



**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 #2, Fiscal Year (FY) 2004

September 2, 2004

*Note: This updates situation report # 1, dated March 16, 2004.*

**BACKGROUND**

In 2004, a fifth consecutive year of below average and erratic rains resulted in widespread water shortages, crop failure, and livestock losses. According to the U.N. Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal (CAP) for Eritrea, an estimated 1.9 million people out of a total population of 4.3 million required humanitarian assistance in 2004. Even in good harvest years, Eritrea produces only 50 to 60 percent of the country’s total food needs, with commercial imports and food assistance normally filling the gap. However, failed rains in 2003 resulted in severely reduced agricultural output and Eritrea was able to produce only approximately 20 percent of annual food needs. Drought conditions and the residual effects of the border conflict with Ethiopia have led to significant socio-economic problems throughout the country with two-thirds of the population currently living below the poverty line. In 2004, U.N. agencies and the Government of the State of Eritea’s (GSE) Eritrea Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (ERREC) targeted humanitarian assistance toward drought-affected communities, demobilized soldiers, HIV-infected individuals, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and returned refugees.

NUMBERS AT A GLANCE	SOURCE	
<b>Total Affected Population in 2004</b>	1.9 million	U.N. CAP (November 2003)
<b>Total Food Aid Requirements in 2004</b>	443,000 MT	U.N. CAP (November 2003)

**Total FY 2004 USAID/OFDA Assistance to Eritrea..... \$3,481,177**  
**Total FY 2004 USG Humanitarian Assistance to Eritrea..... \$65,038,092**

**CURRENT SITUATION**

**Humanitarian update.** On June 15, the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) released the Mid-Year Review of the 2004 CAP for Eritrea. According to the OCHA report, the last six months have produced little change in lead indicators such as rainfall, crop production, and nutritional recovery. Instead, the cumulative effects of droughts and poor economic conditions suggest that the humanitarian situation could deteriorate further during the second half of the year.

A five-person USAID/OFDA team of regional, technical, and program staff traveled to Asmara and throughout Debub and Makaan zones of southern Eritrea from July 10 to 18 to assess the current humanitarian situation and review the progress of ongoing USAID/OFDA-funded emergency water and food security interventions. The team reported that the humanitarian situation in Eritrea was slightly improved from 2003, but erratic climatic conditions combined with complex social, economic, and political factors continued to undermine recovery prospects. Water shortages, increasing rates of poverty, and chronic malnutrition remained the leading humanitarian concerns. The GSE’s mandatory military service requirement and resultant labor shortages, delays in demobilization, and lack of movement in demarcation of the

Ethiopia-Eritrea border continue to complicate the overall humanitarian situation.

**Current agricultural/livestock prospects.** Across Eritrea, the February to April *azmera* rains were sporadic and widely considered to be a failure. The long *kremti* rains, which normally fall between June and September, began in late June with most agricultural zones receiving light to heavy showers. However, USAID’s Famine Early Warning System Network (FEWS NET) reported that the rains stopped in mid-June and dry conditions persisted until early July in most parts of the country. Some areas in Debub and Gash Barka zones received sporadic rainfall in late June and early July, but rain only began to fall with some regularity across these major agricultural zones in mid-July. The USAID/OFDA monitoring and assessment team observed many farmers just beginning to plow and plant their lands in mid-July, which is several weeks later than normal. An early or on-time cessation of this season’s rains will likely lead to significant decreases in agricultural productivity.

According to USAID/OFDA mid-July field assessments, the livestock situation across Debub has been poor but is showing signs of recovery. Although cattle throughout the zone were very thin, the onset of the *kremti* rains has increased pasture and short-term water availability. The U.N. World Food

Program (WFP) reported that herds in Anseba are migrating to other parts of the country where pastures are greener, and most pastoralists in Northern Red Sea Zone have migrated with their livestock to highland areas in search of pastures.

**Health and nutrition.** Although malnutrition rates have stabilized in the last few months, the GSE's Ministry of Health (MOH) reports that malnutrition levels remain high with all zones in the country reporting more than 10 percent acute malnutrition in the under five population. However, OCHA's Mid-Year Review of the 2004 CAP for Eritrea reported some improvements in the health and nutrition situation. According to the OCHA report, coverage of therapeutic and supplementary feeding of children and pregnant and lactating women increased from 10 to 49 percent. In addition, a National Nutrition Surveillance system has been established to monitor nutritional status using surveys and health facility data.

**USAID/OFDA interventions to restore livelihoods.** In response to the positive reaction toward USAID/OFDA-funded seed fair programs in FY 2003, USAID/OFDA supported additional agricultural programs in FY 2004 through Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and sub-grantee, CARE. During the July field assessment, the USAID/OFDA team met with farmers in Maakel and Debub zones who had received vouchers through the seed fair system. In addition, USAID/OFDA staff interviewed seed vendors and Ministry of Agriculture representatives regarding the programs' progress. Overall, beneficiaries were enthusiastic about the seed fairs citing increased choice in the seeds available for planting, which inspired farmers' confidence in seed quality and adaptability to local soil and climate conditions.

The USAID/OFDA team also visited CARE's poultry distribution program, which provides chickens to vulnerable female-headed households. The team noted that the initiative had shown significant success in stabilizing poverty and malnutrition levels and improving household coping mechanisms. Program participants reported improved nutritional status within their families due to the addition of eggs to their diets. Many beneficiaries also acquired sufficient income from selling eggs to purchase chicken feed and household necessities.

**Status of food aid pipeline.** The U.N.'s Mid-Year Review of the 2004 CAP reported that only 25.7 percent of the requested assistance for Eritrea had been received. In FY 2004, the U.S. government (USG) pledged 144,420 MT of food assistance, an estimated 33 percent of the total 443,000 MT requested. With the arrival of 9,392 MT in June, the total amount of food available for distribution was 65,825 MT. With the current reduced distribution rate, the existing stock is expected to last through September. Additional food aid will be required to address food shortages in the upcoming months. Without additional support, WFP will likely face shortfalls of cereals, vegetable oil, and corn soya blend (CSB) in January 2005.

**Progress of the U.N. Mission to Eritrea and Ethiopia (UNMEE).** On July 3, U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan visited Eritrea before proceeding to Ethiopia to attend the African Union Summit. In Asmara, Mr. Annan met with U.N. agencies and was briefed on the status of the peace process. The Secretary General also met with Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki and GSE officials.

On July 7, the Secretary General submitted a report to the U.N. Security Council providing an update on the peace process and UNMEE deployment and activities since March. The report stated that the peace process was unlikely to succeed without flexibility from both sides. According to the report, the general situation in the Temporary Security Zone (TSZ) and adjacent areas was relatively stable. The Secretary General's report noted that relations between the GSE and UNMEE had deteriorated in recent months and cited a number of GSE measures that have hampered UNMEE's ability to conduct operations effectively.

The report specifically referred to continuing restrictions on UNMEE's freedom of movement, especially in the areas north of the TSZ, and GSE detentions of locally recruited U.N. staff. The closure of the Asmara-Keren-Barentu road to all UNMEE traffic from March to August also imposed severe logistical constraints and limited the operations of UNMEE mandated activities. Furthermore, the Secretary General reported that extended detours for UNMEE aircraft flying between the two capitals constrained the U.N.'s ability to support the peace process and increased UNMEE's operational costs. On August 18, through an official communiqué to the Secretary General, the Ethiopian Government agreed to permit UNMEE to operate direct flights from Asmara to Addis Ababa, lifting a ban that was imposed in 2000.

**Refugee returns.** On August 2, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that repatriation of Eritrean refugees in Sudan is expected to be completed by the end of 2004. Since 2000, UNHCR has returned almost 120,000 refugees to Eritrea from Sudan. In early 2004, the Sudanese government estimated that 200,000 Eritreans remained in Sudan, with 35,000 expected to be repatriated during the year.

**Congressional delegation visits Eritrea.** From August 10 to 11, Congressman Donald M. Payne and a congressional delegation (CODEL) visited Eritrea and met with President Isaias Afwerki and GSE officials. In addition, CODEL Payne traveled to Gash Barka to visit several IDP settlements including Adi-keshi camp, which is home to more than 15,000 IDPs and approximately 2,000 rural expellees from Ethiopia. According to OCHA, approximately 59,000 Eritreans remain displaced throughout the country due to delays in the border demarcation process and de-mining and rehabilitation activities.

**Damage to IDP settlement site in Gash Barka.** On July 27, heavy rain and hail accompanied by high velocity wind and lightning caused extensive damage to the Korokon IDP settlement in Shambiko sub-Zone, Gash Barka Zone. The collapse of wooden shelters reportedly injured 13 residents. In addition, U.N. agencies' assessments indicated that Korokon urgently required emergency rehabilitation of the water distribution system, roof reconstruction for the school and health clinic, an estimated 1,300 emergency tents, and replacement of the rub hall used for food stores. In response, USAID/OFDA provided \$50,000 through USAID/Eritrea to support relief and mitigation activities.

#### **USG HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE**

**Non-food assistance.** In FY 2004, USAID/OFDA focused resources to support agricultural recovery and water initiatives in Eritrea. During the year, USAID/OFDA provided more than \$3.4 million to support humanitarian needs. In addition, USAID/OFDA staff traveled to drought-affected areas of the country in October/November 2003 and July 2004 to monitor programs and humanitarian conditions, conduct assessments, and outline recommendations for areas requiring additional support.

In response to agricultural and livelihoods recovery needs in FY 2004, USAID/OFDA committed nearly \$550,000 to CARE for poultry interventions for 10,000 beneficiaries in Gash Barka, Debub, and Makaal zones. In addition, USAID/OFDA provided approximately \$1.4 million to CRS for seed fairs and agricultural initiatives that assisted 27,000 beneficiaries.

USAID/OFDA provided more than \$209,000 to Mercy Corps to establish community water sources in Northern Red Sea, nearly \$227,000 to Concern to develop water sources and promote hygiene in Debub, and \$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 extended basic infrastructure to strategic locations in the most vulnerable communities to increase access and reduce walking time to water collection points.

**Emergency food assistance.** In FY 2004, USAID's Office of Food for Peace (USAID/FFP) pledged 144,420 MT of P.L. 480 Title II emergency food assistance valued at approximately \$58.1 million through implementing partners CRS, Mercy Corps, and WFP. The commodities provided by USAID/FFP included a combination of cereals, pulses, and vegetable oil, and CSB for therapeutic and supplementary feeding. USAID/FFP emergency food assistance was 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.** In FY 2004, the Department of State's Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration (State/PRM) provided nearly \$770,000 to International Medical Corps (IMC) for refugee health programs in Eritrea. State/PRM also provided \$2.2 million to UNHCR and \$500,000 to WFP for refugee assistance programs in Eritrea. In addition, State/PRM's overall contribution to UNHCR supported the Eritrea country program.

## U.S. GOVERNMENT HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO ERITREA

<i>Implementing Partner</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Amount</i>
<b>USAID/OFDA ASSISTANCE<sup>1</sup></b>			
CARE	Food Security, Agriculture	Gash Barka, Debub	\$549,722
Concern	Water	Debub	\$226,757
CRS	Food Security, Agriculture	Gash Barka, Debub	\$1,413,447
Mercy Corps	Water/Sanitation	Northern Red Sea	\$209,751
UNICEF	Water/Sanitation	Gash Barka, Debub, Anseba, Makaal	\$1,000,000
USAID/Eritrea <sup>2</sup>	Disaster Assistance Authority	Gash Barka	\$50,000
Various	Administrative	Countrywide	\$31,500
<b>TOTAL USAID/OFDA .....</b>			<b>\$3,481,177</b>
<b>USAID/FFP ASSISTANCE</b>			
WFP	78,720 MT of P.L. 480 Title II Emergency Food Assistance	Countrywide	\$31,836,100
Mercy Corps	30,150 MT of P.L. 480 Title II Emergency Food Assistance	Countrywide	\$12,868,700
CRS	35,550 MT of P.L. 480 Title II Emergency Food Assistance	Countrywide	\$13,391,121
<b>TOTAL USAID/FFP .....</b>			<b>\$58,095,921</b>
<b>STATE/PRM ASSISTANCE</b>			
IMC	Primary Health Care	Gash Barka	\$760,994
UNHCR	Refugee Assistance	Countrywide	\$2,200,000
WFP	Refugee Assistance	Countrywide	\$500,000
<b>TOTAL STATE/PRM.....</b>			<b>\$3,460,994</b>
<b>TOTAL USAID HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO ERITREA IN FY2004.....</b>			<b>\$61,577,098</b>
<b>TOTAL USG HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO ERITREA IN FY 2004.....</b>			<b>\$65,038,092</b>

<sup>1</sup>USAID/OFDA funding represents total amount obligated for FY 2004.

<sup>2</sup>USAID/OFDA funding for disaster declared on August 19 due to storm damage in the Korokon IDP settlement site.




---

Greg Gottlieb  
Acting Director  
Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance