

**Gode Field Trip Report
28 - 30 December 1993**

**Gromo Alex
Ethiopia Emergencies Unit
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Overview

Will the rise in malnutrition in Gode be reversed by the anticipated arrival of food assistance? Will donors and UN agencies support the RRC's efforts to assist Gode camp inhabitants to move to their places of origin? Or, will January 1994 mark the third Gode disaster in 16 months?

Nutrition

The overall malnutrition in the Gode camps as reported by MSF Belgium and Goal from statistics gathered during their nutritional survey the third week of December is an alarming 30.5% for children <5 (3.4 <70%; 27.7 <80%; 3.4 kwashikor).

3,500 children under 5 years of age and under 80% weight for length (they are discharged after reaching 85% WFL) are currently receiving weekly rations of fafa and oil (2300 kcal/day). Because of a halt in general distributions several months back, many of those children have been unable to reach satisfactory WFL levels (their rations are shared among the entire family). With the looming threat of an advancing "acute diarrhoeal disease" and an increasing incidence of malaria (this is a traditional malaria season) these 3,500 children risk falling below 70% WFL and into the wet supplementary feeding program, which at the end of December served 138 children and 76 adults (an increase of about 50% in one month's time), could rapidly become overburdened.

WFP has earmarked 300 metric tons of CSB to MSF/Goal in Gode so that weekly dry supplementary rations can be increased to 5 kgs for children under 5 between 80 and 85 % WFL and pregnant and lactating woman. This is expected to allow members of these vulnerable groups to benefit from more of the take home ration while continuing to share the ration among family members. It is felt that additional food must make its way into the Gode camps if the situation is to adequately improve.

The RRC

An official handover of responsibilities from the former head of the RRC, Ugas Abderhaman, to the new head, Kader Mohamed Dhere, was completed in mid-December. Initial indications are that the new RRC is serious about addressing the problems which have beset Gode and other parts of Region 5 during the past two and one half years.

In Dur Adi, 24 kms from Gode on the Kelafo road, the RRC has signed a food for work contract with the new community of 770 former Gode camp inhabitants. The work includes the clearing of agricultural land and plans for the construction of diversion canals leading from the existing seasonal river.

The community has already begun (through its own initiative) the construction of a school and a clinic, both of which it hopes to staff with members from own community. They are being assisted by the International Islamic Relief Organization, one of only a few NGOs operating south of Degeh Bur.

A year ago, 800 camp inhabitants established a similar community in Dur Dhere, 18 kms from Gode. The positive results there are encouraging other camp inhabitants to leave the camps and resettle in their places of origin. The RRC estimates that 75% of the camp inhabitants now want to leave Gode. (MSF and Goal in a recent tukul count of the Gode camp estimate the population to be 40,000.)

A committee of 20 persons has been formed to represent the RRC in discussions with clan representatives from the camp population. The committee is presently trying to establish the numbers, identities and destinations of those wishing to return home and what materials and other assistance they might need to do so (including transport, spares and fuel). The committee is preparing a formal program proposal (for which it could use some guidance) and continues to gather information from camp inhabitants. It is hoped that the Region 5 RRC's initiative will receive support from RRC Addis as well as UN and other agencies.

Food Availability

In addition to the CSB for the MSF/Goal program, 270 metric tons of CSB is expected to arrive soon for the RRC's programs in Gode which have not had much food for several months. It is strongly urged that more food be added to the CSB (oil and maize or wheat) and provided through a targeted distribution, possibly food for work, in Gode during January and subsequently in the villages to where those leaving the camps are going. (The capacity of the local RRC to target future distributions cannot be assessed at this time.)

The Gode State Farm has immediately available 800 MT of Kelafo maize which it is willing to sell at Birr 110 per quintal. (Given the high cost of transport in Region 5, it would be worth considering the purchase of this maize which could be used for distributions in the destination villages for food and seed.)

RRC Addis has also promised to release 500 MT of wheat grain from Dire Dawa for use in its programmes, particularly food for work. Transport arrangements have not yet been communicated to Gode.

The distribution of 700 of 800 tons stored in Kelafo through early December (including the nearly 200 MT purchased by WFP from farmers in Kelafo) has not been satisfactorily explained by the Kelafo RRC. The need for such a distribution is questioned because of the excellent harvests this year all along the Wabe Shabelle River.

Acute Diarrhoeal Disease (ADD)

There had been received in Addis and Gode reports of large numbers of persons dying from diarrhoeal disease in Kebri Dehar which were found to be highly exaggerated. However, numerous cases of the euphemistically identified "ADD" have were reported in Degeh Bur, less in Kebri Dehar and one suspected related case in Gode, all of undoubted similarity to cases first reported in Dire Dawa in October. (Since October, more than 2,000 cases have been traced from Dire Dawa to Degeh Bur, including large numbers in Harar. One interesting theory links the spread of "ADD" to chat which is grown near Alemaya (where a large number of cases have been identified), wrapped in grass from the lake to preserve the freshness of the green leaf and then transported significant distances east and south, carrying the disease with it.)

Although Government continues to label the problem "ADD", the Deputy Minister of Health last week transported 7 MT of supplies, remarkably similar to medicines normally used to fight cholera, to Gode. Fears were also very high in Harar that the Kulubi pilgrimage site (28 December), with inadequate water and sanitary facilities, would further spread the disease.

Security

The situation has been fairly good with the exception of conflicts in November near Mustahil between Hawiya and Rer Bare clans resulting in the displacement of a large number of Rer Bares (the problem was later resolved by clan leaders) and in December between two groups of Hawiyas, one having entered from Somalia. (Damage caused by the latter incident has not been confirmed.)

Elsewhere, a dispute between Issaq truckers delivering goods to the Ogaden while Ogadeni truckers sit idle has not yet been resolved, and a 29 December demonstration by ONLF supporters called for independence and the removal of all non-Somalis from Region 5 but passed without incident.

The Gode State Farm Project

830 Somali farmers have now each been allocated one hectare of land on the former State Farm. Two-thirds of the land is planted with maize, one-fourth with sesame and one-twelfth with cow peas. Production costs are expected to be much lower than last year's February/March harvest and yields are expected to be between 30 and 60 % higher than 1993. (Projections are for 20 - 25 quintals per hectare). In addition to the 830 hectares of land now owned by farmers, 370 hectares of maize has also been planted. Harvests of cowpeas are expected to begin in early February and of sesame and maize in late February continuing through the entire month of March.

Benefits of the State Farm plantings are already evident in and around Gode town. Maize stalks are sold in the market for fodder and the availability of milk is reported to be higher than at any time in recent memory. Proceeds from the sale of the stalks are encouraging Somali farmers to engage casual labour for weedings

and other field maintenance activities. This has provided some Gode camp inhabitants with a means of financial support in an otherwise bleak job market.

Nogob

Clan elders in Segeg and Dihun have announced that they have collected contributions from members of their communities that they wish to invest in development activities that will benefit their communities. They are seeking the assistance of NGOs who are willing and able to help them manage these collected funds as their own experience is too limited.

Twenty wells in Sosobene, the digging of which was assisted by UNHCR in mid-1993, have begun to collapse because of a lack of well wall linings. The community desperately seeks material and technical assistance from UN and non-government agencies as large numbers of camels have moved into the area encouraged by the available grazing and new water source.

Summary

While the level of malnutrition in Gode is cause for serious concern, there is hope that the RRC's active pursuit of food for work contracts with communities (although it has no food to make payments) will encourage more camp inhabitants to leave for their original homes. The new RRC is young and relatively inexperienced, but with some assistance, their enthusiasm can be developed into a positive change in attitudes among those who become largely dependent on relief assistance. If, at least in the short term, someone could join the RRC to offer planning and proposal writing experience and assistance, a solid program with emphasis on rehabilitation could be developed.

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