

# AFAR PASTORALIST DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION QAFAR DACARSITTOH DADALIH EGLA

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## THE YEAR ENDS: OUR THANKS AS WE LOOK FORWARD

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### 1. Your partnership in our community work is what makes our program!!!

As again another year ends and we look back to all that was possible, we are strongly reminded that sharing the concern and the vision is what it is all about!! Our Board and Management sincerely thank each and every one of you for taking the journey with us through 2010!! What stands out in the year's achievements are the meetings we have had: at the community and government level to meet and galvanize determination to go forward on issues surrounding traditional law and protecting the environment as an appropriate response as well as meeting as youth and as pastoralist women; that the Afar Diaspora met and engaged in a very energizing debate and finally that APDA was able to project the Afar pastoralist image into international discussion. Much of this was made possible through your contacts, energies and inspiration. We have much enjoyed your visits through the year and hope that the relationship engendered will lead us on into 2011.

Finally we wish you all a time of relaxation, enjoyment and reflection during the Christmas/ New Year Season replenishing all our energies for more adventures in the pastoralist development journey of 2011. Our special greetings to the growing number of support organizations internationally: from the original Afar Friends, Sweden; Can Go Afar, Canada and Afar and New Zealand Friendship Society, a new group has emerged in each of UK, Norway, Denmark and Belgium.

### Community vulnerability that will go on into the New Year:

For the pastoralists, drought leading to household food insecurity, flood and the threat of acute watery diarrhea dominated 2010 and will continue on as major threats into 2011.

#### 1.1 Drought – inflicted vulnerability

The expected winter rains, *Daddah*, are to date limited to a day's rain in some sites in Awash, Ami Bara and Gawwaani in Zone 3 and very light rain in western districts of Sifra, Uwwa and Awra where the season is remarkably cold. The Region's 'drought - belt' is again dogged with thirst: Kori and Biru are suffering a bitter thirst with the community becoming highly dispersed. Eli Da'ar is highly thirsty aside from the community of Lee Addow where the vast dam constructed by APDA in 2009 still holds the August/ September rains. Erebt and Maggaale (Zone 2) that received only limited rain in August are also very thirsty. All these mentioned areas have serious food security problems since with herd sizes as small as 50 to 40% of the herd 5 years ago due to recurrent herd loss in drought. APDA health workers continue to treat severe acute malnourished children in these districts as follows: 149 in Erebt; 68 in Maggaale; 57 in northern Eli Daar and 96 Eritrean refugees in the Assaita camp.

#### 1.2 Flood – inflicted vulnerability

As was reported in the previous bulletin, 2010 will be remembered as the year of the rain but also the year of the flood – more rain than in the previous 10 years fell leaving over 50,000 people homeless overnight. Eight major bridges, crops, livestock, schools and clinics were among the losses. A second flood has occurred connected to the vast Tendaho irrigation project that has yet to recede, having occurred 3 ½ months ago in August. Infact, due to recent release of water from the Awash River dam at

Logya, flood waters rose in the last week in Afambo and Kutubla to heights greater than the original flood. APDA has listed a total of 1,468 households left destitute in these 2 districts. APDA health workers swam through crocodile – infested waters to reach the stranded people and found a total of 120 people with severe acute malnutrition – they had been living off remaining stored harvest. Any agriculture they had is lost. The organization has begun both nutrition, household/ house-construction supplies (traditional mats), water purification distribution as well as health education particularly aimed at preventing acute watery diarrhea and other water-borne infections.

### 1.3 The threat of acute watery diarrhea

While to date, 2010 has remained relatively AWD – free, a case has just been reported in Buurimudayto and 2 cases were treated in August in Logya. APDA is just launched into two new projects aimed at thoroughly awaring/ reminding the community of the danger and going to the extent of training health agents in the farm-laborers' camps to both raise awareness and police sanitation linking this to the local government monitoring of the situation.

## Highlights from each of the 6 program sectors including plans for 2011

### 1. Afar Education and language development

This organization sector has continued to be the hub of development for the entire program: an ongoing effort is being made throughout the program to encourage female education participation that supports stopping harmful practices; all income generation and cooperative members facilitated by the program are encouraged to be literate in language and numeracy; literacy accelerates health education and understanding of the household needs in safe motherhood.

Currently, the organization is teaching Afar literacy and numeracy to 7,475 people of whom 40.03% are females. Again, there are 3,963 non-formal education students of whom 40.67% are female. The program has Afar education facilitators in 221 sites in 15 woredas. During the year, Afar literacy began in Dullassa, Ami Bara and Buurimudayto supporting the effort to stop female genital mutilation in these woredas and also in Datta Bahari, Dubte woreda where similarly, literacy is being used to facilitate the community in stopping harmful practices.

Upgrading teachers through distance education that they can be handed over to local government administration has been a very vital part of the sector's work in the year. Handing over both community education facilitators and health workers to woreda government management remains an objective of the program.

The organization is now completing a manual for functional literacy that incorporates key messages from each of the program sectors as teaching modules. This is expected to catalyze project outputs in all sectors in the coming year. Again, as the program plans to move on in safe motherhood, stopping harmful practices and in food security in other districts of the community, it is expected that Afar literacy will be established as the basis of this in 2011 – Yallo, Goolina in Zone 4 and Erebt and Maggaale in Zone 2 will be targeted.

### 2. Primary health

As mentioned above, APDA's primary health team worked hard in 2010 to avert a possible outbreak of AWD and also worked tirelessly in teams to undertake vaccination, nutrition and disease surveillance in 6 woredas and 2 other districts within Dubte woreda as follows: Yallo and Uwwa in Zone 4; Erebt and Maggaale and Biru in Zone 2; Kori in Zone 1 including Mabay, the isolated kebele of Teeru and Geega and Dagaba in northern Dubte Woreda. All districts had patches of measles and whooping cough while Maggaale and Erebt were found with significant malnutrition. The mobile teams were able to achieve from 83 to 93% coverage on a house to house basis assisting communities otherwise unvaccinated and highly vulnerable to drought.

In November, APDA had the honor of sharing a short DVD clip of this work showing vaccination in remote areas to the GAVI Alliance Board meeting in Kigali, Rwanda. The meeting was enthralled by the idea of using a refrigerator and generator to make ice in the community as well as watching a camel caravan moving a family being downloaded by health workers to vaccinate the children on board. Again, APDA engaged with UNICEF in their Geneva meeting to discuss how the agency might better reach communities like nomadic Afar.

The long-awaited emergency obstetrics hospital will begin in 2011: the main construction is due for completion in January 2011; our first voluntary expatriot obstetrician to lead the training and treatment team will also come in January; equipment and furnishings are on the way – all arranged by linked caring professionals in Australia, Britain and USA.

Matching this, APDA plans to expand and consolidate its efforts at the community level to secure improvement in safe motherhood joining this effort to 8 district waiting centers for mothers at risk initially. All in all, APDA aims to lead the region in lowering mother/ child death and injury, improving the reproductive wellbeing of pastoralist women.

Finally, APDA wishes to trial the strategy of building the capacity of woreda – employed health extension workers in 2011, linking them to APDA - trained and equipped TBAs and women extension workers that they become effective in community – based safe motherhood, surveillance and health education.

### **3. Empowering pastoralist women and stopping harmful practices**

In 2010, the numbers of women extension workers rose in the community to 220 women in 19 woredas. Work has started in Goolina, Teeru and Datta Bahari as well as a process to consolidate work in Dullassa, Ami Bara and Buurimudayto. These women in their own communities are indeed the agents of change taking the issue of stopping female genital mutilation as the leading issue along with securing female rights in traditional marriage. Along with the harmful practices awareness group consisting of 6 people including two Islamic Shieks highly versatile in the Koranic teachings on women's rights, women extension workers are seeing the cultures harming females greatly decrease. APDA was able to secure a local regulation protecting women's interest in marriage in Afdeera, Uwwa and Awra in the year. This is remarkable as women have endured endless marriage repression without divorce rights and young girls have drunk poison not wanting to be forced into a marriage.

In 2011, energized communities will be facilitated to take the issue of totally stopping FGM to its conclusion, women's involvement in development will be deepened and APDA will enable the region to adopt a family law that suits the culture, religion and is in the framework of the government. Indeed, now that the issues related to traditional law have been raised in dialogue between the Bureau of Justice, the government and the community, this will be taken further with the aim to stop traditions that are contrary to development and to build on those enhancing wellbeing. The idea of having traditional local courts using clan law to hear simple cases have been bridged so that the community can be better governed.

### **4. Community and organization HIV & AIDS response**

Pastoralist youth are proving the power for change: their enthusiasm in establishing exemplary associations with deliberate objectives to prevent HIV transmission and develop their culture and language is remarkable. APDA now facilitates learning and networking in 5 associations with another two fledgling youth associations on the way. The youth have chosen to link activities with market-day in their various locations, raising awareness through dramas and singing, cleaning the market area after market closure and assisting local police to see that rural Afar enter the market without guns and knives. They also take the strategy to work to raises in awareness in the kebele most vulnerable to transmission.

The first annual youth conference bringing together representative youth from all woredas was a resounding success showing APDA that more can be done once youth are well networked.

Through traditional association system of *fiamat 'abba*, a regulation that HIV testing is a prerequisite for marriage in 2 woredas has been secured. This can now be replicated in other districts.

In 2011, APDA plans to facilitate the development of youth associations responding to HIV in the community in Yallo, Goolina, Erebtu and Afdeera – all districts with a high incidence of HIV transmission through market and, in the case of Afdeera, the salt production industry. All youth groups will be networked and encouraged to participate with the rest of the region in sport and cultural competition. In all this, the discouragement of *kaat* consumption is the top priority to breaking the cycle of risky sexual practices in towns.

## **5. Community economic development**

This sector gained much energy in the year through the emergence of micro-finance in Afar Region. The Regional Government has opened an institution and APDA is on the governing Board. Within APDA facilitated community marketing cooperatives, there are now 9 micro-finance institutions, all registered with membership having bank passbooks written in Afar and English. Each institution has been given a start-up of 40,000 ETB but they have made their own significant savings and begun the system of loaning as well as returning the loan. The system of a guarantor from the respective group is being used encouraging them to be serious about return since unless this happens, the guarantor loses his/ her opportunity to take a loan. The culture of loans is also working within the marketing cooperative and through this, a significant butter and camel market has been generated in the year in Geega as well as a market of traditional mats (house-making mats) in Uwwa. Cooperative members were taken on experience – sharing to Jinka in Southern Ethiopia where they saw enterprising utilization of local resources and indigenous knowledge to increase market output. Many are now adapting new ideas in their respective cooperatives in the region. Again, it is noteworthy that the women's IGA groups established in 2008/09 are functioning well and paying back the revolving fund money they took.

This is all heartening since as recently as 2005/06, there were no real functioning cooperatives in the region and hardly any bank transaction undertaken by a pastoralist. Clearly, there is a growing appreciation of the value of business and marketing in the community that will serve to secure families into the future.

APDA is now eager to broaden micro-finance especially among drought - destitute and vulnerable people as well as among refugees from Eritrea. Again, APDA envisages widening market opportunity, improving the quality in the market and embarking on cross-border marketing. With the market information center in Logya, APDA will establish a market information distribution.

Assisting settled Afar, the organization is constructing a vocational training center that will teach out-of-work people marketable trades also assisting to boost the local economy.

## **6. Emergency relief, recovery and landuse**

In the year, this sector has been non-stop in working to build recovery in drought – affected communities as well as responding to the disastrous flood of late July/ August. In fact, APDA was the first 'cab off the rank' with flood assistance which is very gratifying when you see what an overnight disaster of this scale does – 450 households were instantly assisted in Mille Woreda. Currently some 3,000 households are being assisted in the above – mentioned flood sites. Again, APDA found it highly empowering to assist drought – destitute people by feeding their remaining goats and seeing the benefit of the milk produced in averting malnutrition. The treatment of these goats played an essential part in the impact. That the organization has begun to work on sanitation is also good: 6 exemplary public latrines were constructed in Logya and more is planned for 2011, particularly in rural districts such as Sifra and Afambo where the community has begun building their own household latrines.

The great excitement for the pastoralists is of course water and pasture: APDA has almost completed constructing another 10 double rain-water cisterns; 10 shallow wells and will construct 10 ponds in the

near future. Again, 11 shallow and hand-dug wells were rehabilitated, 2 springs, 2 boreholes and 3 birikuts in order that the community gets safe water. Pasture rejuvenation did work well in Awra and parts of Geega but was hampered by huge ants eating the new seedling in some areas. Clearly the community is now inspired with the idea of pasture closures, fodder and reforestation. This, APDA wants to emphasize in 2011 along with water source construction.

The organization began working with water-shed management having taken the example from Tigray. This is excellent in gaining both water and pasture, an experience that needs expanding to more districts. This sector emphasized the need to treat any community holistically that they are enabled to protect their environment, gain an improved pastoral livelihood through animal health (treatment and vaccination) and market. APDA plans to work comprehensively in 2011 in food security.

## **7. Leading Discussions and Forums**

In October, the Afar Diaspora met under the facilitation of Afar Forum in Belgium bringing together the thinking and efforts of Afar internationally to assist the development process. APDA is now holding the third Afar Development Conference in Ethiopia starting December 26<sup>th</sup>. Under the overall topic of 'The Afar, from Where to Where', the conference will discuss a range of topics around Afar language development, Afar education, economic development, women and youth... An update will be sharing this discussion will come out in January.

Finally, an Afar pastoralist woman joined 300 other pastoralist women from 32 countries in Gujarat, northern India – the first – ever such international gathering of pastoralist women. This 6 – day meeting proved to be a phenomenal exchange of culture and fun exposing and concluding that pastoralist life worldwide face similar political, climate change, economic, social and cultural challenges to their development. Hence, a Declaration was written calling on UN and international agencies to realize the fundamental rights of pastoralists to land, movement, the protection of their environment and their livelihoods.