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## Update on the Critical Situation In Afar Region and Program Development Activities

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### **In summary:**

Since the update of April 4<sup>th</sup>, the government has met again with NGOs and agencies in the region declaring the urgency to

- a) See that water tankering is adequate
- b) Supply animal medications to tackle animal disease outbreaks
- c) Support animal feeding for selected milking animals in families facing near destitution
- d) Provide human medications for expected increase in human disease outbreaks
- e) Support nutrition monitoring aiming to respond to any cases of acute malnutrition.

### **The rainfall situation**

Since the storm of April 2<sup>nd</sup> as reported in the previous update, there has been 2 further storms in Sifra and parts of Uwwa on April 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> in Gawwaani and Buramudayto on April 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>. This then leaves the dry districts Zones 1, 2 still under extreme thirst. Rain that fell in Eli Daar Woreda was limited to a central strip in the woreda and is estimated to assist communities from 20 to 40 days only.

### **Update of the situation**

APDA and the DPP&FSB have assessed the situation in the worst affected woredas and report

- Continuing and extreme thirst in Kori Woreda north of Dubte Woreda; northern Awra Woreda; Eribte and Barahale Woredas in Zone 2 as well as a very tentative situation in Eli Daar Woreda.
- Animal disease outbreaks are spreading and animal deaths are reported from a number of the dry woredas. It is concerning that there are several reports of camels dying as well as goats, sheep and cattle.
- Increased number of refugees entering Ethiopia from Eritrea (mainly in the Buure district of northern Eli Daar) due to both extreme drought conditions in the border areas and insecurity. Refugees reportedly in poor health and nutrition as well as being totally destitute.
- Malnutrition among infants and child-bearing mothers increasing

### Current assistance achievements

- Government relief food distribution first in early April and again in the last week have brought grain prices down in the region to 'before' levels and relieved the immediate fear of hunger
- APDA has baby cereal to respond to identified cases of infant malnutrition and lentils for malnourished child-bearing women.
- APDA has some food – assistance (grain) for refugees
- APDA has 2 water tankers delivering water in Eli Daar and the government has one tanker in the Kori district
- APDA has sent out animal medications to treat outbreaks in Afdeera, Dallol, Eli Daar. Medicine stock now totally depleted and the government currently has no significant supplies.
- Through food – for – work, communities in 5 woredas are constructing rain-water harvesting ponds and cisterns; constructing feeder roads and later will plant out grass – seed depleted pasture land with seeds. The whole project plans to provide for some 200,000 person workdays.

### Current urgent gaps in assistance

- More water trucking in Kori, Awra, Erebti and Barahale
- Animal medications to curb the outbreaks current in Dubte, Mille, 'Adda'ar, Awra
- Animal feed to assist households facing near –destitution keeping alive the remaining goats and producing milk for the family over a period of 2 months supplementary feeding.
- Human medications to curb any possible disease outbreak

## News of the APDA development program

### 1. Pastoralist education

The January to March reports show a total of 16,108 students as follows:

Type of learning	Male	Female	% of female participation	Total	Student drop - outs
1. Afar Literacy	6,103	2,188	35	8,289	460
2. Non-formal education	6,032	1,787	29	7,819	208
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,135</b>	<b>3,975</b>		<b>16,108</b>	<b>668</b>

Some 212 community teachers submitted these reports giving an average student number per teacher as 75.98. This was achieved despite extremely unfavorable conditions in the community as described above. The program, the teachers and the community development committees are using a number of strategies to retain students and to facilitate learning under the most adverse conditions. The most impressive district in the program, Geega in Dubte Woreda, recorded 8 teachers having a total of 877 students of whom 42.17% were female. This reflects the effort made in community mobilization as well as the use of various techniques to encourage pastoralist children and adults to participate in one of the most 'mobile' communities in the program.

Teachers are teaching AFL (Afar literacy) as well as Level 1 and 2 in non-formal education. Level 3, the final of the primary education phase will begin as of September

2008. Meanwhile, APDA is planning an aggressive program to upgrade the teachers; their field coordinators and their trainers. This the organization is doing in collaboration with the Bureau of Education and the Bureau will then test all APDA's teachers to see that they fit to government standard. This APDA is undertaking aiming to hand teachers over to woreda management.

The Head of the Bureau of Education recently involved in the evaluation of one program district and as a result, the Bureau now has a more realistic view of the role APDA is playing in providing education to communities beyond the reach of the formal system.

## **2. Primary health**

APDA's primary health team, active in 13 woredas is currently anxiously surveying health and nutrition conditions with communities subjected to current water and food shortages. As mentioned above, health workers are currently bringing in increasing reports of pocket – communities where rapid assessment is showing acute malnutrition.

The project aiming to lower maternal death in the community is now underway. A treatment center is being constructed in Mille and APDA is aiming to develop maternal waiting centers in each of the 8 woredas that surround Mille. Within the community, awareness of the rights of the mother to safety are being undertaken through every means APDA has. In the last quarter alone, 9 maternal deaths were reported in the program areas, most of them related to anaemia as well as malpresentation.

## **3. Handing over to the woreda**

APDA is currently piloting hand-over in 2 woredas: 'Adda'ar and Afdeera. The strategy is to firstly assist the woreda to plan for the project teachers and health workers and then to undertake a gradual process of assimilation. For this, teachers are being upgraded as mentioned above and so are health workers. Health workers are undertaking accelerated education aiming that each student reaches Grade 5 standard after 6 months course. Aside from this training, the most senior program health workers elected to use their annual month refresher training in learning English with the aim to work toward higher education.

## **4. Stopping harmful practices**

The campaign to stop harmful practices is now highly intensive: several hundred female genital mutilation practitioners were given the opportunity to swear through Islam to stop the practice in the last quarter and the extent of female suffering under FGM and lack of rights in marriage is now well exposed. The two Shiiks working on the organization harmful practices awareness team are very successfully mobilizing Shiiks at the local level to support female rights. As before, the locally produced films illustrating the problem have a dramatic affect on the community. Community women extension workers are basic to keeping the issue alive in the community.

## **5. Rain-water harvesting**

As well as the ponds and cisterns mentioned above being constructed through food - for - work, APDA is constructing others in Mille, 'Adda'ar, Sifra, Uwwa and Awra. Once it rains, these will overcome a considerable amount of the water shortage in these 5 woredas. With the construction, the community builds rain-water retaining bunds so that the land re-forests. Ponds a dams promote quite some woodland coverage. APDA recently saw work

in Tigray and this has greatly widened the organization's vision of how to collect/ promote water reservoirs through gully closures using the system of water – shed to halt water erosion.

#### **6. Safe clean water**

APDA is currently working to pilot and then hopefully popularize a bio-sand filter that effectively destroys almost all water-borne pathogens. Again, health workers continue to keep the community aware of the dangers of acute watery diarrhea; to distribute soap and jerricans for clean water storage.

#### **7. Community marketing cooperatives**

Intense training of APDA – formed cooperatives continues as well as that of newly – formed women's income generating associations. Taking and linking this better into the woredas, APDA is now training a person per 11 selected woredas to enforce an environment of training - empowerment into income generating. The long – term vision in all this is that the pastoralist community has a household economy base according to their own concept and that makes best use of the resources of the region.

#### **8. Tackling HIV & AIDS**

APDA is now working much more deeply with voluntary testing and counseling and the community APDA is currently assisting is complying well to testing. This is revealing the extent of the outbreak in the rural community and the need now for concerted care and support. The project uses the youth to mobilize the community and works through the traditional association (peer – group) leaders so that the community can develop regulations for safe social practice.

#### **9. Environment**

The organization has resumed its campaign against charcoal production in Dubte, Mille and 'Adda'ar Woredas. The level of land – clearing for large – scale commercial farming is now alarming and yet another challenge to the project. 'Adda'ar Woreda are taking strong measures against charcoal production but the draw back is the need to re-stock a number of destitute households in the district who now depend on charcoal for an income. In order to sustain this effort, APDA is very keen to connect it with empowering and enabling traditional environmental protection laws.