

Humanitarian partners launch a revised emergency appeal of USD 575 millions to respond to escalating humanitarian needs in Kenya

Nairobi, 17 March, 2009

Members of the humanitarian community with support from the Government of Kenya yesterday presented the 2009 revised Emergency Humanitarian Response Plan (EHRP) for assistance of those most in need in Kenya. Since the initial launch of the 2009 EHRP five months ago, the humanitarian situation in Kenya has deteriorated. Poor rains, food shortages and high commodity prices have deepened food and livelihood insecurity across many parts of the country; while instability and conflict in neighbouring Somalia have prompted marked increase in refugees entering Kenya. Humanitarian partners have therefore reviewed their programmatic requirements to respond to existing and emerging needs. The revised appeal requests a total of USD 575 million to address the needs of vulnerable communities.

Among the key populations targeted under the Plan are victims of the current food crisis; particularly affecting the pastoral ASAL areas, the marginal agricultural areas of south-eastern and coastal lowlands, as well as the urban poor. The crisis has been triggered by a combination of factors including poor short rains, rising food and commodity prices, reduced cereal production, livestock diseases and incidents of conflict, which converged to dramatically increase food security among many vulnerable populations. The food crisis led the president to declare an emergency on January 16th, 2009 and launched an appeal for assistance for Ksh 37 billion.

Emergency interventions are now essential to ensure life-saving food assistance for an estimated 3.5 – 4.5 million vulnerable persons; increasing water availability through enhanced harvesting and storage are valuable complements. Long-term non-food interventions to support the livelihoods of vulnerable populations are also required to mitigate the impact of the current crisis and to cushion future shocks.

Another target group for the revised EHRP is the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) mainly those displaced as a result of post-elections violence. Their situation has stabilized over the course of last year due to political progress and joint humanitarian efforts – as a result, an estimated 347,418 IDPs have returned to pre-displacement areas or transit areas¹. Nevertheless, many of the transit sites have inadequate basic services, including sanitation, hygiene and health facilities and limited access to schools. Peace-building and reconciliation for displaced people and the communities that host them urgently need more and sustained engagement, while increased investment in livelihoods is essential to ensure that returnees can lead productive lives and meet their basic needs while re-building socioeconomic security.

Regionally, Kenya's porous borders have witnessed continuous refugee flows. The crisis in Somalia precipitated increased movements of Somalis over the border into Kenya, with more than 60,000 Somalis crossing the border into Kenya in 2008 alone. According to UNHCR, WFP and UNICEF more than 14,000 new refugees have registered by end of January, adding to a refugee population which already far exceeds the capacity of existing camps and support mechanisms. New arrivals are expected to continue during the course of the year. Therefore, there is an

¹ Returns estimated by the GoK

immediate need to decongest existing camps and accommodate arrivals in new camps with adequate infrastructure. Equally important is the provision of assistance to cater for the chronically unmet requirements of these populations and – in the interest of conflict-prevention – the local host community has to be catered for as well.

In light of the need to support populations affected by climatic shocks, food insecurity and livelihood deterioration, post-election violence and a growing number of refugees; humanitarian organizations have thus developed a coordinated multi-sector approach to humanitarian assistance. In presenting the Plan, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator, Mr. Aeneas Chuma noted that, *“as development partners in Kenya, we recognize the importance of tackling chronic, recurrent and predictable problems with durable and effective solutions. We are therefore determined to strengthen our engagement with the Government of Kenya to take necessary steps that will tackle chronic food insecurity by ensuring greater complementarity between our humanitarian aid assistance and long term interventions through the UNDAF as well as the Kenya Joint Assistance Strategy.”*

While recognizing the multitude of challenges faced by humanitarian actors in 2008/2009, due to the changing nature of humanitarian needs as a result of IDP resettlement and climate change; the Minister of State for Special Programmes, Dr. Naomi Shaaban said that, *“even though there was need to respond to immediate live saving needs, the answer to Kenyan food insecurity problem lied with long-term interventions such as provision of farm inputs to farmers and investment in water harvesting and irrigation projects. She noted that the President had last week launched a program termed ‘Njaa Marufuku’ (get rid of hunger) through which farmers in grain basket areas will access inputs free charge or at a subsidized price.”*

The head of UN OCHA in Kenya, Ms. Jeanine Cooper noted that *“the Government and Aid Agencies were capitalizing on the spirit of collaboration to strategize, prioritize and plan for 2009; in order to tackle persisting chronic food insecurity, peace building initiatives and restoration of livelihood to built the resilience of most vulnerable populations in the ASALs, Eastern and Coastal marginal farmers, Urban poor and Refugees.”* In 2008 and 2009, stakeholders have worked together to respond flexibly to new developments, despite many competing priorities. Thanks to the generous support of donors, a total of USD 94.6 million (including carry-over from last year) has already been committed to the 2009 Emergency Humanitarian Response Plan (EHRP), representing 26% of the original funds requested (USD390, 051,584). This includes nearly USD 5 million contributed through the rapid response window of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) for refugee response.

The revised EHRP includes 28 new projects and 38 revised projects (with changes in budget, text, or both); four projects have been withdrawn or merged with existing projects while 70 projects remain unchanged.

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