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UNITED NATIONS COUNTRY TEAM ETHIOPIA



## Dry Season Movements in Afar Thwarted by Insecurity

High concentrations of animals have been noticed in several locations of Afar region due to both the current dry season and insecurity in the area. This concentration might induce overgrazing and animals will die if rains are delayed. ▶

# Deportees Face Serious Crisis



*To survive, Lemlem, a teenage deportee in Mekele, turned to prostitution to support her family.*

Pain is reflected in Tiblets's face as she recounts the story of her eldest daughters. Squeezed into a three by three meter room rented for 70 birr per month, she lives with her husband, eight children and four-week-old grandson. After being deported from Eritrea over one year ago, the family had difficulty surviving. The two eldest teenage daughters, Lemlem and Liya, resorted to prostitution to help the family, even though on some occasions the girls were not paid for their services and abused. Lemlem is now a new mother and Liya is pregnant, both have been shunned by the community with no possibility of finding respectable jobs. More disturbingly, prior to the Ethio-Eritrea war, the girls had a future. Lemlem worked in a pastry shop, while Liya was employed in a food packing company.

These girls say that they will try to keep and care for their babies, unlike a number of deportee\* mothers who were so desperate they abandoned their newborns in the street or left their children on doorsteps in the hope that another family would take care of the child. The local administration government in both Mekele and Adigrat are attributing more than twenty cases to deportees due to the severe social crisis they have encountered.

Tiblets and her daughters live in Mekele, but similar hardship stories are heard in other parts of Ethiopia. On the outskirts of Addis, by a mud hut covered in scraps of plastic sheeting, Mehret passionately describes how her husband deserted her and her seven children when the pressure to provide for the family

\* Those Ethiopian nationals returning from Eritrea both forcefully and induced circumstances as a result of the Ethio-Eritrea war are referred to as deportees throughout this article.

## NEWS ▶

### Opportunistic Traders Abuse Food Aid

Traders take advantage of increase in cereal prices and sell stock at a high profit instead of delivering to needy weredas as planned. ▶

### WFP EMOPs Approved

A new emergency operation for relief food assistance to small-scale farmers and drought affected pastoralists and an extension of the IDP emergency operation was approved. ▶

### Phase III of Development Programme Launched

The third phase of the Ethio-Danish Joint Development Programme that covers 2001 to 2004 was launched on 1 June. ▶

### Meningitis Controlled

From early September 2001 a total of 5,022 cases of meningococcal meningitis were reported in Ethiopia. As a result of coordinated efforts of partners, in all areas where the disease reached epidemic level, it has been controlled. ▶

### Readers Feedback

Readers comment on last issue's article on Somali Region. ▶

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became too intense six months ago. To survive, Mehret makes five birr a week washing clothes for a wealthier family on the hill above their hovel. When asked how she could feed seven children and herself on five birr a week, she responded, “We only eat bread”.

Somehow Tiblets and Mehret are the lucky ones. For many other returnees, churches and streets have become “home” and begging their means of survival. Initially, both Tiblets and Mehrets received 1,000 birr upon arrival, 100 birr for each child, 85 birr for cooking utensils and 104 for blankets, and a 15kg per month ration for nine months of food, the standard relief package for deportee families. For both women, the financial assistance provided by the National Fund Raising Committee for Victims of the Ethio-Eritrea War and the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (DPPC), the largest amount of money they had ever received, lasted only a few months. Now they will have to wait an estimated six months more for further support when the World Bank/Government of Ethiopia Emergency Recovery Programme (ERP) assistance for deportees is scheduled to start. Unless humanitarian assistance can be provided from some source during the interim, it is likely that the harsh conditions many deportees face will only worsen. A government official in Addis confirmed this saying that many deportees are in very poor condition, have nothing to eat and need more relief assistance. He continued to note that 1,000 birr is not enough for rent for very long, nor is it enough to start a new life. However, money is not the only answer. Support needs to go beyond the short-term provision of cash or food.

Numerous deportees came to Ethiopia in poor condition. Some had been imprisoned in Eritrea for months before being deported to Ethiopia and had to pay the government a tax in order to leave. Some managed to carry some Nakfa but have been unable to exchange it in Ethiopia. Most families were split in two partially remaining in Eritrea; their property was taken, they lost all possessions and their livelihoods. Many reported traumatic experiences, such as being raped, and now suffer from psychosocial problems and isolation.

Between late 2000 and mid 2001 there were an average of one thousand people returning from Eritrea every week. The current total number of deportees is estimated at over 95,000. Between 70,000 and 75,000 (75%) went to Tigray, while the remaining spread throughout Ethiopia, predominantly in Addis Ababa and in North Wello, an estimated 4,000 and 10,000 deportees respectively. Of the deportees in Tigray, only 17% have been able to engage in income generating activities and 10% have been able to use DPPC/B cash grants to initiate small-scale businesses (UNICEF/WAT/Study, November 2001).

In hindsight, it is understandable that the deportee caseload would be given less attention over the longer term. The country was stricken with more than 10 million drought-affected countrywide and 350,000 displaced persons from the border conflict at the height of the influx of deportees. Humanitarian resources were limited at that point and directly after the conflict. In addition to the drought-affected and IDPs, the Government had many other priorities for assistance: demobilized soldiers and families who lost their breadwinner. Presently, however, many deportees find themselves among the worst urban and rural destitution cases in the country with an impact being greatly felt by their host communities.

Acceptance within host communities in Tigray has been hard to come by for deportees. Initially, some of the local population was angry with women from urban areas in Eritrea wearing western clothes and exposing parts of their bodies and representing a threat

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to the more conservative dress code of their culture. With the host community slowly beginning to accept these seemingly foreign habits and deportees quietly conforming to local customs, other, more serious pressure is being exerted on the community. In Adigrat, host to an estimated 38,000 deportees, a rise in crime has been observed, which is thought by the regional government to be linked to hardships faced by deportees. Cases include those of deportees killing in order to steal the 1,000 birr from those trickling back into the country receiving their first assistance package. The rest are crimes committed on the local population. Other stress indicators include a noticeable increase in the number of street children, beggars, mentally disturbed and chat and marijuana usage. All factors contribute to tension between the two groups.

A local association, Addis Hiwot, housed in a dilapidated building, was established in Addis to help deportees liberate themselves from any type of dependency with assistance in finding jobs and permanent shelter. Although the association acts as a bond and provides hope for its 870 members, it has only been able to help a few of the most vulnerable. The association even lets as many as ten members a night, who have nowhere to go or have overstayed their welcome with relatives, sleep on the floor of their small rundown office.

Addis Hiwot, which symbolically means “new life” in Amharic, knows that these deportees do have a new life now. Previously many of the deportees that settled in Addis were middle class professionals who contributed to society, but are now jobless and homeless beggars living in a society where they feel unwanted. The deportees feel Ethiopian, yet they said the community does not accept them. Employers know they are from Eritrea because their IDs are different and therefore have refused to hire them, meaning that in addition to the economic and social woes, they also have an identity crisis.

The regional government in Tigray is aware of the decline in the deportees' well-being and is initiating measures to ensure that they receive needed assistance. Their Office of Rehabilitation and Social Affairs (ORSA) held a workshop in early April to address the needs of vulnerable groups including deportees. As an outcome, a taskforce was established comprising key donor, UN and government officials to develop a draft Plan of Action for short-term and long-term programmes. This taskforce recently met in Addis Ababa to refine this three-year plan for rehabilitation and reintegration of war-affected persons in Tigray Regional State. The proposed short-term programme includes the provision of basic food commodities. The Tigray Regional State has submitted a proposal to the federal DPPC in an effort to secure these resources. Unfortunately, the DPPC is unable to supply relief food to the deportees, as assistance was not included for 2002 mainly because the previous request in 2001 was not fully met by donors. In addition, food resources are currently already limited. With over 5 million drought affected farmers and pastoralists currently in need of food assistance of whom almost one million are in Tigray Region, this is a particularly difficult challenge. Also part of the short-term programme is the provision of shelter before the upcoming rainy season, psychological and social support, school uniforms and supplies. UNICEF is responding with Japanese and Netherlands Committee funding to cover psychosocial and educational needs while technical support in planning interventions for the deportees has been provided to ORSA. Further complementary approaches are also under discussion with IOM. This will complement a joint Women's Association of Tigray/UNICEF/Bureau of Labor and Social Affairs study already undertaken that highlighted the general problem and specific needs and recommended priority areas for interventions.



*Members of Addis Hewit, an association formed to support deportees, in front of their office in Addis Ababa. Although the association acts as a bond and provides hope for its 870 members, it has only been able to help a few of the most vulnerable.*



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Besides the recognized need for short-term assistance, the regional government has also identified non-financial assistance it can give to deportees. They have already provided an authorization to deportee children to allow them to attend school free of charge. Although this assists many deportees, the most destitute who are unable to afford uniforms and supplies, are still unable to attend school. The government is also aware that those skilled deportees who are trained no longer have certificates and documentation of their education and abilities. To resolve this problem, the government is arranging for testing and providing certification to skilled workers as proof of their proficiency in the job marketplace.

Although the Emergency Recovery Programme (ERP) is expected to relieve many of the problems of deportees, most believe that it will not cover all the necessities or be quick enough to sustain this vulnerable group. The ERP plans to provide deportees with training based on a current needs assessment intended to identify the most appropriate training and a cash grant depending upon family size to fund start up initiatives. Several cases of deportees using their initial 1,000 birr to successfully establish small enterprises is hoped to be replicated through this next round of assistance. These deportees were able to start up successful businesses like bicycle repair shops, teahouses, shoe repair shops and hair salons. As part of the ERP, a re-registration started on 9 April 2000 coordinated by ERP Coordination and Management Offices in Tigray, Afar and Addis where the remaining regions are coordinated by the federal DPPC. This process will help Government identify beneficiaries and their location while also assessing needs so as to target this next round of assistance. A media campaign was conducted throughout the country to inform deportees to register in the closest wereda. In Tigray, 45,000 households are expected to register. Members of the ERP team commented that this second allotment of aid will not be sufficient to meet all the needs of the deportees and that they and the regional government are hoping that NGO interventions in areas such as HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns, support to the health sector and psychosocial assistance can complement their programme (and the ERP that of NGOs and others) in rehabilitating this group.

Even though the majority of government officials agree that there is clearly a short-term need for assistance before the ERP begins, it is understood that this is not a solution in itself. Providing food and shelter is not the answer, although it buys some time until the longer-term problems can be adequately addressed. There is an immediate need for food, shelter and basic household support; psychosocial assistance for those traumatized by the loss of assets, the hardships of relocation, being ostracized or physical or psychological abuse; and basic training and skill development for a new life in Ethiopia. This awareness of needs for short-term support has not been translated into funding or comprehensive actions. In the meantime, while longer-term solutions are being developed, the risk of more women turning to prostitution, babies being left on the street and mothers feeding their children only on bread continues to rise.

Your comments are welcome: [un-eue@un.org](mailto:un-eue@un.org)

The Women's Association of Tigray/UNICEF/Bureau of Labor and Social Affairs study can be reviewed by accessing the following website <http://www.telecom.net.et/~undp-eue/reports/deportees.pdf>



*Amanuel H/Mariam, just 22, was one of the few deportees able to use their initial assistance package to start a successful business in Mekele. This type of initiative is hoped to be replicated through the upcoming ERP programme.*

## NEWS

### Opportunistic Traders Abuse Food Aid

North and South Gondar is home to some of the most inaccessible weredas north of the country, most of them highly food insecure, eroded, with depleted soils, erratic rainfall and depending on food aid during many months of the year. High mountain ranges, deep valleys and a lack of roads make food deliveries to these areas very difficult and during the rainy season practically impossible. Because of recurring delays over the last few years, trucks were unable to deliver food due to heavy rains. In order to avoid a repeat of this situation the EU agreed this year to facilitate the food supply to the most inaccessible weredas Jannamora, Beyeda, Adi Arkay, Lay Gayint, Ebnat and Simada through maize purchases on the local market. The idea was to speed up the delivery process and preposition the food before the rainy season which should have been a sure bet, since the cereals were readily available in the surplus producing areas especially in nearby Gojam. The federal DPPC invited traders for bidding and issued tenders for the different locations. Unfortunately this exercise failed completely because of the irresponsible and opportunistic behaviour of trading companies. Traders took advantage of increase in the cereal prices during the months of April and May and sold their stock at a high profit back on the local market instead of delivering it to the remote weredas targeted by the DPPC. Until beginning of June, when the rainy season started, the weredas Adi Arkay, Northern Beyeda, Lay Gayint and Ebnat received practically no food deliveries. This might result in the usual food shortages particularly in the remote kebeles and possibly to increased migration due to failed pre-positioning before the start of the rainy season people from remote areas may also have to travel for days to reach their distribution points.

### WFP EMOPs Approved

A new Emergency Operation (EMOP) for relief food assistance to small-scale farmers and drought-affected pastoralists was approved on 23 May 2002, to assist some two million beneficiaries until March 2003. The extension of the EMOP for internally displaced Ethiopians in Tigray Region was also approved on 31 May 2002, which, resources permitting, will cover the food requirements of 76,500 residual IDPs to end December 2002.

### Phase III of Ethio-Danish Joint Development Programme Launched

The Joint Ethio-Danish Development Programme was launched in 1997 to alleviate the problems of food insecurity and to improve the coping capacity at household level in Kobo and Habru Woredas of North Wollo. The programme consists of three components or projects within education, health and agriculture that are implemented in an integrated manner both geographically and functionally by the Ethiopian partners Save the Children Denmark (SCD), Ethiopian Red Cross (ERCS) and Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus/Lutheran World Federation (EECMY/LWF) in close cooperation with the various government counterparts. This integrated approach is believed to bring better impact for the target groups. The programme is funded by Danida and there is also a research component attached.

The third phase that covers 2001-2004 started its operation in 23 kebeles of the two woredas on 1 June 2001. The main objectives of this phase are sustainable increase of agricultural production and other household income, improved access to education and generally improved development opportunities for children,

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improved access to health services and better sanitation and women's and girls' access to resources increased. Protection against HIV/AIDS for children and adults and non-farm income development are also incorporated as new joint activities.

The programme has during phase 1 and 2 benefited 3,400 households through river diversion irrigation schemes, by irrigating 613 ha of land and more than 45,000 persons through food-financed activities (food-for-work and employment generation schemes). Eight health posts were constructed serving a population of up to 40,000. By renovating 9 primary schools and establishing 13 Alternative Basic Education Centers in areas without access to schools during phase 1 and 2 more than 5,800 children now have access to education.

### **Japan, UNICEF Sign US\$ 2.6 Million Grant Agreement**

A US\$ 2.6 million grant agreement was signed on 3 June 2002 between the Government of Japan and UNICEF in support of the 2002 National Campaign for the Eradication of Polio in Ethiopia. The donation was part of the US\$ 31.6 million that Japan earmarked in 2002 for eight countries, of which five are in Africa.

### **Meningitis Controlled in All Areas Where Disease Reached Epidemic Level**

From early September in 2001 a total of 5022 cases and 250 deaths of meningococcal meningitis were reported in Ethiopia (Case Fatality Rate (CFR) 5%). 109 districts reported cases over the past 10 months from SNNPR, Oromiya, Benshangul Gumuz, Tigray and Amhara Regional states. The Ministry of Health has revitalized the taskforce on meningitis control, which comprises the MOH, MSF (Netherlands, France, Belgium, Switzerland), International Federation of Red Cross Societies, Christian Relief and Development Association (CRDA), WHO and UNICEF that coordinates the control effort. At present only Tigray region reported cases at the end of May and control efforts through mass vaccination is underway in two remaining woredas. In all areas where the disease reached epidemic level (threshold of 10 cases per 100,000 population in one week) it has been controlled with the coordinated efforts of partners.

### **WB Earmarks US\$ 100 Million For Ethiopia's Education Sector Development Program**

The World Bank has allocated US\$ 100 million to help Ethiopia's Education Sector Development Program (ESDP). The program is believed to help children, especially girls, children under difficult circumstances, and those from ethnic minorities, have access to good quality free and compulsory education.

### **Dry Season Movements in Afar Thwarted by Insecurity**

High concentrations of animals have been noticed in several locations of Afar region during the current dry season. The recent fighting with the Issa, Kereyu and Ittu has contributed to limited movement of animals in zone 3 (Gewane, Amibara and Awash Fentale wereda) jeopardising the 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, Dofan), with high pressure on grazing resources in the main Afar pastoral sanctuaries. Pastoralists from zone 5, who usually come down to this same area have been mixing with these pastoralists along the riverbank, although they

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are now starting to move west up to Ifat, where the Afar are competing for grazing land with Argobba (Oromos from Wello). In zone 1, animal concentrations have also taken place 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. In two weeks, when those water resources are expected to dry up, animals will also move to the Awash river and to Dobi, a salty depression situated near Galafi and the Djiboutian border.

In several locations, mainly in Awash-Fentale and Amibara, 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 animals not only due to cultural habits but also poor marketing opportunities. For the past several years, those pastoralists have 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 Arafā), as well as Fasika for the Orthodox are all taking place during the dry season. At the time of the main marketing period in the year, animals are not in good condition and prices might be cut as much as 60 to 70 per-cent. On the other hand, traders and middlemen are now targeting small size markets like Yallo and Chiffra instead of Bati and Metahara, the main southern market connected to Addis Ababa that is presently inaccessible to Afar due to the ongoing conflict with the Kereyu around Awash National Park.

If the main rains (kerima) expected to start in June or July are delayed, Afar pastoralists as well as Kereyu, Ittu and Issa might face great difficulties within the next six weeks due to a lack of grazing and higher risk of epizootic. A lot of animals, mainly cattle, will die contributing to acceleration of pastoralists impoverishment.

### Readers Feedback

#### Comments from readers on the April Focus in Ethiopia article “Waiting for More than Water: A Look at Somali Region”

The UN-EUE field mission report would have been more comprehensive and explanatory if it had spent some of its time extracting information on why it was decided that the Southeast Rangelands Project (SERP) was to merge with the Regional Bureau of Agriculture....The team should have also discussed with clan leaders and elderly, those who have according to their culture, decision-making power, and the capacity to mobilize the community for change....Otherwise, the report is enlightening and appreciable. - *Excerpt from a letter from a Project Manager working with an NGO in Somali National Regional State for more than five years*

One main problem with your article is that there is no mention of any appeal towards which donors can apply funding ...The NGOs are being encouraged by donors to submit proposals – I don't know how many have actually submitted any - which is another catch - donors may say to the NGOs "okay, we want to help in Somali Region" as a result of your item, but there won't be ways to absorb money they want to spend. - *Excerpt from e-mail by a UN staff member*

*Focus on Ethiopia is produced by the United Nations Emergencies Unit for Ethiopia. For further information contact the Information Unit at [un-eue@un.org](mailto:un-eue@un.org), Tel.: 44 41 62 or 51 37 25*



*Goat skin water containers loaded on camels and donkeys to supply distant nomad settlements.*