

Field Trip Report: Eastern Amhara Region & South Tigray Zone 22 June - 1 July 1997

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Summary

Retrospective: The generally exceptional climatic conditions of 1996 resulted, overall, in above average agriculture production but in some cases this also led to an over-estimation of specific local conditions/production and their impact on the food prospects for 1997. Large areas of the eastern part of Amhara Region and part of South Tigray had below normal rainfall distribution during the second half of the 1996 *meher* season combined with an early cessation of the *kremt* rains. The consequent yield reduction has not been sufficiently reflected in the estimation of relief needs for 1997, even after post-harvest assessments.

Current Situation in the Agricultural Sector: The generally late start of the 1997 *belg* rains, low rainfall, uneven distribution and short duration will result in a poor harvest. With the start of the *kremt* rains by the end of June, part of the *belg* crop will mature under wet conditions, probably resulting in field and post-harvest losses.

While driving through some *belg* producing areas the heterogeneous development and performance of the *belg* crops from one spot to the next, especially in the central and western parts of South Wollo, gives a clear picture of the erratic distribution of rains. North Shewa and South Wollo are the most affected, followed by North Wollo and the lowlands of South Tigray.

The long cycle *meher* crops, sown during the second half of the *belg* season in lower elevations (*kolla*, parts of *weyna dega*), show a generally poor development for this time of the year, especially in the lowlands from North Shewa up to South Tigray. In some areas, long cycle crops could not be planted for lack of moisture. These facts are a bad omen for the future harvest of the 1997 *meher* season, especially if the *kremt* rains should prove to be erratic or of short duration.

Some armyworm infestation has been reported from North Shewa and North Wollo, mainly harmful to the still young shoots of the long cycle crops. Measures are being taken by the different wereda offices of agriculture, backed up by the zonal departments, to control the pest. It is hoped that the onset of the *kremt* rains will help to ease the situation.

Livestock conditions are generally poor due to the prevailing dry conditions of the first half of the year, but will soon improve with the onset of the *kremt* rains and the subsequent restoration of pasture. No livestock epidemic were reported.

Human Conditions and Relief Activities: With a less than satisfactory 1996 *meher* season and a bad *belg* performance, conditions are becoming increasingly difficult, especially in South and North Wollo and parts of North Shewa. In some weredas of the Wollo zones migration is still ongoing, school attendance registered a significant drop, and market trends are worsening. Although no human epidemics have been reported in all visited zones, people suffer from diarrhoea in the most affected weredas of South Wollo and the number of malnourished children is higher than usual at this time of the year.

The first round of relief supplies has generally been delivered to the weredas according to agreed beneficiary numbers on the basis of 15kg per person/month. However, despite the fact that several disaster prone weredas are not accessible during the rainy season, allocations cover only the period until July with no food stocks for the *meher* season. This dangerous situation clearly reflects the low response of donors to the DPPC appeals, which leaves a high percentage of food requirements unmet. Considering the fact that the actual figures in the DPPC's Relief Plan of Operations for 1997 (released in June) do not fully consider the updated beneficiary numbers, nor does the report cover the additional needs caused by the failure of this year's *belg* rains, one can imagine the seriousness of the situation. In order to avoid a possible crisis, the relief response, supported by donors, should therefore be quick and adequate, taking into account a likely further increase in beneficiary numbers because of the expected poor *belg* harvest.

To get a picture of the very limited coverage of relief needs in the visited zones, refer to the following table:

Zone	Acc. to DPPC Relief Plan of Operation '97	Acc. to Updated Number of Beneficiaries*	Relief period Considered
North Shewa	46%	17%	5 mths
South Wollo	61%	43%	6 mths
North Wollo	35%	36%	6 mths
South Tigray	68%	89%	7 mths

* Updated number of beneficiaries is the new beneficiary number accepted by zones, regions and centre, but not reflected in the DPPC Relief Plan of Operation for 1997

Table I. Percent of Relief Food Needs Covered by Available Food (excluding *belg* needs)

Generally conditions can be described as more or less stable in the less affected weredas, declining in the most affected weredas in South and North Wollo, declining in the three most affected weredas of North Shewa, and likely to decline in parts of South Tigray.

North Shewa Zone

Until now, relief activities have been concentrated on the weredas of Gishe Rabel, Gera Keya and Mama Lalo, which have been relief dependant for several years. Preliminary results of the *belg* assessment were not yet available, but a significant increase in relief needs is expected, not only in the aforementioned three main *belg* producing weredas, but also from other parts of the zone (overall 12 *belg* producing weredas).

Major parts of the lowlands are lightly infested by armyworms, causing some damage on the still young long cycle *meher* crops. Control measures are under way and the onset of the *kremt* rains will help ease the situation.

Wereda	1997 Total Population*	DPPC 1997 Appeal (December '96)		Actually accepted figures (excl. <i>belg</i>)	
Gishe Rabel	56,039	9,000	16%	47,020	84%
Gera Midir, Keya Gebriel	145,925	14,000	10%	73,042	50%
Mama Midir/Lalo	113,767	13,000	11%	23,000	20%
Total	315,731	36,000		143,062	

* Based on 1994 census and readjusted by an annual growth rate of 3%

Table II. Food aid beneficiaries in North Shewa Zone

South Wollo Zone

The 1997 *belg* season is considered worse than 1994 and 1995, with an estimated 60% or more of *belg* crops damaged. Already strained by an unsatisfactory 1996 *meher* harvest, the situation in South Wollo is getting serious, as shown in Table III below. With little relief food in the pipeline and no food stocks in the inaccessible weredas during the rainy season, it is feared that the situation will deteriorate.

Efforts are under way to improve the accessibility of the central and western parts of the zone, with the new south to north link road (Alem Ketema - Tenta - Delanta - Lalibella - Sekota - Adwa), the improvement of the road from Gugufu to Mekane Selam (Rural Roads Authority in collaboration with SIDA) and the voluntary effort of the people of Debre Sina to pave the muddy parts of their road to assure access during the rainy season for relief supplies. The actual progress of works will only allow limited access to the respective weredas during the 1997 *meher* season.

The labour intensive approach of RRA/SIDA is a good example of alternative employment generation in a disaster prone area. With a strengthened supervision and adequate on-the-job training, the quality of works could be easily improved to the required standards, thus contributing to a better acceptance of labour intensive approaches.

Mekdela Wereda: From the total population, 8% live in *wurch*, 43% in *dega*, 42% in *weyna dega* and 7% in *kolla* agroclimatic zone. From 26 peasant associations, 4 are *belg*, 4 *belg & meher* and 18 *meher* dependant (including 1 town kebele). Self-sufficient in good years, the wereda has been now under relief since 1994. After an unsatisfactory *meher* season in 1996, one thousand people left the wereda during the period of January to March in search of work or to settle with relatives. With the start of relief food distributions the situation stabilised and migration stopped (17,775 beneficiaries for April/May and 27,775 for June). The third round supply for July is being transported and should cover the needs of 45,000 people. Following the bad *belg* season, a further increase of people in need of food assistance is expected from August onwards.

Tenta Wereda: From 29 PAs (& 2 town kebeles), 1 PA is situated in *wurch*, 10 in *dega*, 9 in *weyna dega* and 9 in *kolla* agroclimatic zone. The 11 PAs of *wurch* and *dega* are *belg* dependant. In normal years the wereda has a limited surplus production for marketing. After a bad 1996 *meher* season (early cessation of rains), migration to resettlement places and towns for work started in December and is still ongoing. Since the start of relief activities, the situation stabilised with people regaining hope (15,680 beneficiaries for April/May, 25,680 for June, whereas July supply is being transported). Taking into account the bad *meher* performance and the failure of the *belg* season, the wereda officials estimate up to 85,000 people will be in need of relief.

The worst *belg* crop stand could be observed in Mekdela and Tenta weredas, where most fields showed a very scarce plant density partly without any fructification.

Sayint Wereda: From the total population, 4% live in *wurch*, 42% in *dega*, 37% in *weyna dega* and 17% in *kolla* agroclimatic zone. About 25% of the *dega* area is *belg* dependant. Even in good years the wereda is not self-sufficient, but suffers from structural food deficit. After an insufficient *meher* harvest and a failed *belg* season, migration only stopped with the start of relief distributions (18'560 beneficiaries from March to May, 38'560 for June/July now being transported). The number of people in need of food assistance is constantly growing and has reached, according to wereda officials, over 50'000. Consequently, relief supplies are considered to be insufficient.

Debre Sina Wereda: From 31 peasant associations (& 2 town kebeles), 6 PAs are situated in *dega*, 22 in *weyna dega* and 3 in *kolla* agroclimatic zone. 6 PAs from *dega* & *weyna dega* are *belg* dependant. Self-sufficient in normal years with some surplus production for the market, the wereda is now relief dependant. Unusual for this time of the year, migration is still going on. The situation did not stabilise with the start of relief activities, as relief inputs were insufficient and part of the population is still without supplies. Until now only 16,000 beneficiaries are getting food assistance, whereas the wereda has assessed 40,000 (February) and 65,000 people (June) in need of relief.

Food supplies for the local markets of Sayint and Debre Sina normally come from Gojam area, but with the onset of *kremt* rains merchants can no longer cross the Abay river. With only little food supply from Dessie, local markets will fall short of cereals.

As all weather access is still not assured, all the aforementioned weredas asked for adequate food stocks to cover the needs during the rainy season, unfortunately without response. Supplementary food to complement the diet of <5 years old children has also been requested and will be supplied soon.

Table III. Figures of People in Need of Food Assistance in South Wollo

Wereda	1997 Total Population*	Zonal Post-Harvest & Special Assessment		Wereda DPPCs & Zonal Approval		Accepted by Centre/Region		Belg Assessment Additional No**	
Tenta	150,154	25,680	17%	45,000	30%	45,000	30%	17,432	12%
Mekdela	116,305	27,775	24%	45,000	39%	45,000	39%	16,671	14%
Sayint	211,570	38,000	18%	38,560	18%	38,560	18%	† 3,850	2%
Debre Sina	136,729	16,000	12%	34,287	25%	16,000	12%	-	
Wegedi	110,935	16,000	14%	32,550	29%	16,000	14%	† -	
Kelala	127,861	18,815	15%	37,670	30%	18,815	15%	† -	
Legambo	173,509	8,625	5%	51,000	29%	51,000	29%	32,254	19%
Wereilu	131,339	40,000	31%	40,000	31%	40,000	31%	17,363	13%
Jama	117,321	-		24,710	21%	-		† -	
Ambassel	121,481	27,320	23%	40,000	33%	27,320	23%	19,718	16%
Tehuledere	130,297	-		-		-		8,380	6%
Werebabu	98,768	23,280	24%	23,280	24%	23,280	24%	Belg ok 4,467	5%
Kutaber	138,564	11,660	8%	21,660	16%	11,660	8%	15,186	11%
Dessie Zuria	220,112	10,145	5%	20,645	9%	10,145	5%	44,739	20%
Kalu	186,335	31,765	17%	31,765	17%	31,765	17%	18,460	10%
Kombolcha	43,126	-		-		-			
Dessie	106,338	-		-		-			
Total Zone	2,320,744	295,065	13%	486,127	21%	374,545	16%	198,520	9%
Eritrea Displ.		21,900		21,900					

* Based on 1994 census and readjusted by an annual growth rate of 3%

** Not yet approved by Zonal DPPC, Region or Center

† Little *belg* production in these weredas

Table IV. South Wollo: Beneficiary Numbers & Relief Food Supply

Wereda	1997 Total Population*	DPPC 1997 Appeal (December 96)		Zonal Post-Harvest Assessment		Zonal DPPC Special Assessm.		1. Round Supply Quintal (15kgs/person/mth)			2. Round Supply Quintal (13.5kgs†/person/mth)		
		A		B		C		persons/period/figures used			persons/period/figures used		
Tenta	150,154	10,100	7%	15,680	10%	25,680	17%	4,704	2 mths	B	3,467	1 mths	C
Mekdela	116,305	10,200	9%	17,775	15%	27,775	24%	5,333	2 mths	B	3,750	1 mths	C
Sayint	211,570	10,100	5%	18,560	9%	38,000	18%	8,350	3 mths	B	5,206	1 mths	C
Debre Sina	136,729	9,900	7%	16,000	12%			4,800	2 mths	B	2,160	1 mths	B
Wegedi	110,935	10,000	9%	16,000	14%			4,800	2 mths	B	2,160	1 mths	B
Kelala	127,861	16,400	13%	18,815	15%			5,645	2 mths	B	2,540	1 mths	B
Legambo	173,509	-		8,625	5%			2,590	2 mths	B	-		A
Wereilu	131,339	38,500	29%	40,000	31%			9,000	1½ mths	B	5,400	1 mths	B
Jama	117,321	-		-				-			-		
Ambassel	121,481	16,300	13%	27,320	23%			4,090	1 mths	B	-		
Tehuledere	130,297	-		-				-			-		
Werebabu	98,768	23,300	24%	23,280	24%			7,004	2 mths	B	3,378	1 mths	B
Kutaber	138,564	-		11,660	8%			-		A	-		A
Dessie Zuria	220,112	-		10,145	5%			-		A	-		A
Kalu	186,335	37,000	20%	31,765	17%			4,765	1 mths	B	-		
Kombolcha	43,126	-		-									
Dessie	106,338	-		-									
Total Zone	2,320,744	181,800	8%	255,625	11%			61,081			27,826		
Eritrea Displ.		21,900		21,900				7,370			?		

* Based on 1994 census and readjusted by an annual growth rate of 3%

† Provision for vegetable oil made but not yet been supplied

Table V. North Wollo: Beneficiary Numbers & Relief Food Supply

Wereda	1997 Total Population*	DPPC Zonal Post-Harvest Assessment**		1. Round Supply Quintal (15kg/person/mth)		2. Round Supply				Belg Assessment: additional number of beneficiaries†	
						allocated	ration	period	received		
Meket	211,643	17,734	8%	2,660	1 mth	5,320	15kg/pers/mth	2 mth	1,904	6,415	3%
Bugna	187,221	33,709	18%	10,110	2 mth	4,214	12.5kg/pers/mth	1 mth	3,889	3,681	2%
Gidan	148,398	19,863	13%	5,960	2 mth	2,483	12.5kg/pers/mth	1 mth	2,279	8,307	6%
Delanta Dawnt	158,884	34,716	22%	10,420	2 mth	5,207	15kg/pers/mth	1 mth	5,155	12,982	8%
Wadla	116,574	12,911	11%	1,940	1 mth	no supply				4,139	4%
Habru	183,766	38,329	21%	5,735	1 mth	no supply				2,492	1%
Guba Lafto	152,054	29,447	19%	4,280	1 mth	no supply				3,655	2%
Kobo	191,837	25,194	13%	3,780	1 mth	no supply				3,000	2%
Weldiya	26,808	-		-		-			-	-	
Total Zone	1,377,185	211,903	15%	44,885		17,224			13'227	44,671	3%
Eritrea Displ.		1,463									

* Based on 1994 census and readjusted by an annual growth rate of 3%

** Actual beneficiary numbers, accepted by centre/region

† Beneficiary figures agreed at zonal level only

North Wollo Zone

Like for the other zones, relief allocations only cover the period until July and no food stocks are in place to cover the needs during the *meher* season. According to the preliminary results of the *belg* assessment, beneficiary numbers are likely to increase by over 20% (see Table V above).

Long cycle *meher* crops are generally late in development and some damage is expected in Guba Lafto, Habru and Kobo weredas due to an army worm infestation. Measures have been taken by wereda offices of agriculture, backed up by the zonal MOA department, to control the pest.

South Tigray Zone

The first round distribution for April and May reached around 87,000 people through employment generation schemes and free food distributions. The second round supply, which has not yet been transported, should cover the needs of 109,696 beneficiaries. From July up to September the number of people in need of relief will rise up to 167,300, as the labour intensive projects for microdam constructions (SAERT) will suspend works during the rainy season. In October, the number of beneficiaries is expected to drop again to 109,696, excluding additional beneficiaries according to the *belg* assessment results. The preliminary figures of the *belg* assessment were not yet available, but with an estimated 50% drop of expected *belg* production, the number of beneficiaries are likely to rise accordingly.

Wereda	1997 Total Population*	DPPC 1997 Appeal (December 1996)		Zonal Post-Harvest Assessment	
Seharti/Samre	96,926	14,800	15%	11,882	12%
Inderta	115,626	91,900	80%	49,530	43%
Hintalo/Wajirat	121,212	32,400	27%	25,844	21%
Alaje	91,453	5,500	6%	4,117	5%
Indamehone	89,229	5,100	6%	4,205	5%
Raya Azebo	95,765	-		-	
Alamata	102,344	5,200	5%	4,205	4%
Ofla	136,027	12,400	9%	9,913	7%
Total Zone	848,582	167,300	20%	109,696	13%

* Based on 1994 census and readjusted by an annual growth rate of 3%

Table VI. Food aid beneficiary numbers for South Tigray Zone

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