



ICRC

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## UPDATE

Geneva, 14 February 2006

### SOMALIA

### DROUGHT-DRIVEN LIVELIHOOD AND FOOD SECURITY CRISIS

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Successive seasonal rainfall failures in the Horn of Africa have left millions of people in need of emergency assistance. The worst-affected regions are southern Somalia, northern Kenya and southeast Ethiopia where drought has led to a major livelihood and food-security crisis.
- ICRC field assessments carried out in the Bay, Bakool and Gedo regions of conflict-prone southern Somalia in December 2005 and in January 2006 confirmed the extreme emergency nature of the situation and the need to provide immediate assistance to the most vulnerable communities.
- Following the field assessments, the ICRC drew up a multi-faceted emergency relief operation in Somalia which has already started in the south and is expected to gather momentum in the coming weeks. The programme includes the provision of emergency food relief, water trucking, extensive rehabilitation of water points throughout the affected region and de-stocking – i.e. the purchase and slaughter of weakened livestock at above depressed market prices and distribution of consumable meat to the needy, including internally displaced persons and other destitute families.
- The ICRC's current activities in Somalia, as outlined in its 2006 Emergency Appeal for Somalia, focus on emergency assistance to people directly affected by armed conflict, including the provision of food and basic household supplies, first aid, medical and basic health-care programmes, as well as small-scale water, agricultural and cash-for-work projects. The magnitude and severity of the current livelihood and food-security crisis in conflict/drought-stricken areas of Somalia will necessitate a more extensive humanitarian response. This in turn may incur additional funding requirements.
- As always, all ICRC activities in Somalia are being carried out in close partnership with the Somali Red Crescent. The ICRC will coordinate its activities with other humanitarian agencies operating in Somalia in order to ensure maximum impact among all needy population groups.
- **The ICRC's budget for Somalia, as presented in the Emergency Appeals 2006, stands at CHF 26,118,000 (USD 20,326,000/EUR 16,807,000). To date, the ICRC has not yet registered any contributions to the operation. It appeals to donors to make funds available as soon as possible.**

- ➔ The ICRC has also carried out an assessment of drought-related needs in the Somali Regional State of southeast Ethiopia where the organization also plans to carry out a number of emergency relief activities.
- ➔ In addition, the ICRC is reinforcing its support to the Kenyan Red Cross to strengthen its capacity to respond to the drought crisis in conflict-prone regions of northern Kenya.

## GENERAL SITUATION

Somalia has been without an effective central government since 1991 and is the theatre of an ongoing internal armed conflict. Lawlessness is widespread; there is recurrent fighting between rival armed groups who control much of the country and frequent clashes over water and pasture. Its crippled economy, chronic lack of basic services and vulnerability to natural disasters such as drought and flash floods have left many Somalis struggling for daily survival.

The UN estimates that 43% of the Somali population lives in extreme poverty. With around 80% of the population reliant on agriculture and livestock breeding, most Somalis depend for their livelihood on a good rainy season. For the past two years the seasonal rains have failed to materialize in some areas of southern and central Somalia, largely contributing to the worst food-security and livelihood crisis in the country for many years.

## HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

The current drought has exacerbated the already dire humanitarian situation in Somalia, particularly in southern parts where its impact on the population is compounded by frequent hostilities between rival clans. It has mainly struck regions which are prone to ongoing armed conflict and internal violence.

Recent ICRC field assessments in southern Somalia and southeast Ethiopia showed that large numbers of people are exposed to severe water and food shortages and are fast running out of traditional coping mechanisms. Widespread crop failures, pastureland degradation and a sharp rise in livestock mortality have destroyed livelihoods and compelled many people to leave their homes in search of food and water. Moreover, increasingly impoverished resident communities in some parts of southern Somalia are no longer able to assist families displaced by the ongoing armed conflict and internal violence who have settled in their regions.

Humanitarian needs can be expected to rise at least until the next seasonal rains due in April. If adequate rainfall fails to materialize by then the magnitude of the current food security and livelihood crisis is likely to grow far worse.

Another concern is the risk of an upsurge in fighting between nomadic cattle-herders in drought-affected regions over scant water and grazing resources.

Following are some of the key findings of the recent ICRC field assessments in southern Somalia and southeast Ethiopia.

### **Food security and livelihood crisis indicators:**

- ➔ Sharp decrease in the availability of food, water and milk
- ➔ Significant increase in cereal and other basic food prices following poor harvests which have made cereal foods more scarce and unaffordable to many
- ➔ Signs of aggravated destitution among the resident population in some areas
- ➔ Chronic lack of viable grazing areas and water for livestock resulting in an abnormally high rate of livestock mortality, especially cattle: it is estimated that up to 85% of cattle holdings will die in some areas of southern Somalia in the coming weeks, irrespective of any possible relief intervention

- ➔ Drastic drop in livestock prices due to the deteriorating physical condition of animals and the dwindling purchasing power of pastoralists and farmers whose livelihoods have been severely impaired by the drought
- ➔ Increasing numbers of pastoralists are moving their livestock to riverside regions of Lower/Middle Juba and central/southern Gedo in southern Somalia, increasing the depletion of and demand for grazing pastures in these areas
- ➔ Traditional coping mechanisms of both displaced and resident families are eroding rapidly
- ➔ Resident populations are no longer able to provide assistance to internally displaced families in their regions

## ICRC ACTION

### CIVILIANS

Although the extremely volatile security situation makes it difficult for international aid agencies to operate directly in Somalia, the ICRC has for many years been a key provider of emergency aid to the victims of armed conflict and internal violence in the country. It enjoys a high level of acceptance by the various parties and has good access to those it seeks to assist through its solid partnership at field level with the Somali Red Crescent.

In response to the current food and livelihood crisis, the ICRC started an emergency relief operation last December designed to mitigate the most devastating consequences of the drought. The programme will focus mainly on responding to urgent needs in southern Somalia where the situation is of particular concern owing to the combined impact of severe drought and armed violence on the resident population.

In order to optimize the impact of its activities and to avoid overlapping, the ICRC has remained in close contact with other major humanitarian agencies planning or already conducting relief work to help drought victims in Somalia and elsewhere in the region. Within this framework, the ICRC has retained its observer status on the Nairobi-based Somalia Aid Coordination Group, comprising donors, UN agencies and international NGOs.

ICRC action in this context will remain flexible so that it can be adapted to evolving needs and security constraints which prevent the ICRC from maintaining a permanent expatriate presence in the country. It is being carried out in the worst-affected regions such as Bakool, Bay and Gedo together with the Somali Red Crescent and community committees, under ICRC supervision and monitoring.

#### **ICRC activities currently underway or planned to start soon:**

- ➔ food relief for up to 120,000 persons (food distributions have already started)
- ➔ the purchase and slaughter of livestock from pastoralists at above depressed market prices and distribution of the animal meat to up to 150,000 people (this activity has already started in the Gedo region, and will shortly in Bay and Bakool regions)
- ➔ emergency water deliveries to 80,000 people (water trucking has already started)
- ➔ extensive rehabilitation of strategic water points throughout the drought-affected region (already started)
- ➔ Targeted measles vaccination campaign
- ➔ Ongoing monitoring and coordination with all involved humanitarian agencies

At a later medium-term stage, the ICRC plans to vaccinate around half a million cattle in Somalia. The Somali Red Crescent is a key partner in the implementation of all ICRC programmes in the country.

All of these activities are in addition to or an extension of those outlined in the ICRC's 2006 Emergency Appeal for Somalia and will require additional funding to the budget included in the 2006 Emergency Appeal for Somalia.

#### **OTHER DROUGHT-RELATED ACTIVITIES IN THE HORN OF AFRICA REGION:**

A number of emergency relief activities are also being planned in drought-stricken areas of southeast **Ethiopia**. Working with the Ethiopian Red Cross, the ICRC will focus on an emergency relief response in the Gode and Afder regions of Somali Regional State in southeast Ethiopia where it has conducted a field assessment to identify the most urgent needs arising from the drought situation. These activities include:

- ➔ the purchase and slaughter of livestock from pastoralists at above depressed market prices and distribution of the animal meat to up to 15,000 families
- ➔ improving access to water for some 140,000 people
- ➔ providing support for existing health facilities serving some 100,000 people

In addition, the ICRC has stepped up its logistical support to the Kenyan Red Cross to strengthen its capacity to respond to drought-related needs in **Kenya**.

Given the propensity for armed clashes in northern Kenya, the ICRC, in coordination with the Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS), had already increased its stock of relief goods, including medical supplies, to meet the needs of people affected by armed violence, as provided for in the 2006 Emergency Appeal for the Nairobi regional delegation.

At this stage no further funding is needed for ICRC drought-related operations in southeast Ethiopia and Kenya where the ICRC has foreseen contingency reserves for emergency situations, as outlined in the 2006 Emergency Appeals.

## MAP



⊕ (ICRC delegation in Nairobi)

⊕ Somali Red Crescent/ICRC hospital