

EMERGENCY APPEAL



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

CENTRAL AMERICA: DROUGHT AND FOOD INSECURITY

Appeal no:31/01
19 September 2001

***THIS PRELIMINARY APPEAL SEEKS CHF 3,507,865
IN CASH, KIND AND SERVICES
TO ASSIST 57,000 BENEFICIARIES FOR 6 MONTHS***

The Situation

In El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, many rural areas are suffering from a third consecutive year of acute shortages of rainfall. Lack of rain since June this year has resulted in food deficits, as subsistence farmers' crops of beans and maize have withered and died. The World Food Programme estimates that 1.5 million people are affected by drought, of whom 695,000 are facing critical food security problems. Those worst affected are subsistence farmers whose crops have been devastated by lack of rain and whose coping mechanisms have been exhausted.

In *El Salvador*, an average of 80 per cent of the maize crop was lost in four departments in the east of the country: San Miguel, Morazán, La Unión and Usulután. In addition, the earthquakes of January and February resulted in a reduction in the area planted. More recently, the onset of the "red tide" is contaminating seafood. In *Guatemala*, in early September, 41 people died of malnutrition in the municipalities of Jocotán and Comatán, department of Chiquimula, north east Guatemala, as a result of crop failure and poverty. In *Honduras*, the government declared a state of emergency in the south, centre and west on 23 July, with southern Honduras having suffered a 100 per cent grain loss. In *Nicaragua*, drought is particularly affecting the north and north west regions, where farmers have lost virtually all their maize crop.

Continued lack of rainfall in the region is compounded by a series of aggravating factors, including the dramatic plunge in coffee prices. This has led to the closure of coffee plantations forcing thousands out of work, particularly in Nicaragua, as well as depriving small holders and landless labourers of their sole source of income. There are indications that, towards the end of the year, continuing drought and subsequent second cycle crop failures may deepen the crisis.

In *Panama*, the absence of rain has also begun to generate agricultural and livestock losses, particularly in the Peninsula de Azuero. Without rain in September and October the rice harvest will be threatened, creating potential food insecurity. *Costa Rica* is particularly affected by the influx of displaced persons from Nicaragua. The National Societies and the Federation in the region are closely monitoring developments.

The effects of drought in Central America

<i>Countries</i>	<i>Number of Persons Affected</i>	<i>Number of persons in need of emergency food assistance</i>	<i>Agricultural losses due to present drought Hectares / metric tonnes</i>
El Salvador	150'000	75'000	45,000 ha. 113,400 MT
Guatemala	113'596	63'510	31,748 ha 57,357 MT
Honduras	791'394	316'745	96,241 ha 135,064 MT
Nicaragua	187'645	115'400	44,660 ha
TOTAL	1'242'635	570'655	

Sources: World Food Programme (WFP) Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean: Fact Sheet dated 16 August 2001 and El Salvador Government figures.

Between 2 August and 14 September the Honduran Red Cross, with the support of the American Red Cross, Swiss Red Cross, Dutch Red Cross, the Federation, USAID and local institutions - such as Escuela Agrícola El Zamorano - undertook distributions in the departments of Valle and Choluteca. A total of 13,932 beneficiaries received food assistance and 1,050 families received agricultural support. In early September, the Guatemalan Red Cross, with the support of the American Red Cross, distributed beans, maize and rice to 867 families in the department of Chiquimula. However, further support is urgently required. In El Salvador the government has initiated *Plan Sembrador* to attend to the needs of 62 of the most severely affected municipalities.

The Needs

Immediate Needs w

Subsistence farmers in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua are in urgent need of food supplies for at least three months. The National Societies seek to distribute food to a total of 8,000 beneficiary families in the region, taking into consideration the work of their respective governments, the World Food Programme, UN agencies and NGOs, to avoid duplication of assistance. Food rations would be issued in accordance with the Federation and SPHERE standards, based on a family of six and taking into account the population's dietary customs, as follows:

Item	Ration per person / day
Maize	400 g.
Beans	60 g.
Vegetable oil / butter	20 g

Later Needs w

To break the cycle of failed crops, agricultural support will be a fundamental component of this appeal. The National Societies plan to distribute seed and fertilisers to beneficiary farmers while, at the same time, provide information on their use and training on improving subsistence agriculture. It must also be noted that depending on the success of the current crop cycle, there may be an increased need for humanitarian assistance at the end of 2001 and into 2002.

The Proposed Operation

The operation to support subsistence farmers and their families, whose crops were devastated by lack of rainfall, aims to supply urgently needed food to 8,000 families for three months. It will also monitor health conditions in severely affected communities and refer cases of malnutrition for care. In a second phase, the operation seeks to provide seed and fertiliser to 9,500 farmers to maximise the chances of a successful subsequent harvest. This will be accompanied by expert advice in agricultural techniques such as crop diversification.

Objectives and Activities planned w

PHASE 1

Relief Distributions w

Objective 1: To mitigate the impact of food insecurity in the region caused by the lack of rain and other factors

El Salvador: To distribute food rations to 1,000 families for three months in the departments of Morazán, la Unión, San Miguel and San Vicente.

Honduras: To distribute food rations to 2,500 beneficiary families for three months in the worst affected departments of Choluteca, Valle and El Paraíso.

Guatemala: To distribute food rations to 2,500 beneficiary families for three months in the worst affected departments of Jalapa, Baja Verapaz and Chiquimula.

Nicaragua: To distribute food rations to 2,000 families in the municipality of Tipitapa, Colama, severely hit by the drought and coffee crisis.

Health w

Objective 1: To contribute towards improving the health status of families affected by food insecurity

- { On the occasion of the initial monthly food distribution, to carry out monitoring of the nutritional status of children under five through weight/height and arm radius measurements. This will help evaluate the effectiveness of food distribution over the three months and provide early warning of malnutrition.
- { To provide referral to health authorities in cases of severe malnutrition.
- { To compare results of the nutritional survey with those of a survey to be carried out at the close of the three months' food distribution cycle.
- { During food distributions, to hold sessions organised by health promotion teams focusing on topics such as nutrition, clean water and hygiene.

Disaster Preparedness w

Objective 1: To strengthen the capacity of Red Cross branches in the region and to increase beneficiary participation

- { Prior to the initial food distribution, to hold a workshop for community leaders focusing on two topics: conducting a beneficiary survey in accordance with precise criteria; and the drawing up of a community risk map. Each community leader would be required to submit both survey data and a draft community hazard map on the occasion of the initial distribution of food.

PHASE 2

Relief Distributions w

Objective 1: To support agricultural recovery among subsistence farmers

- { In a second phase, to distribute seeds and fertilisers to 9,500 subsistence farmers to ensure second cycle planting and improve harvesting prospects.

- { In Honduras and some regions of Guatemala, seeds can still be distributed for the September 2001 planting season. Should this period pass seeds would be distributed, as in other regions, to allow for planting in the first season of 2002, from March to May. Planting will be according to the appropriate season for sowing in each country. During provision of seeds and fertilisers, agronomists will be engaged at country level to train in the use and care of seeds and fertilisers as well as in such issues as crop diversification, water conservation and improvement of soil conditions.

Objective 2: To improve the capacity of affected families to meet their basic needs

- { To distribute a cash donation of USD 25 per beneficiary family to assist in the purchase of essential items such as replacement tools, medicines and food supplements such as sugar and salt. The contribution will be via the adult female member of the household, using the local banking system. It is also intended that this would contribute to revitalising the local economy. Such a distribution worked well during the “Mitch” operation. An evaluation showed that cash had been well spent for the families’ benefit. Furthermore, the donations would be accompanied by awareness on how to use the cash.

National Society Capacity Building w

Capacity of the National Society branches would be built as a result of the operation in beneficiary selection, planning of relief distributions, health promotion and subsistence agriculture. The operation will promote strengthening of links between the communities and the branches. It will also enhance disaster preparedness capacity through the initiation of community mapping of hazards and analysis of coping mechanisms.

Coordination w

The National Societies will reinforce coordination with participating National Societies (PNS) working in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua on a bilateral basis. Coordination has been ensured between the regional delegation in Guatemala, the country delegations in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua and the Pan-American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU). In addition, the National Societies will continue coordination with their respective governments and the World Food Programme (WFP) to avoid duplication of assistance. The WFP is working to relieve food shortages. However, the organisation seeks additional funding to continue provision of food supplies. Although no overall agreement is in place, it is intended that, to the extent possible, food rations would be obtained through WFP for implementation of the operation. Liaison would also be carried out with other UN agencies and NGOs working in the four countries. Coordination will take place on a sectoral basis. Technical support will be sought from the Ministries of Agriculture and related agencies and universities to provide information and training on improvements in subsistence agriculture.

Monitoring and Evaluation w

The success of the food distributions will be gauged, in relation to the under five population, as a result of weight/height ratio and arm radius monitoring at the outset and close of food distributions. Monitoring of the operation will also be carried out by headquarters staff of each National Society and the Federation’s regional disaster preparedness delegate based in Guatemala, with the support of a regional programme coordinator. Regular operations updates will be issued by the Federation, together with a final report.

The National Societies and the Federation will continue to monitor food insecurity, particularly following the distribution of food during the third month and the first harvest of 2002.

Capacity of the National Societies w

The Salvadorean Red Cross Society, the Guatemalan Red Cross, the Honduran Red Cross and the Nicaraguan Red Cross have wide experience in disaster response, particularly as a result of the “Mitch” operations. Many branches to be involved in this operation are continuing to implement on-going post Mitch projects. National intervention team (NIT) training recently carried out in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras has increased the capacity of the National Societies, particularly since trained participants took part in initial assessments and preparation of the plan of action for the current operation. Furthermore, all four National Societies participated in a successful agricultural support project in the wake of the Mitch disaster. Following this a manual on agriculture in emergencies was issued by the British Red Cross.

Present Capacity of the Federation w

The Federation has a delegation in each of the four countries which would be able to provide support for the operation. The delegations in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala have a disaster preparedness delegate. The delegation in Nicaragua is made up of a head of delegation and the regional health delegate. The Pan-American Disaster Response Unit, based in Panama, is available to provide advice, services and human resource support, specifically in technical areas such as logistics, relief management and, if needed, water and sanitation. Participation in the monitoring and evaluation process is also possible.

Budget summary

See Annex 1 for details.

The Federation is launching a preliminary emergency appeal and CHF 100,000 has been released from the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to ensure immediate launch of the operation. A detailed budget and plan of action will be presented as soon as the details are complete.

For further details please contact: Olaug Bergseth, Federation Desk Officer, Phone: 41 22 730 45 35 ; Fax: 41 22 733 0395; email: bergseth@ifrc.org.

All International Federation Assistance Operations seek to adhere to the Code of Conduct and are committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE Project) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

In line with the Minimum Reporting Standards, the first operations update on this appeal will be issued within 30-days of the launch and the second will be issued over the course of the operation; a final narrative and financial report will be issued no later than 90 days after the end of the operation.

This operation seeks to administer to the immediate requirements of the victims of this disaster. Subsequent operations to promote sustainable development or longer-term capacity building will require additional support and these programmes are outlined on the Federation website.

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

Jean Ayoub
Director
Disaster Management and Coordination

Didier J. Cherpitel
Secretary General

		ANNEX 1
<u>PRELIMINARY BUDGET SUMMARY</u>		APPEAL No. 31/2001
Central America - drought and food insecurity		
TYPE		VALUE
		IN CHF
RELIEF NEEDS		
Food & seeds		2'220'000
Teaching materials		7'000
Other relief supplies		400'000
TOTAL RELIEF NEEDS		2'627'000
<u>PROGRAMME SUPPORT</u>		
Programme management		236'535
Technical support		70'806
Professional services		78'524
<u>TRANSPORT STORAGE & VEHICLE COSTS</u>		160'000
<u>PERSONNEL</u>		
Expatriate staff		80'000
National staff		105'000
<u>ADMINISTRATIVE & GENERAL SERVICES</u>		
Travel & related expenses		20'000
Information expenses		8'000
Administrative & general expenses		95'000
External workshops & seminars		27'000
TOTAL OPERATIONAL NEEDS		880'865
TOTAL APPEAL CASH, KIND, SERVICES		3'507'865
LESS AVAILABLE RESOURCES (-)		Nil
NET REQUEST		3'507'865