

Humanitarian Emergency Fund East Africa Crisis – Stream 1B Agency Response Report

In July 2017, the Scottish Government activated its Humanitarian Emergency Fund in response to the humanitarian crisis across East Africa. The crisis, one of the biggest humanitarian crises in East Africa's history, had been driven by years of successive droughts and failed harvests, conflict and insecurity. Such was its scale, across Kenya, Ethiopia, Somalia and South Sudan, that the Scottish Government, having made an earlier donation to the Disasters Emergency Committee's East Africa appeal, approved its first allocation on the recommendation of the HEF Panel. In addition to a second donation to the DEC, the HEF also funded responses by the non-DEC members of the HEF Panel for their responses to the crisis: Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) in South Sudan, Mercy Corps in Somalia, and SCIAF in Ethiopia.

Country	Agency	Response		Budget
South Sudan	MAF	22 hours of flying time	Transportation of 70 aid personnel, 2,000kg of cargo	£15,666
Somalia	Mercy Corps	Shelter / NFI kits	200 households	£15,666
Ethiopia	SCIAF	Cash grants	118 households	£15,666

South Sudan – Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF)

Context

While humanitarian agencies work hard to respond to the worsening food insecurity of millions of people, they have been challenged by the country's difficult terrain and geographical barriers. The ongoing conflict has further constrained aid agencies travelling overland to hard-to-reach areas to bring aid and provide a regular and effective field presence. Recent reports state that the cost of delivering aid in South Sudan is now up to seven times more expensive than anywhere else in the world¹.

MAF's response

MAF have been operating four high-performance light aircraft in South Sudan, flying to sixty-two airstrips around the country, to meet the demands of the humanitarian actors responding to the dire humanitarian needs.

Achievements

Essential aid and support have been delivered to some of the country's most inaccessible areas for some of the most vulnerable people who would otherwise have been excluded from receiving any essential assistance.



This plane, known as Scotty, was funded entirely by MAF's supporters in Scotland.

The HEF grant from the Scottish Government has enabled MAF's aviation operation to deliver:

- 22 hours of flying time;
- The transportation of 70 aid agency staff;
- The transportation of 2,000kg of cargo.

¹ Value for money – For information, MAF has maintained flight costs in South Sudan at a comparable level as elsewhere.

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Somalia: Mercy Corps

Context

The failure of four consecutive rainy seasons has led to a protracted drought, forcing people to migrate to urban centres in search of food, potable water, and safe and secure shelter. The huge increase in forced migration resulted in outbreaks of cholera, high mortality rates in the Internally Displaced People (IDP) settlements, and significant losses to livestock. Surveys conducted by the Somalia Shelter Cluster cite shelter and non-food items (NFIs), in addition to food and water, as priority needs among the estimated 700,000 displaced people in Mogadishu and Baidoa.

Project Plan

Mercy Corps has been part of a large country-wide humanitarian response, critical in averting famine and laying the foundation for more resilient communities in Somalia. Within their wider response, they have used the funding from the HEF to prioritise the provision of shelter and NFI kits to some of the most vulnerable, newly displaced households across four urban IDP settlements in the vicinity of Mogadishu, along the Afgoyne Corridor in Dayniile (three camps) and Kahda (one camp) districts.

Achievements

Mercy Corps provided 200 households (approximately 1,275 people) with emergency shelter kits comprising plastic sheeting, floor mats, fixings (rope, nails and wire), and non-food items (NFIs) comprising blankets, 10-litre Jerry cans, bucket, two cooking pots and cups. Post Distribution Monitoring noted that, as some shelter and NFI components were shared with extended family members, the number of individuals benefitting from the response is greater than anticipated.



Beneficiaries awaiting Shelter/NFI kits at the designated centre within the IDP camp.



Women with their pre-packed shelter/NFI kits. Photo credits: Mercy Corps

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Identification of vulnerable households

The Mercy Corps team used the ‘Community-Based Targeting’ approach to develop the selection criteria and to identify the most vulnerable households. Having set up Camp Select Committees (CSC), initial needs assessment identified that newly displaced families within IDP camps had not yet developed coping mechanisms and were therefore the worst affected.

Mercy Corps conducted community engagement activities involving the relevant local authorities, traditional elders, camp leaders and the targeted population, explaining the details of the project, its targeted areas, who would receive assistance: women and child-headed households, widows, elderly people and people with disabilities. The CSCs led the selection and, following brief interviews with the head of each household to confirm eligibility, the Mercy Corps team issued vouchers. Each beneficiary was thumb-printed for documentation and identification.

Additional information:

The Mercy Corps Programme and Logistics team, in collaboration with the local communities, procured the shelter kits and NFIs from a local vendor who met the required quality standards.

Challenges

While Mercy Corps managed the emergency shelter and NFI needs of 200 newly displaced households in a timely and efficient manner, there remains acute humanitarian need in the targeted area due to the protracted drought, scarce resources and food supplies, and limited WASH infrastructure.



Pre-packed Shelter kits and NFIs ready for distribution at the designated centre within an IDP camp.

Credit/ Mercy Corps



An elderly woman being issued with an identification voucher by a Mercy Corps team member.

Credit/ Mercy Corps

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Ethiopia: Scottish Catholic International Aid Foundation (SCIAF)

Context

Ethiopia, one of the world's most drought-prone countries, has become more vulnerable to drought in recent years due to the effects of climate change. Poor rainfall in 2015-2016 led to a severe drought across the north and eastern parts of the country. Successive crop failures and widespread livestock deaths caused acute food insecurity for nearly ten million people. Failed rains in 2017 led to another drought in the south-eastern region, giving rise to severe food and water shortages for almost eight million people.

In the northern region of Tigray, the short rainy season, the *Belg*, was erratic in all six of the crop-producing districts². Approximately 95 per cent of crops across these districts were destroyed, including in Hintalo Wajirat where 98 per cent of the crops failed. As a result, 12,000 people are currently facing acute food insecurity in the district.

Project Plan

With funding from the HEF and SCIAF, SCIAF's six-month response, through the CST³ office in partnership with local NGO ADCS-Mekele, prioritised providing conditional and unconditional cash grants to some of the most vulnerable households in Hintalo Wajirat, one of the Priority One⁴ woredas. The cash would cover the critical food gap between August and November.

Achievements

Overall, SCIAF provided 589 households in four villages in Hintalo Wajirat *woreda* with cash grants to cover their immediate dietary needs for a period of between one and four months.

The HEF grant from the Scottish Government has enabled SCIAF to support:

- 118 households and 443 individuals

Cash transfers

The original plan had anticipated targeting 520 households, each with an average of six members. However, some households were fewer in number as some of the most vulnerable groups included landless individuals with no family, and elderly people (either living alone or without children). Therefore, while the number of households has increased, the total number of people reached has reduced from 3,120 to 2,161.

Furthermore, the project had calculated a monthly cash grant to each household of ETB 944, based on an average of ETB 157 for each individual, which would cover the minimum household expenditure for the four-month food gap. In the course of the project, the Ethiopian Government raised the monthly rate to ETB 220 for each individual, sufficient to buy 15kg of grain, 1.5kg of pulses and 0.5 litres of vegetable oil. An unexpected exchange rate gain partially offset the additional costs.

The project had also planned to transfer the cash through M-Birr, a private financial institution. Cash transfers were to be delivered electronically through Smartcards which would store and record the type and value of transactions. During the project, it became evident that the infrastructure lacked the capacity to deliver the transfers, thus the cash was distributed directly by the partners to the recipients on a monthly basis.

² In the main agricultural regions in Ethiopia there are two rainy seasons, the *Meher* and the *Belg*. *Meher* is the main crop season; only smallholders cultivate crops during the *Belg* season as yields are smaller.

³ The CST is a consortium led by SCIAF, CAFOD and Trócaire. The three agencies work collaboratively in Ethiopia through a single common country strategy and office.

⁴ Priority *Woredas* – are areas or populations affected by hazards which have direct impact on food security, nutrition and livelihood. The level is classified in Priority One (Very Severe), Two (Severe) and Three (Moderate).

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Cash-for-work activities

While the most vulnerable people were given cash grants unconditionally, the cash-for-work activities were undertaken by individuals who were able to work. Supervised by natural-resource experts, soil and water conservation technologies were constructed. More than 5,000 seedlings were also planted to provide fruit, both for consumption and for sale, thus generating additional income for the communities.



Soil bund with trench

10.5km of soil bund with trench was constructed along contours to prevent soil erosion and improve water collection from rainfall.

Stone check dam

A 1,050 m³ stone check dam was constructed to mitigate soil erosion by reducing the velocity of the water flow.

Identification of vulnerable households

Having identified the priority villages, SCIAF, in collaboration with its implementing partner, established selection committees with the participation of community groups and representatives and local authorities. Priority was given to households headed by poor women, asset-poor households, and households with a higher number of dependent family members.

Evaluation

Feedback mechanisms and surveys reported that, while most respondents said that the place and time designated for the monthly cash distribution, and the time taken to travel to collect cash, was fair and acceptable 36 per cent said that they would have preferred the distribution to have been on a weekly or fortnightly basis. Additionally, 44 per cent said that they would have preferred food or food vouchers over cash.

The survey also reported that the cash-grant scheme helped to improve the purchasing power of individuals, helping to avoid negative coping strategies such as selling remaining assets or forced migration in search of waged labour. Of the cash grants, more than 75 per cent was spent on food, with almost 60 per cent of respondents reported having three meals a day, and 40 per cent had two meals.

It was noted during monitoring visits by project staff that some mothers brought their children to the cash-for-work activities. In consultation with the community, older women were paid to take care of the children at temporary child-care centres until mothers returned from work.

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Conclusion

In this first activation of Stream 1B, the three HEF member agencies have implemented a range of projects, the impacts of which can be measured favourably in comparison to the relatively small allocation of funding. From the provision of much-needed shelter and household items within the challenging environment of IDP camps, to the provision of cash grants, unconditionally to those most vulnerable, and for those who are more able, the added benefit of contributing to the ecological improvement of their land; together delivering positive change for almost 2,000 people and helping to build resilience for the future. And in the wider dimension of delivering emergency support, the ability to transport aid staff, and resources, to otherwise inaccessible locations made possible only by the inclusion of funding for humanitarian air support.



1 Transporting building materials Credit/MAF



2 Women tending newly planted seedlings Credit/SCIAF



3 Elderly camp resident receiving shelter and NFI kits Credit/Mercy Corps