



EMERGENCY RELIEF PROGRAMMES HORN OF AFRICA

October 2012



A woman tends her crop - part of the recovery phase of the SOS Emergency Relief Programme in Gode, Ethiopia.

In 2011 over 11 million people in the Horn of Africa were hit by the worst famine in 60 years. In response SOS Children's Villages set up emergency relief programmes in Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia.

The focus was first to save lives and then to reduce vulnerability to further drought. Many of those affected were pastoralists who had lost their livestock and thus their only means of subsistence. Those who benefited from the programmes were selected using vulnerability criteria (pregnant and breastfeeding women, children, people living with AIDS and disabled and elderly persons) and a community based targeting approach – when community members, local government representatives and other stakeholders participate in selecting the neediest households as beneficiaries.

In Somalia, SOS Children's Villages, in partnership with ECHO (EU humanitarian aid), has been running an emergency programme in Mogadishu for many years, focusing on mother and child health. (SOS Children's Villages has had a children's village, school and hospital in Mogadishu since the late 1980s. Despite the war, all still function, although for safety reasons premises have temporarily relocated.)

The drought emergency relief programme (ERP) focused on internally displaced people and agro-pastoralist vulnerable households in the Bay and Banadir regions of central Somalia. Overall, the SOS emergency response in Somalia supported over 178,000 people.

The town of Marsabit, in northern Kenya, was the focus of another ERP. While many humanitarian organisations gave assistance to pastoralists in the rural parts of Marsabit region, to avoid duplication SOS Children's Villages chose to concentrate on villages and schools located around the town. It was here that we successfully pioneered our 'smartcard' food relief system. Over 21,000 people were beneficiaries of this ERP.

Meanwhile, in Gode Zone, located in southeast Ethiopia, where SOS Children's Villages already runs a children's village, school and medical centre, the organization reached out to over 21,000 people who had lost their livelihoods, first with food relief, and then with long-term interventions.

MOGADISHU AND BAIDOA SOMALIA



Measuring for malnutrition at the temporary SOS Hospital Mogadishu.

In September 2011, SOS Children's Villages began emergency operations in Bay and Banadir regions in south central Somalia, responding to the massive influx of people displaced by famine and conflict. At the height of the emergency, SOS Children's Villages Somalia provided relief food distribution to 3,000 vulnerable households through food voucher systems for a period of six months.

To improve access to health care and basic services, four medical centres were established. This intervention aimed to address the problem of lack of basic health care support for children and mothers, with a special focus on displaced populations. A total of 138,585 people received free healthcare services at the project's four sites in Mogadishu and Baidoa. In addition, three outpatient therapeutic programme centres were established (two in Bay region and one in Mogadishu) to reduce child malnutrition and micronutrient deficiency disorders, by improving access to appropriate treatment and management. Over 3,000 children were supported through this component.

To promote child development and psychosocial wellbeing, SOS Children's Villages established three child friendly spaces (CFS) - two in Badbado camp in Mogadishu and one in Baidoa - reaching 926 children (442 girls, 484 boys). Each CFS was equipped with playing and drawing materials so that children in the camp and from the community could play games and sports, engage in expressive and creative activities, learn life skills and take part in educational pursuits.

In addition, to augment shelter and improve the living conditions of internally displaced communities, the organisation provided

shelter emergency assistance packages to 2,000 households in Baidoa. This support was aimed at alleviating the poor living conditions of internally displaced people.

The ten month recovery interventions focused on reducing vulnerability and building community resilience. SOS Children's Villages continued to support health and nutrition and psychosocial components in the two regions, and worked on improving food security; the latter involved restocking pastoralist households and providing seeds and farm inputs to agro-pastoralists and cash relief to establish microenterprises. To reduce youth unemployment and spur productivity, vocational skills training was provided to youth in Badbado camp. Also, activities aimed at building community resilience and capacities will be carried out in selected community committees.



A child friendly space for girls at Badbado IDP camp.

MARSABIT KENYA

SOS Children's Villages launched an emergency programme in Marsabit, Kenya in mid-August 2011, to assist pastoralists, many of whom had lost their herds of livestock and thus their livelihoods during the drought. The programme lasted 12 months

During the relief phase, the organisation supported 2000 households with food, via an electronic card system. This was the first time that SOS Children's Villages in East Africa had introduced a 'smartcard' concept, whereby each assisted family was issued with an electronic card, individualised with their personal details. Three retailers were identified to supply preselected goods (all food) plus a small cash component to each family. (Shopkeepers also supplied water treatment chemicals.) Prices were negotiated to take advantage of bulk purchasing and families were free to choose any of the three shops to 'buy' their goods. This ensured that normal market forces kept prices down. Families did their shopping twice a month and presented the swipe card for payment. They could get goods only to the value of the amount on the card, which was refilled after the purchases were made.

The system had several advantages: it ensured that the families received food (and essential items bought from the cash component); the retailers did not lose out through the purchase of bulk food aid from elsewhere (such as Nairobi); it prevented logistical problems associated with the transport of bulk items, such as slow deliveries; and the system ensured that families who had lost their livelihoods could retain their dignity, by 'buying' their food, rather than receiving hand-outs, and, to a certain extent, their freedom of choice.

In addition, SOS Children's Villages carried out a school feeding programme to five primary schools and kindergartens, with one-off assistance to two secondary schools, reaching out to a total of 3,040 pupils in Marsabit central district. As a result, school enrolment and retention increased, with minimal interruption to the normal schooling system. Food for the chosen schools was delivered separately and allowed the children to have a mid-morning and lunchtime meal, during term time and school holidays.

The girls' and boys' secondary schools in Marsabit – both boarding schools – could not afford to buy sufficient food for their students, mainly because parents, ruined by the drought, had not paid their fees. SOS Children's Villages supplied both food and water for a term and assisted the boys' school to construct water-harvesting tanks to ensure that all rainwater could be saved for the dry season.

Lack of water is a perennial problem in Marsabit - the only available ground water for Marsabit town is about 40 km away, making it difficult to access and very expensive. This was worsened during the drought, heightening community vulnerability, particularly for women and girls. SOS Children's Villages arranged for the five communities to have water delivered into central tanks twice a week. A water committee ensured that it was shared out equitably. In addition, water was delivered to each of the five schools twice a month (the amount based on the number of students).

During the heavy rains of November 2011 water deliveries



A mother takes her baby to a health worker at a clinic supported by the SOS Emergency Relief Programme.



Children enjoy lunch at one of the schools that benefited from the SOS Emergency Relief Programme.

were suspended, allowing schools and communities to harvest the rainwater. To date, SOS Children's Villages has helped to establish water users' associations in the five villages, installed water tanks and bought water bowsers to facilitate this component of the programme.

To combat health problems resulting from the drought, drugs for common diseases were distributed to government run health centres to treat vulnerable families. Therapeutic feeding supplements were also supplied to treat malnourished children and parents were encouraged, through community initiatives, to take their children for health screening. Those villages located far from health clinics were assisted through mobile clinics and children were referred to district health facilities if necessary.

The recovery phase, which ended in August 2012, included the water component, livestock restocking, economic empowerment through grants for small scale businesses, and community capacity strengthening (training of water users committees and community groups). Overall, over 21,000 people (in both communities and schools) benefited from the emergency relief programme.

Pushing the boundaries to keep young people in school

Moi Girls Secondary School in Marsabit Kenya is a boarding school located in one of the driest parts of the country. The nearest natural water source to Marsabit town is nearly 40 km away and most households and institutions have to buy water from vendors. The school's Principal, Halima Adan, says that most of the 420 students are from pastoral communities and after the 2011 drought they were left with nothing. Livestock, said Halima, was their source of income. "That is how they used to pay the fees, selling the animals and paying for their daughters".

Fees pay for food

Halima explained that if they sent the girls home for lack of fees they would stay at home since their parents had nothing to pay with. But by keeping them at school Halima had another problem in that almost three quarters of the fees go towards maintaining the boarding facilities and buying food.

Initially, the government gave the school five bags of relief food per month, Halima explained, but they consumed a bag in one meal, so those bags did not last a week. Halima's only way to feed her girls was to buy on credit, promising suppliers that she would pay when she had the money. Such a system could

not last. Without payment from customers the suppliers could not afford to buy stocks of food and eventually they refused to supply the secondary school.

SOS agrees to fund food for a term

When Halima heard that SOS Children's Villages was giving emergency food and water to primary schools in the area, she pleaded her case. The SOS Emergency Relief Coordinator, Priscilla Ateyo, sympathised with their situation and agreed to fund the school's food bill for one term only, giving Halima time to garner some income and use it to pay the school's debts.

"When we came here there were only eight bags of food", explained Ateyo, "So we went out of our way, because looking at the ages of the secondary school they are clearly not part of our catchment, being senior pupils. But we looked at it from an emergency point of view, especially as this is a boarding school."

"Right now, with help from SOS our store is full", Halima added. "We have sugar, cooking oil, maize and beans, which is our main diet, and we also have rice. So we are very grateful and very happy".

GODE ETHIOPIA

An emergency programme was launched in August 2011 in the Gode district of the Somali Regional State in Ethiopia, in Mordile (one month's assistance to the refugees fleeing Somalia to Ethiopia) and in five villages within Gode zone.

In the relief phase between August and December 2011, 2,250 households were assisted with food, water (including water treatment chemicals) and medical support. At the end of this phase the distribution of 100 donkey carts to the most vulnerable families began. The recovery phase ran from January until June 2012, and comprised an emergency relief component (the provision of donkey carts) together with recovery interventions geared towards improving livelihoods and building resilience to further shocks. Additional recovery activities included the construction of 100 dry pit latrines; public health education; the renovation of 75 houses for vulnerable households; and the provision of farm inputs to irrigate 147 hectares of land. Over 13,000 people directly benefited from the programme, of whom 4,774 were children under five.

Donkey carts help recovery

Ardi has six children. The youngest is five and the oldest, Rahmo, is 12. Ardi has no husband and has to feed her children from her own resources. She used to be a road cleaner until the department was downsized and she lost her job. Even before that her life was difficult, spending most days outside in the burning sun, away from her young children.

As a recipient of an SOS donkey cart Ardi uses it to fetch water from the Shebelle river five times a day, selling it on, and making a daily profit of around 50 Birr (about US\$3). The money is used for necessities including feeding and educating her children.

Both Rahmo and her younger brother attend school in the



Children queue with their donkey carts to get water from the Shebelle River.

morning so Ardi collects and sells the water herself; but after school Rahmo takes over, allowing her mother to get on with household tasks such as laundry or preparing food.

Apart from collecting water, the carts are also used for the delivery and sale of firewood, grass, charcoal and construction materials. In addition they are useful as transport for old and sick people.

At the Shebelle river Rahmo waits patiently for her turn to fill her water barrel. Despite the eight carts ahead of her it doesn't take long because two carts can be filled at once, and each barrel takes about five minutes to fill. The barrel filled, Rahmo's brother turns the donkey around, Rahmo jumps up into the driver's seat and the donkey slowly sets off on last run of the day, to take the water home.