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POST-SCRIPT TO JULY 17TH 2011 UPDATE

July 28th 2011

- **Its raining but vulnerability is bringing added calamities**

As of July 16th, storms have begun on the regular evening/ night basis, the pattern of the main rains that are due annually from July to September. Storms are by and large violent with high winds and dust proceeding. The storm distribution is very erratic and very localized. The herd by now is extremely weak from poor to no pasture and the community has been fighting in the last days to keep the remaining herd alive feeding them what they can scrounge from foliage. These weak animals then get wet and shiver: the disease infections in their bodies become active and they die. This is happening in many woredas in various extents. APDA has just visited Ami Bara in southern Zone 3 where probably thousands of cattle died in the last week but these cattle started their down-trend to death 2 months ago with a combination of poor nutrition and diseases. The community level paravets told how they tried to vaccinate the animals around 6 to 4 weeks ago but they were too weak to accept the vaccine and then they tried treating them but veterinary medicines were too few.

What we saw was very fresh carcasses of many calves as well as their milking mothers and the community described that they had been sick with diseases that may have been pasterlosis, black leg and anthrax, one woman described how the cattle had be grazing on poisonous weeds but the over-lying problem was the extreme poor nutrition leading to emaciating of the animals. Again, the community had taken them far away into Oromo Region south of Ami Bara to find grazing and returned when the rain fell and the migration also weakened them.

The top-danger now is the carcasses: unburned they contaminate water sources, cause household diarrhea outbreaks and also transmit diseases to living animals through contaminating the ground they die on.

APDA is currently burning carcasses with the community providing kerosene and treating any affected remaining animals. Awareness of hygiene and sanitation is urgently needed as a back-up.

The reality of all this is that there are a number of contributing factors:

- The realization that the health of animals is intertwined with humans and must be considered as that in all actions
- Lack of access and availability of veterinary medicines
- Lack of access to fodder and distance to water for the animals
- Conflict with Issa – only 6 kilometers north of Ami Bara administration (Andiddo) there is virgin grazing that is ‘no – man’s – land’. The land they are using is overgrazed and drought – deteriorated

- Animals are not readily marketed due to poor marketing culture and lack of access to market.

Current needs

- Immediate and ongoing community mobilization in burning carcasses and hygiene and sanitation awareness
- Medium – term community training and mobilization on disaster risk reduction, a WaSH plan that connects animals to humans, teaching and training on fodder
- Long-term: animal marketing and environment restoration

In Bidu:

APDA has assessed the arrivals from the volcanic eruption around Bidu that have reached the administration centre in Soddonta gaining a total of 167 households with a population of 974.

A further 1,400 households are reportedly in utter need of assistance in the hinterland toward the Eritrean border. Sixteen deaths from diarrhea from drinking volcanic ash contaminated water were reported in these rural communities in the past week.

APDA has the following assistance at hand:

- a) Funds to distribute traditional mats to make mobile houses for the 143 households in Soddonta
- b) Support for 13,500 people's food in Bidu for 1 month
- c) 300 households water containers, soap and water purification material for Bidu hinterland

In Teeru, central Afar Region in Zone 4, there is a critical sanitation situation: rain has fallen in 4 kebeles peripheral to the woreda. The central basin where most of the population is has the water of the Awra River and people are drinking dirty water and keeping water in plastic containers that are contaminated with algae (everyone holds a plastic water bottle collected from the administration town). Diarrhea is now very widespread and as a result, malnutrition is rising.

In northern Awra, upwards to 50 animals in a household were swept away and drowned by sudden storms.

In Dallol:

Reports today are of serious flooding in Badda Admaruk – on the farming river on the border with Eritrea. The Regional Government has gone to check damage will report back. So far there are no reports of human casualties but farmland and property will have been wasted.