

## *ETHIOPIA: DROUGHT*

### *Appeal no. 15/99*

*26 April, 2000*

#### *The Context*

Following the total failure of the belg (or secondary) rains in 1999 in the northern Ethiopian Highlands which usually fall between February and March, the food security situation of the most vulnerable deteriorated rapidly. Several years of failing rains contributed to worsening drought conditions and forced farming families to sell their livestock and other assets. The Federation responded by launching an Appeal for 870,000 CHF to provide supplementary food (complementing Government bulk food rations) to 40,000 of the most vulnerable for a period of six months in the two woredas (administrative districts) of Ambassel and Kutaber in South Wollo zone. A distribution of seeds to farmers was planned to replenish depleted household stocks.

#### *Objectives, achievements and constraints*

The operation had two objectives. The first was 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 country's Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Commission (DPPC).**

**Achievements:** Four rounds of distributions were conducted in July and August (completed on August 3), August and September (completed on September 8), in October (completed on October 18th) and in December (completed on December 23rd). The distributions were successfully carried out at two distribution points in Wuchali and Kutaber towns under the supervision of two Ethiopian Red Cross Society (ERCS) Disaster Preparedness and Response (DPR) officers, with support from the Branch Secretary in Dessie and branch youth volunteers. Monitoring was undertaken by the Federation's regional relief delegates. Some 40,106 beneficiaries were targeted (24,858 from Amabassel woreda and 15,248 from Kutaber woreda), as well as 390 destitute people in Wuchallie and Kutaber towns in the last distribution. The beneficiaries were selected by the local authorities, and consisted of children under five (50%), pregnant and lactating mothers (28%), and elderly and handicapped (22%). Each beneficiary received 3 kgs per month (except for the first month when 2 kgs was made available). Purchases were made in Addis and transported to two ERCS-maintained warehouses within the zone. The table below summarises these distributions.

FAFA/fa mix/CSB distrib.	Opening Stock (MT)	Received (MT)	Distributed in the period (MT)		Total distrib. (MT)	Stock close (MT)	Benef. reached
			Ambassel	Kutaber			
Jul/Aug	0	420	60.5	30.5	91	329	40,184
Aug/Sep	329	0	58.2	45.8	104	225	40,090
Oct.	225	20	148.5	91.5	240	5	40,106
Dec.	5	238	151	92	243	0	40,496

**Constraints:** As a result of the mounting food crisis throughout the country, extreme pressure was put on the local market's supply of fortified blended cereals. The price of FAFA (a wheat based blend) rose considerably. It was, therefore, decided to purchase Famix, rather than FAFA as originally intended, which while slightly lower in nutritional value, was less expensive and allowed for an increase in rations from 2 to 3 kgs per person per month. Some reports indicated that the general food ration provided through the Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Commission (DPPC) to the vulnerable in the two woredas was less than the recommended 12 kgs per person per month because of the large number of beneficiaries and restricted supply. This dilution necessarily reduced the impact of the ERCS supplementary food intervention, although it should be emphasized that malnutrition levels amongst the most vulnerable would have been considerably higher if it had not been for this programme.

The second objective of the programme was to:

- **Provide seeds after pre-harvest estimates are made to vulnerable belg and meher farmers in order to replenish completely depleted seed stocks at the household level.**

**Achievements:** During the August distribution, 43 metric tons of chick pea seeds were distributed to 3,440 mixed cultivating meher/belg households in both woredas. In December, 299 metric tons of wheat and barley seeds were procured and distributed to 7,482 households. The table below summarises these distributions.

Month	Seeds	Open. Stock (MT)	Rec. (MT)	Distributed in the period (MT)		Total distrib. (MT)	Stock Close (MT)	Benefic. reached
				Ambassel	Kutaber			
Aug.	Chick pea	0	43	26.7	16.3	43	0	3,440
Dec.	Wheat	0	219.3	185	114.3	219.3	0	7,482
	Barley	0	80			80	0	

**Constraints:** Due to the increase in seed price, a smaller quantity of seeds than originally intended was distributed. Each beneficiary farmer received 12.5 kgs of chick pea seeds instead of 20 kgs - the amount needed for 0.5 hectare. In the second distribution, 40 kgs of wheat or barley seeds were distributed to each household instead of 62.5 kgs - the amount needed for 0.5 hectare.

## Conclusions

The ERCS, with support provided by the Federation, was able to successfully implement the supplementary feeding programme within the two selected woredas in South Wollo in 1999. The logistics and the management of the operation were carried out well. Co-ordination with local authorities, the DPPC and other agencies was good. While no final impact assessment

was carried out, malnutrition levels amongst the targeted group benefited as a result of this intervention.

Certain factors outside the control of the ERCS and Federation reduced the impact of the intervention. This included the reduction in the level of the general ration provided to the beneficiaries by the DPPC. There now appears to be a more realistic estimate of the number of people in need within the two woredas which will reduce the risk of the ration being diluted in future. This is of significance in the present circumstances with the likelihood of failure of the fourth successive belg rains and the need for a further intervention by the ERCS and the Federation.

The monitoring and reporting capacity of the ERCS and the Federation was affected by a change of staff at Headquarters and the early departure of the Relief Delegate. The situation has now improved with a new DPR officer who has recently joined the ERCS, as well as the assignment of a Federation Relief Delegate.

In February, the ERCS and the Federation undertook an assessment of the situation in the two woredas as the belg rains have so far failed to appear this year. The assessment concluded that Belg farmers were particularly vulnerable, having sold many of their assets to survive. The ERCS and the Federation launched Preliminary Appeal No. 09/2000 on 8 April, 2000, focusing on three types of interventions: a cash for work activity, a supplementary food component, and bulk food distribution (coordinating and working with WFP, other UN agencies, and NGO's). An outstanding balance of CHF 190,384 will be transferred from the 1999 appeal to the current 2000 drought appeal.

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