

AFAR PASTORALIST DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION QAFAR DACARSITTOH DADALIH EGLA

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As we move on together into 2010.....

1. Our heart-felt thanks to all our partners and supporters!!

During 2009, APDA has been able to strengthen its development effort while at the same time face considerable challenges within the pastoralist community thanks to the unwavering support of our partners: we sincerely thank you all!! We have been able to halt disease outbreaks, provide water to thirst communities through constructed rain-water harvesting reservoirs, re-stock destitute households while at the same time make advancement in Afar education and disease prevention, safety in child-baring, stopping harmful practices, securing community response for HIV and AIDS, securing capacity and diversity in income generation as well as lay the ground work for environment protection and rehabilitation based on traditional knowledge law. In all, the year was extra-ordinary busy but we felt we were able to respond to the community and keep the pace thanks to your partnership.

We were excited through the year to see the growth of our sister organizations in the Diaspora through their various awareness and fund-raising activities: namely Afar Friends, Sweden; Can Go Afar, Canada and Afar and New Zealand Friendship Society – the most recent of the three. These organizations are special in that they integrate Afar in the Diaspora with the local people with the objective of aiding Afar in need wherever they might be.

We have thoroughly enjoyed your visits to us in the field: your discussion, intervention and innovation to improve our work as well as your interaction through internet has truly enhanced our working together. As we march onto 2010 realizing the enormous load of challenge we bare, our confidence is in our shared task. Thank you all for proving yourselves the true friends of Afar pastoralists, one of the most endangered People on Planet Earth facing the reality of climate change as well as having to brace under the world's new economic order.

2. The current challenges that will take us on into 2010

Afar region is proving to be a prime example of climate change as unseasonal violent storms reaked havoc during December, normally the season of the gentle but unreliable winter rains. In Barahale, Zone 2 animals were swept away in flooded river. Useful storms have occurred in the western – central districts of Sifra, 'Adda'ar, Awra. The north east (Eli Daar) remains parched as well as parts in the south: Gawwaani, Ami Bara, Awash and Dulassa.

Since pasture dried as early as November in many districts, there are now reports of serious animal disease outbreaks, notably in Afdeera, Erebti, Dawwe and 'Adda'ar. Animal medications are in critically short supply within the region.

Acute Watery Diarrhea continues to crop up: In the town of Manda in Eli Daar in December, 3 people died of AWD, an outbreak affecting a total of 18 people. In late November, 4 died in

the cotton farms of Gawwaani and Ami Bara where over 40 cases were treated. According to government assessment, measles remains a major threat due to low vaccination levels

Malnutrition: the government reports 11 woredas with severe acute malnutrition (SAM) and 19 with moderate acute malnutrition (MAM). The situation looks grim if APDA is unable to stop further destitution by feeding goats in households on the brink of destitution.

Refugees: A further 33 families crossed into Ethiopia from Eritrea reaching Buure in northern Eli Daar in the last month. Of these 12 households are reported in critical malnutrition.

3. Highlights of 2009

- a) **APDA re-registered** on November 12th 2009 as a resident NGO with the registration number of 0228. Prior to undergoing this, APDA prepared a further **5 – year strategic plan** to take the organization through 2010 to 2014.
- b) **HIV and AIDS response established within APDA**. Following the meeting of all – APDA on November 14th and 15th attended by around 1,100 people, almost all of the organization is tested for HIV. The organization is supporting those found affected. This meeting also came out with a clear position on the consumption of the amphetamine leaf, ‘*kaat*’ as well as resolving to double the struggle to develop the Afar language.
- c) **Community development committees** as established in each implementing site came into focus as the motor and the direction of development in the community having received training and establishing resolution to monitor the way forward
- d) **Health and education activities were successfully handed over** to Afdeera, Teeru, Konnaba and ‘Adda’ar woredas during the year and the hand-over process started in other woredas such as Mille and Aysaita. This involved the handing over of some 55 health workers and 54 teachers. This process has been greatly enhanced by providing distance education opportunity so that APDA’s rural teachers can increase their grades.
- e) **Preparation to take education in the pastoralist society on into the intermediary phase**. Conferences were held in several communities as to how education in the pastoralist community will continue beyond grade 4 (as now achieved through non-formal education) to grades 5 to 8. Many communities are now planning how to develop community – run boarding schools.
- f) **Progress in responding to traditional practices harming women**. In the year, intense work was done in communities to see that female genital mutilation (FGM/ C) is stopped through the work of all APDA’s development team but especially the 151 women extension workers, community established committees and APDA – trained religious and clan leaders. Films shown in the community have played a big part as well as a systematic identification and awareing of FGM practitioners. A new awareness – raising film was added to the repertoire: this time a film on the ‘good husband’ – this is already extremely popular in the community. In a meeting held December 27th and 28th with the regional Sharia Council and Regional Women’s Affairs and 7 woreda representatives, it was understood there is no agreed family law in Afar Region. It is hoped that will be rectified as early as possible. Otherwise, many woredas have now come to the conclusion to stop any form of FGM, even the ‘sunna’ form.

- g) **Annual meeting of Afar pastoralist women.** Pastoralist women from all 15 woredas APDA currently works met in late December and reviewed APDA's work in their respective communities as well as reported on the status of problems for women in their areas. The main issues they said still had no resolution was the habit of men to chew *kaat*; problems suffered by the Issa/ Afar conflict and the difficulties endured due to the sugar plantation taking land. On all other issues, they reported progress: female access to education, stopping FGM, gaining rights in marriage, access to health and water. Women of Afdeera reported that they were still very much cut off without access to health referral.
- h) **Rain-water harvesting.** In the year, 8 new ponds/ retention dams were constructed and 12 double birkuts (water cisterns). Too, APDA made one sub-surface dam in Guluble Af, a area where water tankering was needed each year in the dry season. During the year, the new constructions filled with rainwater at least twice.
- i) **Responding to drought through recovery.** From December 2008 to March 2009, a total of 429 destitute households were successfully restocked in the Kori and Mabay districts. They still stand with restored assets and milk in the household. Overall, APDA and the community have constructed over 650 kilometers of rural feeder roads opening up whole communities to access.
- j) **Response to AWD.** From the start of the outbreak in June/ July, APDA continues to work to prevent and treat AWD. Using the strategy of blanket awareness in the affected district, a total of 205,980 people were taught the 6 AWD response messages through both health workers going house to house and the organization music band and drama group. Some 4,512 cases were treated.
- k) **Vaccination coverage in remote areas.** During the year, Teeru, Awra, 'Adda'ar and Goolina received full coverage of the 7 vaccinations for children and tetanus for women. The major outbreak of measles was halted by vaccination in February.
- l) **Progress in modelling community economic development.** After forming 3 new cooperatives from the previously large groups, there are now a total of 12 community animal marketing cooperatives. Gain, having established the means through Djibouti to market animals, animal marketing is coming into focus having begun to be multi-purpose marketing cooperatives. Cooperative facilitators in 11 woredas effectively established over 25 new community cooperatives and mobilized a strong awareness to household income diversity. Again, 10 women's income generating groups composed largely of TBAs and ex-FGM practitioners were consolidated as associations stopping FGM as well as gaining a household income.
- m) **Youth groups mobilized.** Increasingly APDA is seeing the power of youth in community change. Three rural associations working to establish HIV response have become clear examples for their respective societies in stopping risky social behavior as well as experts in a wide range of cultural dancing.

4. On into 2010

In July, APDA and its stakeholders agreed on the organization's 3rd five – year strategic plan. While continuing on with the core program of Afar literacy/ education, primary health and women's empowerment, the organization identified gaps in the current program that require action as follows:

- a) The need for concerted effort to accelerate Afar language development and literacy involving the re-establishment of an Afar language center within APDA

- b) Focus on sanitation in urban centers, initially in Logya to establish a precedent that will work for other towns
- c) Top priority on environmental protection that evolves out of traditional knowledge and practice
- d) Comprehensive effort to enact safe motherhood improving the health and wellbeing of mothers and infants
- e) Urgency in making animal medications available in the community
- f) The need to accelerate efforts to gain a community response to HIV and AIDS in rural communities

In discussing how to move forward in the education program, one of the greatest challenges is that more teachers are necessary per site where non-formal education is being taught. We now have a program that has grown way beyond its resource boundary. For example, one teacher in Uwwa in a place called Wadegernta has 94 students spread over 3 Levels. He is required to teach them in 5 subjects. He needs to work in partnership with 2 other teachers as minimum requirement.