

AFAR PASTORALIST DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION QAFAR DACARSITTO DADALIH EGLA

P.O. Box 952 Code 1,110
Addis Ababa
afarpda@yahoo.com, afarpastoral@telecom.net.et
(251) 011 5159787 (251) 0911 642575/ 0911 246639
Fax (251) 011 5538820 Field Office, Logya (25133) 5500002

Update on drought situation and development activities:

May 12th, 2006

Drought and emergency

1. Rain update

In summary the short rains of March/ April did not start before March 28th and have produced sporadic storms leaving some significant places without rain. As of the previous April 12th report, rain has fallen relieving some areas that were totally dry. See more details below. Thus much of the region is relieved of thirst but the question of adequate pasture rejuvenation remains.

Zone 1: Eli Daar Woreda received some storms in early May relieving very parched districts but rainfall is far from universal and most of the driest areas only had one or 2 storms. In Dubte drought districts, the grazing plain of Musle remains without any rain. Surrounding areas are now relieved including Daaba, Kori, Lubak Daa, Taasuli.

Zone 2: Good rain fell in Barahale and Konnaba and into Dallol in May.

Zone 3: The zone has continued to receive storms and is mainly free of drought problem

Zone 4: while all woredas have received rain, it has been patchy and not sustained in parts with almost no pasture re-growth to now

Zone 5: Rainstorms have continued in the Zone.

Temperatures are now well into the 40's and the region is in its dry hot season of 'Hagay' expecting hot winds. The main rains should come in July/ September.

2. Immediate effects on herds and movement

While rains have fallen, it is uncertain that ground moisture will remain to nurture strong pasture adequately. The likely scenario is that pasture will die off leaving animals with too short time to recovery body weight and condition before deteriorating again. Pastoralists are currently moving to pastures where rain has fallen and still waiting for the full rejuvenation of the main pastures. The Awra communal grazing lands have very low grass – growth and in wide areas, none to date due to sporadic storms. The important Musle in Dubte Woreda, Zone 1 grazing land remains totally dry. Communities are reporting a wide variety of animal disease outbreak in all herd types. The condition remains fragile and milk supplies are certainly minimal.

3. Pressure on the population

While grain distribution did resume in all drought – affected woredas in late April, households are still vulnerable since there has been some months of low household protein consumption and distribution does not reach very many remote areas. Influenza, diarrhea outbreak, whooping cough and in very isolated areas, measles continue to take a toll on the most vulnerable population sectors.

4. Drought and flood emergency responses

As mentioned above, 3 months interrupted food distribution in terms of wheat resumed in late April. The government also hired 8 trucks delivering water in thirst – affected communities.

APDA's response has been as follows:

- a) Health workers are equipped to make rapid nutrition assessment and they are giving packet baby food to moderately malnourished under 2 year olds. Too, disease outbreaks are being controlled as far as possible.
- b) Animal medicines are going out to local paravet groups as needed
- c) With the woreda, APDA supplied some food to flood- trapped victims in Bayahele as reported on April 12th.

Forty health workers from various APDA primary health sites are about to form 2 teams to conduct the first of 3 routine vaccination campaigns in Teeru and Awra Woredas along with health education, nutrition monitoring and malaria control activities in an effort to boost the health of young children and their mothers in these woredas.

APDA plans to assist the worst affected people in Eli Daar woreda de-stock, again to re-stock once there is sustainable pasture. Again, the organization hopes to further assist the poorest families through feeding a limited number of goats for the interim period up to the main rains. However, there are still many isolated communities of a high destitution level due to herd loss needing assistance.

Development activities

1. Afar Pastoral Development Forum

The forum now enthusiastically supported through some 17 NGOs working in the region and backed up by a number of peripheral agencies working to promote pastoral development has written a project to support its running costs. The regional government has declared its full appreciation of the idea of such a forum and hopes to see all NGOs in the region embrace membership that development in the region be streamlined. It is agreed that members should meet again in the first week of July to establish partnership in this endeavor. The initial working body and APDA are able to address any discussion in the meantime.

2. Training activities

Currently APDA is running a spate of training activities to expand mobile education, health and improve pastoral women's income generation as follows:

- Twenty community – selected teachers are about to complete 2 months training to begin literacy and non-formal education in 10 sites in Teeru Woreda
- 20 local leaders from Gaawane Woreda are currently learning to read and write as well as getting training in project management and local leadership.
- 21 community – selected health workers began the initial 3 months health workers training in April
- 15 Eli Daar women are now taking 10 days experience training from 3 Djibouti women in handicraft production. The 3 Djibouti women are members of the Tadjoura Imbida Association. Through their skills, they have gained a considerable overseas market for their products – materials made from dried palm leaves ('unga'), beads and leather.

Then all the above training activities give great reason for the APDA training center now under construction between Semara and Logya. This center will be self-sufficient, catering for all such APDA program training courses and others the community might like to hold.

3. Community cooperative activities

The organization is earnestly seeking to facilitate economic development in the pastoral society. To date, APDA has facilitated the establishment of 3 women's cooperatives engaged in mobile sale of basic household goods; 3 animal marketing cooperatives and 2 cooperatives of paravets serving their own societies. Since APDA is now seeking to consolidate its community – based cooperative activities in sound training and the facility of ongoing information and advice, during the recent APDA visit to Norway and Sweden, opportunity was taken to discuss and learn of those nations' expertise and experiences and even to learn of the struggle of the pastoralist Sammi reindeer herders in the north of Scandinavia.

4. Toward a second Afar Development Conference

APDA had recent opportunity to meet Afar people in London, Oslo and Sweden as well as phone contacts with others. Indeed, these people are making a highly commendable effort to relate the problems of the Afar pastoral society to the international community and there is great enthusiasm to meet again, taking up the agenda of pastoral development in Ethiopia (the first Afar development conference was in December 2004). It is hopeful this event will take place in the first quarter of 2007.

5. A new local development organization in the region

Some Afars have recently established a new organization calling it 'Dadal', translated 'development'. Their main office is in Awash Araba and activities in that district.

6. Afar Eritrean refugees

The Federal government has recently agreed to acknowledge the claim of some 400 – odd Afar youth who have come down from Eritrea in recent months. All of them claim they escaped military call – up, many are well – educated and looking to work and forward their lives. Most of them live in homes of other Afar in Logya and require basic support, further education and work opportunity. These people too have formed themselves into an association with an objective to encourage Afar town – youth to continue education and avoid the pit-falls of the town: kaat- chewing and HIV.

7. Working against harmful practices

While in a growing number of sites APDA works, actual FGM is stopping and people are opting to undertake the lesser circumcision called 'Sunni' which entails clitoridectomy, there are still a number of women who cannot be pursued. APDA is now identifying them to bring them together with the Islamic leadership that they are forced to give up the practice.

8. Working through the process of community response to HIV

Having had considerable success in facilitating community discussion through the said 'community conversations' method in Zone 5, APDA is now keen to modify the method to use through the Fia'ma system (traditional associations) to gain community agreement on accepted social behavior in relation to town culture.