

# ***ETHIOPIA: DROUGHT***

appeal no: 15/99  
8 July 1999

***THIS APPEAL SEEKS CHF 870,000  
IN CASH, KIND AND SERVICES  
TO ASSIST 40,000 BENEFICIARIES FOR 6 MONTHS***

## ***Summary***

Two years of rain failures in Ethiopia's northern highlands have brought drought conditions and minimal harvests. Farming families have had to sell their remaining livestock, resort to last-ditch coping measures and are beginning to migrate in search of other income. The government has already begun food distributions. The Federation appeal will provide a food supplement to government rations for 40,000 highly vulnerable individuals in the worst affected South Wollo Zone. Depending on the evolution of the situation, a distribution of seeds will follow, to replenish depleted household stocks

## ***The Disaster***

The northern highlands of Ethiopia are facing their second successive year of failure of the *belg* rains. The food security situation has deteriorated dramatically for the most vulnerable as drought conditions affect large parts of the Amhara, Oromia and Tigray Regions. Although the *belg* rains, expected between March and May, support the secondary growing season in this part of the country, they also signal the start of the sole annual crop cycle for roughly 60% of the Regions' population who are *belg* dependent. The failure of the 1999 *belg* has limited planting by 60% in the Appeal's target Zone of South Wollo, and of those who were able to plant, 75% are reporting total harvest failure.

An additional negative impact concerns the coming *meher* season. The high-yield, long maturing *meher* (primary) crops of sorghum and corn are normally planted in late April and are dependent on the residual moisture of the *belg* rain. As a result of this year's *belg* failure, those crops have not been sown and farmers are currently engaged in planting seed varieties with a three and a half month cycle, whose yield is substantially lower.

The failure of this *belg* season to provide any significant precipitation was preceded by a poor *meher* harvest in the lowlands of these same Regions. The last *meher* harvest in the Amhara Region, where South Wollo Zone is located, fell short of pre-harvest estimates by roughly 60%, due to heavy rains late

in the season, which damaged crops in the final maturation stage and produced mudslides in the highlands, foreshadowing cultivation difficulties for the coming *belg* season.

Drought conditions also occurred in this area in the 1998 *belg* season, leaving the population with practically no coping capacity today. The impact of this year's rain failure is two-fold: principally, harvest yields were almost non-existent, and rainfall was so limited that livestock fodder did not grow. Consequently, in contrast to the 1998 season when limited rains were experienced, more than 15,000 oxen and roughly 40,000 sheep and goats have died in the past three months. The purchasing power of

households has declined sharply, as the remaining animals in poor condition are sold for 75% of the normal price level, and the cost of staple cereals has more than doubled.

The Zonal Administration reports a registered outmigration of at least 15,000 people - half of which are complete family units that have apparently resettled in the far southern Regions of the country. The remainder are male heads of household, who are seeking employment in the large towns of the surrounding Regions. Food substitution behaviours, typical during periods of severe famine, are also widely reported. Foraging for "wild foods", and mixing soil with sugar or salt for consumption of vital micronutrients, are being observed.

## ***The Response so far***

### **Government Action w**

#### **Food**

Emergency relief and development programmes in Ethiopia are co-ordinated by the National Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (DPPC), which was established in the late eighties. Bulk food contributions to the country's "Emergency Relief Needs" from international organisations, bi-lateral donors and NGOs are channelled through the DPPC, with the funding organisation playing a monitoring role in most cases. The DPPC is constituted at the National, Regional and Zonal levels. At the *Woreda* level, the administrative units of the Zones, the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness "Branch" (DPPB), is normally composed of the local administrator, representatives of various Ministries, and members of the local peasants' association.

The Ethiopian government's revised "Relief Needs" report (25 May 1999), covering the period from June until December 1999, requests 358,950 mt of cereals to assist 4,603,478 beneficiaries. These beneficiaries are victims of crop failure throughout the country, as well as internal displacement resulting from the conflict with Eritrea.

With respect to this Appeal's target Zone of South Wollo, in the Amhara Region, the DPPC reports that 876,476 individuals (41% of the total population) have been affected by the post-harvest *meher* losses and the failure of the *belg* rains, according to household surveys jointly conducted in mid-May by the DPPC, WFP and Save the Children, UK. The internally displaced population in the Zone does not factor significantly into the current assistance scenario. A total of 77,964 mt of cereals are being requested for the South Wollo Zone.

The Zonal DPPC representative confirms that food distributions have occurred in nine of the 15 affected *woredas*. Those that will be difficult to reach during the coming *meher* rains have received cereal rations sufficient through August (12.5/kg/person/month). Others have received supplies up to the end of June. Given current food availability, distributions could be expected to continue through end September, beyond which point they will depend on the response to the revised National Report on Relief Needs.

#### **Non-Food**

The Ministry of Agriculture has provided farmers in the Ambassel *woreda* with 280 mt of teff seed and 983 mt of wheat seed through the FAO. Although this quantity has been characterised as "insufficient" by

the local *woreda* Administrator, it will contribute positively to the harvest potential of this year's *meher* crop.

### **Red Cross/Red Crescent Action w**

In mid-May, a field team comprising representatives from the ERCS headquarters and its branch in Dessie town, the capital of South Wollo, plus a Federation delegate from the delegation in Addis Ababa and a Federation delegate from Nairobi, conducted a one week field assessment in the South Wollo Zone. The status of the *belg* rains was closely monitored throughout May and, based on the total failure

recorded in early June, a Plan of Action was proposed. In the first week of July, the Regional Relief delegate from Nairobi conducted a one week mission to review and refine the proposed Plan of Action.

The ERCS, at the Dessie Branch level, has provided sufficient "start-up" funds to begin procurement of supplemental food, to be pre-positioned in the Gishane locality before the onset of heavy *meher* rains and the resultant logistics difficulties (See *Plan of Action: Emergency Phase*, below).

**Other Agencies' Action w**

In response to the DPPC revised National Report on Relief Needs, which was based on findings from several joint assessment missions, the WFP launched a USD 40 million Emergency Appeal to cover 1,196,000 beneficiaries for a seven month period, June-December 1999. This is expected to cover the needs of 31% of the government's target population, with the remaining needs to be met by other donors.

Although the WFP and the DPPC have not finalised the regional food allocation, the Amhara Region has been tentatively allocated 48.7%, as it is the most seriously affected. In addition to cereals input, the Appeal further requests supplementary food for the four Zones of South Wollo, North Wollo, Northwest Shoa, and South Tigray for a four-month period, effective immediately, based on alarming nutritional indicators.

Both Save the Children UK and World Vision International are currently operational in the South Wollo Zone, where 15 of 17 woredas are affected. World Vision has thus far contributed 150 mt of cereals and is planning on providing vulnerable farmers with seeds, although the varieties have not yet been determined.

Save the Children UK is seeking bulk food in response to the government's estimated requirement. Thus far, 16,000 mt of cereals, and 486 mt of supplemental food have been pledged for the North and South Wollo Zones, by DFID and the Netherlands Government. Save the Children will turn this food over to the DPPC and play a monitoring role in its distribution. Of the 15 affected woredas in South Wollo, only six will be allocated food from this pledge for a six month period, though this selection has yet to be finalised.

**Co-ordination w**

Though the DPPC is the predominant implementor of relief interventions in the country the Ethiopian Red Cross Society, in its constitutional charter, has an explicit mandate to conduct relief interventions. The ERCS is the only other institution in the country with this level of autonomy. At the same time, a strong spirit of collaboration exists between the ERCS and the DPPC. It is anticipated therefore that local DPPB representatives would accompany ERCS distribution teams as observers, and assist as required.

***The Intended Operation***

**Assessment of Needs w**

Red Cross field assessments were made in mid-May and end June, as indicated above. During the same period, UN agencies, Save the Children UK, representatives from USAID/OFDA and USAID/FFP, as well as the EU and DFID, have joined the Ethiopian DPPC and Ministries of Agriculture and Health in impact assessments of *belg* rain failure.

At present, the outlook is very positive for the continued provision of staple cereals to the affected *woredas*. The Plan of Action, outlined below, intends to supplement these rations for the most at-risk among the vulnerable population.

**Immediate Needs w**

Woreda	Total Pop	Affected Pop	Vulnerable Individuals	Vulnerable Households	Food requirement (kg)
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<b>Kutaber</b>	105,386	50,810	15,243	3,811	182,916
<b>Total</b>	229,300	133,199	39,959	9,990	479,508

This Appeal aims to supply six months' supplementary food assistance to at-risk individuals in two of the six most seriously affected woredas in the South Wollo Zone: Kutaber (48% of the population affected) and Ambassel (66%). In both woredas, 80% of the affected population are farmers depending exclusively, or largely, on the *belg* rains for their annual crop. The six-month period of assistance is premised on the availability of off-farm employment for the beneficiary heads of household during the anticipated *meher* harvest in November and December. This coping mechanism is generally utilised to fill the annual food shortfalls experienced by *belg* farmers. While the possibility of a daily wage will not fully relieve the precarious food-security situation of the target group, the *meher* harvest will positively affect household purchasing power, as market prices are likely to fall back to normal levels (at present grain prices are more than double typical levels for this time of year).

According to the Ministry of Health Representative at the woreda level, at risk individuals constitute 30% of the total affected population, as follows: 15% children under five, 10% pregnant and lactating women, and 5% elderly (over 60) and handicapped individuals. As the provision of staple food for the affected population is expected to be met by the DPPC through contributions to its request for assistance, the ERCS programme will focus only on insuring this supplement to those most seriously in need of this additional nutritional input .

A ration of 2 kg/month/person of the blended, fortified cereal product *Fafa* will be supplied to the 39,959 individuals indicated in the table above. This ration will provide a daily supplement of 240 kcal and 13g of protein, within the accepted nutritional parameters of a food supplement. The bulk food ration that has been distributed in the Zone for the past three months has fallen short of the recommended daily kcal requirement by roughly 20%. At the same time the nutritional status of the population, based on survey data compiled by Save the Children UK in May, shows a decline of 5% from six months ago, particularly in the observed rates of severe malnutrition in the "mainly *belg*" areas of the Zone. The planned supplement will raise the caloric and protein intake of the most seriously effected individuals above the recommended basic daily requirement. In addition, it will increase the vitamin intake of young children and pregnant and lactating mothers significantly.

The *Fafa* product is produced under Ethiopian government control, and is prepared by cooking with water. Conversations during the field assessment indicate that the product is widely known and accepted. It can be baked as a loaf, but is most commonly prepared as a broth, ensuring easy consumption and digestion by the target groups, many of whom are in a weakened condition.



The targeted beneficiaries are among the affected population identified and registered by the peasants' associations of the *woredas*, and submitted to the DPPC at the Zonal level. This information will be used to reach the at-risk groups identified above.

**Anticipated Later Needs w**

**Figure 1: Typical Crop Calendar in South Wollo**

	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	August	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
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				Long cycle Corn Sorghum		Wheat	Short cycle Corn Sorghum		Chickpea		Long cycle Sorghum	Wheat
Belg Crop	Sow Barley Oat					Harvest Barley Oat						

 indicates *belg* rain season  
 indicates *meher* rain season

**Figure 2: Farming Demographics by Woreda**

Woreda	Vulnerable <i>belg/meher</i> households (32%)	Chickpea seed requirement	Vulnerable <i>meher</i> households (48%)	Barley seed requirement (70% of total <i>belg</i> seeds)	Wheat seed requirement (30% of total <i>belg</i> seeds)
Ambassel	1,977	39.5 mt	2,966	129.77 mt	55.61 mt
Kutaber	1,212	24.2 mt	1,829	80.02 mt	34.29 mt
Total	3,189	63.7 mt	4,795	209.79 mt	89.9 mt

The figures provided in Table 2 above are rough estimates based on data compiled at the woreda level. The local administrators are able to determine the *meher/belg* farmers, and the solely *belg* farmers by analysing the localities from which they come, altitude being a reliable indicator of the crop cycle which is viable in each of the localities.

According to the Zonal and *woreda* level Ministry of Agriculture representatives, the mixed harvesting population (*belg/meher*) will plant chickpeas using the residual moisture from the *meher* rains in late August. The solely *belg* farmers cannot plant this crop due to the high altitude of their land. Chickpea seeds then will be distributed to the mixed farming portion of the vulnerable households that had received the food supplement (40 kg/ha, avg. farm size 0.5 ha) in mid-August. A combination of 70% barley (125 kg/ha, *workeyeh* or *tikorgebs* variety) and 30% wheat (125 kg/ha, *ET-13* variety) will be provided to those vulnerable households which only plant *belg* crops in December. The required adapted varieties of seeds can be obtained locally within the Amhara Region. Specialist agronomists from the Ministry, who are supported by the FAO, will be involved in this process and will conduct germination tests and certification of the specified seeds.

**Red Cross Objectives w**

- { To provide approximately 40,000 at risk individuals (pregnant and lactating mothers, children under five, and elderly and handicapped persons) with blended, fortified cereal as a nutritional supplement to the staple food currently being distributed by the National DPPC.
- { To provide seeds, after pre-harvest estimates are made, to vulnerable *belg/meher* and *belg* farmers, in order to replenish completely depleted seed stocks at the household level.

***National Society/Federation Plan of Action***

**Emergency Phase: July - December 1999 w**

Procurement, transport and distribution of *Fafa* to seriously at risk individuals in Kutaber and Ambassel woredas currently registered by the DPPC as being among the affected population.

Three distribution sites have been identified:  
 in Ambassel woreda -- Wuchali town (60% of beneficiaries, 60 km from Dessie), and Gishane town (40%, 80 km from Dessie);

in Kutaber woreda -- Kutaber town (100% of beneficiaries, 23 km from Dessie).

Distribution will occur at each site on a two-monthly basis, with the exception of Gishane, expected to be inaccessible from end July due to normally heavy meher rains, where a three month ration will be supplied in mid-July.

**Phase Two: August - December 1999 w**

Procurement, certification and distribution of chickpea (Aug), barley and wheat (December) seeds to vulnerable *belg/meher* and *belg* households in Kutaber and Ambassel woredas (quantities to be determined in late July based on outcome of *meher* rains).

**Capacity of the National Society w**

The Ethiopian Red Cross Society (ERCS) has a long-time relief officer at headquarters who has been closely monitoring the situation and participated in the field assessment. This officer will be responsible for procurement and logistics from Addis Ababa, as well as assisting in programme implementation at the field level.

The ERCS has a well established Branch in Dessie town, the Zonal capital of South Wollo. Both the Branch Secretary and Programme Co-ordinator have been actively involved in relief operations with the ERCS since the mid-eighties. An active sub-branch in Haik has responsibility for the Ambassel woreda.

The branch maintains warehouses in Dessie and Haik town with sufficient capacity to store the anticipated quantities of food and seed stocks. It has a field vehicle which, though currently in need of repair, will be used to transport the team of youth volunteers from Haik and Dessie who will carry out the distributions and conduct end-use monitoring. There are at present a total of 486 volunteers associated with these two branches, including five co-ordinators.

**Present Capacity of the Federation in Ethiopia w**

At present, the Federation Delegation in Ethiopia has no relief delegate. The development delegate who participated in the original field assessment will follow the operation on a day to day basis. The operation will be technically supported by the Regional Relief Delegate, based in Nairobi, who will carry out monthly missions (depending on the phase and development of the operation).

Additionally, reporting support will be provided by the Regional Reporting Delegate based in Nairobi. It is expected that three missions will be undertaken in the six month period covered by the Appeal, in order to insure that informative and timely Situation Reports are produced and disseminated.

## ***Budget summary***

See Annex 1 for details.

## ***Conclusion***

The disastrous effects of drought are neither sudden nor short lived. The climatic conditions behind this famine have been the same for the past three years, but they have had a cumulative effect, reducing the beneficiaries' ability to fully recover from one disastrous harvest before being subjected to another. Efforts to alleviate their impact have proved inadequate and this year's disaster represents the compounding of several years of limited assistance to the affected population. The ERCS and the Federation, through this Appeal, will attempt to break that cycle.

The present drought situation underlines the importance of the disaster preparedness and response programmes presented in the Emergency Appeal 1999 (Programme no. 01.17/99). These include the restocking of ERCS emergency stocks, the development of radio communications in disaster prone

areas and training in relief management. So far, this appeal, for CHF 807,000, is only 48 per cent covered. Donors are asked to take it into account when responding to the present appeal.

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Disaster Response & Operations Coordination

George Weber  
Secretary General

## Ethiopia: Drought in South Wollo

### Appeal no. 15/99 - budget summary

<b>Needs in kind and/or cash</b>		CHF
FAFA: 483 mt	539,000	
Chickpeas: 64 mt	24,000	
Barley: 210 mt	105,000	
Wheat: 90 mt	52,000	
<b>Total needed in kind (or cash)</b>		<b>720,000</b>
<b>Needs in cash</b>		
Transport, warehousing and vehicle costs	45,000	
National staff	35,000	
Travel and communications	8,000	
General and administration	20,000	
Secretariat / delegation support	42,000	
<b>Total needed in cash</b>		<b>150,000</b>
<b>Cash on hand</b>		0.00
<b>Total sought in cash, kind &amp; services</b>	<b>CHF</b>	<b><u>870,000</u></b>