2016 Post-Distribution Assessment Results

FAO’s Meher season emergency seed response to the El Niño-induced drought in Ethiopia

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BACKGROUND

Between March and September 2016, Ethiopia experienced one of the most serious droughts in history. Triggered by the El Niño phenomenon, it resulted in significant crop losses. Households dependent on crop and vegetable production lost their main source of income and food, as well as their ability to plant during the next agricultural season. Both smallholder farmers and agro-pastoral communities experienced food insecurity, with access to both food and income significantly reduced, while agro-pastoral communities and those who rely on irrigation facilities have also been further hit by reduced milk production. To reduce the food gap and mitigate the risk of malnutrition, FAO strove to assist over 165,000 smallholder farming households through agricultural input provision, seed production support, backyard vegetable production and irrigation for the meher (June to September) season.

The Emergency Seed Distribution, conducted between April and August 2016, was one of a raft of interventions conducted by Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) and its partners to respond to the emergency. This seed distribution was the largest in Ethiopia’s history.

From a total of about 32,000 tonnes distributed in total, FAO dispensed 4,000 tonnes to a total of 168,000 households, reaching approximately 850,000 people across the six most affected regions in the country. FAO’s support was focused on 85 woredas (districts) in the crop dependent regions of Amhara, Oromiya, SNNP and Tigray, along with agro-pastoral areas of Afar and Somali Region.

Upon completion of the emergency seed distribution, FAO conducted a Post Distribution Assessment (PDA) throughout the above-mentioned six targeted regions of Ethiopia. Comprising two objectives, it set out to:

* Check the effectiveness of seed distribution to the intended vulnerable households affected by the drought (thereby reinforcing accountability), and
* Assess the satisfaction level among beneficiaries in terms of targeting, timeliness, quality and quantity of seed provided.

Conducted between 23rd August and 2nd September 2016, the PDA team consulted with community members residing in 22 woredas (30% of total number of woredas covered) within 15 administrative zones. Their feedback was elicited through a variety of qualitative and quantitative methodologies, including checklists, household surveys, focus group discussions and key informant interviews. The map below shows the location of targeted woredas, along with woredas visited during PDA.
In undertaking this PDA, FAO and its partners consulted with a total of approximately 655 people, 127 of whom participated in individual household surveys and 528 in focus group discussions. Woredas and individuals were randomly selected, while the PDA team strove to consult a variety of demographic groups including men, women, elderly and youth, in order to ensure the views of all sectors of communities were heard. Both seed recipients and government officials had the opportunity to participate.

FAO is pleased to share the results of this recent PDA, the findings of which will inform future interventions. They will also be shared with FAO’s partners and other organisations active in the emergency response and seed distribution field in Ethiopia.
METHODOLOGY

The PDA sought to answer the following key questions:

1. Were the seeds distributed efficiently?
2. To what extent did the assistance address the most urgent needs, with regards to quality, quantity, timeliness and seeds of choice?
3. To what extent were the most vulnerable households reached?
4. What is the perception of the beneficiaries of the intervention?

In addition to the above, the PDA team collected supplementary information through direct observation and use of checklists. Six teams of roughly three staff members carried out the assessment. Team members consisted of staff from FAO Ethiopia Country Office as well as regional FAO staff and government partners.

Focus group discussions: 66 focus group discussions (3 in each of the 22 woredas) were conducted comprised of demographically varied groups, including the elderly, female-headed households and young adults.

Individual Interviews: 127 people across the 22 woredas undertook individual surveys. The questionnaire comprised questions regarding selection criteria of beneficiaries, the amount, type and quality of seed received and the timeliness of distribution. Other questions regarding any additional problems face and overall satisfaction with the intervention were also included.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Results of the PDA were overwhelmingly positive. Key findings are outlined here organised in three categories: General Overview, Sufficiency and Utilisation of Inputs and Timeliness, Seed of Choice, Quality and Satisfaction Level of Beneficiaries.

General Overview

- About 32 000 tonnes of seed were distributed between April and September (largest emergency seed distribution in Ethiopia’s history)
- FAO distributed roughly 4 000 tonnes of seed
- More than 168 000 households were enabled to plant their fields – 97% targeted due to the effects of the drought

Out of the 127 individual respondents consulted in the PDA, 73% were male while 27% were female. The overwhelming majority of respondents (97%) stated they felt the selection criteria fair as they were chosen because due to being affected by the recent drought. Only a very small proportion (3%) reported they were selected because they were also Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) beneficiary households.

All respondents and group interviewees further indicated that the selection was done through a rigorous woreda or village committee selection process. Moreover, they are all aware of the grievance and complaint mechanisms should they need to access them.
In terms of variety of crop seeds received, more than 90% of respondents received cereals and pulses while the rest were issued vegetable and potato. No serious problems regarding physical access to the emergency seed distribution centre were reported – only 15% indicated some challenges in reaching the distribution centre.

Emergency Seed Sufficiency and Utilisation

- About 97% of beneficiaries planted all the seed they received.
- 80% of beneficiaries face no serious issues with crop performance.
- 80% indicated they encountered no problems with other agricultural inputs.
- 55% received an amount of seed below their requirements.

The majority of emergency recipients (86%) indicated that they received seed exclusively from one source while the remainder (14%) received seeds from multiple sources. It is pleasing to see that woredas supported by one
implementing partner were not also targeted by another organisation. This is an indication of a well-coordinated emergency seed intervention.

Very few of the respondent households (3%) kept their seeds for future use while the majority (97%) planted all the seeds received from FAO shortly after they received them. More than 80% of the respondents reported that their planted crops are in good condition without any serious yield reduction problems. Only approximately 2% of respondents in the household survey claimed the loss of planted seeds due to flood.

Although the emergency seed response is expected to fully cover the needs of households, half of the respondent households reported that FAO’s provision (planned for half a hectare) was not able to fulfil the entirety of the households’ seed requirements. Around 55% of respondents reported that they received below their requirements while 45% stated they received right quantity of seeds. Figure 2 below displays the major findings further.

**Figure 2: Emergency Seed Response: Sufficiency and Utilization of Inputs (%)**

![Diagram showing findings on seed usage and sufficiency.

What did you do with the seed provided by FAO?
- Planted all
- Planted some of them

Have you observed any problems with crop performance after planting?
- Yes, other
- Yes, destroyed by flood
- Too early to tell
- Yes, poor germination
- No, no problems
- Yes, disease problems

Did you have easy access to other agricultural inputs?
- Somewhat ok, will not affect yield
- No problem, I had all I needed
- Problem - vely impact production

Was the amount of seed given by FAO sufficient to plant the entire area you own?
- Too small (less than 25% of requirement)
- Small (less than 50% of requirement)
- Just about right


Timeliness, Seed of Choice, Quality & Satisfaction Levels

- **90% of households** received their **choice of seed in time**

- About **96%** received **good and/or excellent quality seed**

- **Over 96%** of households were **satisfied or very satisfied** with emergency seed provision

Nine out of ten respondents received their seed of choice within the required timeframe with more than 96% of them deeming their seeds to be of good or excellent quality. Despite the seed interventions, some 20% of respondent households still faced challenges associated with accessing other agricultural inputs which may result in a negative impact on yields. The unmet agricultural inputs reported included draught animals, fertilizer and pesticides.

About 50% of respondents reported that their livelihood would have been in jeopardy had they not received emergency seeds for this 2016 *meher* season while the remaining 50% indicated they could have somehow survived without the seed intervention, although they would have encountered serious difficulties. Almost 100% of beneficiaries were grateful or very satisfied by the FAO emergency seed intervention. Figure 3 below provides additional details on these aspects.
CONCLUSION

The assessment successfully achieved its major objectives of ascertaining the effectiveness of seed distribution to the targeted smallholder farmers affected by the 2015 – 2016 El Niño induced drought. The results show that the FAO led emergency seed response successfully contributed to addressing food and income needs of the targeted population for the coming year.

Furthermore, findings also demonstrate that this intervention will continue to positively impact the quantity of crop production which will be used for food, fodder and income generation for beneficiary communities, thus signalling the sustainability of this project.

While the results of the PDA are overwhelmingly positive, FAO is keen to utilise these findings to inform and improve future programming. Through reflecting and analysing the PDA results, FAO has developed the following recommendations.
RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on analysis of the PDA results, FAO developed the following recommendations:

1. Diversify crop provision
To improve the livelihoods and food security situation of households and communities, it is important to provide diversified crop seed types, such as wheat, chickpea, root crops and vegetables in addition to the single type seed already provided by FAO. This minimizes the risk many smallholder farmers face.

2. Conduct Seed Systems Security Assessment prior to Emergency Seed Response
Emergency seed supply should always be needs based and delivered at the appropriate time for planting. This can be achieved through a proper Seed System Security Assessment (SSSA). The SSSA helps to understand the estimated quantity of seed that can be purchased from a specific market during an emergency without distorting the market as well as to determine the amount of seed required. An SSSA further helps to understand the sources and quality of seed available and provides information regarding the system, access and quality of seed available for the season.

3. Involve Government counterparts in the seed assessment and provision
One of the missing elements in the entire emergency seed intervention is availability of seed related information from government sources. Such information from the government increases transparency and eases decision-making processes. This documentation and recording of emergency seed distribution and post distribution data will improve transparency of the system, thus enhancing monitoring efficiency and impact assessment.

4. Strengthen the technical support to smallholder farmers
Agricultural activities are continuous and strengthening the technical support of post distribution activities, such as improved weed management, surveillance of crop pests and timely control of pests are all essential features of successful farming. The timeliness of the harvest and post-harvest handling are also key factors in ensuring high crop yields.

5. Integrate emergency seed interventions with other agricultural inputs
Inclusion of fertilizer support would further increase production output. In 2016, it was observed that resource poor households faced difficulties in accessing the required fertilizers and other agricultural implements due to increased prices. Therefore, it is crucial to consider these difficulties up-front. Supply of fertilizers and other agricultural implements to resource poor households can be facilitated through credit or on a cost free basis.

6. Undertake independent impact assessment
An independent impact assessment would provide an enhanced understanding of the outcomes of the emergency seed response. It would also gather lessons learnt which would inform future decision making processes to ensure optimal use of limited resources. Moreover, documentation of best practices in the field is also highly worthwhile.
SUPPLEMENTARY DOCUMENTS

The following tools were utilised during the PDA, and can be shared upon request:

1. PDA Guidelines (Terms of Reference)
2. Household Level Questionnaire
3. Household Focus Group Discussion Form
4. *Woreda* Information Checklist