

21 November 2003



Hopes and Difficulties of Water Harvesting

Water harvesting is one of the two main pillars of the government's food security strategy. Its implementation is encountering major difficulties, however, water harvesting if done properly has great potential. ►

UNITED NATIONS COUNTRY TEAM ETHIOPIA



Crisis in the Making: Action Needed in Somali Region due to Rain Failure

For the past several weeks the humanitarian community has been closely monitoring the short season *deyr* rain areas in Somali Region in the hopes of some improvement from the rainfall delay which is now reaching two months. In some areas, showers have been received, but either not substantial enough or in the neediest areas to provide significant water relief. Presently there are 2.6 million people (out of the total population of the region of 3.5 million) in the zones that receive *deyr* rains, but no firm figures on the number of people in need or number of livestock or people concentrating in the affected areas. Upcoming assessments should provide a clearer picture of needs and beneficiaries in the region. This information will feed into the Joint Humanitarian Appeal scheduled for issue on 10 December 2003.

The short season *deyr* rains are normally received in October in seven of the nine zones in Somali Region and last until end December. They are less intense and less well distributed than the *gu* rains occurring from March to May, but are crucial for rejuvenation of pasture and water sources for pastoralists before the long dry *jilaal* season.

Interventions to save livestock assets and thus livelihoods of Somali Region population, and of those who have migrated with their herds from the critically drought-affected parts of Sool and Sanaag in neighboring northeast Somalia, will be increasingly urgent in the near future as the additional pressure depletes the limited pasture and water now available. Deterioration in the condition of livestock inevitably leads to deterioration in the nutritional status of the pastoralist population, especially among young children. Food aid is being assessed, and is currently continuing for some one million people. Requirements for an improved water supply, emergency health assistance and shelter are also being identified.

NEWS ►

Multi-agency Assessment Teams Debrief

Multi-agency assessment teams have finished their work of examining the current food security situation in most parts of the country. Assessment teams debriefed key stakeholders on Tuesday, 18 November at the DPPC. ►

WFP Issues a Donor Alert on the Refugee Program

A donor alert has been issued by WFP to bring attention to the urgent need for contributions to enable WFP to continue to provide food rations to 123,000 refugees in Ethiopia. ►

Tufts Training: Saving Lives and Livelihoods

A two week course in Addis Ababa that started on 9 November for humanitarian program managers will be completed on Saturday, 22 November. ►

Ireland Donates One Million Euros for UNICEF Water and Sanitation Projects in SNNPR

The Irish Government has donated one million Euros to UNICEF to fund new and rehabilitate old water supply and sanitation services in SNNPR over the next 12 months. ►

21 November 2003

Enhanced Humanitarian Coordination

The regional government has enhanced humanitarian coordination in response to the current crisis. The Somali Regional Council has entrusted the Regional Crisis Management Committee to prepare a contingency plan and to coordinate the planning and response processes of line departments. The Committee, with inputs from line Departments (not all the sectors have active regional task forces), comprised of water, health, livestock, and agriculture and education bureaus with technical support from UNICEF, WFP, SC UK and OCHA have prepared a detailed contingency and preparedness plan submitted to DPPC on 20 November 2003 to address the current drought between November 2003 and April 2004. The report identifies two possible scenarios, the middle case scenario considers receiving some *deyr* rains in late November or December 2003 and the worst case scenario assumes the extreme possibility of complete failure of the *deyr* rains. It also highlights that the drought situation is becoming critical and that it appears that water is the most serious problem and needs to be given top priority by humanitarian aid agencies.

Additionally, emergency coordination meetings involving government, UN agencies and NGOs are being held at the federal level and in the regional capital of Jijiga to plan response to the worsening drought situation affecting a large part of the population of the region. Federal level taskforces are also looking at sectoral issues and response in the region.

DPPC Holds Meeting with Partners to Discuss Situation in Somali Region

The DPPC held a special Food Aid Taskforce meeting on 19 November 2003 to specifically discuss the situation in Somali Region with key stakeholders. Non-food issues were also addressed. The situation is described as extremely serious, particularly related to the need for water for both livestock and human consumption. Human and animal health was also noted as a major concern, along with school drop-outs, abnormal migration of animals and people and the need for increased monitoring capacity to link closely to NGOs in the region. Participants in the meeting emphasized that extreme emergency measures are likely needed for the next six months. They also highlighted the need to perform advocacy related lifting the Saudi Arabian ban on the import of live animals from Ethiopia and Somalia, and on the lifting of tariffs on cross-border livestock trade. It was also proposed that means be found to provide water tankering and fodder on market and migration routes as well as mobile vaccination units. The group also reached a consensus that the situation is too serious to wait for the government-led multi-agency pastoral area assessments that are scheduled to start on 7 December 2003 before taking action.

Assessments in the Region

Although many zones are now suffering from the lack of rains, the water situation is estimated to be most severe in parts of Korahe and Warder zones. In the last week of November, Action Contre la Faim (ACF) will undertake an assessment in the two zones to look at water, livestock and human conditions in the region. USAID is also undertaking a survey during the week of 24 November in Jijiga, Shinille, Liben, Gode, Afder and other areas in the region except for the far southwest where ACF is undertaking their assessment.

UNICEF will immediately support the DPPB, ENCU, Health Bureau and NGOs to carry out nutritional assessments in Warder, Degehabur, Afder, Fik, Korahe and Gode zones. Reports have been received of migration from northeastern Somalia into Ethiopia. An aerial livestock survey which is currently being undertaken by CSA

The regional government has enhanced humanitarian coordination in response to the current crisis.

may be used to assess the movements of livestock. Assistance on both sides of the border is critical.

The Sool Plateau in northeast Somalia is experiencing the same failure of the *deyr* rains. An October UN inter-agency assessment of the Sool Plateau and Gebi Valley in Sool and Sanaag regions reports that the current drought is the worst in living memory. They also expect that herds weakened by the extended drought would not survive the *jilaal* and that a collapse of the pastoral economy and social support systems would precipitate large-scale population movement to towns, rapid deterioration of nutritional status and increased morbidity and mortality.¹ Effects of this crisis are already present with the population movements into Ethiopia from these areas, particularly to Warder zone.

The Sool Plateau in northeast Somalia is experiencing the same failure of the *deyr* rains.

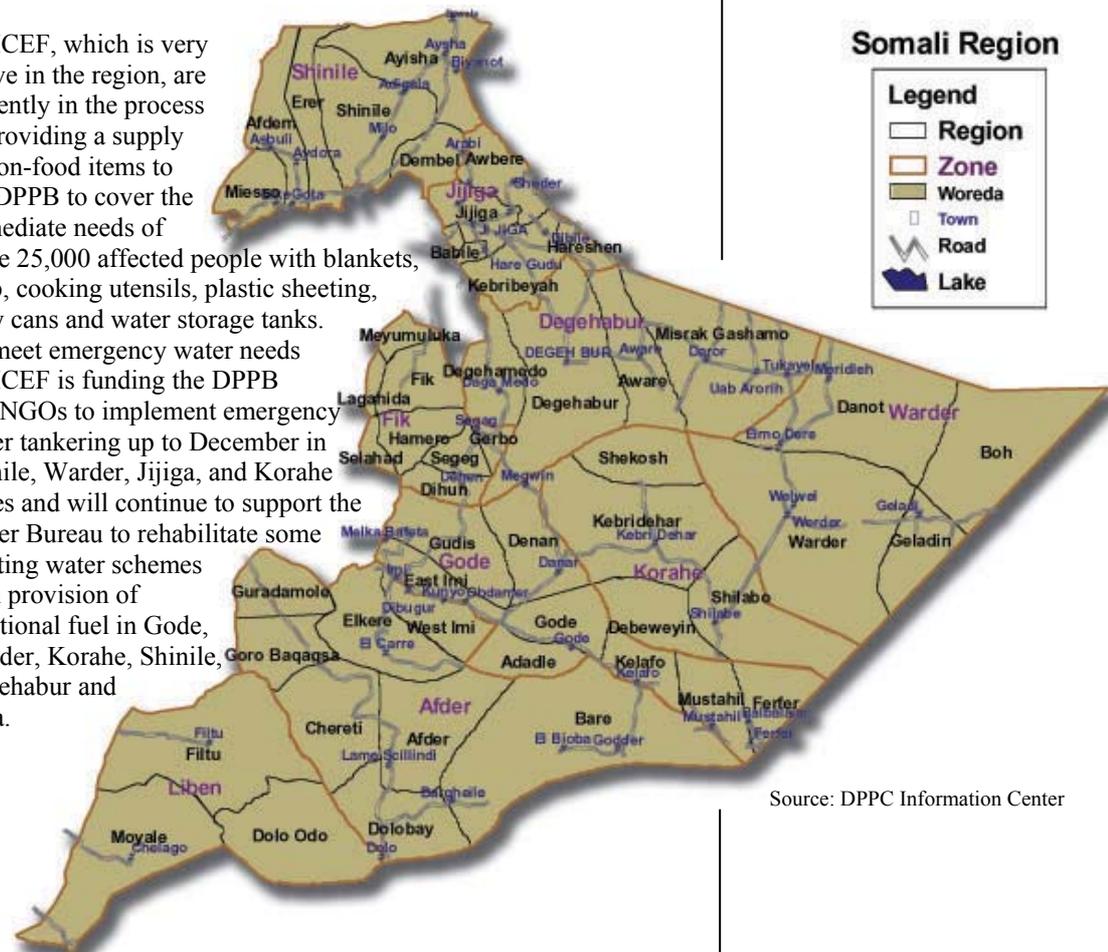
Current Response in the Region

As the crisis is only just emerging, there has been limited response in the region. The NGOs active in the area with regular programs are still reviewing possible response to the situation. Organisations with ongoing activities in affected zones include: ACF, COOPI, CRS, FHI, HCS, HFH, ICRC, LVIA, Oxfam UK, MSF-Belgium, PCAE, SC UK and SC US. The Early Warning project of the DPPB and Save UK issued a food security flash at the end of October. Somali Regional State led the response with an initial alert and with an allocation of 3.3 million birr for emergency response.

UNICEF, which is very active in the region, are currently in the process of providing a supply of non-food items to the DPPB to cover the immediate needs of some 25,000 affected people with blankets, soap, cooking utensils, plastic sheeting, jerry cans and water storage tanks. To meet emergency water needs UNICEF is funding the DPPB and NGOs to implement emergency water tankering up to December in Shinile, Warder, Jijiga, and Korahe zones and will continue to support the Water Bureau to rehabilitate some existing water schemes with provision of additional fuel in Gode, Warder, Korahe, Shinile, Degehabur and Jijiga.

They are also providing funds to NGOs to start digging new hand dug wells in Korahe and Gode zones. For health needs, UNICEF is supporting the Health Bureau to increase health surveillance activities in the affected zones, in cooperation with WHO and NGOs and supply the Health Bureau with Essential Drug Kits, Insecticide

21 November 2003



Source: DPPC Information Center

¹ "Inter-Agency Assessment of Sool Plateau and Gebi Valley in Sool and Sanaag regions" prepared by the United Nations, 9-13 October

21 November 2003

Treated Nets (ITNs) and anti-malaria drugs for the most common disease and malaria-affected communities in Shinile, Gode, Warder and Korah. Additionally, they will supply the Health Bureau with supplementary and therapeutic food to be pre-positioned at zonal level to cover the immediate needs for up to 1,000 malnourished children in the region. UNICEF and WHO are already supporting the current planning and strengthening of routine Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) activities in all zones. Due to the massive migration both across the border and internally, HAPCO and UNICEF are planning to assess HIV/AIDS prevalence and plan proper prevention and control mechanisms in the affected areas with particular concern in the villages allocated the border areas in Warder zone. HIV/AIDS will therefore be incorporated into humanitarian response in the affected zones. Bearing in mind the magnitude of the migrations from Somalia involving people and animals, and the possibility of conflicts over pasture and water, surveillance on vulnerable groups will need to be included as well in the emergency response.

Crisis Suggestive of 2000

Although people are suggesting that the current crisis is reminiscent of the situation in 2000, there are some major differences. On the less positive side, underlying causes of chronic food insecurity and vulnerability of pastoral populations in Somali Region remain unaddressed in spite of significant humanitarian assistance. This is particularly true of displaced populations from the 2000 crisis. On the encouraging side, one million people are currently receiving food assistance and both supplementary food and pulses from WFP are now available to add to the cereal ration, which is significantly different from when the 2000 crisis hit. Coordination structures, nutrition surveillance and guidelines have improved and more capacity is in place to respond. Thus, despite a generally grim outlook due to the *deyr* rain failure, developments have taken place that will enhance emergency response.



Hopes and Difficulties of Water Harvesting

Water in many respects is the most crucial element in the lives of Ethiopian people. It means health, food and survival, and the lack of it - disease, starvation and death. Excluding the purely pastoralist areas, more than 2 million households in the country are drought prone and regularly hit by severe water shortages. This seriously threatens the lives of more than 12 million people. However, Ethiopia is not a country poor in water - the resource is only poorly managed. An estimated 110 billion cubic meters of rainwater annually are lost through surface runoff. This is the equivalent to a full river ten meters deep, 100 meters wide and a hundred and ten

Despite a generally grim outlook due to the *deyr* rain failure, developments have taken place that will enhance emergency response.

thousand kilometres long! The ground water resource is impressive as well, estimated at 4.6 billion cubic meters – but mostly untapped. Overall Ethiopia's water potential is huge and harnessing it is a major challenge, one aspect of which is being addressed now by the Ethiopian governments water-harvesting program. It is one of two main pillars of the governments' food security strategy - for which the government has allocated one Billion ETB this fiscal year - and is presently implemented on a nationwide scale.

The new approach promotes small-scale water harvesting tanks and ponds at the village or household level. The idea is to utilise stored rainwater for vegetable production intended for household consumption and marketing, and for supplementary irrigation of staple crops during dry spells. In theory water harvesting should make farming families less vulnerable to drought and therefore less dependent on outside help in harder times. A UN OCHA mission visited Tigray and Amhara at the end of September in order to look at the progress of the program. The mission came up with some interesting findings.

Last year in Tigray and Amhara combined approximately 70,000 ponds and tanks were constructed. This year in Amhara alone 365,000 structures are planned. Tigray wants to build half a million ponds within the next five years. While Amhara until now has implemented mainly cement structures holding approximately 60m³ each, Tigray builds on plastic and clay lined ponds with a capacity of 180m³ per unit. The cost per structure, depending on the design and materials used, varies between 1500 ETB to 5000 ETB. Countrywide thousands of ponds, tanks and other water harvesting schemes are presently in the making, representing a development effort of almost unprecedented scale.

Water harvesting, if properly done, helps bridge the dry times between the rainy season to the benefit of human and livestock consumption and for agricultural and garden production through irrigation. However water-harvesting schemes have limitations to different degrees. The natural environment and human capacity play major roles. Design, technology, type of inputs, size and cost are factors contributing to success and failure of ongoing implementation programs.

While the current water harvesting effort is pursued at increasing speed, serious problems have surfaced, which need to be addressed quickly in order not to jeopardize the success of water harvesting efforts in Ethiopia. Difficulties encountered by the implementing agencies – the Bureaus of Agriculture, the Bureaus of Water Resources, Rural Development Bureaus and involved NGOs – relate to a variety of aspects of water harvesting.

Many cement tanks are leaking and therefore useless. Plastic-lined ponds consume a wide area, lose a lot of water to evaporation and are hard to repair once punctured. Lack of experienced water harvesting experts creates major problems in selection of sites and schemes. Shortage of materials or late delivery has caused abandoning of projects or alterations in construction methods, which resulted in failures.

The speed by which the program is implemented has created problems in itself. Due to the immense workload, experts have no time to properly monitor, assess and analyse the work being done, eliminate mistakes and make improvements. Accompanying measures, like the rehabilitation and treatment of watersheds with physical structures and vegetation, which is essential to sustainable water harvesting, were largely ignored due to the overloaded

Water harvesting, if properly done, helps bridge the dry times between the rainy season to the benefit of human and livestock consumption and for agricultural and garden production through irrigation.

21 November 2003

21 November 2003

program. This work is essential in order to guarantee long-term success of the program.

Serious questions arise also about the side effects of the program. Malaria and other water borne diseases are reportedly on the rise mainly in lowland areas where water-harvesting structures were built. In a number of places where livestock and people fell into ponds and tanks and could not get out, death by drowning has been reported.

What still seems unclear to many experts is the impact ponds and tanks have on food security in general. So far no cost benefit analyses has been made, but the little experience that is now available, suggests, that during years of drought ponds and tanks will not fill at all or quickly dry up.

One of the main concerns is that the water-harvesting program is implemented on a nationwide scale with a top down approach without first making extensive tests and trials in the different regions and zones to where it is now expanded. Manuals, which were developed by the Ministry of Agriculture in Addis Ababa, were copied to a large extent by the regions without making adjustments as suggested.

However, despite all its problems, the ongoing water-harvesting program has many positive aspects. In many places where farmers were digging into ground water, shallow wells are now constructed, perennial sources of water, which will certainly help increase agricultural production. Field trials and experiments with the aim to recharge the ground water table to be tapped by shallow wells have been successful in many places – a technology that is very promising.

The report produced by UN OCHA points towards some of the positive results of water harvesting approaches, some of the problems and issues associated with the current technologies being employed, as well as some of the human resource concerns. The full report is available on the UN OCHA website www.uneue.org/Archive/DownloadableReports/waterharvesting112003.pdf or directly from UN-OCHA in Addis Ababa.

NEWS

Multi-agency Assessment Teams Debrief

Multi-agency assessment teams have finished their work of examining the current food security situation in most parts of the country. Working with local authorities, the teams have been determining relief food needs for 2004 among populations now emerging from the serious drought of the past year (which has affected much of the country since July 2002). Assessment teams debriefed with DPPB Early Warning Dept. on Tuesday, 18 November. More details will be known when the reports have been finalized. The needs assessment continues in the southern and southeastern pastoralists areas in December. The annual FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment is also currently taking place throughout the country.

WFP Issues Donor Alert on the Refugee Program

A donor alert has been issued by WFP to bring attention to the urgent need for contributions to enable WFP to continue to provide food rations to 123,000 refugees in Ethiopia. The refugees, mostly from southern Sudan and Somalia, live in camps in western and eastern Ethiopia. WFP will face a pipeline break early in 2004 unless contributions are provided immediately. Crucially required is US\$ 5.3 million for the provision of some 6,000 tons of cereals to cover

Despite all its problems, the ongoing water-harvesting program has many positive aspects.

21 November 2003

the needs of the refugees during the first quarter of 2004. The refugees are normally supplied with cereals, blended food, pulses, cooking oil, sugar and salt. A major funding shortage and the resulting break in food supplies would lead to widespread malnutrition among the refugees depending on WFP and UNHCR assistance, and put lives at risk. Despite progress towards peace in Sudan, refugees are not expected to return home in 2004 and will continue to rely on the international community's assistance. In the east of the country, the imminent food pipeline break could halt the voluntary repatriation of thousands of Somali refugees in the next few months if returnee food packages are not available. In 2002, over 29,000 Somalis went home, allowing two of the five remaining Somali refugee camps to be closed.

Tufts Training: Saving Lives and Livelihoods

A two-week course in Addis Ababa that started on 9 November for humanitarian program managers will be completed on Saturday, 22 November. The intensive training course, organized by the Feinstein International Famine Center at Tufts University, focused on nutrition, public health and community-based animal health interventions in complex emergencies. Specialists in gender, humanitarian law, human rights, humanitarian principles and livelihoods hosted sessions. The course is geared towards country directors, policy makers and program managers of multi-sectoral relief operations in conflict and forced displacement settings.

Ireland Donates One Million Euros to UNICEF

The Irish Government has donated one million Euros to UNICEF to fund new and rehabilitate existing water supply and sanitation services at communities, health institutions and schools to benefit 175,000 drought-affected people in Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPR) over the next 12 months. The Regional Water and Health Bureau, with UNICEF support, conducted a joint assessment from March to September that identified 23 woredas especially hard hit by a lack of water supplies and sanitation. Two-thirds of the Irish funding will be used to enable the Water Bureau, NGO partners and the private sector to provide immediate emergency water relief through spring development, hand-dug well construction and borehole drilling of both shallow and deep wells. UNICEF will use the rest of the money to buy another drilling rig, in addition to the one already being used in SNNPR, for the construction of hand-pump-fitted shallow wells capable of benefiting an additional 500,000 people. Sanitation and hygiene education will also be promoted to increase knowledge, build sanitary facilities and enhance hand-washing practices.

Dutch Government Donates US\$ 3.4 Million

The Dutch Government has donated almost \$3.4 million to UNICEF to be used over the next three years to enhance and promote girls' education in six regions of Ethiopia and the rights of all children in the country to quality learning opportunities. The money will be used in Oromiya, Amhara, Benishangul-Gumuz, Gambella and the Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPR) where there are the widest gender gaps and the lowest girls' enrolment. More than four million children, 2.7 million girls and 1.4 million boys, are not getting an education in these five regions, representing 80.5 per cent of the out-of-school children in the whole country. Tigray was also added because its nine woredas show wide gender gaps ranging from 10 per cent in Naedier Adiet to 32 per cent in Erob.

Focus on Ethiopia is produced by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. For further information contact the Information Unit at ocha-eth@un.org; Tel.: 44 44 14 or 51 37 25 and visit our website: www.ocha-eth.org

The Dutch Government has donated almost \$3.4 million to UNICEF to be used over the next three years to enhance and promote girls' education in six regions of Ethiopia and the rights of all children in the country to quality learning opportunities.