

United Nations



Nations Unies

Office of the Resident/ Humanitarian Coordinator

**UNITED NATIONS HUMANITARIAN FUND GIVES
US\$6 MILLION TO ADDRESS HUNGER IN NEPAL**

[KATHMANDU 21 December 2009]– More than 600,000 people in Nepal will receive urgently needed humanitarian food assistance thanks to a US\$6 million (46.8 crowe) allocation from the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to the UN World Food Programme (WFP).

The US\$6 million CERF allocation, one of the largest grants ever awarded to WFP, will provide 4,300 tons of humanitarian food relief to more than 600,000 people suffering from severe food insecurity through WFP’s food-for-work programme.

“This award is a clear acknowledgement by the UN and the international donor community of both the seriousness of the rapidly deteriorating food security situation in Nepal and its commitment to provide relief to families threatened by hunger,” said the United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Nepal, Robert Piper.

Despite the end of the conflict in 2006, a collision of crises in Nepal - some of the worst natural disasters on record including the 2008/2009 winter drought, sustained high food prices, rising insecurity and an estimated 300,000 - 400,000 metric tones of cereal deficit this year because of the poor monsoon – has tripled the number of people at risk of hunger to more than 3.7 million.

WFP had been providing food assistance to 1.6 million highly-food insecure people across 30 districts in Nepal, but in December had to cut the number of people it was feeding by more than half a million because of a severe funding shortfall.

“Many communities in Nepal have malnutrition rates comparable to those found in Sub-Saharan Africa, so even a slight disruption in humanitarian food assistance can push millions over the edge,” said WFP Deputy Country Representative, Dominique Hyde, adding that although the CERF grant could not have come at a more critical time, WFP still needs more than US\$14 million to ensure the 1.6 million are assisted during the critical lean season over the next two months.

In highly food-insecure areas, chronic malnutrition rates for children under 5 years old are as high as 70 percent and acute malnutrition rates approach 25 percent – well above the emergency threshold of 15 percent.

Remote communities in the Mid- and Far-Western Regions of the country are particularly affected. A winter drought combined with an exceptionally poor monsoon season has devastated harvests for many smallholder farmers. With prices for food staples like lentils and potatoes more than 60 to 100 percent higher than 18 months ago and a lack of economic opportunities, household food stocks in many areas are dwindling.

CERF was established in 2006 to make funding for humanitarian emergencies faster and more equitable. Since then, more than 115 Member States and private sector donors have contributed some US\$1.5 billion to the Fund, which is managed by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). With this new grant, Nepal has received US\$19.6 million in allocations in the past 3 years.

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