

Field Trip Report to North Gondar Zone of the Amhara Region

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Background

A short field trip was carried out to North Gondar in the Amhara National Regional State by the World Food Programme (WFP) and UNDP Emergencies Unit.

The purpose of the visit was to verify reports of stress migrations from North Gondar in the Ethiopian Herald on the 12th of February 1996. According to the media report, a press statement by the North Gondar zonal Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Committee (DPPC) indicated that drought conditions induced by the early cessation of the main (*meher*) rains have forced 10,540 farmers in Adiarkai wereda (previously Adis Selam) to migrate to neighbouring zones. Furthermore, the newspaper also indicated that many farmers had moved their families and cattle to May Tsemre town in Tigray Region.

Location of the visited wereda and kebele

May Tsemre

May Tsemre, the main town of Tselemt wereda, is located about 220 km north of Gondar town along the main Gondar-Shire road, and is 27 km from Adiarkai wereda in Amhara Region. The wereda was formerly part of the Amhara Region, but according to the new restructuring of weredas has now been determined as part of Tigray Region for administrative purpose. The main objective of the joint WFP/EUE mission to the wereda was to observe the condition of the migrant families from North Gondar. The team was informed by the wereda authorities that most of the migrant farmers had reportedly moved to Humera and other adjacent towns in search of daily labour or, in the case of about 1,000 people, moved to Fiyel Wuha to receive food assistance.

Meetings were held with the chairman of the Wereda Council, who reported that some migrant farmers are still in May Tsemre, working as a daily labourers. Furthermore, the chairman indicated that food aid allocated for the affected population was being transported from the Kombolcha warehouse to Fiyel Wuha, which is the nearest bordering kebele to affected area of Adiarkai.

Discussion were also held with the chairman regarding the general situation in Tselemt wereda and the 1995 main season production in comparison to that of 1994. Accordingly, it was reported that in the wereda, which is *meher*-dependent and mainly in the kola agro-ecological zone (except a few kebeles 4-5 in the highland and mid-highland agro-ecological zones), the onset of the *kiremt* rains was delayed by one month and resulted in problems of grazing land. Except in some pocket areas, however, cereal production was better than 1994. Nonetheless, some food shortages are anticipated in and, based on the wereda early warning assessment that had been conducted in December 1995, a total of 24,000 people have been targeted for food interventions through Employment Generation Schemes between February and October 1996 (until the next *meher* harvest). Project documents for the activities to be conducted were prepared and sent to Tigray. Accordingly, the region has allocated 39,000

quintals of wheat and/or sorghum for EGS that will include construction of clinics and schools and road maintenance.

Fiyel Wuha kebele

The kebele is located about 216 km east of May Tsemre. Food aid allocated by the Bureau of Disaster Prevention and Preparedness for the migrant farmers of Adiarkai has been transported to this kebele as it borders the affected kebeles and is closer to them. A Rubb Hall with a holding capacity of 500-600 tons has already been erected by the North Gondar Bureau of DPP for the expected food consignment. According to the head of the North Gondar Bureau of DPP, who has visited the site, the stress migration, which was initially reported by the wereda Early Warning Unit, was later confirmed by an assessment team sent to the wereda by the zonal Bureau of DPP. During the assessment of the zonal Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Committee, 5 out of 10 affected kebeles were visited and it was assessed that 2 kebeles had been completely abandoned. Following this, the DPPC then proceeded to May Tsemre where some of the migrated farmer families had moved for shelter. During their visit, it was mentioned that about 1,000 people were in the town and most others had moved further away in search of work. Although drought has not claimed any lives, about 400 livestock had died and market prices for shoats had decreased.

Based on the findings of the zonal DPPC, it was determined that initial food distributions should take place to alleviate the immediate food shortages of the migrant population. These farmers were then requested to go back to their localities with the assurance that additional food aid would be dispatched to their localities. The amount of food which was distributed in the initial round has been reported as 150 quintals which is a 15 kg/person ration. Following this, an additional 5,630 quintals of sorghum and 270 quintals of oil has been allocated for the population sheltered in May Tsemre by the zonal DPP office. This food, which is three month ration, will be dispatched to Fiyel Wuha through the regional Bureau of DPP from Kombolcha warehouse. According to reports, of this amount, a total of 3,773 quintals of grain was transported between 23-27 February. The head of the zonal Bureau of DPP also indicated that Fiyel Wuha as a distribution point was specifically selected due to its short distance from the affected kebeles, which would normally not be accessible from the Adiarkai wereda town. Distributions were to commence as soon as transportation of food was completed.

The WFP/EUE mission were also informed that according to the new restructuring the number of weredas in North Gondar has been reduced from 18 to 15. Out of these 15 weredas, five weredas are reported to be drought-prone and first priority, and two weredas are drought-prone but are secondary priority. No information could be obtained regarding the remaining weredas and whether they are drought prone, self sufficient, or surplus producing.

Ibnat wereda

Ibnat is one of the weredas of South Gondar and is located about 40 km North-East of the zonal capital of Addis Zemen. The wereda is mainly kola (lowland) and is *meher*-dependent. The 1995 *kiremt* rains started on time in May, but ended early at the flowering stage of crops. This early cessation of the *kiremt* together with a reportedly high infestation of the Welo Bush Cricket in the lowlands and hailstorms in pockets of the highlands has resulted in decreased production throughout the wereda.

According to the Wereda Council, market prices which had been birr 165 per quintal for teff in early 1995, have increased to birr 220, while prices for shoat have reduced by 70% in comparison to this time in 1995. Assessments conducted in November 1995 by the zonal

Early Warning Committee resulted in recommendations for food assistance to be provided for 40,000 people in 30 kebeles of South Gonder for a six month period.

At the present time, Ethiopian Relief Organization (ERO) are carrying out area based development activities such as road construction and nurseries. Road construction projects are ongoing in 13 kebeles with 3,600 people participating in food for work activities and receiving a payment of 3 kg of wheat or sorghum, 0.5 kg of oil and 120 grams of lentil.

Water problems were also mentioned by wereda officials and several members of the Wereda Council. According to them, the only water pump normally operational in the wereda (donated by CONCERN during the 1977 famine) has been sent to Bahir Dar for major repairs and therefore inhabitants have to travel far for access to water. UNICEF are, however, are conducting surveys for initiation of water supply projects in several kebeles of the wereda.

Repatriation

According to the Ethiopian Relief Organization (ERO), between December 1995 and 28 February 1996, a total of 11,142 Ethiopian refugees have repatriated from Sudan to the Gondar primary transit terminal. It was reported that after receiving 50 kg of wheat and 10 kg of lentils the repatriate are expected to leave the transit terminal and return after two months for another reintegration package. This grant comprise birr 1,500 in cash, 1 quintal of wheat and 5 litres of oil. The Gondar terminal currently only hosts returnees to Amhara and Oromiya Regions.

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