

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE IN THE SAHEL FACES CRITICAL FUNDING GAP

(Dakar, 30 April 2014): Humanitarian operations in the Sahel require urgent funding to help vulnerable communities prepare a successful agricultural season and deliver life-saving food aid in the coming months.

“We are facing a funding bottleneck at a very critical moment. The planting season is only a couple of months away,” said Robert Piper, UN Assistant Secretary-General and Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Sahel. “Farmers require seeds, fertilisers and tools. Pastoralists need sufficient fodder and veterinary services for their livestock. Without timely assistance, thousands of families will fall back into crisis.”

In 2014, twenty million people in the Sahel face food insecurity, and five million children are projected to suffer from acute malnutrition. Targeted assistance to vulnerable communities before the most difficult months of the year is a key factor in reducing the number of people requiring emergency aid in the next seasonal cycle.

“If humanitarian operations are delayed or have to scale down, the full impact will be felt in a couple of months - and the most vulnerable families will be the first to suffer”, said Mr. Piper. “Now we have the opportunity to strengthen communities’ resilience. It must not be missed.”

Funding constraints also threaten the timely delivery of sufficient food aid and malnutrition treatments. Less than one-third of the food and nutrition commodities required in the coming months are funded. In landlocked Sahel countries, bringing new supplies to remote areas can take several months.

“Humanitarian teams in the Sahel are operating in some of the most isolated areas of the world. Access is often challenging and delivering aid takes time”, said Mr. Piper. “We need funding today to ensure that a child in a remote village can be treated against severe malnutrition in July.”

The three-year humanitarian response plan for the Sahel seeks to mobilize US\$2 billion, in 2014 alone, to aid over 15 million people in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Gambia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal. Since its launch in February, the plan has received only 19 per cent of required funding with US\$391.8 million.

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