

ETHIOPIA: FOOD SECURITY

26 January, 2000

Information Bulletin N° 1/2000

The Disaster

Since the beginning of 1999, estimates of relief needs for people severely affected by drought and crop failure (resulting from the poor 1998 *meher* and 1999 *belg* harvests, and the June-September 1999 *kiremt* season) steadily increased, a result of worsening climatic conditions as well as overly-optimistic assessments of harvests. Many people who were not originally included in the Government's Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (DPPC) first drought appeal for 1999 (issued in December 1998) covering some 2,500,000 beneficiaries were identified as "at risk" but not in need of emergency assistance. However, by July 1999 the situation had worsened and with available food resources dwindling and coping strategies stretched these people were included in the food assistance programme.

In coordination with a United Nations Appeal launched in June, 1999, the International Federation launched a 6-month Emergency Appeal (No. 15/99) in July, 1999 to support the Ethiopian Red Cross Society (ERCS) in providing supplementary food and seeds for 40,000 drought-affected beneficiaries in two *woredas* in the South Wollo zone. This appeal was fully covered (see the Federation Situation report No. 2 dated 30 November, 1999).

Despite the fact that both the Federation and UN appeals were covered by the end of November 1999, the food shortage emergency continued and new areas of concern were identified in North and South Gondar zones, Borena zone, Somali Region (Gode) and Gambella Region. The DPPC subsequently released figures identifying the expected relief food requirements for the first quarter of 2000, intended as a bridging mechanism to provide donors with provisional information on anticipated food requirements pending the completion of the yearly crop assessment, which was not expected to begin until December, 1999. An anticipated poor *meher* harvest, the drought in the pastoral areas, lower yields from short-cycle substitute crops, as well as the effect of the displacement of people as a direct result of the conflict with Eritrea were factors which influenced the preliminary beneficiary number of over 7.5 million persons. In addition, water borne diseases such as dysentery have increased in the drought-affected areas of the north, east, and south of the country where cases of malnutrition among children have become common. Severe cases of both chronic and acute malnutrition have been reported.

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The following table reflects the breakdown of total beneficiaries by area and need:

Region	Beneficiaries	MT *
Tigray	1,047,000	146,081
Amhara	2,500,000	292,000
Oromiya	1,600,000	159,608
Somali	1,321,000	130,395
SNNPR	852,000	83,991
Afar	273,000	17,168
Gambella	59,000	3,840
Harari	7,000	318
Diredawa	47,500	2,136
	7,706,500	835,537

* Information provided is from the latest DPPC appeal document. Quantities specified are preliminary estimates, and consist of a mixture of grain, Famix, and vegetable oil.

Recent media reports have highlighted in particular the conditions in Konso, a town with a population of around 186,000 located 600 kms south of Addis Ababa. Konso faces severe food insecurity conditions due predominantly to the total failure of the *belg* rains and an infestation of army worms in forage and cereal crops. To date, 102,722 people have been identified by *woreda* authorities as requiring immediate relief assistance, twice the number actually receiving assistance.

The Government Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Bureaus (DPPBs) of each area lack capacity in logistics, health care facilities, medical supplies and basic organisational skills, as well as manpower. The Federation is collaborating with WHO, UNICEF, UNDP and USAID on emergency response options to alleviate the situation. UNDP is expected to issue an assessment report on Friday, 28 January.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

The capacity of the ERCS to extend its current relief operation in the north (South Wollo) to a wider area is being assessed. The ERCS is currently working in a limited capacity implementing a small water development project in Borena where the drought situation is particularly serious. The ERCS lacks the capacity to deliver water by trucks or to respond to the drought situation. Joint ERCS and Federation assessment teams will be organised, and the results will determine whether the Federation will launch an appeal to support the ERCS response to the widespread drought.

For further details please contact: Desk Officer J. Gillijns, Phone: 730 4224; email: gillijns@ifrc.org>

Peter Rees-Gildea
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