Cars for the operation are on their way from the Federation's fleet base.

Various options were examined for the purchase of food, both in-country and abroad. Following negotiations with the Minister of Agriculture, involving key ERCS officers and its Secretary General and the Federation's Head of Operations, the operation was allowed to import food into Ethiopia to cover four monthly distribution cycles after the two initial cycles for which food will be procured locally to avoid delays as a result of congestion of the port in Djibouti. The tendering process for both the local and international procurement of almost 11,000 metric tons of food are well under way and will end by the end of January 2009. Food is expected to arrive during the third week of February 2009 with distributions to start during the last week of February 2009.

The initial number of beneficiaries has temporarily been set at 150,000 until more funding becomes available. It merely reflects a compromise between the available funding today and a concern for the cost efficiency of the operation by reaping the benefits of the economy of scale. It, thus, does not reflect in any way the real scale of the needs nor any limitation in the capacities of the joint ERCS and/or Federation logistics and relief teams. After weighing various options, priority was given to starting the distributions in the Liben region (75,000 beneficiaries in Guji and another 75,000 in the Somali Region). Initial indications are that even the arrival of a new harvest at the end of 2008 has not significantly improved the food crisis there. MSF-Holland reported an outbreak of AWD in December 2008 (under control since) while the Emergency Nutrition Coordination Unit voiced concern about the likelihood of a further deterioration of malnutrition in the region. Given the limited number of actors who have access to the area it seems a right choice to start the intervention there.

An ERCS relief and/or logistics team, supported by one of the Operation's Logistics delegates, is finalizing its visit to the region, drafting and validating the beneficiary lists and identifying the various distribution sites and satellite warehouses. Space has already been identified where food can be stored either in existing buildings or in available rubhalls. Long distances between the various communities that need support result in the need for a large number of distribution points (between 15 and 20 per initial reports). The team is expected to return to Addis and discussions will follow to define and/or possibly reduce the final list of distribution points.

Given the progress in the tendering process, the identification of warehouse space and potential transporters and the work done by the ERCS relief team, the Federation's Logistics Coordinator is confident that all is in place to commence distributions in Ethiopia before the end of February 2009.

In Djibouti, a draft MoU between WFP and Red Crescent Society of Djibouti and/or Federation is being finalized to guide a joint food for work programme that will provide up to 50,000 urban poor in the informal settlements in Balbala district (Djibouti City) with partial food rations (approximately half rations) through several food for work schemes that focus on waste management (collection of plastic bags) and water and sanitation improvement (improvement of water drainage and construction of latrines). The food and part of the distribution cost will be provided by WFP while volunteers of the RCSD will manage the distribution and the work schemes. The Federation is committed to covering the monitoring costs (1 Expatriate Logistics, 1 Operations Coordinator, support from the Operation's Water and Sanitation Coordinator) and the WatSan inputs. A detailed plan of action for the start up of this activity has been prepared.

As soon as the food for work starts tackling water and sanitation issues and the presence of the Operation's Water and Sanitation Coordinator becomes necessary in Djibouti and provided that more funding becomes available, a geophysical study will be funded to determine suitable locations for the drilling of boreholes and for water harvesting. This should reduce the constant stress that is on pastoralist communities in rural parts of Djibouti. Deemed a top priority by the initial multi-disciplinary assessment team to guarantee the survival of some of the worst affected populations by four consecutive seasons of failed rains and of their animals and in order to avoid the creation of even more pastoralist drop-outs who are invariably added to an already large case-load of urban poor in Djibouti city, the activity has been frozen temporarily due to lack of available funds. Although the study is not all that expensive in itself, there is a serious risk that it would further upset already highly frustrated populations if no guarantee would be added that the boreholes will be drilled within a reasonable time-frame.

In Kenya, the food crisis has severely deepened since December 2008 when the appeal was launched. The end of year's short rains failed leading to a larger than expected food deficit that even resulted in food related riots in parts of the country. The Kenyan Government has declared a state of calamity in mid-January 2009 and has appealed for support from the international community to assist approximately 10 million people. The KRCS has started a local fundraising campaign aimed at assisting almost 1.5 million people for 12 months through food distributions, live-stock interventions, health support, water, sanitation, hygiene and waste management efforts and advocacy and awareness raising. The newly identified needs and response differ significantly from the original plans that were included in the actual appeal but do reflect a fundamental change in priorities in view of the evolution of food security conditions on the ground. Since most of the available funding had already been committed by the time details of this latest crisis in Kenya became available, the Federation was forced to restrict its support to CHF 250,000 only to allow KRCS to immediately engage in a modest school-feeding programme. A more thorough assessment of the exact situation and needs by KRCS will be shared as soon as available.

Table 1: Break down of advance funds from the Federation

Activities	CHF
Food procurement (Ethiopia)	6.722 million
Transport, warehouse and logistics (Ethiopia)	809,000
Distribution and monitoring (RCSD)	400,000
Monitoring and inputs (RCSD)	513,000
Geophysical study (RCSD)	50,000
School feeding (KRCS)	250,000
Establishing clinics (SRCS)	80,000
Administration	800,000
Total	9,624,000

With almost all of the CHF 10 million committed, no funds were left during this reporting period to support the Somali Red Crescent Society in expanding their network of static and mobile clinics in the rural areas. It is difficult to over-estimate the value of these clinics in the provision of basic health care in Somalia. They really are the backbone of the Somali health system, providing MCH, preventive and curative health care in most parts of the country. Food insecurity is almost omnipresent in Somalia as a result of drought but also as a result of a fundamental disruption of market mechanisms and of the constant insecurity that limits the interventions of potential humanitarian actors. The planned expansion of the SRCS health clinics would not only increase the number of families served but would also expand their capacity to monitor the nutritional status of children and adults in rural areas and to respond rapidly in case of severe malnutrition where the SRCS presence is still limited. CHF 80,000 were provided by the operation to support SRCS to at least prepare the start up of additional mobile clinics if and when more funding becomes available.

Challenges

The main challenge to the operation is inadequate funding. The slow response should probably not come as a surprise since the appeal was launched on 11 December 2008, at a time when most humanitarian funds are fully committed and offices around the world soon start to close down for the end of year's holidays. The appeal was, moreover, launched while a far more visible crisis caught the attention of the international news media such as the cholera crisis in Zimbabwe, very severe indeed but affecting a few people. Indeed, the appeal was launched 6 weeks ago but slow donor response has been very frustrating for the operation's team since it directly witnesses the severity of the crisis for the affected and understands the risk of a dramatic deterioration of the situation as soon as the usual hunger season starts with its already usual alarming peaks in severe malnutrition in any given year. To address the needs and strengthen populations, the operations team needs to be able to launch the various planned interventions rapidly and simultaneously since their impact is interdependent. Food-aid, however relevant in the short run, just postpones the crisis unless it is accompanied by efforts to help the affected in generating more income that allows them to purchase food once the aid dries up. The funding which is available today (and still mostly through the advance extended from the Federation) only allows them to provide food-aid to a portion of the affected. But it does not allow us to even start tackling the root causes, not even for some of the most critically at risk.

The Federation is also faced with a number of challenges in its attempt to source for funding: it is unable to appeal especially to the international media since one only has to leave the capitals of the affected countries to witness the severe destitution of the poor in many parts of the affected countries. It is impossible not to see the extremely critical conditions many pastoralist communities are facing in many parts of Kenya, Somalia, the lowlands in Ethiopia and the rural parts of Djibouti.

The Federation is also unable to appeal to the public at large; it is vital to understand that this is not yet another episode of drought in the Horn of Africa. This crisis is far more about global trade and its effect on people who have hardly any influence on price-setting in international markets. The persisting food deficits in the region are admittedly related to more structural issues: a continued lack of investment in agriculture, weak market development, lack of investment incentives, rapid population growth and fragile infrastructure. Sometimes these factors remain related to conflict or post-conflict issues. All of these factors account, however, to the *chronic* gaps in production and the people and Governments of the region have learned to address these more or less without much help from the international community. This crisis is not about an *exceptional gap* in production but about the *exceptional cost* to cover an only slightly higher deficit in production which resulted from drought.

However the Federation can now appeal to the international donor community to prevent this silent crisis from exploding into a major humanitarian crisis which is bound to happen if rains fail again or cereals' prices increase again even to far more modest levels than witnessed in 2008. Efforts to prevent a further deterioration of the situation, however, take time to yield results and must commence rapidly, simultaneously and in a sustained way. The five years proposed intervention builds on the experience gained from many initiatives, programmes and interventions that were implemented by the Federation with the support from the very same donors we are appealing to now. Allowing us to implement now will just illustrate donor's return on investment far beyond the historic results of the individual projects and programmes of the past.

How we work

All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations \(NGO's\) in Disaster](#)

[Relief](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The International Federation's activities are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to meet the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".

Global Agenda Goals:

- Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.
- Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.
- Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.
- Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.

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