

# ***EASTERN AFRICA: FLOODS***

*19 November  
1997*

***Somalia, Kenya, Sudan, Ethiopia***

***Information Bulletin N° 01***

## ***The Disaster***

Across Eastern Africa, close to a million people are thought to be affected by floods and many more are at risk. The greatest number of homeless have been reported in southern Somalia, while thousands more are displaced across the border in south-eastern Ethiopia's Somali Regional State. More than 100,000 are in trouble in the coastal area of Sudan's Red Sea State. Port Sudan, with a population of 700,000, is threatened by infectious disease and malaria. But tens of thousands are affected on the coast where at least 35 people have died, and 2,500 more are known to be displaced in North-eastern Province which borders Somalia. Weather forecasts are not encouraging. It is predicted that the present system of rains affecting the region will intensify and continue beyond November 20th.

### ***- SOMALIA***

Over 1,200 people have died, 800,000 are at risk and more than 200,000 have lost their homes. The Somali Red Crescent branch in Kismayo reports human bodies floating down the river. Loss of livestock is close to 15,000. Roads are impassable, airstrips are flooded and bridges have collapsed. Half the cereal crops in the affected regions are reported damaged and food prices have increased three-fold. Food reserves, usually kept underground, have been washed away. Conflict is adding an additional challenge to the already complicated operation.

### ***- KENYA***

Rainfall on 2 November was higher than the total expected for the month. Waterborne disease is increasing, and at least 35 people have died from cholera. Tens of thousands are affected on the coast and 2,500 are displaced in North-eastern Province.

### ***- SUDAN***

The coast and Nile River areas are seriously affected forcing IDPs to move out of temporary settlements. The 700,000 inhabitants of Port Sudan face outbreaks of cholera, malaria and other infectious diseases. The local authorities have declared an emergency and called for assistance for 100,000 people.

### ***- ETHIOPIA***

The Somali Regional State is seriously affected. Overflowing rivers have left 57 dead and thousands displaced. Nine thousand head of livestock have been washed away. Most of the affected areas are inaccessible to anything but helicopters.

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

The National Societies in the four affected countries are participating in flood relief operations. The immediate relief response has included elements that will reduce the impact of the disaster in the mid to long term: Kenya Red Cross is distributing information on how to prevent cholera, malaria and other waterborne diseases alongside blankets, plastic sheeting and food.

The International Federation has launched an appeal on behalf of the Sudanese Red Crescent Society to assist 25,000 people for three months. It concentrates on the Red Sea State and focuses on countering the threat of waterborne epidemics such as cholera and malaria, as well as ensuring access to safe drinking water. SRCS and the International Federation plan to back up immediate relief assistance for 25,000 vulnerable persons with a comprehensive health, education, water and sanitation programme.

The Ethiopian Red Cross Society is involved in a relief operation for 5,000 families in the south-eastern part of the country. Blankets, plastic sheeting, medicines, soap and water containers will be provided by ICRC (under its mandate, as this is a conflict zone) and distributed by the National Society. Maize and sorghum seeds, along with farming tools, will be needed to replace crops that have been washed away.

In Somalia, the National Society has three branches in the most affected areas in the Juba Valley, but due to the conflict does not have full access to some areas. It is working in close co-ordination with ICRC in Middle and Lower Shabelle as well as in Beled Weyne, where volunteers are distributing blankets, plastic sheeting, high protein biscuits and other relief items flown in by ICRC. The MCH clinics in Kismayo, Baidoa and Mogadishu are providing health services to the affected populations. These clinics have been supported by German, Norwegian, Belgium and Spanish Red Cross Societies over recent years.

The International Federation is planning to launch an Appeal later this week to assist Somali Red Crescent distribute blankets, tarpaulins and kitchen sets to 4,000 families in the Northern part of the country, where floods have also being reported. The cholera prevention programme that was planned to start beginning of 1998 will be initiated immediately.

The Federation has sent a senior relief advisor to Nairobi to provide technical assistance to the NSs and delegations. A water and sanitation specialist from the Regional Delegation in Harare will travel to Eastern Africa to provide technical assistance.

ICRC, the Federation and the Operating National Societies are co-ordinating closely in the field and at Geneva level.

## ***Needs***

Pressing needs include shelter, basic food/non-food items and safe drinking water. Notwithstanding this, the Federation and the ONSs in the region are deeply concerned about the consequences in the mid to long term, i.e. food security, epidemic outbreaks and rehabilitation of homes and infrastructure

For the immediate emergency relief phase in north-east and north-west of Somalia, North Eastern Kenya and some areas in Ethiopia basic non food items like blankets, plastic sheeting, kitchen sets

will be needed. Due to the difficult access to most of the affected areas, specialised transport will be sought. The Federation's aircraft, presently conducting two trips per week from Nairobi to Somalia has been scheduled for 10 additional trips in the coming weeks.

To cope with the deteriorating health situation a priority for the ONSs and the Federation will be to focus on health education and to monitor outbreaks of cholera, malaria and other waterborne diseases. These will require an increase in medical supplies such as anti-malarial drugs, the provision of cholera kits and water treatment systems. The above will be accompanied by community mobilisation on preventive health and refresher courses for volunteers.

Many of the above measures are in part included in recently-launched appeals against cholera in Kenya (N° 19/97) and in the aftermath of floods in Sudan (N° 24/97). For more information, or to contribute to these Appeals, donors are asked to contact the Acting Desk Officer for the Eastern Africa Region, Juan Saenz, on ++4122 7304315.

Ann Naef  
Head  
Appeals & Reports Service

Bekele Geleta  
Director  
Africa Department