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Emergency appeal operations update

Mauritania: Food insecurity

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

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| Emergency Appeal MDRMR007 | GLIDE n° OT-2011-000205-NER |
| Operations update n° 2 | Period covered by this update: 1 to 15 June, 2015 |
| Operation start date: 13 May 2015 | Expected timeframe: 9 months (End date: March 2016) |
| Appeal budget: CHF 998,467; Appeal coverage: 3% Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) allocated: CHF 100,000 | Total estimated Red Cross and Red Crescent response to date: CHF 32,900 |
| Total number of people affected: 260,000 people in crisis (phase 3). Projected situation for June is: 851,000 people under pressure (phase 2), 443,000 people in crisis (phase 3) and 21,000 in emergency (phase 4). | N° of people being assisted: Immediate intervention: 8,400 beneficiaries (1,400 households) and 2,000 children and pregnant and lactating women. Medium term: 27,000 people in Brakna and Hodh El Gharbi Regions. |
| Host National Society presence (n° of volunteers, staff, branches): 3 branches in Brakna Region (500 volunteers) and 2 branches in Hodh El Gharbi Region (200 volunteers). | |
| Red Cross Red Crescent Movement partners actively involved in the operation: British Red Cross, French Red Cross, ICRC (capacity building). | |
| Other partner organizations actively involved in the operation: WFP, ACF, Oxfam Intermon, FAO, UNICEF, OCHA. | |

Summary

Mauritania like many countries across the Sahel is facing a deteriorating food and nutrition crisis in 2015. At the end of May, ECHO reported that across the Sahel, close to 7.5 million people require emergency food assistance¹ – a figure of a similar order to the last major regional crisis in the Sahel in 2012, and demonstrating the urgent need for emergency response, particularly as the Sahel enters its annual lean season (typically June to September).

The immediate drivers of the current crisis in Mauritania arise from deficits during the 2014 rainy season, which was marked by a late start in all provinces of the country along with poor spatial and temporal distribution of precipitation: 2014's rainfall was down on the five-year average, and one of the highest deficit years in the last decade. Tagant was one of the most affected areas, along with significant areas of the regions of Brakna and Hodh El Gharbi (targeted by this operation) Gorgol, northern Assaba and Guidimaka, and the east of Hodh El Chargui; provinces of the north as well as northern Trarza have also been affected.

The southern regions of Mauritania have not had sufficient rain for normal agricultural production, with an impact on the crops grown by poor and vulnerable households. Cereal production (millet, sorghum, maize) decreased 36.5% compared to 2013, and 61% compared to the five-year average. Livestock production, a main source of income for households in rural areas has also been seriously affected, with insufficient pasture availability, falling prices for livestock due to destocking and losses/deaths of animals, and rising prices of animal feed which is increasingly required due to shrinking availability of pasture.

The reduction of crop production has been accompanied by a decline in demand for agricultural labour, representing a significant loss of income to poor households generally reliant on cash through these activities. In pastoral areas, transhumance has also reduced the demand for labour, as casual labour is often hired to graze the animals.

¹ Source: ECHO, SAHEL – Food and nutrition crisis, ECHO CRISIS REPORT No. 9, May 2015

The last results of the Harmonized Framework (March 2015)² – a regional food security analysis by governmental, UN and INGO partners based on the IPC – estimated that 723,000 people in Mauritania were Under Pressure (Phase 2) in terms of their food security, while an additional 260,000 people were already in Crisis (Phase 3). It was projected that by June 2015 the population suffering from food insecurity at the peak of the lean season (from June to August) would be 1.36 million, i.e. 36% of the total population. 465,000 people would be in Crisis (Phase 3) or emergency (Phase 4) and requiring emergency food assistance, with an additional 851,000 people in a situation of stressed food security; this caseload represents respectively an increase of 27% and 8% compared to the same period in 2014. The main affected areas are the provinces of Hodh El Chargui (19.5% of the total population), Assaba (16.3%), Brakna (14.9%), Gorgol (14.6%), Hodh El Gharbi (14%) and Guidimakha (13.9%).

The nutrition situation for vulnerable communities across Mauritania is also precarious and worsening. The Harmonized Framework in March 2015 found a Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) prevalence of 6.2%; this is supported by the various nutritional surveys carried out during the post-2014 harvest period, which ranged from 5.6% to 8.5% nationally. No region of the country exceeds the 10% threshold, but the regions of Hodh El Chargui (9.6%), Guidimakha (9.4%), Brakna (8.8%) and Gorgol (7.7%) are the most affected. According to ECHO, a total of 129,761 children are expected to be acutely malnourished with 33,757 being severely malnourished.³

Since the launch of the [Emergency Appeal](#) on 13 May 2015, recent updates from donors, early warning networks and operational agencies point to or support the deteriorating food and nutrition situation already projected in March. ECHO analysis⁴ notes state that in the post-harvest period at the end of 2014/early 2015, 23.8% of households were already food insecure – which is significantly higher than in December 2011 at the beginning of the 2012 severe food crisis. The most recent Household Economy Approach (HEA) Outcome Analysis (February 2015) indicates that 1,776,563 people will face a livelihoods protection deficit, including 568,826 people facing a survival deficit. Recent field analysis conducted by NGOs (Save the Children, ACF, and Oxfam) confirms such deterioration, with vulnerable households already adopting negative coping mechanisms.

FEWSNET's May 2015 Food Security update for Mauritania⁵ highlights that in central and southern areas poor households are already facing food consumption gaps indicative of Crisis (Phase 3) food insecurity due to the combined effects of no household cereal stocks, a sharp decline in income levels, and inadequate volumes of humanitarian assistance. The report notes that even in the case of an average rainy season, the population facing Crisis (Phase 3) will grow between July and September 2015, with a small number of very poor households also in Emergency (Phase 4) food insecurity. In the event of a fairly large rainfall deficit during the upcoming season, the food insecure population would likely be larger than current estimates. In other rural areas, a premature start of the lean season (two to four months earlier than usual) and reduced income levels have contributed to Stressed (Phase 2) food security outcomes for poor households, which could become increasingly widespread in the period until September.

Meanwhile, the IFRC's latest global precipitation forecast (June 2015)⁶ notes that many of the typical patterns of El Niño-related shifts in precipitation are now present. The forecast underlines 'moderately increased confidence' that parts of Mauritania will be unusually dry during the July-September rainy season, indicating the possibility of a further rainfall deficit in the East, South and South-East of the country which would compound the existing bad situation.

To respond to acute emergency and longer-term food and nutrition insecurity, the Mauritanian Red Crescent (MRC) with support from the IFRC and Red Cross Red Crescent Movement partners is adopting a twin track approach covering most vulnerable food and nutrition insecure households in Brakna and Hodh El Gharbi regions as highlighted in the Emergency Plan of Action (EPoA). Up to 8,400 vulnerable people (1,400 households) will receive food parcel distributions for 3 months to cover basic food needs during the lean season, while 2,000 pregnant and lactating women and children under-two at risk of malnutrition will benefit from distribution of enriched food for 3 months, community screening sessions and referral of cases of acute malnutrition, and promotion of good nutritional and hygienic practices conducted in close coordination with the Ministry of Health and other humanitarian actors.

² Source: "Cadre Harmonisé d'analyse et d'identification des zones à risque et des populations en insécurité alimentaire au Sahel et en Afrique de l'Ouest (CH)", Commissariat de la Sécurité Alimentaire (CSA) in partnership with CILSS, FEWS NET, WFP, FAO, ACF, OXFAM, March 2015

³ Source: ECHO, SAHEL – Food and nutrition crisis, ECHO CRISIS REPORT No. 9, May 2015

⁴ Source: ECHO, SAHEL – Food and nutrition crisis, ECHO CRISIS REPORT No. 9, May 2015

⁵ Source: FEWSNET, Mauritania: Food Security Outlook Update, May 2015

⁶ IFRC, Global Forecast: Total Rain and Snow July 2015 – September 2015, Produced by the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre and the International Research Institute for Climate and Society (IRI)

Meanwhile, to address and strengthen food security needs in the medium term, 3,500 households (21,000 people) will also benefit from resilience-building sustainable livelihoods support focused on (1) enhancing livestock production, by supporting 500 vulnerable herders through livestock input distribution; and (2) enhancing agricultural production, by supporting 100 women's gardening associations/cooperatives with the provision of agricultural inputs (seeds, tools, fertilizers, materials for fences or protection, etc.) to benefit from the main rain planting season (September-October).

Furthermore, and given the well-established link between malnutrition and several infectious diseases, additional activities will focus on improving the accessibility of potable water for lactating women and their children through water purification and hygiene promotion, including distribution of soap, aqua tabs and other water disinfectant materials to 1,000 households.

The selection of the targeted zones for this intervention – Brakna region (Magta'Lahjar department) and Hodh El Gharbi region (Tintane department) – is based on the impact of the current food and nutrition crisis (Brakna and Hodh El Gharbi are among the 4 most affected regions in terms of number and percentage of affected population), and following the decision to allocate these areas to the Mauritanian Red Crescent based on coordinated response coverage between other humanitarian actors and governmental agencies.

The appeal is currently only 3 percent funded with a single multilateral contribution received from Japanese Red Cross. Without much-needed resources to support the planned Emergency Appeal operation, the Mauritanian Red Crescent and its Movement partners will be unable to cover the established severe food and nutrition needs in the targeted areas; time is of the essence, as with the lean season already begun, the window of opportunity to assist those most in need is steadily closing. All partners are therefore requested to consider supporting this appeal.

IFRC, on behalf of Mauritanian Red Crescent Society, would like to extend thanks to all partners for their continued support.

[<click here for the contact details and here for the donor response report >](#)

Summary of current response

An initial CHF 100,000 was allocated from the IFRC's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to support start-up the early stages of the response operation in Mauritania. The IFRC Sahel Regional Office is providing support to the Mauritanian Red Crescent in the preparation of the MoU and provision of DREF funds (to support the nutrition activities to 2,000 children under 2, pregnant and lactating women), along with the deployment of a Regional Disaster Response Team (RDRT) delegate to support the operation.

Through the financial support from British Red Cross, between 20 June and 1 July the Senegalese Red Cross and British Red Cross will co-facilitate a National Disaster Response Team training to Mauritanian Red Crescent staff and volunteers in food security, nutrition, livelihoods and cash transfer programming. The training builds and reinforces technical capacity amongst key MRC staff and volunteers, and is an important preparatory step towards delivering a high quality set of emergency response and medium term support activities within the framework of this operation.

An operations Coordinator for Sahel regional office has been recruited and will be starting as of last week of June and will take charge of the current and upcoming management of the emergency appeal. Another delegate will be deployed to the IFRC Sahel region to provide technical support to food security sector.

Coordination and partnerships

This emergency operation is the result of a coordinated approach between the Mauritanian Red Crescent, the IFRC Regional office in Dakar and the Africa Zone DMU. The MRC is the lead agency in the operation, and is playing a lead role in planning, coordination with other actors, and implementation of the activities underpinning the response.

The IFRC is promoting a coherent and unified response in this operation by facilitating coordination activities for the Movement – primarily with the MRC, in the management of bilateral and multilateral support from partner National Societies including the British Red Cross, Canadian Red Cross, French Red Cross, Japanese Red Cross and Senegalese Red Cross, and externally with other key operational agencies or organizations including the UN and INGOs. It is also providing resource mobilization support through its DREF and Emergency Appeal disaster response tools.

More widely, the IFRC is coordinating a regional response to food and nutrition insecurity in the Western Sahel, with Emergency Appeals also launched for operations in Senegal and The Gambia. A regional coordination is in place with the IFRC Sahel Regional Office and Africa Zone DMU to provide resource mobilization, technical support, and peer-to-peer support for response implementation in affected countries across the region.

Implementation of the Emergency Appeal will be supported by IFRC, directly through coordination, technical, financial and reporting support, and through the deployment of an RDRT delegate with food security expertise, an Operations Manager, a food security/HES (Household Economic Security) delegate, and a Cash Transfer Programme (CTP) delegate, along with additional support provided by the Sahel Regional Office in finance, PMER and logistics.

Regular coordination continues to be undertaken with the Government of Mauritania, which leads the coordination among humanitarian actors and national agencies (CSA-Commissariat de la Sécurité Alimentaire, Agriculture Department), and with key humanitarian agencies operational in Mauritania including WFP, FAO, UNICEF, OCHA, ACF, Oxfam and Save the Children.

Operational implementation

Overview

There is need to have a robust mobilization of resources to ensure implementation of proposed activities in order to adequately cover identified needs.

| Planned interventions | Implementation (%) |
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| Food security, nutrition, and livelihoods | Progress to be reported in subsequent updates |
| Outcome 1: 1,400 households (8,400 beneficiaries) receive food assistance for 3 months through food distribution | |
| Output 1.1: Immediate food needs of 1,400 households (8,400 beneficiaries) are met through food distribution for 3 months | |
| Outcome 2: Middle/longer-term twin track approach, to build community resilience through livelihoods reinforcement to avoid future food crisis to 3,500 households - 21,000 people - (500 herders + 3,000 cooperative members) | |
| Output 2.1: 500 herders (500 households, 3,000 beneficiaries) receive appropriate livestock inputs to reinforce and replace their livestock production | |
| Output 2.2: 100 women cooperatives (with at least 30 members/cooperative, 3,000 cooperative members) receive adequate agricultural inputs (seeds, fertilizers and tools) and trainings to undertake the vegetable gardening campaign (September-October) | |
| Health & nutrition | Progress to be reported in subsequent updates |
| Outcome 3: To improve the nutritional status of child under 2, pregnant and lactating women for 2,000 beneficiaries | |
| Output 3.1: Assisting the screening and referral to existing health facilities in two regions of child under 2, lactating and pregnant women at risk of malnutrition until end of lean period (September-October 2015) | |
| Output 3.2: Distributing enriched food for 2,000 children under 2, lactating and pregnant women in 2 targeted regions to prevent malnutrition at this vulnerable targets for three months | |

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| Outcome 4: Increase the access to safer water and the promotion in good hygienic practices among most vulnerable communities in the targeted regions | |
| Output 4.1: 6,000 beneficiaries (1,000 households) reached through hygiene promotion | |
| Disaster preparedness and risk reduction | |
| Outcome 5: Improve NS capacity on community, branch and national level in preparation, risk reduction and response to future crisis | |
| Output 5.1: The capacity of staff and volunteers (10 staff and 50 volunteers) are built on food & nutrition security, livelihoods and cash transfer programming and on better information collection and operational efficiency in targeted region | 25% |
| Quality programming / Areas common to all sectors | Progress to be reported in subsequent updates |
| Outcome 6: The quality of the operation is ensured and documented by participatory in-depth needs assessments and accountability measures. | |
| Output 6.1: The management of the operation is informed by a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system which will enhance branch capacity to report on the operations | |

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

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For Resource Mobilization and Pledges:

- **In IFRC Zone:** Penny Elghady, Resource Mobilization Coordinator; Addis Ababa; phone: +254 721 486 953; email: penny.elghady@ifrc.org
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For Performance and Accountability (planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting)

- **In IFRC Zone:** Robert Ondrusek, PMER Coordinator; mobile phone: +254 731 067 277; email: robert.ondrusek@ifrc.org

How we work

All IFRC assistance seeks to adhere to the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief and the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (Sphere) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The IFRC's vision is to inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by National Societies, with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

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The IFRC's work is guided by Strategy 2020 which puts forward three strategic aims:

1. Save lives, protect livelihoods, and strengthen recovery from disaster and crises.
2. Enable healthy and safe living.
3. Promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace.