

RWANDA: FOOD SECURITY

March 9, 1999

appeal no. 12/98

situation report no. 1 (Final)

period covered: 30 March - 30 December, 1998

Despite encountering some constraints in the implementation of this food security and seed distribution operation, the broad objectives were met. In addition to the successful distribution of seeds to the intended beneficiaries, the operation has had a positive impact on the capacity of the Rwandan Red Cross to plan, co-ordinate, manage and report on relief efforts. The Federation's Delegation is now considering ways to support the capacity building process, and to capitalise on the Rwandan Red Cross' willingness to build on lessons learned for future purposes.

The context

For the last several years the prefecture of Gikongoro in south-western Rwanda has suffered chronic food shortages. The soil in this area is highly acidic, and with the low use of fertiliser or lack of other modern agricultural methods it is inherently difficult to farm the land productively. The 400,000 people in the region are unable to improve farming methods to meet their immediate food needs.

The Government of Rwanda launched an appeal in October, 1997 for food support, identifying Gikongoro as one of the most needy regions. In February, 1998, a joint Rwandan Red Cross Society (RRC) and Federation assessment mission found obvious signs of serious malnutrition among children and adults. In response, the RRC and the Federation launched an Appeal at the end of March, 1998. The Appeal attracted only limited donor support, necessitating a revision to allow the agricultural element of the programme to proceed on time. The revised Appeal targeted the September planting season for the start of the program. The beneficiaries specified by the prefectural authorities reside in the rural communes of Mudasowa, Musebya, Muko and Musange. The revised Appeal planned for the distribution of 429 MT of maize, bean, tomato, and cabbage seeds, 240,000 manioc cuttings, 360,000 sweet potato cuttings (for replanting), appropriate farm implements, fertilisers, and 284 MT of food to this population (see summary table below).

The Operation

The Gikongoro Prefecture's communes of Musange, Muko, Musebeya, and Mudasomwa are particularly isolated, and did not receive adequate support during the last general appeal for the area. The objectives of the operation were:

- { To contribute to food security for 35,000 people in Gikongoro Prefecture;
- { To rebuild the available seed stock in the communes through seed multiplication;
- { To support, improve and help to stabilise agricultural production in the area;
- { To train RRCS volunteers in the Prefecture in disaster response and agricultural assistance;
- { To reduce ethnic tensions in the country by reducing competition for food resources.

According to the Prefecture authorities, over 20,000 households were in need of assistance. Because this figure exceeded the immediate capacity of the Red Cross, it was decided to limit assistance by targeting 30% of this group. As a result, based on records provided by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Food and Agriculture Office of the UN (FAO), 6,800 families were identified as the target beneficiary group. The following criteria was used to choose the beneficiaries:

- { Families headed by women, active in farming, but without other sources of income.
- { Recently repatriated refugees embarking on their first planting season.
- { Farmers with an extremely poor or non-existent harvest in the previous season.
- { Newly organised farmers associations lacking seeds and fertilisers.

The types and quantities of seeds were established through consultation with the local community, advice from FAO and prefecture agronomists, and agricultural advisors at World Vision.

The operation was organised and supervised by the Head of Relief Services of the Rwanda Red Cross. Support was provided by the Logistics and Finance Departments. The Federation's Head of Delegation, Disaster Preparedness Delegate, CBFA Delegate, as well as the Logistics and Finance Delegates provided technical assistance. Eighty volunteers participated in the distributions, most having received training in relief, distribution and reporting techniques.

The seeds were distributed during the week of 1 to 8 October, 1998. Teams of 20 volunteers per site distributed the seeds directly to the beneficiaries. Each team was supervised at the site by a senior member of the RRC staff or the Federation Delegation. Distributions were divided into two stages. Households, farmers, and associations of farmers fitting most closely the beneficiary criteria received their rations first. The remainder was distributed to 23 associations working in co-operation with local authorities to improve the quantity and quality of harvests. These prefecture associations received about 3% of the seeds distributed.

The following table shows the total number of items and quantities distributed. There was an average of 20 families per association.

	COMMUNES				DISTRIBUTION	
	Mudasomwa	Musebeya	Muko	Musange	Planned distribution	TOTAL Distributed
# Associations	149	226	12	58	N/A	445
# Households	0	0	1,204	805	N/A	2,009
Beneficiaries	14,900	22,600	7,220	9,825	34,000	54,545
Bean Seeds (kg)	3,807	3,070	3,193	2,210	12,280	12,280
Maize Seeds (kg)	2,646	2,134	2,220	1,537	8,537	8,537
Tomato Seeds (kg)	6	0	5	4		15
Cabbage Seed (kg)	19	0	16	11		46
Manioc (pc)	----	----	----	240,000	240,000	240,000
Sweet Potato (pc)					360,000	0
Potato seeds (mt)					253	0
Maize (mt)					170	0
Beans (mt)					102	0
Oil (mt)					12	0
Urea (kg)	3,134	2,528	2,629	1,820	10,100	10,111
Lime (kg)	78,371	63,203	65,713	45,506	252,810	252,793
NPK (kg)	32,209	25,975	27,014	18,702	103,900	103,900
Hoes (pc)	2,108	1,700	1,768	1,224	6,800	6,800

Evaluation of the Operation w

Planning vs. Implementation: The difficulty in obtaining food for the seed protection activity was the single largest factor in shifting from the intended plan as outlined in the Appeal. The limited response to the Appeal delayed the purchase of the specified food. The RRC and the Delegation attempted to negotiate an agreement with the World Food Program to provide the quantities required, but despite these efforts and indications of an initial agreement, the food did not materialise. Thus, the 170 MT of maize, 102 MT of beans, and the 12 MT of vegetable oil sought in the appeal was never procured. The evaluation following the harvest will consider the extent to which this factor played a role in the overall program.

Seed distribution: The Appeal called for the procurement and distribution of 250 MT of potato seeds. At the time that procurement should have been made, however, the low quality of seeds available in the country precluded the purchase, and this plan was eliminated. Similarly, in view of the lack of funding as well as the fact that most farmers in the region felt that they had adequate quantities of sweet potatoes to cultivate, it was decided not to purchase the planned 360,000 sweet potato cuttings, and to concentrate on cultivating manioc and other vegetables. Final decision on the package of seeds to be distributed and the quantity per household was decided in consultation between the RRC, prefectural agronomists and with input from FAO agronomist Mr. Jean Marie Byakiveli.

Beneficiaries: The participation of the farmer associations in the distribution increased the number of beneficiaries by 20,000. Because the associations will be the primary vehicle for the multiplication of seeds for following harvests, it was considered more effective to include these associations in the distribution. The early involvement of existing community organisations in the operation forms one of the main lessons learned.

Training: It was planned to train up to 200 volunteers in distribution techniques, but as the unavailability of the food supply reduced the need for volunteers, this number was reduced to 40, ten from each commune, who supervised the other volunteers.

Achievements:

- { The effort made by local officials and Red Cross volunteers was excellent, with very good storage facilities provided and maintained, and distribution sites efficiently constructed and utilised. The distributions went well, proceeding in an orderly and efficient fashion.
- { The input of the Disaster Preparedness Delegate in the evaluation and organisation of the effort and the Head of Delegation in establishing the time-schedule for the operation proved invaluable.
- { The forty volunteers who participated in the training for the operations received training in distribution and storage techniques, including use of waybills, delivery notes, and stock and bin cards. The training was conducted by the HOD, the DPP Delegate, the RRC Relief Co-ordinator and Secretary General.
- { It was extremely encouraging that the volunteers involved in the operation absorbed the training offered, and actively used this training in the distributions. The enthusiasm shown and willingness to follow up on the operation proved a very satisfying aspect of the program.
- { The RRC and the Federation's radio communication network functioned well throughout the operation, providing an indispensable link between the field and Headquarters.

Constraints and Lessons Learned:

- { The management of the operation was at times fragmented and disjointed. Within the RRC itself co-operation between the various departments was difficult to achieve, and the management of the operation lacked the necessary leadership. The fact that a Delegate was not assigned full time to assist in the operation, until the distribution was under way, left many gaps which the RRC was unable to fill. The Logistics Department of the Delegation in particular had difficulty in providing sufficient support to the operation.

Follow Up:

- { Following the harvest the RRC will meet and discuss with farmers to identify successful aspects of the intervention, problems encountered, and recommendations for follow up in the next season. This assessment will be carried out by agronomists on the commune and prefecture level.
- { The FAO agronomist will be engaged to return for a complete evaluation of the operation in the next month.

Financial Report

Please see the attached financial annex.

Conclusion

The broad objectives of the operation were met. A successful distribution of seeds was made to more than 50,000 beneficiaries (well above the target number), ensuring that this assistance will have a positive impact on the food situation in Gikongoro. Follow up evaluations of the harvest will be conducted in early 1999 to determine the extent of the impact, indicating as well the types of follow-up action needed and considering whether the farmer's associations were able to successfully carry out seed multiplication for future planting seasons. The operation has had a positive impact on the capacity of the Rwandan Red Cross. The efforts of the volunteers from the communes was encouraging. In addition, the weaknesses of the program may in the long term have a beneficial effect in terms of

increasing the capacity of the Rwandan Red Cross to plan, co-ordinate, manage and report on relief efforts, serving as a road map for future situations.

The delegation and the RRC must focus in the immediate future on training in planning and managing such operations, on logistical support and needs assessments, and proposal and report writing. The delegation is now considering ways to provide this support, and the Rwanda Red Cross has displayed a willingness to learn from this operation for future purposes.

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