

AFAR PASTORALIST DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION QAFAR DACARSITTO DADALIH EGLA

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Update of the Current Situation toward Drought Recovery and Ongoing development: September 12th, 2005

1. Drought recovery update

1.1 From drought to floods

As of the previous update, the main rainy season (July to September) has now given relatively effective relief to almost all the drought – affected areas with the exception of regions bordering Eritrea where storms have been brief and not well distributed. The rain has been particularly consistent in the west giving soaking rains to Zone 4. Rivers flowing east from that Zone, the Mille, the Geega have been almost constantly full for some weeks. The pressure of this water joining the lower Awash has resulted in an exceptional flood (the Awash due to its silted condition, floods to some extent annually) breaking the banks at 3 new flooding sites. Thus, since mid – August 5 kebeles of Assayita woreda have been flood – bound and 3 adjoining kebeles of Dubte Woreda are affected. Some 4,000 people from Bayahele, the customary site of annual flooding were evacuated from Orkombo village and are living in shelters on the outskirts of Dubte town.

More drastically, another estimated 3,000 people in Rumayto kebele, Assayita have been totally water – bound for the past 3 weeks. Apparently no one has been able to cross the water and come out. At the time of writing, the Regional DPP &FSB and UNICEF are investigating demise of the people, landing by helicopter and immediately dropping food. There are also 3 boats assisting the operation. Again, a week ago the bridge leading into Data Barahi a settlement of around 4,000 agro-pastoralists and daily laborers in Dubte Woreda collapsed under the strain of flood waters, cutting these people off and 5 people died trying to cross.

APDA has so far responded by placing two women extension workers among the displaced women to assist with coping and sent health workers in by boat to Rumayto to treat people.

1.2 Water and pasture conditions

As distinct from the previous report, much of the region's pasture is looking freshly green and grass is rejuvenating where rainwater has pooled. The major grazing lands have now

got some pasture but due the fact that grasslands had deteriorated to virtual dust – bowls under continuous drought, it is taking time to regain the full strength grazing pasture.

1.3 Animal diseases and losses

The extra-ordinary camel disease that killed hundreds of camels across Zones 1, 2 and 4 and into Zone 5 has all but petered out without any laboratory diagnosis being secured. A variety of animal diseases affecting all species, due to the still drought - compensated state of the herd, are being reported in small outbreaks where the drought was most severe in Mille, Dubte and Eli Daar Woredas of Zone 1.

Herd – loss across the board is evident. Probably the only substantial family herds of cattle remaining in the region are in Zone 3. In goat – losses in the driest parts of Zone 1 were also drastic – assessing to find beneficiary households with less than 10 remaining goats for a current recovery project (see below) very quickly met the criteria. Too, the majority had less than 5 goats.

1.4 Animal market

Few quality breeding animals are currently being offered on the local market since, with the onset of a good rainy season, the herdsman are taking the measure to keep what little breeding stock they have. Prices are as high as 300.00 ETB for a goat and around 120 to 150 ETB as a medium price.

1.5 Ongoing drought recovery activities

The current drought recovery project assisting around 2,000 of the most affected families in Awra and Teeru Woredas Zone 4 and Dubte and Eli Daar Woredas in Zone 1 is meeting with exceptional participatory energy as the project is addressing blatant needs. It is also directing the local leadership and the beneficiaries to look at recovery in a very market-approach, improved production line. Communities are discussing this in the light of gender equity and HIV & AIDS in development through viewing APDA's locally made videos on the subjects.

2. Development Update

2.1 Education activities

- Literacy campaigns in 3 new project woredas

During Early September, literacy campaigns were launched in 44 sites in 4 woredas as the very first start of education in the history of these respective communities. The campaigns will run for 4 months setting the basis of an education culture in the communities by teaching men, women and children basic Afar literacy and numeracy as part of their daily routine in sites and at times designated by the students. Uwa Woreda officials, having a population of 43,000 people for example stated that they had not a single person in their community literate in Afar. People to run the campaign have been brought from the neighboring Sifra Woreda. APDA will back the campaign with mobilization using the organization musical band and drama group as well as video films. Once this campaign is over, the community will select most active students for training as ongoing community teachers covering the 44 sites. In all sites where appropriate, APDA

is balancing its placing of these most vital human resources with that of the government effort to get Afar teachers into schools and the community implementing non-formal education. To date, the government is not implementing adult functional literacy. It takes on average 6 months for an Afar to fully master literacy using the 5 primer books developed by Dr Enid Parker.

- **Community teachers' annual upgrading training**

APDA is in the process of finalizing the 2 – months upgrading training of the current 158 program teachers. Assisted by Bureau of Education, the training covers all subjects including pedagogy, Afar grammar, mathematics, environmental science, Amharic and English. Fascinatingly, those with no formal education background absorb other language skills the fastest.

2.2 Primary health activities

Annual refresher course for APDA's program health workers

APDA has given the first 70 of the program's 143 health workers refresher training. A gynecologist and obstetrician from the Fistular Hospital in Addis Ababa very generously joined the training to give the health workers further insight in tackling problems of emergency obstetrics in remote areas and dealing with girls and women with various gynecological problems. This has greatly enriched the health workers' knowledge and ability to respond to female health needs.

Malaria, the top morbidity

Malaria is the current dominant sickness both in the towns and the rural areas. APDA is continuing to sell treated bed nets sewn by Afar women in several of the communities (28 treadle sewing machines are working.) Too, health workers are reporting a rise in the number of suspected tuberculosis cases, probably related to the prolonged period of greatly reduced protein in the household diet due to the drought.

Planned safe motherhood conference

APDA is laying plans to hold a safe motherhood conference later in the year. The conference will involve the government, religious authorities as well as prominent TBAs and women extension workers. Also, a delegation from Djibouti is being invited to enrich the discussion with their particular experiences. Overall, the conference aims to come up with an agreed regulation that women in the pastoral society should have a trained, equipped and networked TBA assisting them in child - birth. This should be understood as her right as well as a goal to work toward once the gaps in achieving it are understood.

2.3 HIV & AIDS response activities

APDA's activities in facilitating community response continue with the fullest of energy. The culture of blood testing is at last increasing among Afar people and project counselors are assisting those found positive. APDA is now constructing a second center for community activities. The first in Logya is proving a 'Mecca' for the youth and those who want to do something other than wonder up and down the road.

The project facilitating community response in Zone 5 through the Kambatta idea of 'community conversation' is going well. APDA is looking to broaden this idea to use in other communities using fitting it into the traditional concepts of decision – making and

decision – implementation in the Afar society. By this way, youth will be assisted in adapting to the barrage of cultural change they see in the towns and avoiding situations that could comprise them.

2.4 Cooperative activities

Community animal market cooperatives are a very dynamic part of the overall program now. The first ever market in Mille woreda is working well and seeing benefit and the two new cooperatives are formed and they are busy constructing their sites. The idea itself to stimulate the market interest in the pastoral society is so vitally needed in assuring recovery and development

2.5 Women's issues

As part of the PCDP in Konnaba Woreda, APDA is uncovering another facet of the problems Afar pastoral women face in being partners of their own development. The recently completed women extension workers' training in that woreda is fielding 14 literate pastoral women to teach, assist and lobby in the households of their respective communities. The woreda has seemingly never considered the role of women and it is a whole new era for local women to be working to make changes to lessen the difficulties their women face. The woreda has a strong culture of FGM as well as a very repressive marriage tradition.

2.6 Environmental protection

APDA is about to launch a project aiming at stopping charcoal production in Dubte and Mille woreda using the both traditional and government local leadership and empowering the community through community risk management planning. The project is ambitious but the way ahead for its success is already laid through meetings with the community and awareness – raising. It is also aimed that this project will be an example to replicate in other woredas similarly affected and to stop the problem spreading to the woredas where there is no charcoal production. Charcoal production is normally unknown to Afar tradition and is an advent of the petty trade coming down from the highlands – particularly along the Bati Mille road and the Assab road.

2.7 Afar Development Forum

Partners with APDA plan to hold a meeting later this month to discuss the formation of a development forum in the region. The regional government is most supportive of the idea and wanting for such a collaborative body. It is planned to hold this initial meeting in Addis giving NGOs a better opportunity to participate. The date of this forum will be circulated in the near future and any interaction is very much appreciated.