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Emergency appeal operations update

The Gambia: Food insecurity

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Emergency appeal n° MDRGM010		GLIDE n° OT-2015-00021-GMB	
Operations update n° 1		Timeframe covered by this update: 13-28 May 2015	
Emergency Appeal operation start date: 13 May 2015		Expected end date: 13 May 2016	
Appeal budget: CHF 1,570,943	Appeal coverage: 3%	Total estimated Red Cross and Red Crescent response to date: CHF 51,800	
Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) allocated: CHF 150,000			
N° of people being assisted:			
Immediate needs (emergency response): 16,100 beneficiaries (2,100 households) including 2,300 pregnant and lactating women and children under two at risk of malnutrition in Central River (north) and North Bank (west) Regions			
Medium term (livelihoods/resilience): 49,000 beneficiaries (7,000 households)			
Host National Society(ies) presence (n° of volunteers, staff, branches): 5 NS staff, 5 NDRTs, and 1,500 volunteers in targeted regions. Whole network includes 12,000 volunteers, 25 staff and 100 members of Governance			
Red Cross Red Crescent Movement partners actively involved in the operation: Spanish Red Cross, Italian Red Cross and ICRC			
Other partner organizations actively involved in the operation: Government of The Gambia (Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Ministry of Agriculture), UNICEF, WFP, FAO			

Summary

In common with a number of Sahel countries, The Gambia 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 required 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 region enters its annual lean season (typically June to September).

The Gambia – ranked as a least-developed, low-income, food-deficit country with high poverty and low human development – has a predominantly subsistence agrarian economy. Poverty levels remain high, with 55% of the population living on less than USD 2 per day and 18% considered food insecure according to WFP. Rain-fed subsistence agriculture is the main source of livelihood for the majority of the population.

In 2014, The Gambia suffered from both late onset of rains and rain deficits, which led to late maturity of crops and a significant dry spell negatively affecting agriculture, particularly rice fields. Crop production was drastically reduced in comparison to that of the previous season (down 19% according to the Cadre Harmonisé²) and against five-year averages, with cereal, rice and groundnut harvests particularly affected. Many Gambian farmers now lack seeds and are unable to replant their fields, while there are also reports of depleted soil fertility, and a prevalence of salinity in rice growing areas.

While markets are functioning and provide enough supply for household consumption, across the country households are affected by low purchasing power due to the poor harvest. Food prices have continued to increase, mainly due to the reduction in cereal production, and the unfavourable exchange rate of the Dalasi against major currencies. From January 2014 to March 2015 there were increases in the prices of coarse grains

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

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

(millet 28%, maize 44% and sorghum 50%), rice both local (33%) and imported (49%), findo (102%) and of other basic food stuffs.

Livestock in The Gambia are also at risk as a result of the current crisis. Livestock production – normally the second largest source of income in The Gambia and contributing about 25% of annual agricultural GDP and over 5% of total national GDP – has been negatively impacted by the amount and duration of rainfall which has destroyed essential pastures, forage and water for animals.

As a result of these factors and drivers, the current food and nutrition security situation is of serious concern. Acute food shortages will again occur during the lean season from June to September, when households often exhaust their food supply, particularly in times of increased stress or crisis. According to Cadre Harmonisé data collection and analysis, in March 2015 100,763 people in The Gambia were food insecure and required immediate food assistance (all in a state of Crisis/Phase 3), with this figure projected to increase to 178,012 people plus 11,427 refugees from Casamance in June-August 2015 (out of a total population in the Gambia of 1,849,000). In the same period, 521,928 people were projected to be at Under Pressure/Phase 2.³ Recent discussions between the Gambia Red Cross Society (GRCS) and humanitarian actors in-country, including FAO, WFP and ACF, have indicated that the real situation is considered worse than estimated, according to a view that official figures have tended to be underestimated.

Food insecurity undermines nutrition with current food insecurity in The Gambia is inherently linked with widespread malnutrition which continues to pose a major public health problem. There has generally been an upward trend in the prevalence of acute malnutrition at national level from 6.4% in 2005 to 9.9% in 2012. The already alarming nutritional status of children under five – due to poverty, poor infant feeding practices, the disease burden related to inadequate WASH services, and limited knowledge and low awareness of care givers with regards to essential nutritional and hygiene practices – is worsening in 2015 as a result of increasing household food insecurity and depletion of livelihoods. There is a negative prevalence of both wasting (acute malnutrition) and stunting (chronic malnutrition). According to the UN's 2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) for The Gambia⁴, the burden of Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM) among children under five is currently estimated at 56,839, while Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) is at 10,217 children between 6-59 months based on the 2013 national population census projections and the 2012 National Nutrition Survey in The Gambia conducted by the National Nutrition Agency (NaNA) and UNICEF. The prevalence of malnourished pregnant and lactating women in the reproductive age group (15-49) is estimated at 45,944, while severe acute malnutrition rates are above the WHO 'serious' threshold in some areas.

Deteriorating nutrition is exposing young children and women of childbearing age (the most vulnerable groups) to nutritional risks, while worsening food security is causing the poor and very poor to adopt increasingly negative or harmful coping strategies in order to meet their basic food needs, causing sometimes irreversible harm to their means of sustaining their livelihoods. An already difficult situation is reaching its peak as the lean season grips, and food stocks increasingly run dry.

To respond to both acute emergency and longer-term food and nutrition insecurity, the Gambian Red Cross 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 Central River (north) and North Bank (west) Regions of The Gambia – as highlighted in the Emergency Plan of Action (EPoA). These two regions have been targeted due to their identified food security and nutrition needs and in close cooperation with the humanitarian coordination mechanism led by the Government of The Gambia and other key agencies in-country to ensure coverage of needs while avoiding duplication of activities.

As a result of the planned operation, the food security and livelihoods of up to 16,100 people (2,100 households) will be protected and reinforced through direct cash transfers or vouchers equivalent to GMD 3,350 per household per month for 3 months, to allow most vulnerable households to meet their basic food and other needs.⁵ The cash transfer value has been calculated based on a standard food basket (composed of cereal, sugar, oil, salt, and legumes) that meets the SPHERE standard 2,100 Kcal/person/day, and to align with the amount distributed by other humanitarian cash assistance programmes in The Gambia (e.g. WFP).

³ Source: Cadre Harmonisé, March 2015

⁴ Source: OCHA, 2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview: The Gambia, December 2014

⁵ NB that the number of beneficiaries and the cash transfer value have been updated since the Emergency Appeal was published.

Within the targeted population 2,300 pregnant and lactating women and children under two at risk of malnutrition (including heightened risk during the 3 month lean season) will benefit from distributions of ready-to-use nutrition-enriched food ("Plumpy'Doz"), along with community screening sessions of under-fives (via MUAC) and referral (to UNICEF and NaNA) of cases of acute malnutrition in close coordination and collaboration with the Ministry of Health and other key actors. Promotion of good nutrition practices will also be delivered through a sensitisation campaign including culinary demonstration sessions.

Meanwhile, to address and strengthen food and nutrition security sustainably for the future, the above emergency response activities will be complemented by a longer-term intervention focused on resilience-building and sustainable livelihoods which will support 7,000 households (56,000 people) through (i) enhancing agricultural production: support for vegetable gardens for 1,000 farmers, and community gardens (100 gardening women associations with 50 members each) through provision of agricultural inputs (seeds, tools, fertilizers and other agriculture materials such as fences or protection materials); (ii) enhancing livestock production for 1,000 herders through livestock restocking or other livestock inputs distribution (livestock feed, vaccination treatment, etc.); and (iii) Rehabilitation of wells for cooperative gardening, and trainings in best practices and management (agriculture and livestock best practices, cooperatives management, market factors, destocking etc.) to create and strengthen resilience and to build capacity in the targeted regions.

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 hygiene promotion. Distribution of soap, aqua tabs or any other water disinfectant materials will be carried out during the intervention.

GRCS volunteers will also undergo training to improve their knowledge of planning and implementation of food security, nutrition, livelihoods and cash transfer programming, along with hygiene promotion activities.

The appeal is currently 3% funded with a single multilateral contribution received from the Japanese Red Cross. Without much-needed further mobilization of resources to support the planned activities, the Gambian Red Cross 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.

The IFRC, on behalf of the Gambian Red Cross Society, would like to extend its thanks to all partners for their continued support.

Summary of current response

An initial 150,000 CHF was allocated from the IFRC's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to support start-up and early stages of the response operation in The Gambia. The IFRC Sahel Regional Office has provided support to the Gambian Red Cross through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and provision of DREF funds, along with the deployment of a Regional Disaster Response Team (RDRT) delegate to support the operation. It is exploring options for further deployments of delegates (as envisaged in the Emergency Plan of Action), to ensure there are IFRC personnel on the ground in The Gambia to provide the necessary operational support to the National Society.

Coordination and partnerships

This emergency operation is the result of a coordinated approach between the Gambian Red Cross, the IFRC Regional office in Dakar and the Africa Zone DMU. The Gambian Red Cross 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 Gambian Red Cross, in the management of bilateral and multilateral support from partner National Societies including the British 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 Mauritania. 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 Operations Manager and an RDRT delegate (both with food security and Cash Transfer Programming (CTP) expertise), an Operations Manager, a technical delegate with food security/HES (Household Economic Security)/CTP expertise, PMER, Finance and Logistics delegates, along with additional support provided by the Sahel Regional Office in PMER, finance and logistics.

Regular coordination by the GRCS continues to be undertaken with the Government of The Gambia and its relevant ministries and agencies (Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Ministry of Agriculture, National Disaster Management Agency, National Nutrition Agency) and with key humanitarian agencies operational in The Gambia including WFP, FAO, UNICEF, OCHA, UNHCR, and ACF.

Operational implementation

Overview

As mentioned above, implementation to adequately cover identified needs depends on further mobilizing of resources to fund the activities planned for this operation.

Planned interventions	Implementation (%)
Food security, nutrition, and livelihoods	0%
Outcome 1: 1,800 households (12,600 beneficiaries) receive food assistance and basic needs during 3 months through cash transfer (direct cash or vouchers)	
Output 1.1: Immediate food and basic needs of 1,800 households (12,600 beneficiaries) are met through cash/vouchers distribution (4,500 GMD – equivalent to 97 CHF-) per month per household for 3 months	
Outcome 2: Medium / longer-term twin track approach, to build community resilience through livelihoods reinforcement to avoid future food crisis to 7,000 households (1,000 farmers + 5,000 cooperative members + 1,000 herders) in targeted regions.	
Output 2.1: Appropriate agricultural inputs (seeds, fertilizers and tools) are distributed to 1,000 farmers (7,000 persons) in rural areas with possibility to set up counter season crops.	
Output 2.2: 100 women cooperatives with at least 50 members/cooperative which equates to 5,000 cooperative members receive adequate agricultural inputs (seeds, fertilizers and tools) and trainings to undertake the vegetable gardening campaign (September-October)	
Output 2.3: 1,000 herders (7,000 beneficiaries) receive appropriate livestock inputs to reinforce and replace their livestock production	
Health & nutrition	0%
Outcome 3: To improve the nutritional status of child under 5, pregnant and lactating woman for 1,500 beneficiaries	
Output 3.1: Assisting the screening and referral to existing health facilities of child under 5, lactating and pregnant woman at risk of malnutrition until end of lean period (September-October 2015)	
Output 3.2: Distributing enriched food to 1,500 child under 5, lactating and pregnant women in targeted regions to prevent malnutrition at this vulnerable targets for three months	
Outcome 4: Increase the access to safer water and the promotion in good hygienic practices among 30 most vulnerable communities in the targeted regions	
Output 4.1: 1,000 households (7,000 beneficiaries) reached through hygiene promotion	
Disaster preparedness and risk reduction	0%
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 100 volunteers) are built on food & nutrition security, livelihoods and cash transfer programming and on better information collection and operational efficiency in targeted regions	
Quality programming / Areas common to all sectors	0%
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 operations	

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

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For Resource Mobilization and Pledges:

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For Performance and Accountability (planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting)

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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.