



**Emergency food assistance to vulnerable households in Bahr el Gazal,
Chad**

COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT AID-FFP-G-15-00065

Annex A: Annual Results Report

June 26, 2015 – September 30, 2015

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Awardee Name and Host Country	International Rescue Committee, Chad
Award Number	AID-FFP-G-15-00065
Project Name	Emergency food assistance to vulnerable households in Bahr el Gazal, Chad
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Reporting Fiscal Year	FY 2015
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i. Project Activities and Results

Indicator	Disaggregates	Comment
Total number of project participants targeted	Male: 12,960	
	Female: 14,040	
Total number of project participants reached	Male: 0	Cash and voucher distributions not yet undertaken.
	Female: 0	Cash and voucher distributions not yet undertaken.
Actual average cost per project participant	Cash: \$272	
	Voucher: \$272	
	LRP: N/A	
	Title II: N/A	
Average cost per project participant per month	Cash: \$68	
	Voucher: \$68	
	LRP: N/A	
	Title II: N/A	

In order to prepare for the food vouchers and cash distribution, the IRC conducted a detailed context assessment of markets surrounding Moussoro, the primary market town in the Barh el Gazal (BeG), in June. The main points assessed were:

- The spatial distribution of markets and potential providers in the Barh el Gazal for voucher distributions
- The market supply and price levels of the main targeted commodities (oil, rice, pulses)
- The existence of potential cash distribution agencies
- The security context

The results of the context analysis report helped the team make decisions regarding standard operating procedures (SOPs) to the project, which were subsequently approved in July. These SOPs provided IRC Chad the necessary details pertaining to food vouchers and cash distribution procedures for vendors and agencies, regarding the sequence of steps to take in conducting distributions. The SOPs also advised the IRC on distributions and payment modalities for beneficiaries as well as potential security challenges.

The IRC also conducted a baseline study in September 2015. This baseline study was able to proceed as planned despite some obstacles. With various humanitarian interventions in the region, the IRC is attempting to cover the gaps and food security needs of the population. The purpose of this survey was to assess baseline levels of project indicators. This assessment then paves the way for project implementation and effective monitoring and evaluation of activities. The field team in Moussoro assessed the food security situation of the project target population through socio-demographic characteristics of respondents' households, sources of revenues and expenditures, food consumption, coping strategies, agriculture and livestock, market access, water and sanitation, and previous humanitarian assistance. The IRC concluded that 45% of the population resorts to negative coping strategies as a direct impact of food insecurity, with the highest amount of households (61%) resorting to selling livestock, an essential livelihood. Coping strategies are common to supplement the lack of food, and are methods used by people to deal with stressful situations. Obtaining and maintaining good coping strategies amongst vulnerable populations proves to be difficult as many households do not have much of a choice or flexibility. Food insecurity and malnutrition remain a major threat to the target population, making provision of assistance in the coming months crucial to beneficiaries' health and nutritional wellbeing.

Cash transfers and food vouchers

Food security reports and the IRC's market assessment conducted in July highlighted that food was available in the markets in sufficient quantity and quality, but that vulnerable households had low purchasing power. Climate and social shocks raised food prices and forced families to begin buying food, as opposed to consuming their own food stocks earlier in the year than usual. Cash transfers and food vouchers are the most appropriate modality to permit households to use functioning markets and avoid negative coping strategies during the lean months. IRC will give beneficiaries cash to maximize their flexibility and choice. In northern BeG, there is a lack of available markets for individuals to purchase food, and is instead characterized by vendors from the local community. For this reason, the IRC decided to use a mix of commodity vouchers, redeemable for basic foodstuffs at specified vendors, and cash transfers. This varied approach ensures participating vendors have incentives to stock the foods, and also provide

beneficiaries with choice and flexibility. This also guarantees that the food received is consumed and not sold for cash.

The project assists 4,500 households in the following geographical locations:

- Amsilep sub-prefecture, southern BeG: 1,500 households with limited access to agricultural activities, identified jointly by IRC and local leaders.
- Moundjoura sub-prefecture, northern BeG: 1,500 households, identified jointly by IRC and local leaders
- Dourgoulanga sub-prefecture, northern BeG: 1,000 households, identified jointly by IRC and local leaders
- Salal sub-prefecture, northern BeG: 500 households, identified jointly by IRC and local leaders.

The two types of assistance are (1) mixed food voucher and cash transfer (approximately 32,000 XAF worth of food vouchers and 8,000 XAF cash transfers per month) for 3000 households in Moundjoura, Dourgoulanga, and Salal, and (2) cash transfers for the full amount of 40,000 XAF per month for 1500 households in Amsilep. Therefore, beneficiary households in Amsilep (southern BeG) will receive cash transfers, while those in Moundjoura, Dourgoulanga, and Salal (northern BeG) will received a mix of vouchers and cash transfers. As vouchers will be the primary modality in the areas lacking regular food markets (northern BeG: Moundjoura, Dourgoulanga, and Salal).

As of the end of FY15, there had been no vouchers or transfers redeemed for the reporting period due to delays in project activities, and the total actual cost (\$USD) for cash and vouchers for the reporting period is zero.

A few weeks after the market assessment was conducted in early July, prices increased sharply, reflecting the seasonal increase naturally linked to the lean season. The increase in market prices was also due to the border closing and disrupted trade routes in the fight against Boko Haram which provides the commerce to the BeG.

During the reporting period, the IRC monitored prices of key foodstuffs at the market in Salal, the primary market in the northern BeG. Prices during the reporting period, as compared to the prices projected by the IRC during proposal development for this project, are as follows:

Foodstuff (price in FCFA per kilogram)	Budgeted price (projected)	July 2015	August 2015	September 2015	Comments
Millet	300	321	348	-	Not recorded in September
Imported rice	480	714	714	-	Not recorded in September
Vegetable oil	1250	1250	1600	-	Not recorded in September

Note: 600 FCFA = US \$1

Two main observations can be made based on these limited data:

1. The price of essential foodstuffs is slightly higher than projected for millet and vegetable oil, and significantly higher than projected for imported rice, for which the price was 149% of the projection for both July and August. This indicates that the rise in prices during the 2015 lean season surpassed expectations.
2. Prices climbed from July to August, except for imported rice, which remained stable. This is consistent with the dynamics of the lean season: food becomes increasingly scarcer the longer the lean season lasts, causing a corresponding rise in prices.

As the IRC now projects commencing distributions during the fourth quarter of 2015 (see below), when the harvest will have begun, further price observations during the next reporting period will be critical to assessing the impact of the intervention.

Challenges, Success, and Lessons Learned

Staff turnover, particularly for the Livelihoods Coordinator who is responsible for overseeing the project, caused modest delays in the start of some activities such as, team recruitment, targeting of beneficiaries, the selection of vendors, and the baseline survey.

The vehicle provided by USAID for the IRC team in Moussoro implementing the project was held up by the Chadian customs process, which indicated that significant fees were owed on the vehicle due to the fact that the registration was allowed to expire prior to being lent to the IRC. The IRC worked with USAID and the Chadian government to attempt to find a solution, but as of the end of FY15 the vehicle was still legally unable to leave the IRC's office in N'Djamena. The absence of the FFP/USAID vehicle in Moussoro during the first months of the project negatively affected the teams' ability to travel to project implementation sites.

The IRC did not expect these delays to have a long-term impact on the project. However, the IRC encountered difficulties with vendors to align their prices with the amount budgeted as prices rose during the months of May through September (lean season), particularly for millet and oil, beyond the levels anticipated at the time that the project's proposal was written. The costs originally budgeted did not therefore reflect actual market price fluctuation, and vendors were not willing to accept them. The IRC is working with the vendors to resolve these issues, with distributions to take place in the fourth quarter of 2015.

Distributions are scheduled to start in November. Although the distributions did not take place during lean season as planned, beneficiaries are still in dire need of assistance, especially those who will experience food shortages as early as November (considering harvest dates). The Bahr el Ghazal region finds itself in a chronic state of food insecurity, with dismal crop yields on an annual basis. This assistance will still contribute to the increase in the level of food access for the most vulnerable households in the BeG. For example, rapid assessments in the Bahr el Ghazal have shown that households receiving WFP distributions often use up the assistance provided within just a few days. This is likely due to social and familial obligations to share food outside of the household. In addition, the Chadian army's closure of the border with Niger in response to the Boko Haram crisis has devastated the livelihoods of herders in the Bahr el Ghazal by cutting them off from cattle markets in Niger and Nigeria, causing the price of cattle to

plummet. After a short period of decline in market prices linked to the seasonal harvest period, grain prices are now on the rise again. This combination of plummeting cattle prices and rising grain prices has effectively reduced the purchasing power of agropastoral households whose livelihoods depend at least partially on the trade in livestock.