

AFAR PASTORALIST DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION QAFAR DACARSITTOH DADALIH EGLA

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End of Year Update: December 17th, 2007

1. Many greetings to one and all!!

Again, as we busily wind up activities for one year and contemplate the New Year, we are anxious to share our contemplations with all of you. But first we take the opportunity to greet you all: for Christmas and for Eid Al Arafa (Al Ad-ha). We all in APDA wish you both the peace and joy of the celebration and look forward to sharing your company on into 2008. In so saying we are utterly mindful that 2007 was only possible through your generous support and encouragement and we remain so grateful that we spent another year's journey into Afar pastoralist development in this partnership.

Again, 2007 has proven a year of gathering momentum in the struggle for development appropriate to the Afar pastoralist lifestyle. Progress in terms of coverage as well as improved delivery is noted in the triangular activities that mark development in the community: in Afar education (the central/ lead activity), mobile primary health and women extension activities. Highlights include the fact the regional government is now close to ratifying APDA' education system as ideal for the pastoralist society, APDA health workers' exemplary effort in vaccination coverage and disease control over many woredas and the campaign to stop FGM and gain rights in marriage for pastoralist women.

Indeed a people under siege from external factors, this year the Afar society faced the killing disease outbreak of acute watery diarrhea from December 2006 through to September, ongoing influx of Afar Eritrean refugees fleeing government military brutality, further drought animal – loss from May to July focused on the western border woredas and finally locust infestation. APDA has closely monitored these situations and, as far as possible been part of providing relief and facilitating recovery. Below is a brief update of these critical situations.

2. Refugees from Eritrea

A further 52 households walked into Afar Region, Ethiopia following a brutal massacre of 11 of their members in the Wadde/ Daabu area in Eritrea and are currently being assisted in Teeru. Through Afar Canada, APDA is able to offer them meat for the Eid celebration. There are now over 13,000 refugees in the region living in both rural and urban areas and hosted by local Afar.

3. Prevailing rain and pasture conditions

Since the cessation of rain in late September (ending a mostly average to above average main rainy season) there has not been a storm. There is no sign of the current season of winter/ December rains. APDA joined the government assessment of the effectiveness of the man rains. It is concluded that while rains were generally better, pasture growth was disappointing due to the depletion of grass-seed over recurrent droughts. Again, animal milk production has not peaked since animals gave birth late/ had fewer pregnancies having endured extremely

limited pasture from February to July due to the poor performance of the short rains of March/April. Locusts have destroyed pasture in a belt including the northern 3 woredas of Zone 5, part of Zone 3, Mille, north-west Dubte in Zone 1 and southern Zone 2. Animal diseases are current particularly camel diseases in the Mille district.

4. Highlights of 2007

Having begun with the 2nd Afar Development Conference on January 29th to February 2nd, the year is finishing with the most hectic quarter yet as the organization makes an all – out effort to end acute watery diarrhea in the affected woredas as well as laying the beginning to the all exciting project of establishing a women’s treatment center aimed at lowering maternal and infant death.

In a year described not less than hectic, the community and APDA were energized as follows:

4.1 Consolidating Afar pastoralist education toward government institutionalization

As a steering committee member of the now 18 month old Afar Education Development Coordination Platform, APDA has been able to share its implementing methodology with the Bureau of Education to the point where the Bureau is now ready to have a mobile education system in pastoralist communities that demand the mobility. APDA now has 237 community teachers teaching both Afar literacy and non-formal education (5 subjects from Level 1 to 3 that take the student on to Grade 5 in the formal system) working in 14 of the region’s now 32 woredas. APDA has and continues to battle with several issues including female participation over which a regional conference was held in March, preventing drop-outs when household milk – supply is low and improving the standard of community teachers who have not benefited from formal education.

4.2 Mobilizing and confronting the issues of pastoral women

During the year, the number of women extension workers, pastoralist women agents for change within their respective communities, increased from 133 to 158. With the increase, APDA took on more ammunition to fight harmful practices particularly that of female genital mutilation (FGM) and gaining rights for women in traditional marriage. In fact, the organization recruited 2 Shieks swelling out the team of harmful practices awareness actors covering more districts. As a result, several hundred FGM practitioners have vowed to stop the practice and APDA is on the hunt to find any still continuing the severe practice. Again, the team has assisted several women without recall to rights in rural areas and the discussion on female rights is mounting. The annual Afar Pastoralist Women’s Conference will take place later this month acting as a steering rudder to APDA’s strategies and activities in implementing their demands for improved well-being.

4.3 Pushing on with vaccination coverage in hard-to-reach communities and halting disease outbreak

Throughout the year, APDA has deployed its 234 health workers in tireless teams vaccinating in the most remote areas (walking up to 14 hours with vaccine cold-boxes on camels to reach the target community – Mabay) of the Region as well as searching out cases of acute watery diarrhea and blanket covering woredas with health messages to stop the outbreak. As well as the 4 woredas of Zone 4 that had child – vaccination coverage for the first time in 2006, this year the team reached uncharted territory in north-west Dubte Woreda into Teeru and covered Eli Daar, the largest woreda in the region. This was made possible using generator-driven refrigerators making ice as close to the community as possible. The year – long campaign to stamp out acute watery diarrhea (AWD) took health workers to 18 woredas. Their work saved thousands of lives during the peak of the outbreak, distributed soap and water purifying chemical to 10,000’s of thousands of households teaching them the 4 AWD survival messages and then back-tracking during the past 3 months while the disease petered out to re-enforce

disease prevention. This campaign was backed by the organization musical band and drama group on tour to all affected woredas. Again, 6 public toilets and wash houses were constructed.

4.4 Toward safe motherhood

After joint effort between supporters in Australia and donor agency in Ethiopia, preparatory work is now underway to establish a women's treatment center that will offer emergency obstetrics as well as gynecology under the direction of voluntary expatriate doctors. The project will link with 8 surrounding woredas establishing birth – waiting areas that support and link with APDA health workers, women extension workers and traditional birth attendants in the community in the fight to secure safer pregnancy and child birth.

4.5 Mobilizing Afar communities in marketing cooperatives

This year has been one of intense and directive learning on how to facilitate community cooperatives from the position of having identified the anomalies and problems in cooperatives throughout the region as well as those with APDA. The organization hosted a conference with the government and a wide range of the cooperatives that exposed the challenges of cooperatives in a pastoralist society with no previous experience of the cash economy system. This then opened pandora's box to the gambit of challenges to face and the course to navigate to assure that the pastoralist society remains in tact as the beneficiary in the process of improving household security and Afar mobility in the market. 2008 will again be a full year in this effort.

4.6 Constructing more rain – water harvesting reservoirs

The organization with the community is working in Uwwa and Awra of Zone 4 and Sifra, 'Ada'ar and Mille of Zone 1 (all western border woredas) constructing some 16 cisterns and 11 retention dams improving water storage for 5 highly drought – affected woredas where little has previously been done in terms of water – access improvement. In all sites, environment protection is being taught and an implementation plan drawn up.

4.7 Halting forest destruction

This issue is now increasing in priority as so many drought - affected families are reverting from the good Afar practice of forest protection to producing/ gaining money from producers of charcoal. The campaign against charcoal production completed in August. Environmental protection is a vital area that needs support into 2008 as Afar face the challenge to protect their existence against the interest of short-term gains.

4.8 Empowering the program with music and drama

APDA music and drama group have produced an extremely exhilarating range of songs and dramas covering stopping FGM and harmful practices; the need for female education; HIV prevention and response; conflict resolution; uselessness of kaat chewing; preventing diarrhea; motivation to work and education and so on.

4.9 Empowering the community to respond to HIV & AIDS

Working with particularly male youth attracted to waste time in villages and towns, APDA is establishing an alternative to kaat chewing to prevent them from engaging in unprotected sexual practices in Sifra and 'Ada'ar districts. To do this, APDA is using the traditional association leadership (fi'ama) to establish workable social behavior laws for Afar in town living.

4.10 Conflict resolution

During the year, APDA worked with communities in Uwwa in Zone 4 toward resolving conflict within the community and with neighboring Amharas as well as in Ami Bara. This experience has greatly taught APDA as well as enabling the organization to study traditional resolution methodology. Again, this is opening up more need and opportunity.

4.11 Vocational training

In the latter part of the year, APDA has trained 12 refugee youth in garage and electrical skills, one person in computer repair, 15 women in Thai-dyeing clothes and 20 men in leatherwork. These training courses have developed new quality of production in the community.

4.12 Responding timely to community disaster

Goats were re-stocked in 800 destitute households in Eli Daar before the main rains. In response to the disaster of 1,000's cattle deaths in the western woredas from May to July, APDA worked with other organizations to burn carcasses, treat sick animals and supplementary feed milking animals in all but destitute households working from late June to September. Again, APDA distributed food relief and clothes to Eritrean refugees in Aba'ala, Barahale and Dubte area.

4.13 Pasture restoration

Small pasture areas seeded in 2006 produced remarkable grass in the main rains in Eli Daar and Teeru.

4.14 Afar Pastoral Development Forum supported

APDA was elected to host the Afar Pastoral Development Forum giving the forum an office and sustaining a representative. The forum has promoted the formation other local NGOs in the region forming consortiums for funding.

4.15 Launching of the organization website

www.apdaethiopia.org is now up and containing much of the organization information (some parts to be added) and hoping to link with all other websites supporting Afar development. The document of the January – held 2nd Afar Development Conference defining all the major issues obstructing/ delaying Afar development.

5. Expectations for 2008

The issues APDA needs to pursue/ consolidate to sustain development include:

- a) School-feeding for pastoralist children in mobile schools
- b) A community – supported plan to take pastoralist child education beyond the current non-formal education of level 1 to 3 on to the middle grades from 5 to 8.
- c) Train and strengthen community development committees that mobilize and monitor development in the community
- d) Establish community radio to lead the process of development
- e) Gain scholarship support to train strategic people to take on leadership in APDA
- f) Support an increasing use of Afar literature in the community.
- g) Work with greater intent to stop harmful practices.
- h) Research and document all Afar traditional laws that the government might appreciate how the society is governed at the same time, taking the opportunity with traditional leaders to discount harmful cultures and agree on stopping them.
- i) Campaign teaching in areas of great difficulty as education awareness – raising as well as mobilization.
- j) Extension of health workers activities into remote areas as yet without any health services.
- k) Projects of environment protection and improvement should be high on the agenda in association with drought recovery, increasing availability of water.