

**RELUFA**  
**2006 FOOD SOVEREIGNTY PROGRAM**  
**First Quarterly report**



RELUFA

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## INTRODUCTION

After careful study of the precarious food security situation in northern Cameroon, the national *Network for the Fight Against Hunger in Cameroon (RELUFA)* identified the exploitative speculation mechanisms on the food markets as systemic root cause of hunger and poverty.

Poor subsistence farmers sell crops at harvest time to ensure educational and other pressing needs of their family. With prices low, merchants buy up the produce and create shortages later in the year. Once food becomes scarce, they put their stocks back on the market. As the families run out of their own supplies, they are forced to sell livestock or borrow money to purchase grain. By this time, prices are soaring for sorghum and plummeting for livestock. The people's living standards and their food security spiral downward.

RELUFA seeks to break this cycle by establishing community grain banking systems in vulnerable villages. Community grain banks allow for self-governance of food supplies by the farmers themselves. Permanent supplies in the village ensure the community's own food needs, particularly during the lean season. Members can better afford the purchase of food through the group price. Rather than using savings, selling livestock, or taking out loans, all resources remain in the community. Furthermore, the sale of any surpluses provides additional capital, increasing the living standards of the community at large.

The Mokolo Sub Division of Mayo Tsanaga in the Far North Province of Cameroon was retained as intervention area for RELUFA's 2006 Food Sovereignty pilot Program. For the implementation of the program, RELUFA signed an agreement with *Action for the Rural Development of the Sahel (GIE ADERSA)*, one of its member organizations and Task Force leader of the network's Food Sovereignty Program. ADERSA would engage and train a grassroots organizer from network member organization ACD-Sahel, and collaborate with him in the realization of the activities.

The main objectives in the context of this agreement are:

- To identify communities for RELUFA's pilot village granary project
- To inform and sensitize these communities on the realization of the project.
- To ensure the identification by each of the communities of a safe and clean storage space for the food supplies
- To ensure the democratic election and installation of granary management committees in each of the identified villages
- To provide the training for the members of each of the management committees.
- To organize the purchase of grain on the local markets.
- To ensure the transportation and deposit of the food supplies in the granaries according to the plan elaborated by RELUFA's Food Sovereignty Task Force and Coordination.
- To monitor the management of the food supplies by the grain banks;
- To supervise the activities of the groups trained for this operation;
- To produce detailed and regular reports on the monitoring of these activities.

ADERSA engaged 02 (two) grass-roots organizers, (*Konai Robert* of GIE ADERSA and *Gakola Moïse* of ACD-Sahel) and its leader *Elias Gondji* coordinated the activities.

This is the first quarterly report drawn up in light of the agreement to assess all activities carried out between December 2005 and March 2006, the difficulties encountered and the prospects.

## I. INFORMATION-AWARENESS BUILDING-TRAINING

Following multiple working sessions with RELUFA's leadership in Yaoundé, the awareness building and training activities started on 23 December 2005. According to the criteria set out by RELUFA, the two grassroots organizers have been going back and forth between the villages in the intervention area of the project:

- To inform the communities about the project
- To explain to them the objectives and arouse their adhesion to it
- To identify resource people in each community and to explain them the project;
- To prepare the closer training activities.

Training activities are of great importance for the operation of the village grain banks. To succeed, they need to be done on a regular basis. In this spirit, training continues throughout the purchase and storage phase as well as during the sale and clearance of the granaries. In other words, training activities have been and will be carried out throughout the entire operation and include:

- Concerted programming with the leadership of each sensitized community (January 02, 2006);
- Training meetings in each community and group to explain the need for village grain banks (use of comic strips, boxes of images... etc.);
- Identification by the groups of a storage space as their own contribution to the village grain bank;
- Meetings at each community grain bank to democratically elect and establish a management committee;
- Organization of the farmers for their regrouping;
- Organization of assemblies in each community to ratify decisions taken about the village granaries;
- Assistance to help each of the groups in writing up the manual for policies and procedures for their community grain banks;
- Assistance with legalization processes for each group
- Support to the groups in drafting estimated budgets for the 2006 storage campaign;
- Organization of the constitution of a working capital at the level of each community;
- Preparation and explanation of indicators for the purchasing phase;
- Preparation and explanation of indicators for the selling phase;
- Assistance to the groups in establishing balance sheets and evaluation reports on the storage campaign and to present the results to all the members during the general assembly;
- Assistance to help the groups think through the expenses necessary to further develop the association;

After the training sessions, and at the end of the planned activities, the list of the groups retained for the training was drawn up as follows:

*Table 1: List of beneficiaries*

N°	Sector	Community	Composition of the group	Locality	Person to meet
	1				
1		Mambaria	Mixed	Lawanat	Mozongo Elias
2		Djamdoudidi	Mixed	Village centre	Aminou Robert
3		Ziakam	Mixed	Djaoro area	Konai Djadai
4		Mazlaguidey	Women	Mazlaguidey	Mrs Jacques born Abiba
5		Mbiga	Mixed	Wouro Mbiga	Dawai Pierre
6		Djeling	Mixed	Marbai	Moussa Kaimdou
7		Gouzlom	Mixed	Toufsokol	Dawai Elias
8		Mélendou	Mixed	Village centre	Ndjidda Philippe
9		Boudoum	Mixed	Lawanat	Deli Silas
10		Djalingo	Mixed	Lawanat	Hamadou Waziri
11		Mowo	Mixed	Mowo centre	Gala Goloved
12		Tchembi	Women	Lawanat	Mrs Saïdou born Aïssatou
13		Goulwa	Mixed	Goulwa centre	Lakola Jean
	2				
14		Gueling	Mixed	School area	Mamoudou Pierre
15		Dimsack	Mixed	Dimsack centre	Matawarei Daniel
16		Mandaya	Mixed	Mandaya centre	Djaoro Ndjidda
17		Métchezleo	Mixed	Village centre	Sra Banai Jean
18		Gagala	Mixed	Gagala shop	Moutchouko Jean

Most village storage groups are mixed, i.e. made up of men and women. The few experiences where women have created their own village granaries are rather positive. RELUFA has therefore included a number of women-run grain banks.

## II. STOCKPILING IN THE GRANARIES

To establish the village grain banks, the main pre-occupation was:

- To proceed with the purchase of stocks in the various markets
- To ensure the transportation to the storage space supplied by the beneficiary groups;
- Follow-up on the identification and choice of a space to serve as storage room
- Training the members of the management committee on stock conservation techniques.
- To continue basic training activities with receiving communities
- Monitoring the beneficiary groups to ensure the establishment of the working capital and the good management of the stocks;

Crucial part of creating a community grain bank is the constitution of a basic supply of food stocks as its working capital.

During their most recent support mission from 18-22 February 2006 Mr. *Valéry Nodem* (RELUFA's national network coordinator) and Mrs. *Christi Boyd* (mission co-worker of the Presbyterian Church USA) participated in the actual start of this operation, checking out with the agents of ADERSA and ACD Sahel the various places for grain supplies (muskwaari, yellow sorghum) and verifying the different market prices. They were present at the purchase, transportation and delivery of the stocks for the first established granary of the Tchembi women's group.

From 21 February 2006 on, after the trainings and concerted activities for the identification and creation of the village granaries, the team of ADERSA and ACD-Sahel has continued with the identification, purchase and stockpiling of the first grain supplies for each of the grain banks participating in RELUFA's Food Sovereignty Program. Under the supervision of ADERSA's coordinator, they visited local village markets, bought supplies, loaded them onto rented trucks, and accompanied the stocks to the granaries in each of the villages. There, the stocks were handed over and received by the leadership of the grain banks. Altogether, the operations to stockpile the 18 granaries with grain took 25 days.

Several difficulties were encountered during this operation. Subsequently, it took longer to supply the granaries with stocks, and extra costs were incurred particularly in the purchase of the grains. The main problems were:

- Price rise on the food market. Less bags could be bought than anticipated
- Constant price fluctuations. Not knowing the ruling market price has rendered each day of the purchasing stage difficult and stressful. Also, prices were not exactly the same in all the markets
- The lack of large quantities of grains on the markets made it difficult to organize group purchases. The consequence is that all the 1088 bags bought were bought practically one by one.

By the end of the operations, the staff has been able to purchase and stock the 18 granaries with a total of 1088 bags of 100kg, according to the following scheme:

Table 2: Table of quantities deposited in the granaries

Sector	Group	Amount (cfa F)	Anticipated number of bags (100kg @10,000FCFA)	Number of bags provided	Purchase and delivery dates
	Mambaria	1 000 000	100	60	March 05, 13
	Djamdoudi	1 000 000	100	60	March 05
	Zlakam	1 000 000	100	60	March 05, 14
	Mazleguidey	1 000 000	100	62	February 22
1	Mbiga	1 000 000	100	60	March 02
	Djeling	1 000 000	100		March 03
	Gouzlom	1 000 000	100	60	March 03, 14
	Melendou	1 000 000	100	60	March 07, 14
	Boudoum	1 000 000	100	60	March 12
	Djalingo	1 000 000	100	60	March 12
	Mowo	1 000 000	100	60	February 24
	Tchembi	1 000 000	100	66	February 21
	Gouloua	1 000 000	100	60	Febraury 25
2	Gueling	1 000 000	100	60	Febraury 26
	Dimsack	1 000 000	100	60	March 14
	Mandaya	1 000 000	100	60	February 27 and March 11
	Metchezleo	1 000 000	100	60	February 27 and March 11
	Galala	1 000 000	100	60	March 1,11 and 14
	<b>Total</b>	<b>18 000 000</b>	<b>1 800</b>	<b>1 088</b>	

The table above presents an obvious discrepancy between the initial forecasts and the quantities actually obtained with the available basic funds. The following factors are at the basis of the difference.

- The original estimate of 100 bags per community was based on the purchase of rainy season sorghum, commonly called red millet (*djigaari*). This grain would be purchased locally from the farmers themselves at the harvest period of September-October, when prices for red millet are usually around 10.000Fcfa / bag of 100 kgs. The shift in the period of implementation of this operation made us proceed with the purchase of stocks on the markets in the zones of production of *muskwaari* at the cost price of the market. It should be noted that the current zone of intervention does not produce the muskwaari and that therefore the grain had to be bought at market price rather than from the farmers in the participating communities themselves. At the same time, it is a zone where even the productions of rainy season cereals is weak and where the problem of food shortages is felt each year.
- The presence of speculators drove up the prices on the trading markets. Their main preoccupation is buying up the foods, regardless the price they pay. This drove up the prices for our purchasing operations.
- While budgeting the operations, certain parameters had not been taken into account for the purchase of cereals. There were additional expenses for communal (council) expenses (200 cfa F/bag bought), transport costs and the storage expenses when, in the absence of means for transportations, overnight storage needs to be arranged (100 cfa F/bag/night).
- The costs related to unexpected events like hiring of a motorbike taxi for the local staff to go out in many different villages and look for cereal stocks were not taken into account when the operation was budgeted.

The following table recapitulates the various prices by bag and the related expenses by provisioning site:

Table 3: Cost statement for purchase of initial food grants 11

Purchase Site or market	Quantity	Average price/bag	Total price	Transport cost/bag	Total transport cost	Handling	Communal expenses	Storage expenses	Cost price/ bag	Total costs
	Gawel	454	15 000	6 810 000	1 000	454 000	90 800	90 800	24 000	16 452,8
Salak	175	14 500	2 537 500	1 000	175 000	35 000	35 000	4 800	15 927,4	2 787 300
Djappaï	340	15 000	5 100 000	1 500	510 000	68 000	68 000	6000	16 917,6	5 752 000
Windé	93	14 500	1 348 500	1 500	139 000	18 600	18 600	0	16 394,6	1 524 700
Dagaï	26	14 500	377 000	1 200	31 200	5 200	5 200	0	16 100	418 600
<b>Total</b>	<b>1088</b>	<b>14 700</b>	<b>16 173 000</b>	<b>1 240</b>	<b>1 309 200</b>	<b>217 600</b>	<b>217 600</b>	<b>34 800</b>	<b>16 500,18</b>	<b>17 952 200</b>

*NB: The relative balance after the purchasing operations is 47 800 CFA francs. But the real balance is 17 500 CFA francs since 15 300 CFA francs were used to buy bags for re-packaging and 15 000 CFA francs for the various trips the agents needed to make to various sales points to purchase bags.*

### III. OTHER ACTIVITIES

These consist particularly of capacity building activities for the management committees, formalization of the groups and the monitoring of the stocks in the granaries.

#### 3-1 Capacity building of the management committee members

Several meetings were organized to train the members of the management committees. This training is necessary because in many groups the notion of community cereal banks is not well developed. To facilitate work, we carried out the reorganization of the communities by sectors and by community organizer to allow for a better participation of the committee members in the various training sessions. And so, the reorganization made for the creation of two sectors:

Sector N°1 is composed of Mambaria, Djamdoudi, Zlakam, Mazlaguidey, Mbiga, Djéling, Gouzlom, Mélendou, Boudoum et Djalingo. They benefit from the daily training by *Konai Robert*.

Sector N°2 is composed of Mowo, Tchambi, Goulwa, Kidvé, Dimsack, Mandaya, Métchezleo et Gagala. These communities are trained by *Gakola Moïse*.

During training sessions, several topics are addressed. They are mainly topics related to the discipline of the members; the organization of meetings for reflection and for the evaluation of activities or of the project; the maintenance of the granaries; the choice of grains in the markets; the treatment of the food products during storage; and the study of the strategies to minimize purchase costs (overheads). The capacity building activities is ongoing and will be more detailed in our next activity report.

#### 3-2 Formalization of the groups

Under this heading, the work consisted in the first place of creating and organizing the groups with the democratic election of officers during the general assembly of all group members. Then they were assisted in developing the statutes and manual for policies and procedures needed for each group to obtain a legal status. In their assemblies, the groups decided mainly for the status of Common Initiative Groups (CIG). This is a legally recognized form of association, which the farmers can easily assimilate and manage. This work of formalization of the groupings continues and will also be further detailed in the next report.

#### 3-3 Treatment and supervision of stocks

Before the bags of cereals were stocked in the granaries, they were treated with a local product against termites and other rodents, which are harmful for stocking operation. Also, every management committee decided that each granary will have a door with 2 different padlocks managed by 2 different people from the management committee, so that one of them alone can not open the granary alone and take out grains. The management committee regularly inspects the products.

#### IV. ENCOUNTERED DIFFICULTIES

This is a first experience in purchasing and stockpiling of grains for 18 community cereal banks of 18 villages in the Mayo Tsanaga District. The difficulties encountered are of various natures. The most relevant seem the following:

- The price fluctuation of the food products on the various markets. This instability of the prices make it nearly impossible to communicate to our partners the eventual market price and to monitor accurately the purchasing operations. Moreover, this price instability makes it difficult and even impossible to fully achieve the objectives set at the beginning of the project. As a result we have had to readjust on several occasions during this phase the anticipated quantities in order to try and treat each beneficiary group equally.
- The difficulty of finding large stocks on each market to carry out grouped purchases. The usury practices of dubious tradesmen are more and more repressed by the local and administrative authorities. As a consequence the sales tend to be controlled and canalized by communal or traditional intermediaries who impose taxes. These taxes were not taken into account at the beginning of the operation.

#### V. PROSPECTS

During the next quarter, our working program will primarily focus on the following points:

- Continuation of capacity building activities for the members of the management committee;
- Support and monitoring of the maintenance of the granaries;
- Monitoring of the grain prices on the various markets and communication to all the trained groupings;
- Continuation and finalization of the formalization of the groupings;
- Continuation of trainings for women groups.

#### CONCLUSION

In general, the various activities prescribed in the agreement between RELUFA and GIE ADERSA proceed normally in spite of the difficulties noted in this report. The main objectives laid down in this agreement are overall achieved.

Without RELUFA's coordination and facilitation, it would have been difficult to supervise the activities in the field.

Lastly, given the deep interest the population in the villages has taken in this operation, it is desirable that RELUFA already considers the preparations and organization of a new campaign for community grain banks.