



HUMANITARIAN UPDATE

May/June
2004

*Information coordination centre, a joint OCHA/ERREC venture to facilitate humanitarian intervention in Eritrea
Tel 185154/182923, fax 182970, e-mail: icc@gemel.com.er*

Highlights

The Peace process is still in stand off.

The CAP-2004 Mid Year Review has disclosed that the key priorities on humanitarian response for 2004 identified in November remain valid. The response to the CAP 2004 stands at 25.7%.

174 IDP families lost their shelter in Mai-Wurai to wind storm.

The Voluntary Repatriation Programme of Eritrean refugees from Sudan has assisted 8,627 as at 4 June 2004.

Azmera rains covering the period March –May has performed generally below normal.

PEACE PROCESS

The peace process is still experiencing an impasse; there has been no progress in the implementation of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Border Commission's ruling.

Ethiopia has rejected the commission's April 2002 ruling, despite agreeing, in a peace accord signed with Eritrea in December 2000 to respect it as "final and binding."

The Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi in his recent interview has disclosed his country's rejection of an independent commission's ruling on his country's border with Eritrea.

In January, UN Secretary General appointed Canadian former foreign minister Lloyd Axworthy to try to break the deadlock between Asmara and Addis Ababa.

According to UNMEE, the situation in the TSZ remains militarily stable but politically tense.

CAP -2004 PLEDGES AND CONTRIBUTIONS

The donor response to the total requirement of USD 117,636,804 appealed in the Consolidated Appeal Process 2004 stands at 25.7%. Out of the overall response food comprises 27.4% where as the non-food has been resourced 23.3%. There is a need for an immediate and adequate donor response to the overall appeal.

ERITREA CAP MID YEAR REVIEW

The CAP Mid Year Review (MYR) is finalized. It has underlined that the key priorities for humanitarian response in 2004 remain: preventing loss of life; maintenance of a healthy food pipeline; and, support for critical social service interventions, especially in the nutrition, water, sanitation, and shelter sectors. The MYR has also given priority to interventions in the agriculture sector that preserve livelihoods and prevent food aid dependence as well as the repatriation of Eritrean refugees. The CAP MYR further underscored strengthening humanitarian coordination and support services, information management and data collection will be important priorities.

To address these priorities, the CAP MYR underlined that humanitarian partners should ensure adequate response during 2004 by focusing on coordinated assessments; strategic planning and monitoring; dissemination of information; inter-agency programme support; and, advocacy. This will ensure harmonization of efforts and effective utilization of available resources. For humanitarian interventions to be effectively addressed, joint efforts are required by the Government, Donors, UN and NGOs, the MYR document added.

The expected humanitarian needs and response for 2005, based on the current situation, argue strongly for the development of another CAP for 2005. However, whether it would be a traditional or

transitional CAP, the decision would be made later. The continuation of the situation at the current level or even the deterioration there-of - taking into consideration the huge caseload of IDPs, widespread malnutrition and food insecurity – presuppose the necessity. As stated by the Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for the Humanitarian Crisis in the Horn of Africa, Martti Ahtisaari, “Eritrea will require international humanitarian assistance for the coming few years.”

The 2004 CAP MYR has been done in close consultation with and participation of the UN Country Team, Government, NGOs and donor partners in the country.

POPULATION MOVEMENT

IDPs

According to recent ICC Field Liaison assessment, there has been no movement of IDPs to and from the camps. There are still 58,000 IDPs living in and out side of camps in Debub, Gash Barka and Northern Red Sea.



IDP Camp Prototype

Repatriation of Nationals

Three Eritrean children and some 175 Ethiopians were repatriated on 4 June 2004 under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). So far ICRC has facilitated the repatriation of 45,000 Ethiopians and 5000 Eritreans to their respective homes since the programme started following the Algiers Agreement on 12 December 2000.

Repatriation from Sudan

The number of refugees returning to Eritrea has risen up to 8,627. This includes the latest convoy arrived in Tessenei on 4 June 2004 with 366 returnees.

Refugees opting to benefit from the voluntary repatriation had been packing for days and readying themselves before bidding farewell to Sudan. Some had fled Eritrea more than 30 years ago, while others had been born refugees and are coming back to their homeland for the first time.

Most of the refugees returned to communities located near Goluj, Haykota, Tessenei and Barentu in western Eritrea's Gash Barka region, while others are going back to areas deeper inside the country, including Northern Red Sea and Anseba regions.

UNHCR has announced recently that the organized repatriation programme of Eritreans would phase out by 31 December 2004. UNHCR highlighted that subsequently, it will focus on reintegration activities to assist the returnees.

There remain 26,000 individuals who have registered for voluntary repatriation. The repatriation has so far enabled UNHCR to close 10 of the 18 camps established decades ago on the plains of eastern Sudan.



Eritrean refugees heading home

Major Challenges

Food Aid

The response to the national food aid requirement of 443,000 MT for 2004 including carry over pledges from last year including supplementary items, so far stands at 188,881MT leaving a short fall of 254,119 (48.33%). Carryover pledges comprise about 40,000 MT. The remaining second half of the year is normally the most critical hunger period until the next harvest. Farmers in order to effectively engage in the intensive agricultural activities need full basket of food rations. Against the caseload of 1.9 million people who need food assistance, general distribution have been able to reach

only 1.3 million people at 60% of the standard per capita per month. Despite the shrink of food ration to the majority of the food aid recipients, ERREC has maintained normal food ration for the IDPs in camps and returning refugees.



Food aid distribution

The national food aid requirement has been estimated at 443,000 MT to feed some 1.9 million people in 2004. The CAP which aims at part of the overall national requirement has been undergoing Mid Year Review, as the result figures for food requirement were reduced from the original appeal of 198,802 tons of commodities (USD 98,800,000) in support of 1,103,400 beneficiaries, to 185,431 tons (USD 70,800,000) in support of 899,200 beneficiaries. According to WFP, the changes were due to a number of factors, such as the commodity prices that were lower than originally envisioned.

The remaining of the National food aid requirement i.e. 257,569MT should be solicited by other partners such as the NGOs and bilateral.

Food Security

The March-May, Azmera season rainfall has performed generally below normal, as the result the expectation from the season has become grim in improving the pasture and water, and subsequently the food security of the majority of households. Hence the outlook of the agricultural activities will totally be dependant on the performance of the approaching Kiremti season (June-September).

Despite all the gloomy conditions, agricultural activities such as land preparation and planting of long cycle crops has been going on in areas, which receive *Azmera* rains mainly Maekel and Debub. Similar activities are underway in the *Kiremti* benefiting areas, which include Maekel, Debub, Gash Barka, Anseba and part of Northern Red Sea zones.



Azmera Season Performance

Limited seed distribution to needy farmers has been going on. For instance at the end of May/beginning of June, ICRC has distributed a total of 290 MT of seeds to 9,122 vulnerable resident farmers in Gash Barka and Debub before the main rain approached. In Gash Barka, 2,950 families received a total of 60 MT of sorghum and pearl millet seeds, and in Debub 6,172 families were assisted with a total of 195.5 MT of barley and 34.5 MT of taff seeds.

The Sectoral Task Force reported that out of the 7000 MT of seed deficit appealed for assistance, so far 2,603 have been pledged by FAO, ICRC, CARE, CRS, ManiTese, Vision Eritrea and Toker. Of the total pledges 770 tons has been purchased and distributed. There is a gap of some 4,397 MT yet to be solicited from partners. Timely and adequate response is crucial in the efforts being made to improve food security of the vulnerable groups affected by drought, war and extreme poverty.

Health and Nutrition

The second series of National Nutrition Surveillance System (NNSS) surveys are underway: in Northern Red Sea data collection was completed, Gash Barka training was being conducted to start data collection, Debub logistical preparation is underway to start data collection and survey is planned in Anseba and Southern Red Sea/Maekel in July and September respectively.

The first round of the NNSS has been concluded in Maekel and Southern Red Sea zone. Preliminary results indicate that while the nutrition situation in the Maekel zone remains at an acceptable level, global acute malnutrition rates in rural areas of the Southern Red Sea zone are alarmingly high. Except in Maekel, all zones showed high levels of malnutrition above the WHO cut off point.

In addition to the general malnutrition, it was reported that micronutrient deficiencies were also high. Vitamin A deficiency was detected at 42.2% and moderate anemia among 32% of the children between ages of 6-59 months. In order to deliver life-saving health and nutrition interventions planned under the CAP-2004, the health and nutrition Sectoral Task Force faces a short fall of USD 4.8 million.

The estimated cost of the NNSS is USD 200,000 a year for two surveys.

Shelter and Non Food Item

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in May has completed distributing a total of 12,612 tarpaulins to families in the camps to help households reinforce their tents to sustain the upcoming rainy season. Concerning non-food items, 11,221 water containers (50l capacity), 2,418 mosquito nets (targeting families with children under 5) and 130,060 pieces of soap (4 pieces per person for four months) were distributed. In Gash Barka, two camps received also 4'273 palm mats serving as heat insulators.

Water and Sanitation

The ground water table did not replenish due to the poor performance of rains in March-May. Eritrea is therefore still under the grip of a harsh drought resulting in severe critical drinking water problems both for human and animals. The worst affected regions are Anseba, Southern Red Sea and Northern Red Sea.

The Water and Sanitation Sectoral Task Force in Eritrea has focused its activities to meet the urgent water and sanitation needs of the most affected communities impacted by war and drought, i.e. IDPs, Returnees, Expellees and host communities. Currently, around 30,000 people are provided emergency water by trucking. However, in terms of drought-affected communities, an estimated 54,000 of people require immediate support through accelerated water projects and water trucking. The needs of IDP's are mostly taken care of, except a few residual camps such as Denbedoran, Gash Barka and camps in Aromo, Mai-Alba and Kolet in Debub region where immediate and urgent interventions are needed.



People using unsafe water point

The water and sanitation programme has been striving to ensure inter-sector linkages through full provision of water and sanitation facilities to schools and health centres. The provision of safe water is achieved through water transportation to drought affected areas, repair and rehabilitation of existing schemes as well as construction of new schemes.

The Consolidated Appeal requested some USD 4 million for the water sector, of which only some USD 1.8 million has been received to date. The urgent funding needs in the sector for 2004 are US \$ 2.2 million through the Consolidated Appeal (CAP).

MINE INCIDENT

According to UNMACC, on 18 May unexploded ordinance incident happened in Tsorona after a nine-year-old boy detonated the UXO. The boy sustained minor injury. Earlier on 17 April, a mine incident has occurred five kilometers north east of Adi Ibrahim village, in Gash Barka zone. The incident happened after a Toyota pickup detonated anti-tank mine. There was no loss of human life except the driver who was on his own sustained a minor injury to his legs.

FOCUS

Mai-Wurai Camp

The camp administrators of Mai-Wurai camp reported on 02 May 2004 that rain accompanied by windstorm destroyed 632 tents in the Camp.

Based on the report ICC Field Liaison Unit visited the camp on 28 May 04 and discussed with the Camp administrator and the dwellers about the incident. The administrators and dwellers said that the rain started in the afternoon around 16:00 hours and continued up to 17:30 with heavy wind dismantling 632 tents. Out of the above-mentioned number of tents blown up 174 tents could not be recovered. The owners of these damaged tents are now living with their neighbours.

Similarly four tents were destroyed as fire broke out in Mai Alba IDP camp during the first week of May.

ERREC regional office is taking further investigation on the damaged tents.

Gash Barka

Due to the bomb blast incident in Barentu on the 25 May 2004, the issue of security has become of concern in Gash Barka. The Field Security Coordination Officer (FSCO)-Mr. Brian Drayner visited Barentu and met with the governor and other local government authorities. He later met with staffs of UN agencies on 27 May 2004 and briefed them on the official report from the governor's office on the number of deaths and injuries sustained as a result of the 25th bomb blast in Barentu. Consequently, emphasis was placed on MOSS compliances and Mine Awareness Training for each and every UN staff, in particular drivers. Agencies were also advised to use at least two vehicles for the routes leading to Shambuko and Gerenfit.

At the monthly humanitarian coordination meeting held under the auspices of OCHA on 2 June 2004, agencies reported the resumption of visits to project sites and the distribution of relief items.

<p>For further information please contact the ICC at: Tel. 291-1-185154/182923, e-mail: icc@gemel.com.er</p>
--