



Afar: insecurity and delayed rains threaten livestock and people

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1 Introduction and background

1.1 Animals are now dying

The Objectives of the mission were to assess the situation in the Afar Region following recent clashes between Afar and Issa and Oromo pastoralists, and focus on security and livestock movement restrictions, water and environmental issues, the marketing of livestock as well as “chronic” humanitarian issues. Special attention has been given to all southern parts of Afar region affected by recent ethnic conflicts and erratic small rains, which initiated early pastoralists movements in zone 3 & 5. The assessment also took into account various food security issues, including milk availability while also looking at limited water resources in Eli Daar woreda (Zone 1), where particularly remote kebeles¹ suffer from water shortage.



Dead camel in Doho, Awash-Fantale (photo Francois Piguet UN-EUE, July 2002)

High concentrations of animals have been noticed in several locations of Afar region during the current dry season. The most important reason for the present humanitarian emergency crisis in parts of Afar Region and surroundings are the various ethnic conflicts among the Issa, the Kereyu, the Afar and the Ittu. These

conflicts forced pastoralists to change their usual migration patterns and most importantly were denied access to either

traditional water points and wells or grazing areas or both together. On top of this rather complex and confuse conflict situation, rains have now been delayed by more than two weeks most likely all over Afar Region and is now causing livestock deaths.

The recent fighting with the Issa, Kereyu and Ittu has contributed to limited movement of animals in zone 3 (Gewane, Amibara and Awash Fentale woreda), jeopardising the

¹ The smallest administrative territorial unit in Ethiopia

traditional division of work. Women are no longer tending livestock and the men, armed, have taken over to protect their herds. Pastoral groups are now concentrated along the Awash riverbank and the surrounding marshes and lakes (Yardi, Hertale, Ashahari and Lehadu), resulting in significant pressure on grazing resources in the main Afar pastoral sanctuaries. Pastoralists from zone 5, who normally go to this area have been mixing with these pastoralists along the riverbank, although they are now starting to move up west to Ifat, where the Afar are competing for grazing land with the Argobba. In zone 1, animals concentrate along the Awash riverbank (Dubti – Assaita) and in places like Guyah, a location situated halfway to Afdera, where people and animals are entirely dependent on water ponds. As those water resources are expected to dry up quickly, animals will also move to the Awash river and to Dobi, a salty depression situated near Galafi and the border to Djibouti.

In several locations, mainly in Awash-Fentale and Amibara woredas, weak cattle herds have to move a long distance daily for alternative water and grazing and therefore, are not marketed due to poor animal conditions. This situation is not limited to the Afar. Kereyu and Issa animals are also suffering and stress has contributed to an increase in security incidents. Within the area, pastoralists overstock herds, not only due to cultural but also poor marketing opportunities. For the past several years, those pastoralists have



Tribal war memorial along the Afdera Road, Jodah (photo Francois Piguet, July 2002)

been suffering from the effects of the livestock ban, as well as the fact that all the main Muslim festivals (Id al Fitr and Id al Arafa), as well as Fasika for the Orthodox are all taking place during the dry season. During this main marketing period of the year, animals are not in good condition and prices down as much as 60% to 70%. On the other hand, traders and middlemen are now targeting small markets like Yallo (Zone 4) and Chiffra (Zone 1) instead of Bati and Metahara. The latter is the main southern market for Afar people that is connected to Addis Ababa. But Metahara is presently inaccessible to Afar people due to the ongoing conflict with the Kereyu around Awash National Park.

The main rains (*kerima*) are now delayed. Together with the various conflicts and ethnic tensions, Afar pastoralists as well as Kereyu, Ittu and Issa are presently starting to face difficulties due to a lack of grazing and access to traditional grazing areas and water along Awash River as well as traditional water points and wells. Animals, mainly cattle but also camels are now starting to die making pastoralists poorer due to important asset depletion.

1.2 Afar: poor, underdeveloped and suffering from ethnic conflicts

The Afar Region, structured into 5 zones and 29 woredas, is located in the Northeast of Ethiopia sharing international borders with Eritrea and Djibouti (Guinand, 2000). Afar

land, about 150,000 km², stretches in a triangle of lowlands covering the Awash valley and the Danakil depression. The Afar people, circa one million², originally Cushitic like their Oromo and Somali neighbours, are predominantly nomadic in origin and the majority are still practising “transhumant pastoralism” for subsistence (Guinand, 2000). The northern part of Afar Region around the lower Danakil Plain, is largely a semi-desert with thorny species of shrubs and acacias, while further south in the Awash valley, steppic vegetation is dominant (Guinand, 2000). Both ecological stages are facing bush encroachment of *Prosopis juliflora* (*wayane*), which takes over from more nutritive browsing varieties.



Abandoned village along Assab Road Elida woreda (photo Francois Piguet, July 2002)

The Afar Region is one of the poorest and least developed Regions of Ethiopia, neglected by national development efforts. It is only in recent years that efforts have been undertaken to provide basic infrastructure such as road accessibility and administrative buildings as well as education and basic health services for each of the woredas (Guinand, 2000). Some of this infrastructure, like the new regional capital Samara, a project

initiated in 1996, remains empty. Despite their relatively small numbers in Ethiopia, Afar are of some importance because of their location between the highlands and the Red Sea. Therefore, all the regional economy is polarised by the transit road to Djibouti port. This road led to a typical ‘truck-stop economy’ with towns such as Logiya, Mille, Adaitou, Gewane, Gadamaitou, where water facilities, commerce and services are principally related to truck drivers needs.

The Afar, first designated as *Danakil* by geographer Ibn Said in the 13th century, have played a major role in all state building and war initiated by Muslims in the Horn of Africa: from Ifat to Adal Sultanates, in the 16th century with the short-lived Amir *Ahmed Ibrahim* empire and the 20 years war against Ethiopia, as well as in Awsa Sultanate created by Harar ruling families. Since the 17th century, the Afar people abandoned territories (Harar and Zeilah) to Oromo and Somali’s in constant expansion. The Afar people have been driven further and further to remote areas, a continuous process even after colonisation and the creation of modern states with international borders dividing Afar.

Issa people, the immediate neighbouring Somali clan, are the long lasting enemies of the Afar. They challenge them more than any other surrounding ethnic group. Since the opening of the Djibouti – Addis Ababa railway in 1917, Issa were in charge of the security along the line. They have taken control of large territories between Djibouti and Dire Dawa and most of their expansion has been obtained from the Afar. South of Mille in the Awash valley, Issa well armed are usually pressing towards the west in order to gain access to grazing land and the Awash riverbank. Since the Issa are known for their illicit trade (gun

² The official figure used by DPPC from 2000 Afar Region census are the following: total Region 1,1176,148 (zone 1: 326,146; zone 2: 234,645; zone 3: 129,464; zone 4: 142,352; zone 5: 343,541)

running and contraband merchandise), they consider the main road and connection from Addis Ababa to Djibouti as vital to their strategic interest.

2 Mission Results

2.1 Conflict and insecurity along the main Addis Ababa – Djibouti road

Since March 2002, heavy fighting has taken place between the Afar and Issa along the main road between Mille and Gadamaitou, as well as between the Afar and the Kereyu and the Ittu in the southern part of Afar Region (Awash - Fentale woreda, Zone 3). Such armed clashes are quite frequent between pastoralists communities related to competition for grazing and water. The conflict has also affected truck drivers along the road that resulted in a fuel shortage panic in the capital in April 2002. With a dozen victims, according to various sources, the present conflict appears as the worst confrontation between the Afar and Issa that occurred during the 1990s. The situation remains unstable with the possibility of further incidents.

Aside from the recurrent conflict between Issa and Afar people, confrontation between Kereyu and Ittu pastoralists in southern Afar Region has now reached a dangerous point with the killing of a Kereyu leader in Metahara and a large amount of camels taken by the Ittu. Traditionally, Afar used to opt for co-operation with the Oromo instead of confrontation, and even inter-marriages are quite common. If the dry spell continues throughout July, stress and competition will increase among the Issa, Kereyu and Ittu. The Afar might also confront the Oromos of Argobba and Wello along the highland escarpment on the west.



Dying cattle in Doho kebele, Awash Fantane (photo Francois Piguët UN-EUE, July 2002)

South of the Afar Region (Zone 3 & 5), Afar pastoralists are bordering the Oromos of the surrounding escarpment, where the Kereyu, the Ittu and the Arsi of the southern plain graze their animals in the wide-open rangelands. Occasionally, fighting breaks out and recent incidents may be related to stress generated by local failure of *dadaa* (November-December) and *sugum* (March-April) short rains. Several clashes caused a number of deaths and stolen livestock. On both sides, clan leaders are trying to settle the differences (see also “Box 1: Conflict along Mille – Gadamaitou highway”).

2.2 Restricted livestock movements

Insecurity along the Awash valley, south of Adaitou, forced pastoralists to cut down on animal movements. For example, pastoralists around Gewane are not allowing animals to go more than two hours walk away from their settlements. Disturbance of the traditional pastoral labor division also makes pastoral life more difficult because livestock has to be accompanied by armed guards. During the dry season, most pastoral groups are concentrated along the Awash river and within marshes in Gewane and Amibara woreda where water is abundant and causes overgrazing near the riverbanks and within an increasing radius towards the end of the dry season. Presently, weak cattle herds have to move a long distance daily for alternative water and grazing. Consequently, a lot of animals are now weak. Further livestock movements towards western escarpments are expected, where the Afar are competing for grazing land with other pastoral groups.

In zones 1 and 2 there are high herd concentrations around water points. In Guyah for example, where the last rainfall was in April, people and animals depended exclusively on water ponds. Pastoralists



Emaciated cattle herd near Awash town (photo Francois Piguet, July 2002)

present at that location are sometimes coming from far away. Apart from local people, most of them are coming from Maska (Eli Daar / north) or Terru (south). In Maska there apparently is no a road to Guyah and water facilities are limited to natural ponds along a little valley. The people in Maska usually come to Guyah during the dry season. In Guyah, women are carrying water on donkeys or camels up to 10 km and beyond. The Guyah water pond is expected to dry up soon. This will cause livestock migration towards Dubti along the Awash river and to some other locations like Imino or Dobi (Eli Daar woreda), where water and salty grazing are available throughout the year.

Box 1: Conflict along Mille– Gadamaitou highway

For more than 30 years, water and grazing competition lead to open conflict between Issa and Afar people over territorial control. Succession of harsh dry seasons, the lack of water facilities east of the Awash valley, as well as grazing restrictions in the Yangudirassa National Park have exacerbated resource competition between Afar and Issa. The conflict is furthermore aggravated by commercial competition in trading centres along the strategic Djibouti – Addis Ababa road¹. Since March 2002, clashes occurred in Boromodaitou, where the Afar recently opened a new woreda office. Issa claimed that the buildings are located on a path used by animals for grazing and watering. Boromodaitou, one of the main Afar grazing reserves, is only two hours walking distance from Lake Hertale. Presently, Issa have been chased from the area known as the “Curbile hills” southwest of Boromodaitou and pushed back behind the hills situated on the left side of the road. They now live about an hour walk from the road and the new woreda office. Fights have also taken place near the Adaitou and Unfahoo trading centres.

Box 2: Conflict around Amibara and Awash Fentale

In Amibara and Awash-Fentale woredas in southern Afar Region, clashes arouse on the access and use of natural resources in the Awash National Park, between Afar and Kereyu from Boset and Fentale woredas. Both groups are equally hit by the prolonged dry spell. Hence, since two months Afar cannot trade anymore in Metahara market that is situated in the midst of Kereyu territory. On the eastern side towards Mieso, the situation seems to be more complex. Issa recently tried to expend their territory towards Mieso pushing away the Ittu to the west but without clashes. The actual dry spell contributed to the rise of tensions between Ittu and Afar in a grazing area called "Halaydagi", situated east of the Addis-Djibouti road. Traditionally Afar and Ittu livestock herds are grazing together around the Asbot mountains north-east of Gumbi, a railway station and settlement east of Awash. Recently 650 camels of the Afar have been stolen from the "Halaydagi" grazing area and two Afar shepherds were killed. Until now, negotiations to bring back the animals were unfortunately unsuccessful.

2.3 Overgrazing and shortage of milk

Already in May 2002, a FAO mission pointed out deteriorating livestock conditions in Halledaba and Buri (Amibara woreda) and Hertale (Gewane woreda) where pastoralists migrated out of their traditional transhumance areas. According to Gewane woreda authorities, between 10,000 and 15,000 pastoralists from zone 5⁴ have moved to Awash riverbanks. Weak cattle herds are visible everywhere as far as Ifat along the Dessie road. In addition, the dry season means higher risks of epizootic, particularly for anthrax and black legs.



No enough feeds, no more milk: Pastoralist watering goats near Guyah, Dupti woreda (photo Francois Piguet, July 2002)

South of Gewane, Afar pastoralists that settled around Hertale marshes are already facing stress due to the bitter competition for resources with the Issa. With additional pastoral groups coming from zone 5, the amount of feed available is actually not enough to keep the livestock population of the host community alive. Such a situation has an immediate impact on food and milk availability. In early June 2002, the

Farm Africa milk marketing cooperative project⁵ in Gewane only received between zero and 10 litres a

day where as during the rainy season the project usually receives 40 to 50 litres. Melka Werer and Awash are facing similar overstocking problems. There the milk market is

⁴ Mainly the three neighbouring woredas: Artuma, Dewe and Fursi.

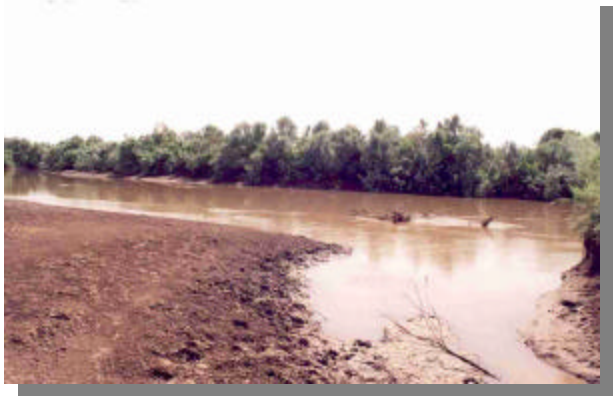
⁵ 39 pastoralists are members of the co-operative and they earn currently 1.5 ETB/litre. Milk is sold in town 3 ETB/litre (1 ETB/cup or 2 ETB/cup during the dry season). Currently, there is no milk-marketing problem in Gewane, the only place in Middle Awash with such marketing project.

based on door-to-door petty trade. No milk was available on the market. Very likely pastoralist women only trade very small milk quantities early in the morning.

Animal watering is always a key-issue during dry spells when pastoral groups usually undergo water stress as they are located away from permanent water points. Presently, there are large animal concentrations around all water ponds and streams and many animals have to walk long distances for watering. In Bilen Spring, north of Melka Werer, large herds constantly flow and rotate for watering. In Awash Station, where a watering point set up near a lime factory is dry following a pump breakdown, animals have to walk down the river gorge. Some of the weakest cattle have already died on the way. If the dry season extends, pastoral groups will be forced to move near relatively favourable areas, where generally clan consciousness of territory becomes more intense the closer they are to the Awash riverbank. This situation could once more increase tensions between neighbouring pastoralists clans and raise the potential for renewed clashes.

2.4. Impact of Awash River course changes

For years, the Awash River has generated two major course changes around Afambo (Zone 1) and around Gewane (Zone 3) with long term consequences in areas where irrigated farms currently operate. Actually, former state farms in Afambo and Gaframo and Cudda (Gewane) were forced to stop their activities. Since then, Afambo area has been severely affected by water shortage. In Gewane crop fields have progressively been infested by non-suitable plant species such as *Prosopis juliflora* or *Calotropis procera*, a toxic vegetal for both human and animals. In a few years, large areas in the marshland became a sort of “green desert”. *Prosopis juliflora* chased away all valuable vegetation and endangers biodiversity. Goats are only eating *Prosopis juliflora*⁶ when there is no browsing alternative. In addition, *Prosopis juliflora* seems to be suitable for charcoal, firewood and construction



Awash river diversion in Gewale woreda (photo F. Piguet July 2002)

Competition between agricultural schemes and grazing land remains a sensitive issue. According to woreda authorities, shortage of water in Afambo is directly linked to the eastward change of the Awash River course towards Koutoubla where the Tendaho commercial farm is now benefiting from the river water. Pastoralists with their hungry animals already invaded crop fields on commercial farms on several occasions in the past during food and grazing shortage periods. Presently high animal concentrations around

⁶ According to elders, *Prosopis juliflora* tree was first introduced into the Middle Awash in the 1970s. It was attributed to a foreigner who lived in Melka-Werer. He planted this tree as a garden plant around his office and residence. Since then, the irrigated farm workers around their branch offices and residence areas in Melka Werer and Melka Saddi planted this tree. Goats, wind, rainwater and floods were responsible for the species' spreading, establishment and dissemination (Getachew, 2001)

Tendaho commercial farm in Dubti and around commercial farms in Amibara may cause similar reactions.

Overgrazing followed by water and wind erosion is actually visible in all visited locations, particularly in Dulecha woreda. Like the *Prosopis juliflora* infestation, land degradation caused by high livestock population density, requires radical measures in order to assure the sustainability of grazing resources, particularly in the most favourable areas (e.g. Awash riverbanks, Gewane, Amibara), which are supporting livestock concentrations during the dry season.

2.5 Exploitation of Afar pastoralists' ignorance of market values in livestock trading

External factors such as insecurity and export restrictions following the livestock ban imposed in September 2000 after a Rift Valley fever outbreak significantly and similarly to Somali Region affected livestock trading in Afar Region. However, structural factors related to livestock trading remain obvious in and around the Afar Region. During the dry season, there are less marketing opportunities linked to poor livestock health condition. Market distance is an additional constraint, because weak animals are sold at the lowest price in order to avoid taking them back with the risk that they may die. Hence, poor livestock trading conditions enforce pastoralists' cultural attitude to overstock their herds.



Cattle near Metahara Sugar Cane Factory (photo Francois Pigué, July 2002)

In Afar Region, livestock traders and middlemen set the prices, because the Afar pastoralists lack of Amharic language, the main trading language for highlanders and urban traders. Furthermore, in

terms of marketing information, pastoralists are generally not aware of prices and marketing conditions elsewhere. Due to market segmentation and the sheer total lack of market and trading information of the Afar pastoralists, highland traders and middlemen exploit them and hence, fully benefit from the Afar pastoralists' ignorance. Marketing training and networking could be appropriate actions to bring information to the pastoralists, by highlighting price differentials between Assaita and Djibouti or Bati and Metahara, two markets connected to the highlands and the main urban centres. More awareness about marketing conditions might help Afar pastoralists to improve their trading skills and hence their income opportunities.

According to the Muslim calendar of the last couple of years, the main religious festivals, Id al Fitr (end of Ramadan, December 16, 2001), Id al Arafa (end of the Hajj, February 22, 2002), as well as Christmas (January 7, 2002) and Easter (May 5, 2002) all took place during dry spells. For less attractive animals, marketing opportunities during these festivals are quite limited and trade is restricted to local demand only. What makes matters worse is the closure of the Eritrean border since 1998, which cut off the Afar Region from the port of Assab in Eritrea. Another problem are various bans on livestock imports from Afar imposed by Saudi Arabia. Only few export opportunities remain via Djibouti, some of them illegal.

A major problem is the pastoralists' lack of experience and know how in trade and bargaining. Another problem are cultural barriers that limit the willingness to sell livestock. Animals are status symbols and pastoralists only part with them when they are in dire need of cash. Although vendors usually ask for high prices at the start of a market day, they mostly end up selling their animals later in the day at dumping prices. Since a couple of months, traders from the highlands are invading small-scale markets (e.g. Chiffra and Yallo), where conditions are more favourable for them. Tigrean traders are absent since the beginning of March 2002 in the once big Bati livestock market. In Metahara, the second important market linked with Nazaret and Addis Ababa, no animals from Afar and Kereyu are sold due to their poor condition as a result of the dry spell and the recent fighting which restricted the movement of animals to alternative grazing grounds. The main supply of cattle for Metahara arrives by truck from West Hararge. But so far the brand new slaughterhouse built by Al Hamoudi – MIDROC



enterprise, only processed a few camels. With no market abroad, the slaughterhouse remains unutilised since six months.

Al Hamoudi –MIDROC slaughterhouse in Metahara (photo Francois Piguet, July 2002)

2.6 Less income opportunities

For pastoralists in Afar Zone 1 & 2 traditional production of salt remains the main source of alternative income. In Afdera⁷ a number of salt production co-operatives have been organised. But their business is under threat. Industrial salt processing projects are under way and will compete with them. Already dominated by outsiders is the marketing of skins. What is left for Afar people are firewood collection and charcoal making - the two major alternative income sources and the most common coping mechanisms within the whole of Afar Region. The UN-EUE assessment team observed increased marketing of firewood and charcoal in Sardo and between Gewane and Awash Arba along the main road from Awash town towards the Djibouti border.

Other natural resources could offer valuable opportunities, but Afar people seriously lack know how to harvest them in a sustainable manner. Honey for example is a highly appreciated food and medicine collected regularly, but unfortunately in a destructive manner. When Afar people gather the sweet bio-product they destroy the natural hives and they cause considerable damage to the bee-colonies.

⁷ Project initiated by APDA. APDA's mandate focuses on social and economic development for the Afar pastoralists. Water issues are a priority, especially in woredas where APDA is currently working: Eli Daar Afdera and Afambo, three woredas facing chronic water shortage during the dry season.

In urban areas Afar people compete with highlanders for income opportunities, mainly trading and petty trade. In many locations where Afar people are settled such as in Melka Werer for instance or in Awash Station, they represent about half of the population, but control only a few activities. Even the petty trade in milk relies partly on Oromo supplies and is controlled by non-Afar women (Getachew, 2001).

2.7 Chronic humanitarian problems accentuated

Local authorities, pastoralists and representatives of various agencies alike stated that the recent clashes combined with the current extended dry season have affected the southern part of the Afar Region and accentuated but not really changed the needs of the people. Everywhere there is water shortage and animal and human health and education are the main concerns that have been neglected for a long time. Any step forward in terms of self-reliance and development must address these issues.

a) Water stress in Eli Dar woreda

Scarcity of water generates stress during the hottest season and is a major concern in Eli Dar in Zone 1. This woreda is composed of 18 kebeles and situated south of the Danakil Depression along the Assab road close to the border with Eritrea. Since 1998 traffic out of



Travelling far to the next waterhole: Emaciated cattle in (photo Francois Piguet, July 2002)

Assab port in Eritrea is blocked due remote areas of the Afar Region. The woreda got cut off from traditional grazing grounds and disconnected from trade with Assab and Tadjourah in Djibouti.

Eli Dar is extremely arid and offers very poor grazing on extensive hard volcanic soil. People and animals suffer from chronic water shortage during the hottest period of the year. Army presence has brought some marketing

opportunities for shoats. More recently construction work organised by the defence forces offered temporary jobs with salaries of 10 ETB a day. But the military presence also brings problems: The spread of HIV/AIDS and of an unknown coughing infection could be linked to it. The armed forces have attracted numerous restaurants and bars with prostitutes. All related businesses are in the hands of migrants from the highlands.

For water consumption, Eli Dar village relies on shallow wells equipped with Indian pumps in the dry riverbed. Only four of the seven wells are functioning at the moment and the pumps are shut off several times a day in order to save water and give wells time for replenishing. Nevertheless, the Eli Dar water management has improved, thanks to an APDA sanitation awareness campaign. People at the water points now use funnels to fill

up jerry cans at the pumps. Waterpoints were fenced in order to keep animals out. During the dry season, the pastoralists use shallow wells in the same riverbed to water their animals. People in permanent settlements are generally more aware of health and sanitation issues and of water management.

Elsewhere in the woreda water points are unequally distributed and people and animals have to walk long distances. Water scarcity and animal concentration force humans to share the same water source with their livestock. Poor water quality and the spread of water borne diseases are the result.

In Afdera and Eli Dar woredas, APDA constructed birikuts⁸ and water ponds and contributed to the rehabilitation of numerous wells.

b) Human health and the MSF-France TB project in Galaha

“Médecins sans Frontières France” (MSF-France) currently operates a tuberculosis (TB) treatment programme in Galaha, a place where Awash and Mille rivers join. 18 months ago it was necessary to move the TB treatment out of the Dubti hospital in order to isolate TB patients and minimise infection transmission. In Galaha, MSF-France offers accommodation for patients and a family attendant thus reducing treatment drop out. Since three months, MSF-France is confronted with a significant increase of patients. At present 240 people receive TB treatment in Galaha with 25 to 30 severe cases hospitalised. Other patients are accommodated in a traditional Afar tent. The TB patients come from all over Afar Region with a significant increase recorded from around Gewane and Eli Dar.

Aside from TB, the medical team of MSF-France is also confronted with an increasing number of current pathologies. This forced MSF-France and the Assaita Health Department to separate both types of patients. Main problems pose water borne diseases and a seasonally high prevalence of malaria. Anaemia is quite common but no increase of the malnutrition prevalence is reported. Only about 10 children are under a therapeutic feeding programme at the moment. In March 2002, a blood diarrhoea epidemic caused by water pollution resulted in about 50 deaths north of Gewane. The origin of the disease is still unknown.

MSF-France is filling a gap caused by the poor regional medical infrastructure. With the exception of Dubti hospital, which has difficulties in recruiting staff, most of the woreda health centres in Assaita, Gewane, Mille, and the Melka Sede hospital are not fully operational. This forced a lot of patients to seek treatment in places as far away as Nazaret, Woldiya or Dessie. In the military hospital of Manda north of Eli Dar, civilians are only treated in case of emergency and most of the patients have to look for help in Assaita and further away.

c) APDA approach: Education and dissemination of traditional techniques

The Afar Pastoralist Development Association (APDA), a local NGO currently working in the Afar Region since 1996, is engaged in community-based activities focussing on basic education and primary health care. Community leaders are in charge of selecting community workers: literacy teachers, health workers and women extension workers, to be active within APDA's programme. An Afar language school is combined with education on primary health and sanitation.

⁸ Cemented underground water tanks filled by rainfalls collected by soil gravity.

Aside from giving basic training, APDA has developed a network of people in charge of awareness creation in HIV prevention campaign, water and sanitation, child-care, etc. Instead of providing the services at a permanent location the organisation follows the nomads. This enables APDA to collect precious information about the situation in the most remote areas.

Through their network, the NGO got to know about many traditional coping mechanisms that were weakened by the relief food programs. In Afdera for instance, the traditional processing of milk powder and yoghurt has been stopped although it was an efficient method to conserve milk for the dry season. In Dulecha, babies receive goat milk mixed with coffee shells to complement breast-feeding. Those shells are actively marketed in Melka Werer for example. The Promotion and improvement of such traditional coping mechanisms could contribute to strengthen Afar subsistence all year round.

3 Conclusion and recommendations

Security situation and prolonged dry spell have negative cumulative effect on livelihoods

The recent security situation increased the difficulties for pastoralists to cope with the present dry season. It also highlighted most of the chronic problems that need to be addressed. Long-term problems in Afar Region mostly concern education, human and animal health, water supply, rangelands management and animal marketing⁹.

The presently overstocked herds of animals and impressive livestock concentrations around water sources and grazing lands represent high risks for grazing resources and animal health. Livestock diseases are endemic and can break out any time, especially among weak animals during the dry season.

In the long run Afar pastoralists remain vulnerable as they are essentially trekkers, bringing animals and caravans of goods to the traders. Trading routes are under the control of highlanders or Issa Somali. Price determining market mechanisms are also not under the control of the Afar. Exceptions are only salt, butter ghee and dum palms. The Afar traditional economy is extremely vulnerable due to lack of cash and income generating alternatives.

Close monitoring of animal health, grazing and water availability and pastoral movements

The seriousness of the situation and the uncertainties regarding rain request a close monitoring of animal health, grazing and water availability and pastoral movements in order to act timely to save threatened livestock and human population in the area. Specific technical measures must be taken in order to minimise the impact of a possible dry spell. Such measures must cover priority sectors such as animal health, water and fodder. Animal health monitoring should be increased and strengthened, as weak animals are more vulnerable to livestock epidemics (epizootic). Vaccination campaigns against anthrax and

⁹ Already NGOs are active with projects covering most of these topics, mainly ACF (animal health and marketing), MSF (human health and particularly TB treatment) Farm Africa (animal marketing, EWS and resource management), APDA (Afar Pastoral Development Association) intervenes in water and health education. In the future, such activities must expand and go on, a situation, which requires additional funds and development care on a long-term basis.

black legs should be intensified. If necessary, short-term relief, targeted to save animals, has to be organised similar to the CARE-Awash fodder distribution for the Kereyu. Forage trucking could be an efficient short-term solution and in the long run, forage-cropping projects could be implemented. Expansion of water supply facilities with appropriate technology in the pastoral areas as well as short term rehabilitation or construction could be initiated e.g. in Guyah and Kori (on Afdera road, north of Lagiya in Dupiti woreda), where an earth quake recently destroyed the 70,000 m³ water point. Water and grazing land issues appear to be one of the main conflict's causes in the eastern part of the Awash valley, where short-term actions to ease water stress might contribute to a decrease in tensions between the Afar and Issa.

The early warning systems in the Afar Region should be strengthened and eventual action prepared. The Ministry of Federal Affairs has already asked the DPPC to take the situation into account and to be ready to launch an appeal together with mid-term food aid reallocations.

Conflict resolution and Peace building

Conflict resolution and peace building between Issa and Afar communities in Gewane area together with selective water intervention in Shinile zone might contribute to decrease the competition for resources.

Training and capacity building

Training and capacity building in marketing through pastoral market associations should help to increase trading abilities of Afar pastoralists and increase their profit share.

Use of media

The use of media, particularly the use of radio in the local Afargna language for the dissemination of health awareness, in particular HIV prevention, animal diseases, animal marketing, etc. campaigns could have a positive impact on education and know how building. All possibilities for economic diversification and support of existing production such as salt and skins should be explored.

Rehabilitation of grazing lands and development of better water accessibility

Measures for the rehabilitation of grazing lands should be taken and the proliferation of *Prosopis juliflora* controlled. The plant could be used for the production of firewood and charcoal. Top priority should be given to the various aspects of water such as selective additional water facilities for Afambo, Afdera and Eli Dar woredas, Awash River diversions in Gewane and in Awasa as well as control of recurrent floods, water rights and the question of resource sharing between irrigated agriculture and the pastoralists.

Abbreviations and NGOs and other organisations operating in Afar Region

ACF	Action Contre la Faim
APDA	Afar Pastoralist Development Association
DPPC	Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (Federal Government level)
DPPB	Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Bureau (mostly at Regional level)
DPPD	Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Department (mostly at zonal level)
ETB	Ethiopian Birr
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation
MSF-France	Medecins -Sans -Frontieres -France
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
TB	Tuberculosis
UN-EUE	United Nations Emergencies Unit for Ethiopia
UNICEF	United Nation Children Fund
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation

DISCLAIMER

The designations employed and the presentation of material in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever of the UN concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

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