

Africa Report by Mary Lalevée

The famines keeps worsening

The International Monetary Fund and World Bank reap their harvest of death.

Even the cold figures published by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) on the African food emergency are a shock: Less than half of the 7.0 million tons of food aid needed by the 21 African countries affected by famine during the period May 1984-May 1985 have actually arrived. And FAO estimates of how much food the populations actually need are, even according to their own admission, far below the minimum needed for survival.

The situation has led the FAO to comment: "Forty-five percent of the aggregate pledges of food aid to the 21 countries has not been received, and it now seems inevitable that part of the balance will not be delivered in time. In order to minimize human suffering and loss of life in the period leading to the next harvest, it is essential for new initiatives to be taken as a matter of extreme urgency by the international community and the governments of the affected nations."

The six most affected countries are Chad, Ethiopia, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, and Sudan. In Chad, the FAO reports: "The available supplies of food are not sufficient even to meet the minimum needs of the most severely malnourished sections of the population." The closing of Apapa port in Nigeria and the accumulation of backlogs at Port Harcourt and Douala have compounded an already difficult food distribution situation. In Ethiopia, 90,000 tons of cereal have accumulated at the port of Assab, due to a shortage of trucks to deliver the supplies. Food aid

deliveries to Mali are being impeded by backlogs at Abidjan, Dakar, and Lome, as well as by poor road conditions, particularly between Lome and Gao. Similar logistic constraints continue to impede the delivery and distribution of food in Burkina Faso (Upper Volta) and Niger.

Next year looks no better: In Burkina Faso, Chad, Ethiopia, Mali, Niger, and Sudan, the available seed supplies are well below the minimum requirements, reports the FAO. "Without emergency supplies of seeds over the next few weeks, the current exceptional food deficits will inevitably be extended into 1986, even if the weather conditions are favorable," writes the FAO, which also points out the shortage of other farm inputs and draught animals, especially in Chad, Ethiopia, and Sudan.

In Sudan, there are now more than 11.5 million people affected by drought conditions, nearly twice as many as three months ago, according to Bradford Morse, Director of the Office of Emergency Operations for Africa, speaking at a press conference in Geneva on June 2. He reported that the famine in Ethiopia was likely to endure through 1986, and that 5 million people would need food aid in 1986, even assuming optimal harvest conditions.

Between 700,000 and one million people may have already died in Ethiopia. The labor-intensive food-for-work projects run by the U.N. World Food Programme in Ethiopia are reported to have come to a standstill, "as

people become too hungry to carry on."

In Sudan, some sources are saying that "anywhere from 500,000 to 2 million of the country's 24 million population will probably be dead before the harvest in November." The decrepit one-track railway line going into Eastern Sudan, where there are 3.5 million famine victims, has predictably been unable to carry the 1,000 tons a day needed. A British Save the Children Fund official told me that it was now "unlikely" that sufficient food would arrive in time. "The prospects are very bleak," he said. "People in Darfur are no longer eating grain, they are eating poisonous berries, that have to be soaked for days and boiled for hours to remove the poison. They are breaking open anthills looking for grain."

A spokesman for the Catholic Food Agency in London told me, "The most optimistic scenario is that a quarter of a million children under five will die in Sudan before the end of 1985. The most pessimistic is that three-quarters of a million children will die."

In the Sahel region, as many as 7 million are at risk of starvation. A report in the British daily *The Guardian* described the situation: "Many of the nomads of Mali have resigned themselves to death within the next few months. 'We have no food, almost no camels, no seeds and no strength to move even if we knew where we could find those things so our children could live. I am as helpless and dependent as a new born baby,' said Youssouf, a Touareg chief."

The IMF and World Bank are the only ones in Africa reaping their harvest: the genocide described. Even now, the World Bank is trying to prevent Burkina Faso from building a railway to the north, and to prevent the EC from building a 500 km road through the center of Niger, linking Algiers to Lagos.