

OPERATIONS UPDATE



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

SOUTHERN AFRICA: FOOD INSECURITY

4 January 2006

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

Appeal No. 05EA023; Operations Update no. 3; Period covered: 22 November to 22 December 2005; Appeal coverage: 20.8%.

[Click here to go directly to the attached Contributions List, also available on the website.](#)

Appeal history:

- Launched on 18 October 2005 for CHF 39,360,753 (USD 30,193,299 OR EUR 25,301,687) for 9 months to assist up to for 1.5 million beneficiaries.
- Operations Update no. 1 dated 7 Nov. 2005- http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.pl?05/05EA02301.pdf.
- Operations Update no. 2 dated 21 Nov. 2005- http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.pl?05/05EA02302.pdf focused on Malawi and the impact of DREF.
- Disaster Relief Emergency Funds (DREF) allocated: CHF 1,160,000.

Outstanding needs: CHF 31,170,072 (USD 23,757,677 or EUR 20,025,745).

Related Emergency or Annual Appeals: N/A

Operational Summary: The food security operation continued on a slow note due to the low response to the food insecurity appeal. Planned food aid distributions targeting 16,647 people in Malawi was scheduled to start in the last week of December 2005. Agricultural starter packs (seeds, fertilizers and cassava cuttings) are under procurement with the distribution set to commence at the end of December 2005 to early January 2006 in all the targeted countries. However, Zambia has opted for vegetable and legume seeds instead of cereal seeds because they recommended that it is too late to plant cereals. Procurements for food items are ongoing for Zambia and Zimbabwe (the most affected after Malawi) with distributions set to start late January 2006.

The food insecurity situation is rapidly worsening in the affected countries (Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe), with the onset of the lean period in the region. December to April (which is the planting and harvesting period) is the most difficult period in terms of food availability and accessibility. The situation is exacerbated by the sharply rising staple food prices, coupled with logistical problems experienced in the importation of food items into the affected countries. The most recent food security assessments have shown that vulnerable households in parts of Lesotho and Swaziland are also now facing critical food shortages.

With the food insecurity situation in the region remaining critical, the International Federation calls for further donor support to address all the needs planned in the emergency appeal.

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Background

The slow start of the rainy season has delayed sowing of cereal crops in most countries. The latest Drought Monitoring Centre seasonal outlook update indicates a likelihood of normal to above normal rainfall over most parts of the region for the period December 2005 to February 2006.

As reported in [Operations Update 2](#), priority has been given to Malawi because of the critical food insecurity situation. Approximately 58% of the funding received has been allocated to Malawi Red Cross Society in order to ensure an immediate food security intervention.

Operational developments**Lesotho**

The prolonged dry conditions have dampened the prospects of a good harvest of the secondary winter crop to be harvested between November and December, thereby exacerbating the already poor food supply situation in the country. However, Lesotho has managed to keep the commercial maize import programme on track, with 71% of planned imports having been delivered to date. Even though food prices have remained stable, the most vulnerable households are unable to purchase adequate supplies, and are thus increasingly dependent on food aid. WFP currently assists close to 300,000 of the most food insecure people out of an estimated 548,000 vulnerable population. This leaves a gap of 248,000 vulnerable people who are food insecure and still in need of assistance. To date, rainfall has been above normal in northern areas but below normal in the southern parts of the country. Planting of the main season crops is in progress.

Malawi

Food insecurity throughout the country is worsening as maize prices continue to rise, induced by the short supply of grain. A recent UNICEF survey indicated a 22% increase in children admitted to the Nutritional Rehabilitation Units in the drought affected southern districts during October 2005.

Emergency interventions by humanitarian agencies have played a significant role by improving food availability at both household level and local markets. However, the fact that only 60% of the planned WFP cereal distribution between April and October was achieved indicates gaps and the inadequacy of international response. The WFP November 2005 report concluded that due to increasing reports of a rapidly deteriorating situation, more resources have been made available. Nevertheless, food pipeline breaks are envisaged as a result of inadequate regional transport infrastructure, and the huge demand to import food and agricultural inputs, not only by Malawi but also other neighbouring countries. Field preparation and input procurement are underway for planting of main season crops.

Mozambique

Factors exacerbating the food insecurity for the vulnerable population include rising maize prices, limited food supplies aggravated by a poor harvest from the second season crops, slow deliveries of emergency supplies, very high food prices, very limited water availability and exhausted coping capability. WFP reports that it is scaling up its current emergency plans from the planned 47,970 MT to 83,000 MT of food items. The current resourced food is below the revised requirement by about 42%, such that urgent resource mobilization is required.

Planting of the main season crops has been disrupted by erratic and insufficient rains in October and early November 2005. However, a normal to above normal rainfall season is forecast for 2005/2006. Availability of quality seeds remains a challenge, particularly in the southern parts of the country due to logistical problems. Some 50,000 small holder farmers received seed through the government's seed fair programme, although this is not meeting the outstanding needs.

Namibia

Despite the high per capita income, extreme poverty and food insecurity is prevalent in certain pockets of the country, such as in the Caprivi region. Production of winter wheat is estimated at 10,500 MT, down by 1,000 MT from the previous year due to erratic rain patterns. To date, only 27,000 MT of the projected national cereal deficit of 145,000 MT have been imported, mostly from neighbouring South Africa.

There had been little rain over most parts of the country as of mid-November 2005 and planting of the main season cereals (maize, sorghum and millet) which takes place typically only in the northern strip of the country has been delayed.

Swaziland

Food prices have been rapidly rising, leading to an increase in the number of food insecure population becoming unable to purchase adequate supplies and thereby becoming increasingly dependent on food aid. With a self-sufficiency rate for cereals of only about a third, the Swaziland population is mostly dependent on food imports. To date, less than half of its annual cereal imports have been acquired. Planting of main-season crops is currently underway as above average rainfall was received during the first week of November 2005 over most parts of the country.

Zambia

Both commercial and food relief responses to Zambia's food shortages have been very slow, with 10,653 MT out of the anticipated 200,000 MT commercial imports delivered by end of November 2005. The slow responses are partially attributed to fuel, transportation and other logistical difficulties, in addition to the government's delayed lifting of the 15% import duty, and the new 'Phytosanitary Regulations' that require that all maize imports be certified GMO free. The recent waiver of the 'Phytosanitary Regulations' has been welcomed by the Millers Association of Zambia (MAZ) and the Zambia National Farmers Union (ZNFU) as it will improve the movement of grain.

While the northern part of the country received normal to above normal rainfall during the first half of November, southern and central parts received below-average precipitation, thereby delaying normal sowing. Key agricultural inputs are not easily available for purchase in many rural areas due to inaccessibility. The government input subsidy programme targets 125,000 small-scale farmers with 50,000 MT of fertilizer and 2,600 MT of maize seed. In addition, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) will provide cowpeas, soybean seeds and cassava cuttings to some 33,000 households not covered by the government programme.

The government of Zambia declared the current food shortfall a disaster and appealed to the donor community for assistance with its relief efforts. The VAC has estimated food aid needs through March 2006, and major food aid distributions after this time are likely to compromise the harvest in April and May. The amount of food aid currently required has been estimated at 66,684 MT to cover the period from December 2005 to March 2006.

Zimbabwe

Household food accessibility is of serious concern because of grain shortages on the local markets, very high market prices, and the continued erosion of purchasing power due to hyper inflation (502.4% annual inflation rate at the end of November). While 57% of the planned 1.2 million MT of maize had been imported by the end of November 2005, internal distribution bottlenecks hamper grain accessibility, particularly in the remote areas. Subsistence and commercial farmers are facing seed, fertilizer, fuel, and spare parts shortages. The country normally requires about 50,000 MT of maize seed; however, indications are that only half of this quantity is currently locally available. Due to lack of foreign currency to import raw materials, domestic production of fertilizer is very limited (about 75% of last year's much reduced amount) and available at much higher prices.

Although some light rains fell during October and first half of November 2005 in the northern part of the country, the bulk of planting is not expected to start until later in the year.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action- objectives, progress and impact

Overall goal: To assist some 1,483,900 vulnerable beneficiaries in Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe with food security, water and sanitation projects and to reinforce coping mechanisms (promoting livelihoods).

Food Assistance

Objective: To meet the immediate food needs of vulnerable individuals in Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia, and Zimbabwe until the next harvest in 2006.

An initial consignment of food items was received in early December 2005 in Malawi at the Blantyre branch of the Malawi Red Cross Society and food distributions were planned to start before the end of month. The second tender for food purchase was conducted by the Finnish Red Cross during the first week of December 2005, and the food is expected to arrive in Malawi in early January 2006. Funds to purchase the initial food supplies for Zambia and Zimbabwe have been earmarked. The tendering process has already began

Malawi Red Cross Society, with support from the Federation regional delegation, is procuring food items to complement distributions for a period of six months in the southern districts namely; Chiradzulu, Zomba, Mwanza, Balaka and Blantyre. The standard ration to be distributed per individual contains: 5kg of maize, 1kg of pulses, 0.5 litres of oil, 1.5kg of corn soya bean (CSB). The nutritional value of the parcel is 992 Kcal/day/person. The targeted beneficiaries- approximately 93,784 people (16,747 households)- will receive a food parcel to ensure their immediate access to a nutritionally balanced diet.

The intervention in Malawi targets the most vulnerable groups within the operational areas identified in 14 project areas defined as the home-based care (HBC) and orphans and other children made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS (OVC) programmes impact areas. The vulnerable groups comprise of HBC clients, OVC, care facilitators (volunteers) and their families. The volunteers provide care and support to food insecure and chronically ill HBC clients and OVC. However, it has been evident that the volunteer care givers are also vulnerable because they use their own food resources to assist the most needy HBC clients. Red Cross volunteers spend much of their productive time providing care and support to HBC clients and OVC, and therefore food aid would enhance their capacities in service delivery.

Some gaps and shortfalls have been identified from the Malawi VAC (MVAC) and the beneficiary targeting system during the last few weeks (i.e. there were redistribution of food parcels to the same people by local chiefs leaving out other more deserving vulnerable people due to poor targeting of beneficiaries). Consequently, the Red Cross plans to distribute complementary rations of 5 kg of maize to the identified beneficiaries through funding generated through the Emergency Appeal. Malawi Red Cross Society will ensure that no duplication takes place in the targeted areas by conducting joint verification exercises on beneficiary lists with local government, WFP, DFID and other agencies with food aid pipelines at district level. Given the intention to focus support on reinforcing productive capacities for recovery purposes, beneficiaries will also be provided with seeds and fertilizers during the planting period.

Reinforcing self-reliance and coping mechanisms (livelihoods)

Objective: To reinforce or rebuild self-reliance and to restore their positive coping mechanisms through food-for-work/food-for-assets (income generating opportunities), cash transfers, targeted agricultural support, and the provision of vegetable garden drip kits.

The procurement of agricultural starter packs (seeds and fertilizer) for all the seven countries is in progress and distribution is ongoing until mid January 2006. In order to better meet the different and plural country specifications, agricultural and meteorological conditions, the composition of agricultural starter packs has been revised from what was originally appealed for. For Malawi, the number of packs has been increased in terms of overall numbers due to the increased need, and ensuring sustainability of the intervention.

Table 1: A breakdown of agricultural starter packs under procurement

Country	Agricultural starter pack composition	Total number of packs
Lesotho	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 kg fertilizers (10 kg basal and 10 kg topdressing) • 4 kg maize or wheat seed (according to availability) • 0.05 kg vegetable seed 	5,000
Malawi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20kg fertilizers (10 kg basal and 10 kg topdressing) • 2.5 kg maize seed • 4 kg pulses seed • 0.01 kg vegetable seed • 100 cassava cuttings 	16,647
Mozambique	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 kg fertilizers (10 kg basal and 10 kg topdressing), • 4 kg maize, • 0.05 kg vegetable seed. 	1,600
Namibia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 kg fertilizers (10 kg basal and 10 kg topdressing), • 4 kg maize or millet seed (according to availability), • 0.05 kg vegetable seed. 	2,000
Swaziland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 kg fertilizers (10 kg basal and 10 kg topdressing), • 4 kg maize, • 0.05 kg vegetable seed. 	2,000
Zambia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 kg groundnuts, • 8 kg cowpeas, • 200 cassava cuts, • 10 kg vegetable seed, 25 kg fertiliser. This will be sufficient for plots up to 1 ha, which is the average dimension in Zambia. 	3,000
Zimbabwe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 kg fertilizers (10 kg basal and 10 kg topdressing), • 4 kg of maize, • 0.05 kg of vegetable seed. 	19,000

The Malawi Red Cross Society food-for-work activities are funded by the Netherlands Red Cross while the procurement is managed by the Finnish Red Cross. The food items to cover food-for-work projects are part of the second tender expected in the country in early January 2006.

Discussions with the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO) are on-going with regards to support for the complementary food distributions and provision of agricultural starter packs in three southern districts of Malawi. Due to the limited time available for procurement of inputs, a DFID proposal for funding for the provision of agricultural starter packs in the targeted food insecure districts in Zambia has been dropped.

Water and Sanitation

Objective: Ensure access to safe and adequate drinking water, borehole rehabilitation, sanitation, small-scale irrigation, latrine construction, and hygiene education by vulnerable individuals.

Water and sanitation activities proposed in the appeal are expected to be implemented in 2006 should funding become available.

Reinforcing capacities in assessing livelihoods, and food security monitoring and reporting

Objective: To ensure that national society staff is well versed in livelihood and food security interventions.

The Federation has scheduled a food security workshop for January 2006 where the seven national societies involved are going to review progress, impact and constraints of the operation; to explore in details the sustainable livelihoods platform and to discuss the definition of a Red Cross Regional Food Security Strategy.

Food security officers from national societies will participate in a one-week long training workshop on food security scheduled for the second week of February 2006. The main focus of the workshop is to discuss food security issues in the region including livelihood and food security assessment, integrated programming, monitoring and evaluation, food security data collection, reporting and information dissemination.

A Food security operation appeal manager has been recruited to lead a team so far comprising of relief coordinators for Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe; a logistics coordinator (currently posted in Malawi) and roaming logistician based in Harare. Relief coordinators for Malawi and Mozambique were identified and are due to start in early January 2006. Positions for relief coordinators for Lesotho and Namibia, logistics delegate for Malawi, information, reporting, water and sanitation delegate are still open.

All national staff positions to support the implementation of the appeal at the regional delegation level are in place and operational as from late November 2005. Recruitment of additional long-term contract officers at national society level is on-going.

Impact

Although the food security operation will cover only a fraction of the total needs in the region, the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement is focusing its response to the most vulnerable households, ensuring that food requirements for people affected and infected by HIV/AIDS pandemic are met.

The planned food assistance reduces the level of suffering for the food insecure households, while simultaneously assisting the beneficiaries in bridging the food gap until next harvest. The impact of agricultural starter packs is very significant, as it provides vital inputs to farmers who cannot afford to purchase the much needed agricultural inputs. Provision of starter packs enables vulnerable households to produce food for consumption, if the rain season is favourable. With the livelihood approach assistance, the vulnerable households should be able to move from their current vulnerability status and get back on their feet to live with dignity.

Constraints

Based on the current funding response situation, a limited number of the planned activities are taking place. Donor response has been slow and the appeal has attracted little funding, which is affecting the implementation and response timeliness to the food crises. Delays in the recruitment of key food security operation staff has been constraining delivery of service due to pending workloads having to be assumed by other substantive staff.

However, the intended activities remain as important as at the time of planning and further contributions are urgently needed to ensure implementation, particularly the water and sanitation interventions.

Federation coordination

The Federation task force established at regional delegation level continues to hold weekly planning meetings at which progress on the operation is reviewed. Minutes of the meetings are circulated to all food security task force members at regional, country level and to the Secretariat in Geneva.

All national societies submitted their plans of action detailing the kind of support to be given to the food insecure populations in their respective countries. Relief agreements were signed between the national societies and the Federation Secretariat at the end of November 2005.

A memorandum of understanding has been signed between the Federation and the Finnish Red Cross on food procurement for the Malawi operation. The Finnish Red Cross is managing the procurement of food items for operations in Malawi in close coordination with the Federation regional delegation. This is a Federation regional delegation's effort to comply with the Federation of the Future concept on operational alliances, which encourages development of strategic partnerships.

National Society Capacity Building

Building on the experience from the previous 2002/03 food security operation, the Federation places strong emphasis on sustainable capacity building of local resources so that the region becomes empowered to meet current and future humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable people. However, given the scale of the food security operation, the Federation regional delegation has seen it necessary to recruit and train targeted staff to cover the necessary human resource gaps. Technical support in logistics, monitoring and information technology is provided to national societies to facilitate implementation of activities, reporting and finance management requirements.

Training workshops to support national society staff and strengthen their capacities are being planned for the first quarter of 2006 as illustrated on page 6 (paragraph: Reinforcing capacities in assessing livelihoods, and food security monitoring and reporting).

Communications – Advocacy and Public Information

The regional delegation organized a regional information workshop held in Malawi to prepare the national society information officers for activities related to the food security operation. This follows the realization that information officers, especially from the affected countries, have a strong advocacy role to play in fundraising and awareness campaigns. Information officers from eight national societies- except Angola and Lesotho- attended the workshop.

Part of the training included a field exercise where participants experienced practical scenarios from the food crisis, particularly within the HBC projects. Each participant prepared a news story some of which have so far been used by various news organizations such as Reuters, AlertNet and Reliefweb. A journalist from Reuters attended and also covered the food insecurity situation in Malawi under the Red Cross banner. More than four stories were put on the Reuters AlertNet website. Some of the stories were used by the UN news wire, especial one with a quote used for the week. More than eight stories were done and half of them have already been published.

The British Red Cross head of media and public relations toured the region on food security fact finding mission and explored ways of raising the profile of the current crisis. It was suggested that a camera person will be sent to the region to facilitate coverage in the United Kingdom. CNN was in Mozambique covering the drought and HIV/AIDS situation in that country and the field trip conducted in close collaboration with Mozambique Red Cross Society information officer. It is hoped that with Mozambique beginning to get coverage, whilst there is more in Malawi, the media consultant will only focus on other countries not yet covered such as Lesotho, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

External information Sources:

- FAO/GIEWS: Africa Report No.3 - December 2005
- FEWS Southern Africa Food Security Brief Nov 2005 - Hunger season begins, conditions deteriorate
- IRIN reports for November and December 2005
- United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) November 2005 reports

[Contributions list below; click here to return to the title page.](#)

Southern Africa - food insecurity

ANNEX 1

APPEAL No. 05EA023

PLEDGES RECEIVED

28/12/2005

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
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CASH

REQUESTED IN APPEAL CHF ----->					TOTAL COVERAGE	
					39,360,753	20.8%
BRITISH - RC		100,000	GBP	225,900	01.12.05	MALAWI, ZAMBIA, ZIMBABWE
CANADIAN - GOVT/CIDA/HAPS		990,000	CAD	1,077,318	07.11.05	
FINNISH - RC		100,000	EUR	155,700	25.10.05	MALAWI
FINNISH - GOVT		14,625	EUR	22,771	25.10.05	MALAWI
IRISH - RC		66,668	EUR	103,169	20.12.05	MOZAMBIQUE WATSAN
JAPANESE - RC		30,000,000	JPY	332,400	02.11.05	
MONACO - RC		20,000	EUR	31,140	25.10.05	
NETHERLANDS - RC		106,952	EUR	165,294	23.11.05	FOOD-FOR-WORK 30'000 PEOPLE IN MALAWI
NORWEGIAN - GOVT/RC		10,326,000	NOK	2,007,374	15.11.05	INCL. 2 RELIEF DELEGATES
SWEDISH - RC		5,000,000	SEK	810,000	11.11.05	
SWEDISH - RC		3,000,000	SEK	486,000	18.11.05	
SWEDISH - GOVT		14,250,000	SEK	2,315,625	16.12.05	
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				7,732,691	CHF	19.6%

KIND AND SERVICES (INCLUDING PERSONNEL)

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
FINNISH - GOVT		270,000	EUR	420,390	25.10.05	MALAWI: 540 MT MAIZE, 150 MT CSB, 90 MT BEANS, 50'000 L. VEGETABLE OIL
SWEDEN	DELEGATES			37,600		
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES				457,990	CHF	1.2%

ADDITIONAL TO APPEAL BUDGET

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED				0	CHF	