

AFAR PASTORALIST DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION QAFAR DACARSITTO DADALIH EGLA

P.O. Box 592 Code 1,110
Addis Ababa
afarpda@yahoo.com, afarpastoral@telecom.net.et, www.apdaethiopia.org
(251) 011 5159787 (251) 0911 642575/ 0911 246639
Fax (251) 011 5538820 Field Office, Logya (25133) 5500002

Ongoing Information on Emergency Situations and Development News

November 1st 2007

In summary:

As of the last update, September 7th, the 3 reported emergency situations have dissipated leaving their sequel as part of the daily life of the community:

- a) AWD continues to re-occur over a very widely dispersed landscape in relatively smaller outbreaks.
- b) The new volcano that erupted on August 12th in Diyyele, north-west Dubte Woreda continues to 'glow' but has caused no further major eruptions and displacements.
- c) Since the end of the rainy season in late September, the flood water receded in Buramudayto and Gawwaani woredas leaving several thousand families to mop – up their losses and more stretches of swampy land.

Now the most pressing issues are:

- a) The herd loss that occurred prior to the rains in the western woredas leaving destitute households

From late June to August APDA burnt 12,382 animal carcasses and treated 101,369 animals in the western drought – affected woredas of Mille, Sifra, Uwwa and Awra.

- b) Locust infestation in all 5 Zones of the region

Significant pasture that rejuvenated after the July to September rains are now depleted through locust damage.

1. Herd loss and household vulnerability

Having lost from 50 to 70% of the cattle herd and around 30 to 80% (figures gained from spot – surveys in August and September) of the goat herd along the western border of the region from late June to August, there are now around 1500 households left destitute with too few animals to support the family – 0 to 10 goats. Knowing the affected kebeles, APDA is concerned to identify the precise households and assist them with re-stocking. Within the pastoralist society, this is currently the only way forward since the traditional system to assist such families is now so weakened by recurrent herd loss through some 5 successive droughts since 1999. Without sufficient animals to produce household milk and to market for household supplies, these families are dependant on relief assistance and what their clan can possibly afford them. Families with less than 10 goats need from 5 to 12 goats to bring them up to a minimum of 12 to 15 goats.

Currently much of the Afar herd is waiting to reproduce in around one month therefore there is minimal goat and cow milk in the household and camel milk is the main source of milk for those with breeding camels. Therefore the household remains very vulnerable to poor nutrition, particularly child – baring women and small children.

2. Locust destruction

The marvelous 'green' after the rains hardly lasted a month in all major grazing areas. Locusts (both large tree locusts up to 10 cms and small grass-eaters up to 2 cms) have defoliated vast areas:

Zone 1 – the grazing lands of Waranso and Yeldi are stripped and small maize crops along the river courses are ruined, in Dubte, Geega, Dagaba, Musle and Daaba are now so ruined herders are migrating, in Eli Daar the Gammeri plateau is affected and these swarms have come down to the grazing areas of Assayita and Afembo. Prats of Sifra are affected

Zone 2 – Barahale, Aba'ala, Erebtu are affected

Zone 3 – one month prior lush grazing around Gawwaani, Ami Bara and into Awaas Fantele is stripped.

Zone 4 – Uwwa, Awara, Yallo and Teeru are all affected

Zone 5 – Talalak, Dawwe, Daali Fagi forest areas are now looking dry.

That grazing shrubs are now in flower and the flower is lost is very significant as the seed – pods are an important feed for goats and camels. Again, the droppings of tree-locusts densely cover the ground under the trees and are apparently poisonous to goats. In some areas, unusual early movement is already occurring.

APDA has shared information with the Bureau of Agriculture and Livestock Development as well as FAO but appeals for rapid assessment and immediate action fearing we are heading for an artificial drought. The winter rains of December are expected but the benefit will be lost if the locusts persist.

3. AWD (acute watery diarrhea) causing sporadic, constant trouble

In October, APDA health workers went in 2 campaign teams to Yallo and western Teeru (Dirma) in north western Zone 4 and Dallol in Zone 2 in response to outbreaks of AWD. In Dallol the outbreak was affecting communities on both sides of the Raggele Ba'ad River, the border with Eritrea. The affected communities were very eager to gain information to protect themselves and to assist those affected by AWD.

In Yallo, APDA health workers treated some 74 cases scattered in 4 kebeles including Dirma, the most westerly kebele of Teeru that adjoins Yallo. Again, in late October, health workers were called to a community in Geega, Dubte Woreda where 2 people had died and there were 2 other cases.

Urban areas continue to be trouble-spots and cases are now reported in Datta Bahari, Dubte Woreda where Afar pastoralists and farming communities co-exist in several permanent villages. APDA is producing and distributing soap and distributing water-purifying material.

Community development

1. Increasing the primary health team

APDA is currently training 20 health workers for Sifra and 20 for Uwwa Woreda. As with all program health workers, they are taking an initial 3 months training and then will return to the field to consolidate learning to return within one year for the final 3 months training.

Meanwhile, APDA's primary health team is thoroughly engaged in their home districts as well as going on campaign to areas without health workers to fight AWD as mentioned above. Secondly, APDA health workers are currently implementing the second round of EPI (8 child – vaccinations and anti-tetanus for child-bearing women) in Eli Daar using the mobile cold chain strategy of running refrigerators from generators in order to reach the most remote districts.

2. Intensifying the campaign against FGM and supporting women's rights in marriage

Currently, the organization's team of harmful practices awareness experts including religious leaders, the organization gender officer supported in each district by women extension workers are operating

in western Mille Woreda. They are generating enormous response and all FGM practitioners in the area are being located so that they can be brought to swear through Islam to stop the practice. In each site, films showing the harmful practices and the Head of the Regional Islamic Council's response to the practice are shown followed by in depth discussion on all issues affecting women's rights to health and wellbeing. Each community is forming its own committee to police the decisions the community gathering comes up with. The community committees then work with the women extension workers to see that harmful practices stop.

This activity will soon be intensified in Sifra Woreda. In preparation for this, some 20 women from all kebeles of Sifra Woreda are in training so that they will be on the ground to carry out the process of mobilizing and monitoring the stopping of harmful practices.

3. Towards safe motherhood

After much planning, preparation and backed by the enthusiastic response of several medical and non-medical folk overseas and in Ethiopia, APDA is finally laying the pathway to establishing a women's treatment center in Mille. The center will have the following objectives:

- a) To establish an exemplary referral center for emergency obstetrics as well as gynecology that will be assisted by voluntary expatriate staff in the start-up years
- b) These expatriate staff will train local Afar to be competent in service delivery. Again the center will facilitate improved training of traditional birth attendants, women extension workers and health workers that they are part of the process of improving safe motherhood
- c) Establish in the surrounding 8 woredas competent waiting areas for mothers under trained midwives that are linked to the center
- d) Act as a hub of information dispersion within the Afar society aiming to change behavior toward safe motherhood including maximizing antenatal checking, gaining community commitment to accepting only trained and equipped traditional birth attendants for the delivery and working toward child – spacing/ family planning.

4. Using Afar traditional leadership to establish safe sexual practices in towns

APDA is now using a method called 'community conversations' in Eli Daar, Sifra and Mille getting the traditional association leaders (fiamat 'abba) to direct community thinking and resolution to safer social practices among youth in contact with towns. Since traditional law encompasses all manner of situations and conditions occurring in the rural setting it is now time to utilize these influences to establish the traditional 'social safety net' in the town setting. Many towns in Afar Region now have at least night electricity and the community is exposing itself to soft porn movies as shown in bars and the like brought in through the non-Afar community who run the commercial life in the region. This, combined with the ever-increasing town culture of chewing kaat, an amphetamine leaf is leaving those involved highly exposed as they lose any sense of shyness or inhibition. APDA is establishing youth centers with alternative activities as well as using all its membership to mobilize the community on the need to develop a clearly defined response to HIV transmission.

5. Rain water harvesting

The organization continues to work hard to construct rainwater harvesting reservoirs (ponds and cisterns) in Mille, Sifra, Uwwa and Awra. In each site, the activity is integrated with drought cycle management teaching, improving forestation as well as community response to HIV & AIDS and gender balance in development.

6. Vocational training

APDA has just completed a 50 – day training in leatherwork and tie dyeing in Awash for urban Eritrean refugees and others identified as poor. The organization will now seek to establish them in production in Logya where other skilled training is continuing in mechanics, electricity and the like.