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PERSISTING HUMANITARIAN PROBLEMS AND SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENTS OF COORDINATION IN SNNPR

*The cases of Hadiya, Kambaata-Tambaro, Dawuro,
Gurage, and Silte Zones and Alaba Special Woreda*

Assessment mission: 11 August – 09 September 2003

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1 Introduction and background

The objective of the mission was to facilitate and follow-up Zonal Emergency Partners' Coordination Forum meetings and conduct assessments on detected hotspots. The field mission was carried out in Dawuro, Kambata-Tambaro, Hadiya, Gurage, and Silte Zones and Alaba Special Woreda from 11 August – 09 September 2003. The establishment and institutionalisation of the forums began serving as an effective coordination structure in information exchange and decision-making on the current humanitarian situation in the region. The forums involve all relevant emergency partners, including government line departments, NGOs, and UN agencies.

2 Mission findings

2.1 Humanitarian problems still persist

Key problems of serious humanitarian concern were identified and observed still persisting in the areas covered by the UN OCHA assessment mission.

2.1.1 Hailstorm, heavy rain and flooding damage

The ongoing main season's rainfall amount and distribution in all the abovementioned zones and special woreda is noted sufficient. The *meher* harvest is expected to be good if the rainfall trend continues uninterrupted. The availability of pasture and water also improved. Ironically, the promising present weather condition is threatened by prevalence of crop damages by hailstorm, heavy rain and flooding. UN OCHA field mission observed in some areas that field crops and garden plants were destroyed, cultivated fields eroded, and fields along steep slopes washed-out by erosion, inundating valley bottoms by flooding and silting. As a result, several households were displaced and field crops and grazing lands submerged. Moreover, human life was lost and livestock were killed.

The areas severely hit by the disaster are Shashogo, Duna, Soro, and Lemo Woredas of Hadiya Zone; Angacha Woreda of Kambata-Tambaro Zone; Sankura and Silte Woredas of Silte Zone; and several kebeles in Alaba Special Woreda. For instance, in Shashogo Woreda 2,215 heads of households with a total population of 15,505 persons in 9 Kebeles were affected. 2,128 hectares of crop fields were damaged — 1,118 hectares of hot pepper (*berbere*), 861 hectares of maize, 148 hectares of sorghum, and 2 hectares of haricot bean. In addition, 124 Households with a total population of 1,008 persons in 8 Kebeles were displaced and 284 hectares of field crops inundated due to flooding. In Duna Woreda, 3,344 households in 19 Kebeles were affected in which 1,642 hectares of field crops were damaged — 829 hectares of wheat, 214 hectares of barley, 117 hectares of faba bean, 18 hectares of field pea, 68 hectares of enset food, and 21 hectares of maize. Additionally, 358 hectares prepared for planting have been washed away. In Soro Woreda, 341 households in 10 Kebeles were affected whereby 1452 hectares of field crops were damaged — out of which 76 hectares were completely damaged. Similarly, numerous households were affected in Lemo Woreda by hailstorm damage.

In Angacha Woreda of Kambata-Tambaro Zone, 590 households with a total population of 3,540 in 5 Kebeles were affected. As a consequence, 1 person died, 50 houses have been destroyed, 634 hectares of field crops have been damaged — 60% of wheat in 274 hectares, 34% of faba bean in 180 hectares, 19% of barley in 60 hectares, and 14% of enset in 120 hectares. The total value of destruction is estimated to be 919,062 ETB.

In Sankura Woreda of Silte Zone, 540 households were affected whereby 232 hectares of field crops being damaged — 40% loss in 180 hectares of hot-pepper and maize, moderate damage in 52 hectares of wheat and finger-millet. In addition, 10 households were displaced due to flooding. Similarly, 1,960 hectares of crops in Silte Woreda were damaged with the estimated loss of 64% in 1583 hectares of maize, 16% in 306 hectares of sorghum and 100% in 71 hectares of hot pepper.

Parts of Alaba Special Woreda were seriously hit by the same hazard in which the detailed damage figures were under assessment by the Agriculture & Natural Resources Development and Conservation Desk at the time of the field mission. Despite the natural hazard, lack of soil and water conservation activities were noted to be among key aggravating factors for the increased intensity of erosion and flooding.

2.1.2 Critical shortage of fertilizer and prevailing Lump Skin disease

Critical shortage of fertilizer was noted during the planting season in all the areas of this assessment despite the favourable rainfall conditions. Therefore, possible yield reduction is expected on the main season's harvest. Its adverse effects are stated to be more severe in those predominantly wheat producing areas that have been used to fertilizer application for a long time such as the Hadiya and Kambata-Tambaro Zones. In the case of the former zone, it was reported that increased fields than normal were covered by *teff* due to late planting season for wheat while expecting fertilizer.

Although the severity of Lump Skin disease has somehow subsided, it is still widespread in Hadiya, Kambata-Tambaro, and Silte Zones and parts of Alaba Special Woreda. Trypanosomiasis is endemic to most parts of the lowlands where its adverse effects are

worsened in times of pasture and water shortage. The widespread eucalyptus trees have severe adverse effects on soil nutrients and underground water though it needs thorough study.

2.1.3 Inaccessibility and consequent sufferings of the beneficiaries

Inaccessibility, exasperated by the rainy season, caused multiple problems for the relief beneficiary population. The needy population living in areas difficult to reach due to lack of all weather roads and rough terrain have to travel long distances to reach relief food distribution sites. In the mean time, assessment teams seldom visit these areas to update on the humanitarian situation. For instance, the beneficiaries of Gena Bossa Woreda in Dawuro Zone are forced to travel to the neighbouring Loama Woreda to receive their relief food. On average they travel more than 50 km (two-way). Since they usually cannot arrive at the exact time for the distribution date as well as problems related to delays in distribution itself, they have to wait for two to three days. Hence, they suffer from hardships of hunger, thirst, and the cold nights when sleeping outside waiting for the food distribution. The Zonal Health Desk reported that some beneficiaries have been affected by pneumonia as a consequence. These beneficiaries share parts of their ration, usually one-third, with owners of pack animals for transportation. In certain cases, some even sell the food ration right away.

The beneficiaries of Duna Woreda in Hadiya Zone are forced to receive their ration from a distribution site located in the neighbouring Soro Woreda. They also have encountered similar problems. Here, it was reported that some beneficiaries were robbed while travelling back home with food ration in the evening.

The needy population in Sankura Woreda are also exposed to severe difficulties due to inaccessibility. Project Mercy, an NGO engaged in relief food distribution in Silte Zone, has handed over Sankura Woreda to World Vision (WV) due to lack of access to reach the area. World Vision, on the other hand, runs the relief food distribution activities in the woreda extending operation from its base at Shone in Badawacho Woreda of Hadiya Zone. However, both the zonal and woreda government staff is sceptical of the efficiency of WV's relief food distribution in a single distribution site located at a very far corner of the woreda. WV also undertakes similar operations in Alaba Special Woreda where related constraints were noted by the relevant woreda government staff. The WV office in Shone admitted the existing gaps due to their overstretched operational capacity in the emergency relief with limited resources principally meant for Badawacho Woreda Area Development Program (ADP).

2.1.4 Increasing beneficiaries, inefficient targeting, and warehousing problems

The beneficiary numbers are increasing in several areas. In Genna-Bossa Woreda of Dawuro Zone, for instance, the number of food beneficiaries rose from the targeted 19,500 (as of August) to 23,200. Hence, the woreda was forced to distribute 789 quintals from pre-positioned relief food¹. In Sankura Woreda of Silte Zone, 12,955 needy people identified have not yet been entitled any access to relief food. Similar increasing beneficiary numbers were noted in the Angacha Woreda of Kambata-Tambaro Zone and

¹ The Genna Bosa Woreda local authorities distributed 788.8 quintals of ration from pre-positioned relief food without proper consultation with the zonal authorities.

Meskan Woreda of the Gurage Zone. In Angacha Woreda, the DPP desk explained about prevalent cheap labour cost, increasing trends of begging, and unstable but rising grain market prices, indicating a precarious scenario for the humanitarian situation.

Inefficient targeting remains still a widespread problem of differing scale. There is a serious warehousing problem, especially in Dawuro Zone where relief food was stored in government offices and schools. Similar warehouse shortages were noted in all the zones covered by the UN OCHA assessment. In Kacha Bira Woreda of Kambata-Tambaro Zone, a Rubbhall sent to the woreda more than a year ago has not yet been erected because of technical problems.

2.1.5 Incidence of malnutrition, problems related to TFCs and malaria threat

Malnutrition is still prevalent. Preparations are underway to open a new TFC at Angacha Woreda of Kambata-Tambaro Zone the local Kale Hiwot NGO. According to the nutrition assessment conducted by the Sankura Woreda Health Office, out of a number² of children screened in the woreda, 1,377 were mildly and moderately while 300 were severely malnourished.

During the forum meetings, the heads of Health Desks in all the zones reported prevalent detection of malnutrition cases in their respective local health centres, clinics and health posts. Meanwhile, sanitation and hygiene problems were noted in the TFCs and WFCs in the Gurage Zone. In particular, the standard of Dalocha TFC in Dalocha Woreda of Silte Zone is observed being below standard. Project Mercy, an NGO in charge of the centre, admitted the poor conditions and already took action to improve its operation.

According to the head of the Health Desk in Dawuro Zone, there are still prevalent cases of malnutrition in the affected kebeles of Gena Bossa Woreda. He expressed how they felt surprised by the results of the earlier rapid nutrition survey result conducted by SC-US, which from their point of view lacks to depict the reality.

Malaria is endemic in the lowlands of most zones and its increased threat is obvious and inevitable. For instance, it is still a number one disease in areas such as Genna Bosa and Loama Woredas of Dawuro Zone. Despite some shortfalls, DDT has been sprayed in most malaria prone areas in an attempt to limit the spread of the disease.

Likewise, although water is available due to the on-going rainfall, access to clean water remains a serious problem. In particular, problems of spare parts and skilled personnel are key problems in areas accessing water from boreholes such as Silte Zone, Alaba Special Woreda and some others.

2.1.6 Asset depletion in poor households and destitution of resettlement returnees

Although it needs a thorough study, several households of the poorest category have disposed their land asset through rental and extended sharecropping arrangements to wealthier farmers, including small town dwellers. In the latter form of arrangement, the

² The number of children screened is not indicated in the assessment report.

landowner's share is mostly less since the households cannot cover equally the costs of inputs. Hence, they became very vulnerable.

Similarly, numerous settlers from the failed 1980s resettlement schemes who returned to their places of origin were eking out for a mere survival, leading a life of utmost destitution. Since their land had already been distributed to others, they found themselves landless after return from the settlement schemes. If any land was given after their return, it was only very small plots mostly at marginal locations just to build their huts and hence since lack basic means of livelihood.

In SNNPR, poorer households are among the most severely affected. For instance, most of the children and caretakers observed and interviewed at Teza TFC in Kadida Gamela Woreda of Kambata-Tambaro Zone are from families who returned from resettlement areas and from the poorest households lacking basic livelihood assets.

2.1.7 Capacity and infrastructure constraints remain prevalent

Most zonal and woreda offices are inadequately and poorly staffed and hence face capacity problems. For instance, the DPP desk at the zonal level has only one staff. But in most woredas, the DPP desk structure permits to post additional staff. Despite efforts from all relevant line departments and offices both at zonal and woreda levels, there is a predominant tendency to leave and push all humanitarian and emergency disaster issues to the DPP desks alone. Hence, shortage of human resources has serious and adverse impact on the management and the monitoring of the prevalent humanitarian crisis.

Most of the offices at zonal and woreda levels lack the necessary logistical and financial capacity to monitor the humanitarian situation as well as to take timely actions. Lack of proper infrastructure such as rural feeder roads, are severe bottlenecks. Due to both multiple resource limitations and poor infrastructure facilities, basic data and figures are either completely missing or do not clearly depict the contextual realities. For instance, as noted earlier, inaccessibility and capacity limitations, limited and even prevented proper information provision and hence the visibility of the humanitarian crisis in woredas such as Gena Bossa in Dawuro Zone, Duna Woreda in Hadiya Zone, and Sankura Woreda in Silte Zone.

2.1.8 Data collection on belg harvest and federal decisions criticised

There has been and still is frequent criticisms at the various Partners' Coordination Meetings at woreda and zonal levels concerning the past and most recent belg assessment undertaken in various localities of SNNPR and the accuracy of the perceived humanitarian situation and subsequent decisions taken on the number of eligible relief food beneficiaries at federal level. The Multi Agency Assessment Teams do usually only have very limited time and are not able to undertake in-depths assessment in order to obtain a more realistic overview of the crisis situation. Furthermore, the timing of this year's belg assessment in parts of SNNPR was inappropriate because crops were at a flowering stage and hence harvest projections can only be of very limited value. Members of the coordination meetings also criticised and questioned the qualifications and the team composition for the assessment. In their opinion, the teams did not include key experts or enough experienced

and familiar people within the teams that would have enabled them to come up with better estimations.

Bargaining about beneficiary figures between assessment teams and woreda officials is a very common practice in the absence of accurate data, figures and relevant information for better decision-making. During the last *'pre-belg assessment'*, similar practices and gaps were noted for example in Shashogo Woreda of the Hadiya Zone. When the assessment teams debriefed at regional level in Awassa on their assessment findings, the inappropriate timing and other shortcomings and constraints have been discussed and the regional government demanded a reassessment. However, no reassessment took place and as a result, gaps now exist between the empirical realities on the ground regarding increased beneficiary figures and the shortage of allocated relief resources.

2.2 Emergency coordination significantly improved

Regional Emergency Partners' Coordination Forum was established at a regional level as a new initiative of the UNCT SO-Awassa in order to institutionalise effective coordination structures. Regular meetings of the forum have been held bi-monthly being chaired by the Head of DPPO and co-chaired by the OCHA Field Coordination Officer. Four sectoral task forces were been established, involving all relevant partners. These are Agriculture Task Force chaired by Head of Bureau of Agriculture, Health and Nutrition Task Force chaired by Head of Bureau of Health, Water and Sanitation Task Force chaired by Bureau of Water, Mines and Energy, and Food and Logistics Task Force chaired by Head of DPPO. Each task force is responsible to undertake emergency related activities in its respective specialized operational mandates. Meanwhile, the UNCTSO meetings are held regularly on a weekly basis and chaired by the OCHA Awassa Field Office.

At the Zonal and Special Woreda level, regular Zonal/Special Woreda Emergency Partners' Coordination Meetings are held bi-monthly³ and chaired by the Heads of the Rural Development Coordination Main Departments. OCHA field officers have been facilitating the establishment of these meetings as well as the subsequent monitoring to ensure the institutionalisation of these forums. The minutes are taken by the Heads of DPP desks supported by UNICEF field monitors and being distributed to all participants and relevant offices in the woredas and the region. The participants of the meetings are relevant government line departments and desks (Agriculture, Health, Water, and Planning), all NGOs operating in the respective zones/special woredas, and UN agencies (UNICEF field monitors, OCHA field officers, and accordingly other UNCT-SO Awassa member agencies).

These coordination meetings serve as a platform to elaborate common action plans amongs all partners and inter-actors, i.e. government line departments, NGOs and UN agencies. Significant improvements have been achieved in the institutionalisation of effective coordination on the prevailing humanitarian crisis by mobilizing the efforts of all emergency partners. These coordination meetings very well served the action-oriented coordination purpose enhancing information exchange and strengthening decision-making capacities.

³ The experience so far is convening the forum meetings regularly principally bi-weekly but with flexible arrangements extending from 15 to 20 days interval as agreed upon by the participating partners.

3 Conclusions and recommendations

UN OCHA field mission in SNNPR has facilitated and monitored Zonal Emergency Partners' Coordination Meetings and assessed detected a series of areas where the humanitarian situation in one way or another deteriorated or where serious humanitarian problems prevailed or emerged. Key problems identified include, crop damage by hailstorm and flooding, fertilizer shortage and possible yield reduction, inaccessibility and distant relief distribution sites, malnutrition, poor hygiene and sanitation situations in the TFCs, warehousing problems, increased malaria threat, inefficient food aid targeting, poor access to clean water, lack of linking relief to development, increased vulnerability and depletion of assets by poorer households, prevalent cases of lump skin disease, lack of conservation schemes, and adverse effects of widespread eucalyptus trees on soil nutrients and underground water. However, significant improvements were noted in the institutionalisation of effective coordination among the emergency partners in the exchange of information and decision-making. In the series of forum meetings held, action plans were formulated on key problems identified based on humanitarian updates for taking action and follow-ups.

The persisting humanitarian crisis in the affected parts of the region requires deeper understanding of the root causes and closer follow-up of the situation by enhancing effective coordination. The responses taken to address the immediate effects of the crisis should be strengthened through interventions linking up to longer-term sustainable solutions. In other words, concerted efforts should take place to link relief with development. Areas heavily hit by hailstorm, erosion and flooding should be supplied with immediate relief packages but which later on will be replaced with longer-term development-oriented interventions and solutions such as soil and water conservation measures. Capacities at all levels and most particularly at woreda level should be built and regularly strengthened deploying the necessary resources. Hence, they would be enabled to closely monitor the humanitarian situation, identify contextually the root causes of persisting crisis, find out local level solutions with the participation of the communities at the grassroots, and be able to consolidate systematically data updates that can facilitate rapid intervention.

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Annex

Abbreviations

ADP	Area Development Program
DPPD	Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Desk
DPPC	Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission
DPPO	Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Office
ETB	Ethiopian Birr
HH	Household
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
SC-US	Save the Children USA
SNNPR	Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples region
TFC	Therapeutic Feeding Centre
UNCT-SO	United Nations Country Team – Support Office
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
UN OCHA	United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
WFC	Weight Feeding Centre
WV	World Vision

Forthcoming forum meetings in the case study zones

The forthcoming “Zonal Emergency Partners’ Coordination Forum Meetings” are scheduled as pointed out in the following table.

Zonal Emergency Partners’ Coordination Forum Meetings			
No.	Zones	3.1.1.1 Date	Time
1	Dawuro	23 September 2003	9:30 am
4	Gurage	25 September 2003	9:30 am
5	Silte	26 September 2003	9:30 am
3	Hadiya	01 October 2003	9:30 am
2	Kambata-Tambaro	02 October 2003	9:30 am
6	Alaba Sp. Woreda	03 October 2003	9:30 am