

INFORMATION BULLETIN



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération Internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

EAST AFRICA AND HORN OF AFRICA: FOOD INSECURITY

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The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 183 countries.

In Brief

This Bulletin (no. 1/2006) is being issued for information only, and reflects the status of the situation and information available at this time. The Federation is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

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For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for national society profiles, please also access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

The Situation

An estimated 11 million people or more are facing serious food shortages in East Africa and the Horn of Africa due to severe droughts coupled with the effects of past and/or ongoing conflicts. Food shortages are particularly grave in Somalia, eastern Kenya, south-eastern Ethiopia and Djibouti. Meteorologists predict that the seasonal rains normally expected in the Horn of Africa in March may not be enough to end the drought and food insecurity.

Kenya

Crop failure and depletion of livestock herds due to prolonged drought have led to famine conditions with an estimated 40 deaths reported in the arid areas. The Kenyan government has appealed for around CHF 197 million (USD 150 million or EUR 126.5 million) to provide food for about 2.5 million people, almost 10 per cent of the country's population, over the next six months. Additional assistance is also required for the provision of water (for people and livestock), restocking of livestock as well as provision of seeds to farmers in preparation for the next crop season.

FEWS NET reported that pastoralists were trekking up to 40 km in search of water and pasture leading to weakening of the livestock and high animal mortality rates especially in Wajir, Marsabit, Kajiado and Mandera districts.

Rates of child malnutrition are alarmingly high in several pastoral districts of the country. Significant parts of these districts are now classified by the Kenya Food Security Steering Group (KFSSG) as facing emergency conditions.

Somalia

Approximately 2 million people need humanitarian assistance in Somalia, according to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). Most of the affected people are in the south- especially in the agro-pastoral and pastoral Gedo, Middle Juba and Bakool regions- where acute food shortage and livelihood crises are being faced due to severe drought. The secondary rainy season or *Deyr* (October to December) failed in most of the eight agricultural regions in the south resulting in widespread crop failure. It is estimated that the forthcoming *Deyr* crop, about to be harvested, could be the lowest in a decade.

Increases in admissions of severely malnourished children to therapeutic feeding centres have been reported in Beletw Hawa (Gedo). According to the World Food Programme (WFP), about 64,000 tonnes of food aid are needed to feed the drought-affected population until June 2006. So far, only 16,700 tonnes are available.

Djibouti

Nearly 150,000 people, almost one-fifth of Djibouti's population, are estimated to be facing food shortages. Food insecurity in rural areas has worsened due to delayed and poor rains during the main July-September season. Poor off-season rains (October-February) in the coastal dry season areas will exacerbate the already serious situation. Water is becoming scarce, and livestock deaths have been reported in some areas. The situation is particularly serious in the northwest and southeast border pastoral zones.

Ethiopia

Initial estimates indicate that more than 1 million people in the Somali region are facing severe food shortages. Over CHF 52.5 million (USD 40 million or EUR 33.7 million) is urgently required to save the affected and vulnerable communities. The onset of the dry season (January to March) is expected to worsen the situation.

Overall, more than 8 million people in Ethiopia rely on food assistance in both relief and safety net programmes. Already there have been widespread human and livestock migrations and tribal conflicts over scarce resources. There is an increase in the number of livestock deaths, the slaughtering of calves to save cows and a decrease in the production of livestock products such as milk. Crop wilting in agro-pastoral areas, malnutrition and reports of child deaths are also some of the post-famine conditions being witnessed.

Tanzania

A Rapid Vulnerability Assessment conducted in August 2005 by the Food Security Information Team (FSIT) revealed that there were 594,503 people in 34 districts facing acute food shortages. According to the Tanzania

Metrological Agency, the prevailing drought is forecasted to continue up to March and is affecting more than 12 regions of Arusha, Manyara, Mara, Shinyanga, Dodoma, Singida (all of which are hard hit), Tanga, Pwani, Dar-es-Salaam, Mwanza, Kilimanjaro, Morogoro and Zanzibar. WFP, in collaboration with FSIT, is preparing to implement a Comprehensive Food Security Vulnerability Assessment (CFSVA) in the whole of county, including Zanzibar. Priority will be given to drought prone areas in the central, north-western and north-eastern parts of the country.

Eritrea

The government of Eritrea is assessing the short-term food needs. Crop assessments for four regions are not yet released. Two regions in the coastal areas expected the rains to start in December 2005; however, so far the rains have delayed. The Eritrean government launched a long-term food security strategy in early January 2006.

Uganda

The current dry season Uganda is experiencing is to continue until mid-March, an official from the Meteorology Department has warned. The official, Aloysius Kagoro, told Xinhua News Agency by telephone that though the country is currently supposed to have a dry season, the weather this time round is out of the ordinary as temperatures are very high and the last rainy season ended prematurely. Last week, the Uganda government announced emergency measures to mitigate the impact of the drought season especially in the cattle corridors, which include areas in southern, central and north-eastern parts of the country.

Burundi and Rwanda are also experiencing drought that needs to be monitored closely.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Kenya Red Cross Society has launched a national appeal for assistance to the affected communities. Currently the national society is involved in providing relief assistance to the affected people in collaboration with the government. Towards end of December 2005, the International Federation provided the national society with CHF 427,808 from its Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.pl?05/05ME076.pdf) to begin meeting immediate needs. On 4 January 2006, the Federation launched an international appeal for CHF 16,369,585 (USD 12.7 million or EUR 10.5 million) to assist some 329,000 beneficiaries for 12 months. For more information please visit http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.pl?06/MDRKE001.pdf.

The Somali Red Crescent Society is working in operational alliances with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) as the lead agency. The national society, in conjunction with ICRC, has carried out a food security assessment in South Gedo region. A similar evaluation is to be carried out in Bay/Bakool and Juba. The Somali Red Crescent Society and ICRC are involved in de-stocking as well as water and health care provision.

Discussions are ongoing between ICRC and the Ethiopian Red Cross Society on how to conduct a joint food security assessment in the Somali region of Ethiopia.

The Red Cross Society of Eritrea and the Red Crescent Society of Djibouti have been working closely with the UN and government agencies in providing relief to the affected communities in their respective countries. Currently, the Red Cross Society of Eritrea is implementing an emergency operation to assist 55,000 beneficiaries with food relief, water for both domestic and agricultural use, seeds and farming tools and community based health development activities. This operation is supported by a Federation emergency appeal (Eritrea: Drought; Appeal no. 05EA002- refer to http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.pl?05/05EA002.pdf).

The Uganda Red Cross Society continues to monitor the situation, in close collaboration with the Office of the Prime Minister, and is sharing available information with partners including the regional delegation in Nairobi. The national society intends to prioritise areas for action and keep the Movement partners informed of its decisions, resources and gaps.

The Tanzania Red Cross National Society is closely monitoring the situation through its regional coordinators in Mwanza region, and subsequently updating the regional delegation through its headquarters.

The Federation regional delegation in Nairobi has been following the situation closely through the internet, local press, reports from the national societies, and through information sharing with other partners. The Federation plans to hold a regional food security meeting in Nairobi, Kenya on 19 January 2006, to review the situation with the aim of proposing an assessment for other countries in the region. It is anticipated that a regional appeal will be

launched thereafter. The one-day meeting will bring together the national societies of the affected countries, partner national societies (PNS) working in the region as well as Geneva-based and Nairobi-based senior staff and delegates. An assessment of the returnee situation in Burundi, commencing on 17 January 2006, will also review the food security situation in the country.

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