



March 19, 2012

I. SUMMARY

- 15.5 million people at risk; nearly 8 million in need of emergency assistance
- Steep increase in staple food prices, especially in remote rural markets
- 8 countries declare crisis: Niger, Mauritania, Chad, Mali, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Nigeria & Cameroon
- \$1 of early intervention could prevent a child falling into malnutrition, where treatment cost \$80
- Severe drought and conflict in northern Mali lead 35,797 to flee to Mauritania
- Designated appeal open for West Africa Sahel Drought, 100% of gifts used for disaster.
- Visit www.elca.org/disaster for more information

II. SITUATION

The Sahel region of West Africa is currently in the midst of a growing food crisis. As many as 15.5 million people are now feeling its affects. Of this number almost 8 million are in need of emergency food and nutrition assistance.

The current crisis is causing extra strain on an area already living with perpetual nutritional emergencies. The region has consistently excessive levels of acute malnutrition, with hundreds of thousands of children under 5 requiring treatment and care for malnutrition every year. Many of the poorest households, which were most affected during the last serious food crisis in 2010, have not had time to recover and rebuild their resilience.

A steep increase in the prices of staple foods started in the post-harvest period, especially in remote rural markets. Many of the most at-risk people in the region rely on access to markets to obtain food; therefore access to affordable food in local markets is vital for their food security. The number of people accessing only one meal a day and scavenging for wild foods is daily increasing.



Previous hopes that off-season gardening during the winter months would be able to provide an additional source of foods and income for rural populations have been disappointed. Water levels were too low for these off-season crops due to erratic rains. This has led to more people being dependent on markets for food at a time when prices are becoming prohibitive. Grain prices are likely to remain at high levels throughout the hunger gap in all three trade basins of the West Africa Sahel region, especially in the central basin countries of Burkina Faso and Mali. Several markets in remote areas are already not functioning normally.

The vulnerability of pastoralists communities is also under high stress due to shortage of pasture and water. Unusually high movements of livestock are being reported from Mauritania to Niger and Chad while the condition of the herds is deteriorating. The ability to sell animals is also becoming more difficult as the trade for livestock is diminishing in many regions, especially Niger.

Along with the severe drought armed conflict in northern Mali has sparked a migration of people to neighboring countries. As of March 9, 2012 there were 35,797 Malian refugees (7,538 families) in Mauritania. 12,882 are in the refugee camp of Mbera and 22,915 are in the refugee site of Fassala. Over half (54%) of these arrivals are under 18. The daily intake has averaged to about 600 new refugees/day.¹

Left unchecked this crisis has the potential of devolving, leading to the risk of wide-spread famine and an increased need for emergency food and water intervention. The seriousness of the situation has propelled the governments of Niger, Mauritania, Chad, Mali, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Nigeria & Cameroon to declare states of emergency and call for international assistance. The time for responding is now, not only because early intervention will save lives but because in the early states more can be done with less. According to a report of the 2005 Niger drought one dollar of invested in reducing risk could prevent a child from slipping into malnutrition, whereas its treatment costs \$80.²

III. COORDINATED RESPONSE

The ELCA has a long-standing history with the region. The ELCA Global Mission unit has been involved in Senegal, Niger and northern Cameroon and through its membership in Lutheran World Federation the ELCA has been active in Mauritania and Chad. Working through these relationships the ELCA Disaster Response program is standing ready to respond as our companions assess the situation and how best to respond.

The ACT (Actions by Churches Together) Alliance has issued an appeal for response in Mauritania, Senegal and Mali. This appeal will reach a total number of 60,572 people (including 29,441 drought affected people from Mauritania, 10,131 drought affected people from Senegal, and 21,000 Malian Refugees) or 8,653 households (including 4,206 drought affected households from Mauritania, 1,447

¹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Mauritania Daily Report", 09 March 2012.

² "Humanitarian actors call for swift and adequate funding in response to the unfolding crisis", 12 March 2012, <http://reliefweb.int/node/482234> (accessed March 16, 2012).

households from Senegal, and 3,000 Malian Refugees' households) throughout its lifespan, estimated at 12 months. They are from three Sahel Region countries: Mauritania, Senegal and Mali. They are located in south-eastern Mauritania, and in Fatick, Senegal.

In **Mauritania**, the Lutheran World Federation – Department of World Services (LWF/DWS) is participating in the response. It has distributed blankets to 7,832 people; mixed soups to 2,065 people; and hygiene kits (including soaps) to 653 vulnerable people. They have also attended coordination meetings at Mbour and Nouakchott under the facilitation of UN High Commissioner for Refugees to discuss the situation with Malian refugees. They will also meet the WFP (World Food Programme) regional staff to discuss cash transfer as markets become better stocked by local merchants.

In **Senegal**, the LWF is working with the Lutheran Church in Senegal (ELS). Their response will include identifying the most vulnerable households in the Fatick region, where the ELS has a strong presence. The program here will assist 13% of the households most affected. BP5 biscuits and locally made enriched food (mixed sorghum, rice, Niébé, maize, peanut) will be distributed to malnourished children, pregnant and lactating women, and elders (+64 years). The project will also build resilience through training on appropriate techniques, such as introduction to drought-resistant crops, protection of the environment, disasters preparedness and risk reduction.

IV. FUNDRAISING

The ELCA has opened a designated account (West Africa Sahel Drought) to receive gifts for response efforts to this disaster. One hundred percent (100%) of all gifts contributed to these funds will be used entirely to respond to this disaster both for immediate needs and long-term rehabilitation of communities and livelihoods.

Contributions to this appeal can be made in the following ways:

- Give by phone at 800-638-3522
- Donate online at: www.elca.org/disaster
- Send checks to:

ELCA Disaster Response
39330 Treasury Center
Chicago, IL 60694
Memo: West Africa Sahel Drought

V. COMMUNICATION

To help you share the severity of this situation and how to respond the ELCA has produced a number of resources, free to reproduce, found at www.elca.org/disaster and elsewhere. These include:

- Worship resources for this disaster
- Featured content from our companions in Central America on the ELCA Disaster Response blog at: <http://blogs.elca.org/disasterresponse/category/intl-region-africa/west-africa>.
 - West Africa: Response Before Need

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