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Update on relief situation and development activities:

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Flood and Disease Outbreak

1. Rain update

With the closure of the main rainy season in late September, significant pockets remain virtually drought – bound

- a) Much of Yallo Woreda in north – western Zone 4 (adjacent to Alamatta in the Highlands) This woreda particularly suffers from an influx of tree-locusts that have stripped the grazing shrubs.
- b) Dirma in Teeru Woreda that borders onto Yallo
- c) Dallol in the far north west bordering to Eritrea in Zone 2 as well as adjoining areas in eastern Konnaba and significant parts of Barahale
- d) Musle in northern Dubte woreda (a significant grazing area)

Other woredas such as Eli Daar had below average rainfall, rain only beginning in that woreda in mid August. Otherwise, the region enjoyed average to good rainfalls. Currently there are local storms in Zone 3 in the Awash / Fantalle and parts of Ami Bara Woredas as well as in parts of Mille, Sifra, Uwa and Awra on the central western frontier of the region.

2. Ongoing flood waters in Buramudayto and dry areas on Gawaane

Floods that covered 6 kebeles of the woreda in September have not receded. In fact, due to release of water from the Koka Dam on the head – waters of the Awash, the water rises from time to time. There are 2 NGOs planning to assist these people with household supplies, shelter, malaria protection and sanitation.

On the other hand, in the last month, the Awash River in the adjoining woreda, Gawaane has diverted its course away from Bi'ida, Gabaya Bora and Gal'eela Bora where communities are growing considerable hectares of maize. The planted maize crop has grown to flowering stage but now channel water is too low for gravity irrigation and total crop – loss is immanent. APDA is about to help a group with 25 hectares of maize to pump water from the remaining channel in an effort to save the crop and 2 water pumps have similarly been given to the community in Bi'ida by other Afar working with FOA.

3. Outbreak of Acute Watery Diarrhea (AWD)

As with many regions of Ethiopia as of one month ago, Afar Region is affected by acute watery diarrhea, a disease causing sudden death. The disease was first reported in Afdeera shanty - town on the shores of the salt – production lake Afdeera. According to the Bureau of Health the sickness

came to the region with daily salt laborers coming from an adjoining region. While UNICEF and the Bureau of Health supported by MSF have established treatment centers, still one month later there are up to 20 new cases daily. The Bureau reports that 22 people died in the early weeks of the outbreak and a total of 401 cases have been diagnosed in the area. The offending problem is contaminated water wells around the town. The town started to mushroom in 2001 as a living and trading base for salt workers. Public toilets were first constructed this year and are far too few. There is no garbage disposal and local water is salty (apparently salty water promotes the growth of this bacteria). Otherwise, drinking water is for sale, coming from Logya, Addis and also sold as bottled water.

Aside from Afdeera, there is a smaller but still dangerous outbreak in Goolina Woreda (114 cases and 11 deaths), Zone 4 and very recent reports of cases in the surrounds of Dubte town, Sifra, Mille and Uwa.

The Bureau of Health as of November 8th expressed that the disease was spreading at an alarming rate and is calling for all possible assistance, including in setting up CTC treatment centers. They express need for operational support, media coverage for awareness, support to tanker water to Afdeera, need for latrine construction in Afdeera. APDA has mobilized its health workers in the Afdeera area to work on searching out new cases, teaching the community how to handle the outbreak and as support for the Bureau of Health team in Afdeera and is processing a proposal with a donor – partner to further mobilize health workers and women extension workers as well as the organization drama group. As of November 9th, the organization has sent a provisional team of health workers to Uwa Woreda.

4. Boosting the region's vaccination coverage

APDA will complete 3 rounds of vaccination for Yallo and Uwa Woredas then giving full EPI coverage to 4 of the 5 woredas in zone 4. As the organization vaccinates the women and children, health education and health/ nutrition surveillance is carried out.

5. Afar Pastoral Development Forum News

The forum now has an employed coordinator in place who is familiarizing himself with all forum member organizations. The Forum plans to again meet in early February after the Afar Development Conference in January.

6. The newly – formed forum on non-formal education in Afar Region

In a meeting held in Awash on November 5th and 6th, the non-formal education forum elected its Board of Executives consisting of one from the Bureau of Education, one from the Women's Affairs Bureau and representatives of 3 NGOs. The Board is now vested with the task of drawing up a working constitution for the next planned meeting in early January. UNICEF expressed their firm support of the Forum and its aim to improve education enrollment, particularly female enrollment that is reported the lowest regional figure in Ethiopia. Too, the government requested urgent support in introducing a full Afar – language administration by 2000 EC, one year's time. The To do this, APDA asked to immediately second 15 capable, literate Afar from its staff to coordinate education in various woredas that have very low capacity.

7. Non-formal education for pastoral children

Throughout the country, non-formal education is gaining momentum as the solution to Ethiopia's extremely low education parameters. In Afar Region for the pastoral society, the government has now realized there is no other or better option. Therefore, APDA's mobile non-formal model is being adopted as it particularly suits the Afar lifestyle. Again, since non-formal education condenses learning, children learn the equivalent of grades 1 to 4 in 3 years. Therefore if they get

the opportunity to continue in the formal system, they are granted a grade: from learning 3 years in the rural, they are promoted to grade 6 in the formal system rather than grade 5.

APDA is now faced with the tremendous cost of providing texts and exercise books for 5 learning subjects for each student. The organization now has over 4,000 students in total learning in non-formal education and the number is expected to rise. Students in the program are now being issued with grades 1 and 2 texts and grade 3 texts will go out in the coming academic year.

8. Training new health workers for Teeru and Awra Woredas

The initial 3 months health workers' training for 20 people from Teeru and 20 from Awra has begun. Once they complete this 3 months, they will consolidate learning with 1 - year field experience and take the final 3 months course toward the end of 2007. This will provide mobile primary health workers' coverage for all kebeles in these 2 woredas. Both woredas now have community teachers and Awra has women extension workers. APDA is also training currently active TBAs from both woredas so that the primary health team in Awra will be complete with health workers, women extension workers and TBAs while Teeru will have health workers and TBAs.

9. Afar Pastoral Women's Conference (an annual event reviewing progress addressing issues affecting women)

57 rural women from remote sites in 14 woredas (Assayita, Dubte, Eli Daar, Afembo, Mille, Sifra, Uwa, Awra, Teeru, Afdeera, Gawaane, Ami Bara, Awaas/ Fantale and Dulassa) met in Logya for 5 days (November 5th to 9th) discussing development progress in resolving the difficulties they face as women in the society. They particularly focused on APDA's work, giving the organization highly valuable criticism and insight. They highly commended work done by women extension workers giving substantiating evidence to the organization that this community development role is essential to the way forward in Afar pastoral development. Too, women re-iterated teaching given to TBAs demonstrating that the community shares knowledge and takes learning very seriously on issues to improve maternal safety and health. While the issues they mostly raised re-iterate issues raised in their conference in 2005, they noted progress on FGM, informing households about safe motherhood and in attitudes of men toward them as a result of literacy and awareness – raising. They emphasized the need to

- a) Improve opportunity of female participation in education all agreeing that education is essential
- b) While many areas do now have access to grinding mills, they expressed problems in remaining remote areas where women still grind grain by hand
- c) All women spoke of the tremendous problems of distance to water and quality of water. While APDA is and continues to increase the number of rain – water catchment reservoirs (dams and ponds) it is clearly urgent to do more. Carrying water is another huge problem and this remains with APDA, the Islamic and community leaders to convince men how dangerous it is for women to carry 20 to 30 liters of water for hours. They particularly thought APDA's film on 'Afar women's Hard Work' was very helpful and convincing.
- d) They appreciated APDA's introduced system of training, equipping and networking TBAs and said that apparently antenatal checking is going on in remote areas as a result of this teaching. They wanted many more TBAs trained and expressed extreme problem in getting emergency obstetric assistance when it was needed. So many women die in the process of trying to get them to assistance, they said. All women expressed eagerness to learn what they can to give first aid assistance in the home as well as prevent illness.
- e) On the issue of FGM (female genital mutilation), they all agreed the tradition was draconian and outside Islam. While they conceded some women do secretly continue the practice, they said in most of APDA's program areas it had stopped

and the 'lesser practice' of taking skin from the clitoris was performed. Like APDA, they are hopeful FGM will totally stop in the not too distant future.

- f) There was much discussion on women's rights in traditional marriage. This discussion was also combined with that of what they described as socially repressing pressure on women. They said APDA must do more to make the issue clear and focused, particularly demanding the Islamic Council and the local religious authorities to take action to bring marriage and household practice in line with Islamic teaching.
- g) Women expressed the need for APDA to work harder with the Islamic and government authorities to curtail the use of town – related practices such as kaat – chewing since this is draining their family life.
- h) Women from woredas along the Awash River Basin spoke of the worsening overgrowth of the weed – shrub, Prosopis Julanti. Women in Gawaane said it had taken their life, along with the invasion of Issa clan on their territory. In Bayahele (Saahil) women said they had to leave their land and live on the outskirts of the town of Dubte because of this shrub. They claim that it is impossible for the community to control.
- i) From other areas, women talked of the local governments increasingly giving opportunity to charcoal production destroying their forest cover. APDA has an ongoing campaign against this.
- j) Again, women from Gawaane, Mille and Kutubla in Assayita talked of the increasing menace of Issa invasion – both loss of life and animals. Gawaane women say they are not safe in the town of Gawaane any more. They called on the Federal government to intervene to resolve particularly this conflict and conflicts with other neighboring nationalities that raid and try to take Afar water and grazing resources.
- k) They spoke of increasing loss of animals to drought and disease and said that in the dry parts of Zone 1 (Eli Daar, Geega and Kori in Dubte Woreda) there are now many families near destitution.

10. Planned Afar Development conference in January

Following the national celebration for Pastoralist Day that this year will be celebrated at the regional level as well as the national level, APDA and the Regional Government are planning to hold a 6 – day development conference involving all Afar: whether in Ethiopia, Djibouti or the diaspora in discussions on critical development issues. Issues regarding Afar education and language development; various conflicts the Afar face; the status of environmental protection; Afar female participation in development; the use of kaat as a growing household practice; the dichotomy between Afar traditional and modern government and the security of Afar development into the future will be discussed. Once the conference is over, a general statement will be issued so that generated ideas and recommendations can be shared with all stakeholders. It is suggested the agenda be crystallized into the following 7 issues:

- a) Afar education and language development
- b) The status of environmental protection in the region
- c) Female participation in development and female – driven issues
- d) Security and conflict in the region
- e) Relating Afar traditional government to modern government
- f) The affect of the practice of chewing kaat on Afar development
- g) Sustaining development and the way forward