



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

ERITREA – Drought

Fact Sheet #2, Fiscal Year (FY) 2003

March 18, 2003

This Fact Sheet updates USAID/OFDA Eritrea Fact Sheet #1 for fiscal year 2003, dated January 30, 2003.

Background

- In 2002, below-average minor season rains (March through May) severely hindered land preparation for the main planting season (June through September). Additionally, main season rains, which are crucial to 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 Maekel, were sporadic and insufficient. In response, the Government of the State of Eritrea’s (GSE) Eritrean Relief and Refugee Commission (ERREC) issued an appeal in August 2002 to the humanitarian community for a timely response to the drought situation. The GSE identified a food production deficit of nearly 300,000 metric tons (MT) and significant humanitarian needs in the health and water/sanitation sectors.
- According to the 2003 U.N. Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for Eritrea, launched in November 2002, an estimated 1.4 million out of a total of 3.3 million people are affected by drought conditions associated with major crop failure in agricultural areas and the substantial loss of livestock among pastoral communities. The U.N. has identified an additional 910,000 people comprised mainly of HIV infected individuals, demobilized soldiers, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and returnees that are also deemed vulnerable and are targeted for assistance under the Consolidated Appeal bringing the total number of vulnerable individuals in Eritrea to 2.3 million.

Numbers at a Glance

Drought Affected Population	1.4 million	Source: U.N.
Total Food Aid Requirements for Drought Affected Population	290,000 MT	Source: U.N.

Total USG Humanitarian Assistance in FY 2003 (to date)..... \$25,233,435
Total USG Food Aid in FY 2003 (to date) 55,400 MT

Current Situation

- The overall humanitarian situation in Eritrea is becoming increasingly desperate as the past six months have denoted a slow, but steady decline in food security, agricultural productivity, nutrition, and water resources. According to the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization and the U.N. World Food Program (WFP), the 2002 cereal production of 54,000 MT is the lowest since 1991 and is more than 60 percent below the previous ten year average. Eritrea is also reeling from severe shocks to its asset base, undermined by years of conflict and drought.
- On February 7, ERREC and USAID’s Famine Early Warning System Network (FEWS NET) reported that total food aid pledges had reached 112,360 MT. This total represents 39 percent of the 290,000 MT appeal for drought affected populations and 23.6 percent of the total appeal for all vulnerable populations. WFP and other relief organizations have warned that unless food deliveries are mobilized quickly, stocks could be depleted by April.
- Health and malnutrition problems are also on the rise due to the pervasive effects of the drought. Health centers in Gash report that malnutrition rates among children under five years of age are now four percent higher than the average rate in 2002. According to a recent demographic health survey, three out of six sub-regions have global acute malnutrition of more than 15 percent and as high as 28 percent in some areas.
- USAID/OFDA’s Water and Sanitation specialist reports that water shortages are becoming a serious problem as water tables have fallen more than 10 meters in some severely affected areas. Small villages with shallow, hand-dug wells are forced to travel longer distances to obtain water. As many small and remote villages are accustomed to chronic water shortages, they are already conserving water. In larger towns and cities, the impact of the drought is far more taxing as those populations are not as accustomed to water shortages. The reduced water availability could lead to deteriorating hygiene conditions in densely populated areas and, thus, elevate the potential for water related disease outbreaks.
- USAID/OFDA’s Food Security and Agriculture specialist reports that the condition of livestock has visibly deteriorated since December 2002. The drought has led to a substantial reduction in pasture availability and water for livestock. In turn, animals and herdsman have been forced to migrate much further this year than in the past in search of water and fodder, particularly to the eastern escarpment. The increased grazing pressures will likely lead

to rapid exhaustion of the land. An estimated 75 percent of the population of Eritrea depends on livestock production as part of their livelihood.

- WFP reports that dry cultivation has begun in the Dehub sub-regions of Mai Mine and Mendefera during February. Farmers are plowing their land in anticipation of the minor season rains. The lack of harvest from last year has pushed cereal prices up by 22 percent in the markets of Mendefera and Decamhare in the past six months.
- Landmine threats and insecurity along the southern border with Ethiopia have hindered the mobility of people and livestock, thereby reducing agricultural and other economic activities. Large tracts of the most productive farmland and prosperous grazing grounds are still inaccessible. In January and February, the U.N. Mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea reported that newly laid landmines were discovered in the western part of the 25 kilometer buffer zone separating Ethiopia and Eritrea. The mines are believed to be the work of local armed factions rather than that of the either side's army. The current number of IDPs totals 58,180, which is expected to remain constant until the demarcation process allows IDPs to return to their villages.

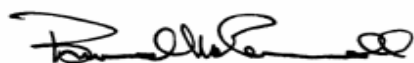
U.S. Government Response

- On December 2, 2002, U.S. Ambassador to Eritrea Donald J. McConnell declared a disaster in Eritrea due to food security concerns throughout the country and the significant loss of main season crops in western Eritrea.
- USAID/OFDA has committed more than \$1.4 million in humanitarian assistance funding to implement a food security program through CARE and a water project through the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF).
- From February 18 to February 25, USAID/OFDA dispatched a technical assessment team including food security, health, and water/sanitation experts to Eritrea to assess the humanitarian situation and meet with key government officials. The USAID/OFDA team, along with USAID/Eritrea staff, traveled to the three worst affected regions in the country. This was the fourth USAID/OFDA assessment in the past six months. Portions of the assessment team's findings are contained in this factsheet.
- USAID emergency food assistance to date in Eritrea in FY 2003 totals 55,400 MT and is valued at approximately \$23.8 million. This food assistance includes wheat, blended cereal, beans and vegetable oil. USAID/FFP provided more than 13,400 MT of emergency food assistance in FY 2002, valued at \$5.8 million.

U.S. GOVERNMENT HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO ERITREA

<i>Agency</i>	<i>Implementing Partner</i>	<i>Sector</i>	<i>Regions</i>	<i>Amount</i>
FY 2003 (to date)				
USAID/OFDA ¹				\$1,433,435
	CARE	Food Security	Gash Barka, Dehub	\$697,435
	UNICEF	Water/Sanitation	Dehub	\$736,000
USAID/FFP				\$23,800,000
	WFP	12,000 MT of P.L. 480 Title II Emergency Food Assistance	Countrywide	\$5,800,000
	Mercy Corps	24,700 MT of P.L. 480 Title II Emergency Food Assistance	Countrywide	\$9,500,000
	CRS/IEOP	18,700 MT of P.L. 480 Title II Emergency Food Assistance	Countrywide	\$8,500,000
Total USAID Humanitarian Assistance in FY 2003 (to date)				\$25,233,435
Total USG Humanitarian Assistance in FY 2003 (to date).....				\$25,233,435

¹ USAID/OFDA funding indicates committed and/or obligated amounts as of March 14, 2003.



Bernd McConnell, Director
Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance

Public Donation Information

- The most effective way people can assist relief efforts is by making cash contributions to humanitarian organizations that are conducting relief operations. A list of humanitarian organizations that are accepting cash donations for their drought response efforts in Eritrea can be found at <http://www.interaction.org/eastafrika/index.html>. Information on other organizations responding may be available at www.reliefweb.org.
- USAID encourages cash donations because they: allow aid professionals to procure the exact items needed (often in the affected region); reduce the burden on scarce resources (such as transportation routes, staff time, warehouse space, etc); can be transferred very quickly and without transportation costs; support the economy of the disaster-stricken region; ensure culturally, dietary, and environmentally appropriate assistance.
- More information on making donations and volunteering services can be found at:
 - USAID: www.usaid.gov -> "Disaster Assistance" -> "How Can I Help?"
 - The Center for International Disaster Information: www.cidi.org or 703-276-1914
 - InterAction: www.interaction.org -> "Guide to Appropriate Giving"
- Information on relief activities of the humanitarian community can be found at www.reliefweb.org.

USAID/OFDA fact sheets can be obtained from the USAID web site at

http://www.usaid.gov/hum_response/ofda/situation.html