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## Drought Assessment Report – immediate response needed

May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2007

As of May 22<sup>nd</sup> a combined government and NGO assessment team returned to Semara having spent 15 days assessing in Zones 1, 2, 4 and 5. Zone 3 was not included as by and large, adequate rain had fallen in that zone. Findings involve both a fresh outbreak of acute water diarrhea (AWD) and the consequences of the near – total failure of the short rains (March to April). In zone 2 and 4, the situation is described as far more grave than that of 2006 since while there was insufficient rain in 2006, in 2007 a few areas have had 1 to 2 days of rain only.

### **1. AWD in Chefa Valley and Daali Fagi, Zone 5**

The assessment team found reports of AWD in Chefa Valley where Afar cattle herdsmen have migrated to in Amhara Region. This is now worrying that the local outbreak will spread to the herdsmen since they are living with extremely minimal supplies and shelter and in close settlement. Again, the drought assessment team was told 4 people had recently died of the disease in Daali Fagi, Zone 5 and 20 cases were reported. The surrounds of Assayita town and Ami Bara in zone 3 continue to report the occasional case.

### **2. Drought in Zones 1, 2, 4, and 5**

The assessment team characterized the following woredas as severely affected:

- Zone 1: Eli Daar, north west Dubte, Mille and Sifra
- Zone 2: Barahale, Aba'ala parts of Dallol and Eribti
- Zone 4: Awra, Uwwa and Teeru
- Zone 5: Dawwe, Talalak

Other woredas including Yallo and Goolina I Zone 4 and Daali Fagi in Zone 5 are described as moderately affected.

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

#### **3.1 Locust infestation:**

The assessment team found desert locusts (more mobile and adaptable to dry conditions) in Aba'ala, and in Simbileli kebele of Dallol. The locusts are in the adult stage and in Aba'ala at the strength of 5 to 6 per hectare. This is extremely worrying as once the locust begin to reproduce, each locust produces up to 100,000 eggs. Again, reports of tree locusts in Eribti are current. Locusts are also in Yallo but there the number has reduced after 2 days of extremely strong wind and rain storms. APDA is also aware that locusts are still eating their way through Dagabba and Geega grazing areas and have caused vast damage in Mille.

### **3.2 Pasture**

In the west of Afar Region, there is currently no cattle grazing remaining. Uwwa and Awra in Zone 4 have the most stark situation where grazing is absolutely depleted. Again, Barahale and Aba'ala land is barren where rain totally failed. The 2 most westerly kebeles of Barahale had some but insufficient rain and there is minimal grazing in those areas. Shrub grazing is patchy and sustaining some goats and camels. However, this is inadequate since the camels have depleted body mass.

### **3.3 Animal health**

In all drought woredas visited, a variety of animal diseases were reported and identified: pasteuriosis, CBPP, respiratory illness from grazing to close to the dirt in Aba'ala. Disease outbreaks are in small pockets and due to the extreme stress animals are under due to poor pasture and in some parts, inadequate water. The great danger now is that these outbreaks will extend and there will be significant animal loss. All animals have clearly depleted body mass, even camels.

The bureau of Livestock and Farming has begun treating external parasites on a campaign basis in Awra Woreda. Reportedly, the plan is to cover all 29 woredas with this campaign. Again the bureau reports an extreme lack of veterinary medications in the region and that they plan to organize a charter to purchase urgently needed medicines.

## **4. Household and herd migration and conflict.**

There is currently massive abnormal migration underway. Herdsmen from Uwwa, Mille and Sifra are seeking to save their now close to emaciated cattle that have been grazing on the only pasture that regenerated in the Awra districts after 2 days of rain in April. Most of the herds are being moved west into Amhara Region, hoping to reach the Chefa Valley. The remainder is aiming to reach the banks of the Awash between Galaaha and Adayto, land that is frequented by the Issa / Somali clansmen who are constantly clashing with Afar in the Middle and Lower Awash River Basin.

Already, the Chefa Valley has migrants from Mille, Sifra and Dawwe that brought their cattle out 10 days ago. As mentioned above, this group is affected by AWD.

Uwwa community migrated west into the borders with Amhara Region where rain did fall 1 month ago. Conflict with the Amhara community arose and according to woreda officials, that is not yet resolved and a meeting is planned after 1 week.

From Aba'ala in southern Zone 2, people moved into the Tigray area of Wajarat where again conflict between Tigrayans and Afar broke out over land usage.

## **3. Thirst**

The team found an extreme situation of thirst in the Guluble Af, Guyah and Musle areas of north – west Dubte. There is real concern that death will begin to occur as a result in these districts. Buure and Daba in northern Eli Daar and Paradizo 20 kilometers south of Eli Daar are facing thirst. In Barahale - Da'ar, Sore', Kora and Goolben kebeles thirst is extreme and the surrounds of Yallo Woreda administration and in Talalak. In Yallo, of 16 constructed

water ponds, 8 are empty. People are walking into Goolina for water from distant kebeles and those surrounding the administration are using the pump in the town.

In Eli Daar town where there are 9 traditional Turkish – built wells, the community recently received a document from The Sultan of Tadjoura stating that there are in fact 360 such wells in the riverbed. In the last days, the community have begun digging and discovered 151 wells to date, all with some water in them.

#### 4. Human health, nutrition and market prices

In all areas visited, **food shortage** was reported: ‘safety net’ grain has not been delivered to the woredas for 3 months now. Again, all woredas reported the vulnerability of child – producing women and children under 5 years. In Awra, the woreda had done a rapid nutrition assessment coming up with 581 children 6 months to 5 years moderately to severely malnourished and 166 pregnant and breast – feeding mothers below weight in 10 kebeles.

In Uwwa and Yallo, the woredas reported a remarkably **high school drop-out**

Animal prices are falling: the middle – sized goat price has dropped from 200 to 100:00 and the cattle price down from 1,200 to 800:00. Weak animals are selling for as low as 30:00 ETB per goat. Conversely, grain price is extremely high: in Yallo wheat is marketing for 300:00 ETB per quintal and maize for 250:00 per quintal. In Aba’ala, wheat is 250:00 ETB and sorghum 180:00 ETB per quintal.

Butter is now unavailable and milk extremely scant – insufficient for more than tea – milk.

#### 5. Immediate strategy to avert disaster

The government is planning to

- a) Appeal for and distribute grain
- b) Transport water
- c) Purchase veterinary medications

APDA wishes to respond as follows:

Response	Location/ Beneficiaries	Estimated cost
Water transport	Guluble Af/ Guyah – 3,500	1000 x 60 days = 60,000
Mobilize animal paravets	Uwwa/ Awra	40 x 50:00 x 30 days = 30,000
Veterinary medicines	Uwwa/ Awra	40,000
Feeding 3 milking cows per HH	Uwwa/ Awra – 15,000	3,000 HH x 3 x 78 = 702,000
Baby food – cerefam	Estimated 1,000 children	1,000 x 12 pkt x 8:00 = 96,000

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.