

# **AFAR PASTORALIST DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION QAFAR DACARSITTO DADALIH EGLA**

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Drought Alert and other immediate issues:

May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2007

## **1. The status of the Acute Watery Diarrhea outbreak in Afar Region**

While there has not been a reoccurrence of the epidemic in other areas during the month, there are repeated cases reported in Assayita town – rural areas in Assayita seem to be relatively under control. APDA is concerned that this relates to the poor sanitation of the town; weekly Tuesday market that is attended by hundreds, even from adjacent areas in Djibouti and the uncontrolled status of food outlets that accommodate the market traders. Therefore the organization is planning to mobilize and train the various stakeholders along with the woreda and kebele leaders to establish the means of control realizing that there is huge potential that the outbreak will again spread to adjoining areas particularly Dubte and Logya due to the mobility of the traders.

## **2. Grave concerns over the poor results from the short rains (March to April)**

There is a serious short – fall in Zone 1 and parts of zones 4 and 5 that appear likely to endanger the herd aside from the acute thirst now present in particular districts. APDA has extensively visited the chronically dry areas of northern Dubte Woreda and Zone 4 and has the following rainfall information:

While there was the very occasional storm in March, the season virtually consisted of rain storms from April 10<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup>.

.Rain fell well in Zone 3 and parts of Zone 5 but was patchy in the rest of the region:

- On the western boundary, northern Sifra and southern Uwwa had reasonable falls while the remainder of Sifra, Uwwa and Awra had insufficient to no rain
- Teeru Zone 4 had a reasonable coverage
- In zone 1, rain in the worst drought prone areas of Eli Daar and the northern parts of Dubte Woreda relieved thirst in a few places only
- Central Mille remains dry
- Eli Daar had a couple of storms in Doobi and in Immino. The remainder of the woreda had no significant rain.
- The Lower Awash Basin had fair rainfall

Given that the next season of the main rains are 2 to 3 months away and the region is now seasonally extremely hot, the fear is that the pasture is not sustainable and animals will begin to die in areas of shortfall. Already there is remarkable thirst and hunger in affected parts of the region. See below.

## **3. Herd situation: pasture and health**

The region is currently under intense herd movement with animals from already drought – affected districts converging on areas where rain has fallen and pasture has rejuvenated. It is this movement

that will deplete vast sections of the rangeland: Zones 1, 2, 4 and parts of Zone 5 have not moved out of pasture recovery mode due to recurrent droughts for the past 7 years. This means that while one area has effective rain, the surrounding districts that missed out moved into that rain-fed area using that pasture resource to survive. Currently, pasture resources in Awra and Uwwa are under stress with insufficient rain in much of the area aside from the western fringes and the south. Already, cattle from the Dowda in southern Sifra are grazing in Uwwa. Again, herds from Eli Daar and northern Dubte are highly dispersed since the pasture is very limited.

There are several pockets of animal disease outbreaks that show the herd is under considerable stress. Camels in Mille woreda remain seriously affected and goats in Uwwa are dying of chest infection.

### **3. Thirst**

In northern Dubte woreda particularly Guluble Af, Guyah, Musle and Lubak Daa households are trekking up to 12 hours for water. Similarly in parts of Eli Daar, thirst is extreme – the effort to secure water dominates the daily life for these communities.

### **4. Human health and nutrition**

Outbreaks of whooping cough in parts of Mille and Awra again are evident of the low milk level in the household – in most households, there is little more than ‘milk for tea’. Clearly, weaning children, pregnant and breast – feeding mothers are in danger.

### **5. Immediate strategy to avert disaster**

APDA is currently undertaking an assessment jointly with the concerned bureaus in the regional government and anticipating the need to

- a) Transport water to particular thirsty communities in Eli Daar and Dubte where there is no access to sub-terrain water. In Guluble Af, for instance, NGOs and the government have repeatedly tried to get water at a depth of up to 250 meters
- b) Supplementary feed milking animals (cattle in Awra and Uwwa and goats in Eli Daar) to secure milk in the household, preventing malnutrition and total loss of household assets in affected targeted areas
- c) Veterinary support targeted milking animals
- d) Feed identified malnourished children and child – bearing women

The most significant and appropriate aspect of this strategy is to feed a selected and limited milking herd in the vulnerable household rather than giving them relief grain. This then assures the family gets a full protein food as well as the fact that the family remains with a milking herd beyond the drought.

Again, all activities must be couched in the framework building the community capacity on drought cycle management and pasture protection/ management/ production.

### **6. Development forum news**

The Afar Pastoral Development Forum meets Awash (Boufe Le Garde) on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> discussing how to fund – raise for the forum.

Afar Education Development Coordination Platform (AEDCP) plans to meet from May 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> as the 4<sup>th</sup> consultative meeting. Woreda education officers will also attend this meeting. Each implementing NGO will present a brief summary of their respective activities in Afar Education.