



**U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
BUREAU FOR DEMOCRACY, CONFLICT, AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE (DCHA)
OFFICE OF U.S. FOREIGN DISASTER ASSISTANCE (OFDA)**

ERITREA – Complex Food Security Crisis

Situation Report #1, Fiscal Year (FY) 2004

March 16, 2004

Note: This updates Fact Sheet # 5 dated October 10, 2003.

BACKGROUND

In 2004, a fifth consecutive year of below average and erratic rains has resulted in widespread crop failure and livestock losses. According to the December 2003 U.N. Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for Eritrea, an estimated 1.9 million out of a total population of 4.3 million require 443,000 metric tons (MT) of food assistance in 2004. In addition to the drought-affected population, the United Nations (U.N.) is targeting assistance toward HIV-infected individuals, demobilized soldiers, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and returned refugees. In 2002, below-average *azmera* or minor season rains from March through May, severely hindered land preparation for the main planting season. Additionally, insufficient and sporadic *kremti* or main season rains from June to September, seriously reduced crop production in the drought-prone Anseba, Northern Red Sea, and Southern Red Sea zones, as well as the breadbasket zones of Gash Barka, Debub, and Makaan. Drought conditions also resulted in substantial livestock losses among pastoral communities. In August 2002, the Government of the State of Eritrea's (GSE) Eritrean Relief and Refugee Commission (ERREC) issued an appeal to the humanitarian community for emergency assistance in response to the continuing drought situation in 2003.

NUMBERS AT A GLANCE		SOURCE
Total Affected Population in 2004	1.9 Million	U.N. Consolidated Appeal
Total Food Aid Requirements in 2004	443,000 MT	U.N. Consolidated Appeal

Total FY 2004 USAID/OFDA Assistance to Eritrea (To Date) \$2,982,376
Total FY 2004 USG Humanitarian Assistance to Eritrea (To Date)..... \$41,050,236

CURRENT SITUATION

Humanitarian update. According to the U.N. Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Eritrea, a timely and generous international response averted a major food crisis in 2003. However, failed rains, poor recovery prospects, and ongoing needs in 2004 require donor support of \$147.2 million for emergency food, water and sanitation, health, nutrition, agriculture, and livelihoods recovery initiatives.

On February 13, representatives from U.N. agencies, donors, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the GSE attended the first general coordination meeting for Eritrea in 2004. Participants noted the need to link emergency and recovery programs to secure sustainable long-term results.

Current agricultural prospects. A January 2003 joint U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)/World Food Program (WFP) Crop and Food Supply Assessment estimated Eritrea's cereal production at only 22 percent of the country's annual requirements of 612,000 MT, indicating substantial food shortages for 2004.

On February 16, USAID's Famine Early Warning System Network (FEWS NET) reported that the poor performance of *bahri* rains, which normally fall between November and February, had negatively affected crops and pasture in the eastern escarpments and coastal areas of the Northern Red Sea Zone. Although the rains improved in early February, the timing was late for rain-fed crops and FEWS NET predicted total crop failure in rain-fed crop production areas. Crops performed better in the spate irrigation area of the Sheeb sub-Zone. Vegetation cover also improved following the *bahri* rains in Gindae sub-Zone and surrounding areas.

Chronic water shortages. USAID/OFDA field reports from December 2003 indicated that only 22 percent of households in Eritrea had access to potable water. According to a February 2004 report, FEWS NET observed negative effects of the dry season on water sources in Debub, Gash Barka, and Anseba regions, including nearly empty dams, dry wells, and severe shortages in several zones. The International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) reported in February that 2003 *kremti* rains had provided good quantities of fodder and drinking water for animals, but were not adequate for replenishing groundwater sources. According to USAID/OFDA field reports, water shortages required many

rural residents to walk up to three hours to reach water collection points. The negative consequences included reduced productivity for agricultural and other income generation pursuits and high rates of school drop-out, particularly among girls.

Potential break in food assistance pipeline. In FY 2004, the U.S. government (USG) has pledged an estimated 21 percent of the total 443,000 MT requested in the U.N. Consolidated Appeal. In order to extend existing resources, the ERREC has reduced ration size from 15 kg to 10 kg, and lowered beneficiary numbers from 1.9 million to 1.35 million from January through March. IDPs and returnees will continue to receive 15 kg rations but significant numbers of vulnerable people will be excluded. Without additional contributions from the donor community in the near future, acute shortages may occur in April.

Surveys confirm high rates of malnutrition. On March 5, the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) reported that joint nutritional surveys by the Ministry of Health, U.N. agencies, and NGOs collected data for the first time on Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) among children under the age of five and their mothers in four of Eritrea's six regions. Gash Barka and Northern Red Sea zones had the highest GAM rates with 15.6 and 16.9, respectively. Malnutrition among mothers was greater than 40 percent. The assessment teams plan to collect data for the remaining two regions during March.

Constraints to productivity and recovery. Humanitarian organizations in Eritrea cite several constraints to effective program implementation and consequences on recovery efforts. Difficulties in obtaining work permits and securing registration has reduced NGO capacity for program implementation. The GSE's mandatory military service requirement has resulted in labor shortages that have undermined recovery efforts. With an estimated 40 percent households headed by women, the absence of males has resulted in reduced productivity in the agricultural sector. In addition, the presence of land mines along the border with Ethiopia has inhibited residents from returning to their homes and engaging in agricultural production. The demining process was delayed by the expulsion of international demining groups in 2002/2003.

Security concerns. On March 1, UN OCHA reported that two explosions occurred in the western border town of Tesseney at a hotel frequented by GSE security forces. This marked the latest in a series of security incidences. The U.N. Country Team held a security management training on March 4 to evaluate security status in the country. Due to increased security concerns, the U.N. Security Management Team elevated U.N. Security status from Phase I to Phase III throughout Eritrea, excluding Asmara.

U.N. appoints Special Envoy for peace process. On February 2, UN OCHA announced the appointment of former Canadian Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy as U.N. Special Envoy for Ethiopia and Eritrea. The Special Envoy has a mandate to initiate dialogue and provide support toward implementation of the December 2000 Algiers Agreement that ended the border conflict between the two countries.

USG HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

Non-food assistance. In FY 2004, USAID/OFDA plans to focus resources to support agricultural recovery and water initiatives in Eritrea. In FY 2004 to date, USAID/OFDA has provided nearly \$3.0 million to support humanitarian needs. In addition, USAID/OFDA staff has traveled to drought-affected areas of the country in October/November 2003 to monitor programs and humanitarian conditions, conduct a post-harvest assessment, and outline recommendations for areas requiring additional support.

In response to agricultural and livelihoods recovery needs in FY 2004, USAID/OFDA has committed nearly \$550,000 to CARE for poultry interventions for 10,000 beneficiaries in Gash Barka, Debub, and Makaal zones. Through CARE, female-headed households are provided with 25 chickens. This project aims to improve nutritional status and give families an income generation opportunity through the sale of eggs. In addition, USAID/OFDA has provided approximately \$1.4 million to Catholic Relief Services (CRS) for seed fairs and agricultural initiatives that assist 27,000 beneficiaries. The CRS program empowers farmers and supports local markets in Gash Barka and Debub zones.

USAID/OFDA has provided \$1.0 million to the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF) to increase access to potable water and improve community sanitation and hygiene practices in drought-affected areas of Gash Barka, Debub, Anseba, and Makaal zones. In response to water shortages, UNICEF is extending basic infrastructure to strategic locations in the most vulnerable communities to increase access and reduce walking time to water collection points.

Emergency food assistance. To date in FY 2004, the USG has provided 21 percent of the total food assistance requirements for Eritrea. USAID's Office of Food for Peace (USAID/FFP) has pledged 94,620 MT of P.L. 480 Title II emergency food assistance valued at approximately \$37.3 million through implementing partners CRS, Mercy Corps, and WFP. The commodities provided by USAID/FFP include a combination of cereals, pulses, and vegetable oil, and corn-soya blend (CSB) for therapeutic and supplementary feeding. USAID/FFP emergency food assistance is provided to vulnerable populations through direct distribution, food for work programs, emergency school feeding, maternal and child health programs, and therapeutic and supplementary feeding programs.

Refugee assistance. The Department of State's Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration (State/PRM) has provided nearly \$770,000 in FY 2004 to International Medical Corps (IMC) for refugee health programs in Eritrea. In addition, State/PRM's overall contribution to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) supports the Eritrea country program.

U.S. GOVERNMENT HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO ERITREA

<i>Agency</i>	<i>Implementing Partner</i>	<i>Sector</i>	<i>Regions</i>	<i>Amount</i>
FY 2004				
USAID/OFDA				\$2,982,376
	CARE	Food Security, Agriculture	Gash Barka, Debub	\$549,722
	CRS	Food Security, Agriculture	Gash Barka, Debub	\$1,413,654
	UNICEF	Water/Sanitation	Gash Barka, Debub, Anseba, Makaal	\$1,000,000
		Administrative	Countrywide	\$19,000
USAID/FFP				\$37,306,866
	WFP Emergency Operations (EMOP) and Protracted Relief and Recovery Operations (PRRO)	38,020 MT of P.L. 480 Title II Emergency Food Assistance	Countrywide	\$15,543,027
	Mercy Corps	21,050 MT of P.L. 480 Title II Emergency Food Assistance	Countrywide	\$8,372,718
	CRS	35,550 MT of P.L. 480 Title II Emergency Food Assistance	Countrywide	\$13,391,121
State/PRM				\$760,994
	IMC	Primary Health Care	Gash Barka	\$760,994
Total USAID Humanitarian Assistance in FY 2004				\$40,289,242
Total USG Humanitarian Assistance in FY 2004				\$41,050,236

¹ USAID/OFDA funding represents committed and/or obligated amount as of **March 16, 2004**.



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