

Food Security Monitoring in the Sahel

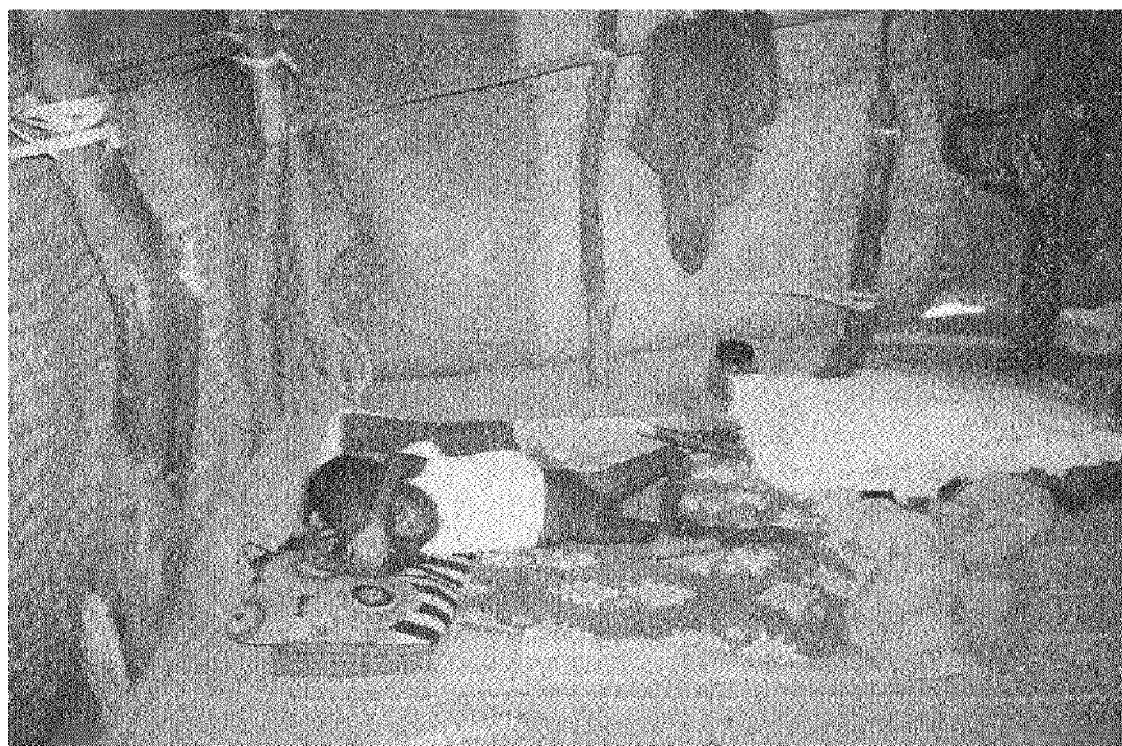
During FY 2001, several countries in the Sahel region of Africa, a strip of semi-arid land south of the Sahara Desert stretching from Senegal east to Chad, were beset by drought conditions and food insecurity. Lack of rain at the end of the growing season in late August 2000 caused many crops to be stunted or to fail completely. Following the poor harvest, cereal production estimates for the Sahel in 2000-2001 were for a total of only 8.9 million MT, 21% lower than the cereal production in 1999-2000 and 8% lower than the average production of the previous five years.

Beginning in April 2001, several U.S. Embassies in the Sahel region reported severe food shortages, pockets of malnutrition, and high market prices for cereals. Some of the Embassies even warned of the potential for a famine if the situation continued to deteriorate. On May 24, in response to the worsening food security situation, the U.S. Ambassador to Chad declared a disaster due to the effects of drought and food insecurity. (For more information on the USG response, see the "Chad-Drought" case report).

In years past, this type of early warning information was not readily available. In the mid-1980s, widespread famine engulfed much of the Sahel as well as Ethiopia and Sudan, causing millions to suffer before the international relief community was able to adequately respond. However, in FY 2001, USAID/OFDA was able to effectively mitigate and respond to the Sahel drought and food insecurity situation through a combination of early warning systems, field reports, intra-agency coordination, and

the deployment of a USAID/OFDA assessment team to the region.

Drought and famine early warning systems incorporate satellite imagery, rainfall data, crop and market reports, cereal reserve information, and updates on government and international relief efforts to create a portrait of a country's or region's food security situation. In the Sahel, USAID/OFDA was able to use early warning tools including: 1) USAID's Famine Early Warning System Network (FEWSNET); 2) the USAID/OFDA-funded Radio and Internet for the Communication of Hydro-Meteorological and Climate Related Information (RANET) program; and 3) the



A severely malnourished child is treated at a USAID/OFDA-funded therapeutic feeding center in northern Chad (photo by Matt Mueller, USAID/OFDA).

USAID-funded Interstate Committee for the Fight Against Drought in the Sahel (CILSS) to monitor the deteriorating situation. These early warning systems provided USAID/OFDA with crucial agricultural, climatic, and food security information.

In addition to these early warning systems, the reporting from U.S. Embassies in the Sahel region provided USAID/OFDA with country-specific information on

the situation and host government coping efforts. USAID/OFDA received reports from U.S. Embassies in Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Burkina Faso alerting them to the gravity of the situation. USAID/OFDA also worked with USAID/FFP to coordinate USAID's emergency response to the deteriorating situation. For example, in Chad, USAID/OFDA supported therapeutic feeding centers and seed distributions, while USAID/FFP provided emergency food assistance to affected areas.

In July 2001, USAID/OFDA deployed a team to assess the impacts of the food shortage and drought on vulnerable populations. Working in tandem with U.S. Embassies, FEWSNET, and local and international relief agencies, the USAID/OFDA assessment team visited affected regions of Chad, Niger, and Cameroon. The team visited therapeutic feeding centers and seed distribution sites, spoke with farmers and market vendors, and met with local and national government officials to determine the extent of the crisis. While some areas were more acutely affected than others, the team concluded that the situation in these countries did not warrant a massive emergency response.

With the exception of Chad, these countries were experiencing the cumulative effects of slow-onset,

long-term agricultural and food security problems that could not be solved by providing only emergency non-food and food assistance. Desertification and ever-increasing population growth have been undermining the long-term food security and nutritional status of affected residents far more than cyclical droughts.

By using early warning information systems, coordinating with USAID/FFP and the regional U.S. Embassies, and deploying an assessment team to affected areas, USAID/OFDA was able to respond to the drought and food insecurity situation in a timely, appropriate, and effective manner. Just as important, USAID/OFDA was able to avert an inappropriate over-response to the situation. While a record cereal harvest at the end of FY 2001 eased immediate short-term food security concerns, high market prices and diminished cereal reserve stocks persisted. USAID/OFDA continues to closely monitor the food security situation in the Sahel and elsewhere. Equipped with climatic, agricultural, and economic early warning information, USAID/OFDA and USAID/FFP can help prevent future food security crises from deteriorating into famines.

—Matt Mueller

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

COMPLEX EMERGENCY

Violence and insecurity continued to destabilize the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in FY 2001 and to restrict humanitarian access to many vulnerable populations. U.N. Observer Mission (MONUC) monitors were deployed to the DRC in September 2000 to verify the disengagement of all armed forces from the front lines, even as fighting intensified in the eastern part of the country (North Katanga, Maniema, and North and South Kivu provinces). On January 26, 2001, Joseph Kabila became President following the murder of his father and DRC President, Laurent-Desire Kabila. President Joseph Kabila announced his commitment to fostering peace in the DRC and supporting the Lusaka Peace Accords brokered in July-August 1999. A tenuous cease-fire held through the end of FY 2001.

For several years, the DRC conflict was aggravated by foreign military support to local combatants. Troops from Angola, Namibia, and Zimbabwe had supported the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (GDRC) since 1999. Uganda backed the opposition group Front for the Liberation of the Congo (FLC), headed by Jean-Pierre Bemba and based in Gbadolite, Equateur Province. Rwanda supported the *Rassemblement Congolais Pour la Democratie* (RCD), headed by Adolphe Onusumba and based in Goma, North Kivu Province.

Under the direction of the U.N. Security Council, Uganda, Burundi, and Rwanda partially withdrew their armies during FY 2001, while Namibia completed the withdrawal of its troops. Despite these positive developments in the peace process, approximately two million people remained displaced in the DRC, and relief agencies had access to only about 60% of them as a result of continuing insecurity in conflict areas, deteriorated physical infrastructure, and logistical constraints. With the deployment of military observers from

MONUC, some previously isolated areas in the eastern DRC were opened to emergency relief assistance.

Instability in rural and urban areas restricted farmers' access to agricultural land, decreasing harvest yields and contributing to food insecurity. In addition, the lack of access to traditional agricultural markets discouraged farmers from planting crops. Poverty was widespread, and the local health care system deteriorated due to a lack of resources and continuous looting of medicines and medical supplies by various parties to the armed conflict.

USG humanitarian assistance to the DRC has increased steadily since the conflict began in 1998. On October 1, 2000, U.S. Ambassador Aubrey Hooks redeclared a disaster in the DRC due to the poor humanitarian situation caused by continued fighting and instability. USAID/OFDA provided more than \$22 million in emergency relief assistance to the DRC in FY 2001. Grants to AAH/USA, CRS, FHI, German Agro Action, Interchurch Medical Assistance, IRC, MERLIN, SCF/UK, and WVI focused primarily on health services and food security programs, such as assistance to the health care system and seeds and tools distributions.

In addition, USAID/OFDA supported emergency market infrastructure rehabilitation and agricultural programs for war-affected and vulnerable populations. USAID/OFDA supported programs that immediately provided emergency assistance, as well as projects that focused on building local capacity to promote livelihoods. UNICEF and FAO also received USAID/OFDA funding for emergency health and agriculture activities, respectively. An important component of USAID/OFDA assistance was the funding of Air Serv International to operate three humanitarian aircraft to transport relief commodities and personnel into insecure areas outside of government control. USAID/OFDA also assigned two EDRCs to monitor the humanitarian situation

throughout the country and make programmatic recommendations.

In addition to USAID/OFDA's FY 2001 assistance, USAID/FFP provided 17,770 MT of P.L. 480 Title II emergency food assistance, valued at \$14.2 million, and USDA contributed 24,500 MT of Section 416(b) surplus food commodities, valued at \$21.4 million. USAID/FFP and USDA food aid was provided through WFP and ICRC to assist war-affected and displaced vulnerable populations.

As part of USAID's Integrated Health and Humanitarian Action Plan, USAID's Africa Bureau provided approximately \$15 million in health-related support during FY 2001. The Plan's goal was to deliver high impact health services by promoting, where possible, development of the country's health zones (each consisting of a referral hospital, health centers, and community actors), and the management systems necessary to make each health zone functional.

State/PRM provided \$13.9 for programs targeting refugees and conflict victims inside the DRC. State/PRM also provided more than \$3.5 million to support DRC refugees and other refugee groups in neighboring countries, including programs carried out by



As part of a USAID/OFDA-funded seed multiplication project, German Agro Action (GAA) is reconstructing roads in North Kivu to facilitate trade in the region (photo by Tim McRae, USAID/OFDA).