

## Low Rainfall and/or Drought Checklist for National Societies

### Introduction and propose

Drought is a slow onset disaster and can be caused by lack of rainfall. Its effect on a country can be magnified by lack of planning and management of the water resources/storage system. Small low-lying atoll island communities in the Pacific like Kiribati, Tuvalu, Cooks, Tonga, FSM, Palau, Solomon Islands etc depend on rainfall and desalination as their main water sources. Not all countries will declare drought when low rainfall occurs, that doesn't mean preparedness and response actions can't be taken, it just means that we need to be watching forecasts, water levels and health indicators to act appropriately.

It is noted that past drought events and periods of low rainfall are linked with El Nino and La Nina weather phenomena that have significant effects on rainfall distribution. During La Nina years, for example the 2010-2011 period, low rainfall was experienced in islands such as Tuvalu, Kiribati, and Northern Cooks, some parts of Tonga, Samoa and Tokelau. Many remember the 1997/1998 El Nino event resulting in particularly low rainfall for countries such as PNG, Vanuatu and Fiji. These islands all experienced drought and it has significant impacts on peoples livelihood, food security and the whole economy.

The onset of drought is by nature a slow event and if the warning signs are not recognized early enough it can catch communities by surprise. The IFRC regional office DM team has prepared this checklist to assist National Societies whose countries are prone to droughts and periods of low rainfall in preparing for and under taking appropriate actions that can help in responding effectively to these situations.

The low rainfall/drought checklist covers the following:

- Preparedness Phase
- Early Warning
- Emergency Response
- Recovery – Exit strategy
- Longer term risk reduction measures?

Under each heading, you will find guidelines to help you gather appropriate information and take action.

It is important for National Societies to be clear on which areas to focus on when responding to drought, and preparing for low rainfall whether it is provision of potable water, basic sanitation and/or hygiene promotion.

These guidelines are generic and National Societies disaster management officers are encouraged to make appropriate changes to the checklist to suit the situation of your National Society considering the resources available.

## 1. Preparedness phase (non emergency)

Steps that the disaster management officer (DMO/DMC) can follow in preparation for drought with his team members:

### **Initial analysis:**

- Analyze past droughts that occurred, and ask your national meteorological office if they tend to happen during El Nino or La Nina years. If the answer is yes, seasonal forecasts that highlight these events can be useful for triggering preparedness measures.
- Map the locations where drought has occurred in the past to try and identify areas that are more vulnerable. This can be done with the Government to produce Hazard & Vulnerability Maps
- Identify **who** are the most vulnerable people affected and estimates of how many people will be affected and look at the demographics (are they farmers or traders or who?). Define scenario of response based on this first analysis.
- Work with the identified communities to assess their water harvesting and storage facilities to ensure all are functioning adequately and are operational
- Identify the impact to the affected communities and interventions that were used to reduce the impacts of drought.
- Find out from the MoH, health sicknesses that can be associated with drought, such as typhoid, diarrhea etc.
- Capacity Mapping. Identify all agencies or government bodies who will respond and in what capacity, including health, WASH, logistics, nutrition etc and prepare communication flyers in the event that drought occurs.
- With your public works department, you could get access to or make maps showing locations of water sources and classify on basis of likely duration of supply. Try and identify the sources expected to dry up first and those that can last for longer period.
- **Planning**
- Prepare a contingency plan (response plan/checklist) for drought or periods of low rainfall; identify roles and **responsibilities** of key NS staff with the support from the IFRC Regional Office and/or partners.
- Prepare a standard plan of action which can be your national society framework during the emergency phase and ease the process of planning. Share plan with the IFRC regional office for technical inputs as needed..
- Coordinate with your colleagues (health, logistic, programme side) to get the right support and involvement in the preparedness phase.
- Involve DRR in activities to mitigate vulnerabilities.
- Align the response plan with the roles of the Red Cross in the National Disaster Plan.
- Work with your national society team to elaborate your response plan and undertake simulations on a regular basis.
- Define beneficiaries' communication plan. This should include:
  - ✓ what is Red Cross role and mandate; key messages on your national society role in drought situation; awareness message

- ✓ who will deliver the message/information (volunteers/staff)
- ✓ associated cost (if flyers or printing material is required)

All of the above planning could be used in longer term planning activities of the National Society, such as in the development of programme plans, strategic plans, proposals etc.

### **Activities**

<b><i>N S and Government related activities</i></b>	<b><i>Community and volunteer based activities</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prepositioning of essential relief items based on the scenario stated in your contingency plan and the coverage of the population.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Production and distribution of awareness /hygiene promotion material for use of the water and basic health/hygiene messages.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Coordination with national stakeholders to identify potential gaps in needs coverage and/or potential opportunities in coordination.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Arrange activities or awareness in the community to ensure water tanks and gutters are maintained properly Awareness program on conserving water for schools and communities</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Check regularly with the Ministry responsible for water to find out water levels in reservoir, rivers and streams, especially when periods of low rainfall are forecast.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure that rain harvest equipment like gutters, water tanks are repaired and clean.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Check water quality to find out salt concentrations with water Ministry.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Undertake awareness campaigns of water conservation. Promote water efficient fittings etc</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Attend government meeting to know government plan in responding to the drought (preparedness committee) and to advocate on your national society role during drought response.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure to get connected to your National Meteorological Centre to get update Early Warning alerts.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Kindly consider your national society strengths and capacities to address periods of low rainfall in the long term programme. Make sure that it is linked with your national society strategy and plans.</li> </ul>	

## 2. Early Warning

### ***Confirmation of the warning***

- IFRC regional office DM unit is providing Pacific Islands' national society with climate updates that forecast rainfall prediction for the country.
- The primary early warning source for periods of low rainfall and possible drought is your National Meteorological Office. They are likely to have more detailed forecasts for different parts of your country.
- Communicate with your meteorological office when your country is experiencing unusual long dry weather condition and/or with IFRC regional office DM team.
- If early warnings are difficult to understand, ask your meteorological office to explain them further or seek technical advice from IFRC (Red Cross Climate Centre) if there is any need of clarification. You may even be able to help your meteorological office understand the forecast needs of organizations like Red Cross and the wider community. For example encouraging colour coding may be easier to use than complex words.
- Update your National Society colleagues on the early warnings so that you have support for preparedness actions

### ***Disseminate the warning and coordinate***

- Coordinate with your Government (NDMO/Ministry of Health/meteorological office as required) and responding agencies to disseminate the warning at community level.
- Report to NDMO/ MoH for good coordination on what your NS has done for warning and which communities have been reached, Rather than having to communicate complicated forecast information, the early warning might be a trigger for initiating community based awareness and preparedness such as save water or hand washing campaigns.
- Publish the alert detailing the location and numbers affected etc on the Disaster Management Information System (DMIS).
- Make sure you have access to the latest emergency stock reports for all the affected areas and national headquarter. What are the resources available in term of technical support (logistic, finance, technical sectors) and financial resources? (This should be done at every stage from the warning to the final implementation stage).
- Start your volunteers' mobilization at national and branches level (depending on size of the potential emergency and your national society practices, can be also done through radio, media...).

## 3. Emergency response phase

The emergency stage is when the impact of low rainfall on water and food sources is visible and therefore requires immediate actions. An official drought may be declared at this stage.

### ***Assessment and information collection***

- Confirm the target areas based on needs and consultation with other national stakeholders (Government and non Government)
- Set your assessment team (volunteers and staff) with clear roles, one team leader per assessment team, clear targets areas, reporting system (format and timeframe). Make sure they have all the required material to conduct their assessment (assessment forms, logistic, financial support, communication resources, basic gear...). Ensure that your assessment team is representative of your target population (different origin, religion if relevant, gender...).
- Coordinate with your colleagues (health, logistic, programme side) to get the right support and involvement in the response. Try to not forget one sector,
- Make sure you have in hand last emergency stock report for all the affected areas and national headquarter. What are the resources available in term of technical support (logistic, finance, technical sectors) and financial resources?
- Coordinate with all other agencies, Govt & NGO's to ensure the detailed assessment identifies the exact location of the affected area, its size and the total number of population affected and who they are (farmers, traders. Disaggregate data per age, sex...).
- Provide the most significant indicators of the emergency. Some example of indicators are; lower crop yield, high food price especially vegetables and root crops, increase in forest fire, disruption of water supplies, lack of drinking water, increase of water borne diseases dysentery, typhoid etc.
- Provide drought related mortality figures malnutrition rates per group. Indicate data sources example Government or local authorities and the date these figures were issued. Record any epidemics been reported.
- Gather hazard or vulnerability maps of the area affected by drought that you made or gathered during your preparedness work. UNOCHA can be a good source of updated information - coordinate with IFRC regional office to have access to this information (if available).
- Are there security issues in the area, risk for the volunteers/staff (health, social tension...) and/or restriction on expatriate personnel?
- Determine how to organize a distribution, through village chief or local hierarchy.

### ***Analysis and planning***

- Define your implementation environment (are there religious, ethnic, or cultural considerations that will affect the population and/or the implementation of the activities?) Plan how to do the distribution in the villages (stock, security, logistics, information sharing with beneficiaries... Other responders or support in each community targeted)
- Be clear with the **priorities**:
  - ✓ What are the priorities your national society can address: water, health, hygiene promotion, community awareness?

- ✓ Who, how many and where are the target groups (based on your assessment findings)?
- ✓ Define time frame to reach them (based on most urgent needs and your national society capacities).
- ✓ What are the resources you will mobilize from your national society to respond (people, assets such as disaster preparedness container stocks, finance)?
- ✓ What are the gaps and where do you need support?
- Elaborate your **national society response plan of action** in coordination with your other team members:
  - ✓ Work out who should be involved: logistic (for relief items, transportation costs) – admin/finance (for budget, volunteers management, per diem, accommodation) – sector technicians for health, water and sanitation and other technical fields (as needed).
  - ✓ Define your activities on the field per sector with clear time frame, costs and reporting mechanisms.
  - ✓ Get your Secretary General on board to understand and promote the plan of action, to get his/her sign off (the more you involve your Sec Gen in the process, including in the early preparedness and early warning phases, the quicker you will get the final sign off).

### ***Consultation and coordination***

- Consultation and Coordination should be happening from preparation phase onwards
- Consult with other national and regional organizations to know who is covering what, how and when. Make sure your own plan is taking this information into consideration, to avoid overlap and gaps.
- Set coordination mechanisms:
  - ✓ Coordination with NDMO/MoH (who will attend, how often, how to report and share essential information)
  - ✓ Coordination with RC/RC partners. As country team support, use IFRC regional office to communicate with your RC/RC partners. Define how to communicate (email, teleconference, DMIS, information bulletin) and how often??

Coordination with partners and donors can be done through national and regional coordination meeting, Information bulletin, sitrep (define rules and timeframe).

### ***Communication with beneficiaries***

- Beneficiaries' communication is important to ensure your national society recognition and also as they are the one we are serving. This approach will avoid a lot of misunderstanding.
- Use the beneficiaries communication plan you have set up during preparedness period to be carried out by volunteers and staff while they are in the field (during assessment, distribution and awareness raising)

- Set a complaint registration system so you can follow-up on complaints (ask for IFRC regional office support for doing so, if you need)

### ***Implementation and information management***

- Based on your emergency plan of action linked with available resources (funds, assets and human resources) implement your response
- Update regularly your plan of action, based on evolution of needs and further findings and constraints of implementation (eg. time)
- Update DMIS on regular basis and write information bulletin following major achievement of the response phase. Insure that your reporting is including update of sectors relating to the NS response and also include what the government has done as well as other NGO's(the overall response is under your overall coordination if agreed with your management).
- Update your stock (done by your logistic if existing or your volunteers).
- Keep your management updated on activities on daily basis (that will ease your response process) as well as your team members.
- Coordinate with government and all other agencies

### **4. Recovery Exit strategy**

- Review your response after the end of the implementation phase. It can start with review and evaluation of your response, for example using beneficiaries' surveys. Seek technical/financial support from IFRC regional office/RC partners. Monitor & Evaluate your response
- Replenish stock levels based on results of the M & E process, may indicate that greater or lesser stock of some items or new stocks that were not previously considered.
- Update your contingency plan/response plan (check-list) with the lessons learnt from this response.
- FEED BACK TO IFRC RO WITH ANY COMMENTS OR SUGGESTIONS SO THAT THESE CAN BE SHARED WITH OTHER NATIONAL SOCIETIES IN THE PACIFIC.

### **5. Longer term risk reduction**

- Get back to your preparedness activities as per section 1. For example:
  - ✓ Awareness program on conserving water for schools and communities
  - ✓ Ensure that rain harvest like gutters, water tanks are repaired and clean. Kindly consider your national society strengths and capacities to address long term programme.
  - ✓ If your National Society undertakes VCAs, you might like to think about undertaking more in drought prone communities but be aware that a VCA may identify other hazards as a greater risk than drought, so remain focused on the drought issue.

Many drought impacts are long term, for example if taro is destroyed there is a wait of many years before the crops can be replanted and then harvested again – meaning that drought can

have a significant impact on food security and agriculture. You might need to work with government to advocate for longer term solutions for affected populations.

Make sure that these activities are linked with your national society strategy and plans....