

# AFAR PASTORALIST DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION QAFAR DACARSITTO DADALIH EGLA

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Update on drought situation and development activities:

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## **Drought and emergency**

### **1. Rain update**

After the short – rains discontinued in early May, the region anxiously awaits the full onset of the main rainy season. In the past week, sporadic storms have slowly increased and are heralded by massive dust - storms and high winds. Heat remains in the 40's. To date, rain has fallen in very scattered locations. There is now water in the Afdeera Basin coming from the Eribti and Barahale/ Dallol river systems (northwest) and in the Teeru Basin coming from Awra. The driest woreda, Eli Daar remains dry although a storm of rain fell in the north – west of Dubte Woreda.

### **2. Current condition of the herd**

Several areas have reported animal disease outbreaks to APDA including Hormayti In Mille Woreda where goats and cattle are affected; goats of the Boyna Kebele community now living in Marammara and Ibiidi in Teeru; scattered outbreaks of disease in Geega and Eli Daar.

In Eli Daar where APDA is supplementary feeding goats of very effected families, the project mostly could not find families with as many as 20 goats to assist (the project target was set at 20 goats per household) showing that herd size is now greatly depleted.

### **3. Human disease and nutrition**

In the last quarter, APDA health workers still reported sporadic outbreaks of measles. In 3 isolated parts of Dubte Woreda: Saha, Sooma and Dabal, children and some adults died of the disease. In 4 kebeles out from Buure, northern Eli Daar, measles deaths were also recorded. Whooping cough is also in Mille and influenza and pneumonia were high in the quarter. Health workers are carrying out ongoing MUAC rapid assessment and have found pockets of under 2 – year – olds who are moderately to severely affected. Again, several were seen in the Buure district of Eli Daar, in measles – affected areas and in parts of Mille Woreda where the population has still to recover from the onslaught of disease outbreaks that lasted until April.

### **4. Drought and flood emergency responses**

The following responses are being made:

- a) The Regional government has water trucks in Eli Daar, Dubte and parts of Zones 2 and 4
- b) Some 540,000 people are receiving relief food rations

- c) APDA is giving cerefam, baby food through the hand of health workers to identified under 2 year olds
- d) Some 1,000 households highly affected by herd loss are receiving supplementary goat – feeding in Eli Daar for 2 months, aiming to increase the milk as well as tide the animals over until there is pasture from the expected rains.
- e) APDA is currently carrying out full EPI (vaccination) in Teeru and Awra as well as malaria assessment, nutrition assessment, health education awareness – raising.
- f) APDA is now seeking to assist communities and local government in grasping the concept of community risk management.

## **5. Meeting in Awash results in the launching of the Afar Pastoral Development Forum**

On April 4<sup>th</sup>, some 16 organizations as well as government and community representatives as observers of the process met in Awash and agreed on the mechanism to start a joint development forum in Afar Region. The forum itself is distributing meeting minutes and notice of ongoing activities. APDA was given the responsibility of facilitation with a forum office in APDA's field office, Logya.

## **6. Advances in the struggle to stop FGM and give Afar women rights in marriage**

In June, APDA held a 7 – day conference with 88 women who perform FGM, bringing them from different project sites in Zones 1 and 3. Aside from describing in detail how they perform FGM, the women also described other harmful practices they perform during the birthing process such as deliberately bleeding a considerable amount of 'bad blood out while the placenta is still in the uterus; resisting breast – feeding for up to 72 hours and so on. All women were traditional birth attendants and mostly had not been taught by APDA before. A handful had been taught but was sent to the conference because they refused to leave practices harming the mother and/or child. Then, after graphic explanations of physiology, discussions on logic and readings from the teachings Koran, the women realized they were actually performing harm. In the final day, the Head Khadi in the region led the women in prayer that they would never perform such practices again. He took them in discussion to say that performing cliteroidectomy, the 'lesser' form of female circumcision called 'Sunna' is unnecessary and could be dangerous and therefore should not be done. The women then chose 30 women from among them who will continue to monitor that the practice is stopped in the various sites, reporting to APDA. From this, APDA has learnt how vital it is to mobilize FGM practitioners and is forming a register of all such practitioners in all the organization's project sites with the aim to bring them before the Islamic leadership.

Following this, APDA met with khadis in Dubte and Assayita discussing the progress they have made in securing rights for pastoral women. In Assayita, the Islamic Council has taken a very strong stand and is imprisoning any offenders: those who perform FGM and those involved in forcing a female to marry against her wish. However, in Dubte, the khadis declared they did not have the same government support and asked APDA to intervene to establish dialogue between them and the government justice authorities, woreda officials and police so that they have the support to act against injustice as they see it. Therefore, APDA is now seeking funds to hold a conference between the Islamic authorities and the legal/ government authorities that a plan of action can be taken. Again, APDA would hope this goes as far as producing a policy and law that will become the region's Family Law.

## **7. Eli Daar women initiate a cooperative network**

Pastoralist women who have and are suffering the impact of drought have formed themselves in small groups of 10 to 20 women making traditional mats out of palm – leaf (qunga) in the hope of gaining a joint market to improve household income. Program women extension workers are working with them and assisting their organization.

## **8. Toward forming a forum on non-formal education in Afar Region**

During a 2 - day meeting in Awash on July 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>, Bureau of Education, Capacity Building, Afar Language Development and Enrichment Center, UNICEF, APDA, Kelem and EMERDA formed a task – force to prepare or the formation of the forum. Then, in 2 months, a further meeting will be called to draw up a Memorandum of Understanding with the aim to collaboratively work toward improving education in the region, particularly in the pastoral setting.

## **9. Moving on the issue of charcoal production in Dubte, Mille and Assayita**

As of June, charcoal production has stopped in Assayita Woreda after massive confiscation of charcoal. Mille Woreda heads have given order for the same action. In both woredas, charcoal is made from indigenous trees such as the much – loved Kasalto acacia. Now APDA is hoping to gain enough leverage in the region to hold a conference with Zone I and the regional council to try and push toward defining a law about preserving the indigenous forest from wanton cutting. Communities where Afar make around 2:00 per sack of charcoal from the non-Afar charcoal maker are beginning to use the techniques in community risk management to work out what they will do as an alternative.

## **10. The Region's top social issue, that of kaat chewing**

Having completed a wide household assessment in the central areas for kaat chewing, APDA will now hold a conference with all those in the region who would like to see action taken to reduce kaat consumption in August. The organization will invite various people from the government, from the Islamic authorities and any interested people. The assessment spells out the affects in terms of health, social relations, household economy, time consumption and productivity, effects on culture and religious practice, sexual interest and mental ability.

## **11. Training in the organization**

APDA has begun to give refresher/ upgrading training to the organization's 212 – odd teachers. The first session is accommodating 106 teachers and the course is using 6 trainers/ facilitators. The non-formal textbooks recently produced by the Afar Language and Enrichment Center in the Bureau of Education are being taught along with the 5 subjects taught in non-formal education. Teachers also learn and discuss on gender in development, community response to HIV & AIDS and community risk management as well as practicing skills from the Reflect method of teaching functional literacy to adults.

24 health workers from Konnaba have just completed 3 months initial training and return to Konnaba working under the Pastoral Community Development Project funded by the World Bank. After a year of field experience, they will take a second 3 months training.

Again, APDA is in the process of constructing the much – needed training center that will house such training courses rather than using part-empty government schools and so on.

## **12. Afar Pastoral Development Forum**

Having formally formed, the forum now has a start-up running budget of 178,000 that APDA facilitated the securing of. Under this budget, a secretary will be recruited to organize the daily activities of the forum working out of APDA's field office in Logya.

## **13. APDA's Best Practices Document**

The English version is now translated into Afar and is being distributed in the community and the local government.