

**Field Trip Report:  
Region One (Tigre) and the South Welo, North Welo and Wag Hamra  
Zones of Region Three (Amhara)**

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**INTRODUCTION**

The mission to Northern Ethiopia was planned on the basis of information obtained from the WFP food needs assessment team who indicated that 8 weredas from South and North Welo zones of Region 3 (Amhara) and 13 weredas from Region 1 (Tigre) were affected by food shortages as the result of too much rainfall, hail storms, poor soil fertility, crop pests, high population density and a shortage of land.

Accordingly, the UNDP-EUE visited 3 zones and 4 weredas from Region 1 and 3 zones and 2 weredas from Region 3 to obtain information regarding the current situation and the planned response to expected relief needs for the coming year, 1997.

Overall, crop production in the central zone of Region 1 was reported to be good. According to zonal officials, the Eastern and Southern zones, which are traditionally seen as disaster prone, will also suffer food shortages this coming year due to a lack of rain, localized flooding, soil degradation, shortage of land due to high population and various pest infestations, including the parasitic weed, *Striga*, which is becoming increasingly prevalent.

Based on the government's pre-harvest assessment, a total of 634,336 people have been registered for assistance in 1997, in the 3 zones of Region 1.

Likewise, in South Welo, North Welo and Wag Hamra zones in Region 3, even though the overall annual production has been good, a total of 472,573 people are expected to be in need of food assistance in the coming year.

**REGION ONE (Tigre)**

**Eastern Zone - Adigrat**

The zone is located in the intermediate agro-ecological zone and consists of 7 weredas, out of which 3 weredas, namely Astbi in the south-east, Erob in the north-east and Saezi Tseadamba south of the zonal capital of Adigrat, were reported to be affected by a shortage of rainfall.

According to DPPD the zone is mainly *meher* dependent and 1996 *meher* rainfall was late by one month. Based on the official pre-harvest assessment conducted in October 1996, the department report that 271,166 people are expected to require assistance in 1997 (applying the 80:20% quota for FFW/EGS and free food distribution), while 8,695 will need close monitoring. Food resources needed are expected to be allocated by central Government and NGOs operating in the area, mainly World Vision. The DPPD indicate the above beneficiary numbers are expected to increase further due to extreme variations in rainfall, which occurred between the pre-harvest and post-harvest assessments, and other, primarily structural, problems.

Information about the area cultivated and annual crop production figures for both pre- and post-harvest assessments could not be obtained since the wereda agriculture experts were in the field for the final crop assessment during the visit to the wereda.

From the three affected weredas in the zone, two weredas, namely Atsbi and Erobe, were visited and the following information obtained:

#### Astbi wereda

The wereda is located south-east of the zonal capital Adigrat, bordering Region 2 (Afar). According to the wereda agriculture office, the *meher* rains normally commence in June and finish in September. However, it was reported that the rains this year began late and ended unseasonably early. Furthermore, a shortage of rain, compounded by pests, mainly aphids, had a negative effect on production of the main season crops: barley, wheat and in some pocket areas, teff.

According to the official pre-harvest assessment conducted in October, while the crop was still in its vegetative stage, from the total cultivated area of 16,783 hectares, 141,654 quintals (about 8qt/ha) was expected. However, according to the post-harvest assessment, actual production was reported to be 43,700 quintals (about 3 qt/ha) - only 30.8% of what had been anticipated, due to the various reasons mentioned above.

The wereda is well known for its high livestock population - mainly sheep and goats. However, the area of grazing land in comparison with the existing livestock population is reported to be less than satisfactory. Furthermore, the livestock health situation is threatened by internal and external parasites, and common diseases such as Anthrax, Black Leg and Pastoralosis. The wereda veterinary clinic reported two sources of drug supply: the regional government and the NGO, World Vision International.

The region supply mainly vaccines while World Vision provide veterinary equipment and drugs. Shortage of veterinary drugs was not mentioned as a major constraint.

With regard to relief needs, based on the official post-harvest assessment, a total of 51,054 beneficiaries are to be assisted through a combination of food-for-work and free distribution (in the ratio of 80:20) during the coming year. From this total, 36,716 people will be covered by World Vision, who are operating in all 18 kebeles of the wereda. It was mentioned by local World Vision representatives that a total of 6,000mt will be required for this programme, which will run from October 1996 to September 1997. However, currently the agency has a total of 2,143mt in the wereda and at their Kombolcha warehouse, while the balance is expected from USAID.

According to the wereda agriculture office, based on a recent survey the market trend for cereal prices was not attractive for the consumers at harvesting time this year. A quintal of Barley which was sold at Ethiopian Birr 85 this time last year, has been on sale for Birr 140/qt. Wheat, which sold for Birr 148/qt last year, is this year selling at a price of Birr 205/qt.

### Erob wereda

The wereda is located north-east of the zonal capital Adigrat, bordering Eritrea in the north and north-east, and Afar in the east. It is reported to be mainly *meher* dependent. This year, *meher* production was poor as the result of a shortage of rain (late onset in July and early cessation in August).

Since the wereda is considered as disaster prone and a food deficit area, crop production, even in a normal year, is sufficient to feed people for only 4 months.

According to the recent post-harvest assessment, conducted by the wereda agriculture office, from an actual cultivated area of 748 hectares, production of 5,144 quintals had been anticipated. However, the actual harvest registered was reported to be only 573qt, less than one quintal/hectare. Due to repeated production failure, the zonal Early Warning Committee has abandoned the wereda for both pre- and post-harvest assessments for the last two years.

Regarding livestock, animal diseases such as Anthrax, Black Leg, and various internal and external parasites were reported as common. However, major outbreaks have not occurred recently, though the condition of animals was said to be poor due to inadequate pasture and scarce water. No shortage of drugs were reported and one veterinary clinic is under construction. However, as gathered from various sources, in addition to livestock production, people depend on bee-keeping and trading to maintain their livelihood.

A 32 km road is under construction by the Ethiopian Rural Road Authority, connecting the wereda capital, Alitena, with Zala Anbesa. Out of the total distance, about 18 km has been completed so far. The remaining is expected to be finished within the current Ethiopian calendar year.

### **Central Zone - Axum**

From a total of 10 weredas in the zone, four are reported by the zonal DPPD and Agriculture department to be affected by food shortages. The long cycle rains began on time this year but ended early following a 20 day dry spell in July. Furthermore, various pests, including army worms, shoot fly and stalk borer; poor soil fertility and striga weed had a very negative effect on crop production. The poor season was further compounded by unusual and unseasonable rains which occurred towards end of November in almost all weredas in the zone, causing damage to mature crops and seriously affecting some pocket areas of Dega Tebein wereda, located west of the zonal capital, Axum. However, the year was still considered to be better than last year. According to the zonal Department of Agriculture, based on the post-harvest assessment conducted in October, from an actual cultivated area of 243,928 hectares, a total of 1,684,055 quintals was reported to have been harvested. In comparison with the previous year, this represented a 50% increase in production.

Despite this relative improvement, the regional authorities have identified 176,778 people still in need of assistance during 1997 through FFW/EGS and gratuitous relief. In addition, a total of 18,061 people will require close monitoring. Beneficiary numbers, in comparison with last year's figures, have reduced by about 40 %.

Pasture and water availability for animals in the zone was generally more than adequate and animal health is very good at present with no reports of serious disease.

One wereda, Dega Tembien, was reported to have been badly hit by the unexpected rains. From the team's visit the following information was obtained:

### Dega Tembein wereda

Located to the west of the Central zone capital, Axum, the wereda is situated in the *Dega* agro-ecological zone and is reported to be *meher* dependent.

Based on the recent post-harvest assessment conducted by the wereda Agriculture Department, from a total area cultivated of 23,226 hectares, a total production of 195,186 quintals had been harvested. However, due to damage arising from the recent heavy rain, which fell continuously for about 10 days in some parts of the wereda, a further 5% yield reduction has since been suffered.

Out of 16 kebeles in the wereda, 8 were reported as affected by hail storms and heavy rain. According to information obtained, the extent of the damage in two kebeles affected by hail, amounted to the loss of 239 hectares of crops, affecting 634 people, while in the remaining 6 kebeles a 25% crop loss was reported from 650 hectares of teff, wheat and millet.

Despite these local problems, according to wereda agriculture office experts, the general situation is better than last year. The people affected by hail and as the result of the unexpected late season rain, may need assistance during March and April 1997, until the time of land preparation.

### **Southern Zone - Maichew**

Based on information obtained from the zonal Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Department, the zone consists a total of 12 weredas which are mainly *meher* dependent with a few pocket areas dependent on the *belg*. Out of these, 3 weredas, namely Hintalo Wagirat, Raya Azebo and Enderta, have been affected by a combination of a shortage of rain, too much rain, hail storms and various pest infestations (mainly Army Worm and grass-hoppers).

Based on a post-harvest assessment conducted in October by the zonal technical committee, from an actual cultivated and planted area of 222,545 hectares, a total of 1,934,035 quintals had been successfully harvested. In comparing crop production with that of last year, an increment of 14,982 quintals had been registered.

Regarding relief needs, 186,392 beneficiaries were expected to be assisted during 1997.

From the 3 affected weredas, one, Mehone (formerly Raya Azebo), was visited with the following information obtained:

#### Mehone wereda

The wereda is located east of the zonal capital Maichew and is reported to be both *belg* and *meher* dependent.

The *meher* rains began on time in June, but were followed by a 15 day dry spell and early cessation. Also, a high infestation of Army worms and aphids contributed negatively to overall crop production, in addition to the shortage of rainfall.

The main crop of the wereda is sorghum followed by teff, barley and maize. From a total area cultivated during 1996 of 32,741 hectares, 315,770 quintals of crop production was harvested. According to the wereda agriculture department, this was a considerable reduction on previous years as the result the above mentioned factors.

Based on a recent market survey, a quintal of sorghum which had been selling for Birr 80 to 85 last year, is presently fetching a price of Birr 100.

No major problems regarding animal health were reported. Availability of water and pasture is also satisfactory.

### **REGION THREE (Amhara)**

#### **Wag Hamra Zone**

The start of the *meher* rains in the three weredas of the zone was reported to be timely though they finished early. The distribution of rain was reported to be poor in Sekota and Zequala, while good in Dahana.

Based on the official pre-harvest assessment, from an actual cultivated area of 96,128 hectares, a total production of 399,426 quintals had been anticipated. However, due to the shortage of rain and significant pest infestation, a considerable yield reduction was recorded in all the three weredas. According to the Zonal Department of Agriculture, in Dehana a loss of 14,096 quintals was anticipated from 2,326 ha of land as the result of pest infestation (mainly Welo Bush Cricket) and a shortage of rain. In Sekota, 4,315 hectares of crops were damaged by pests and the rain shortage, resulting in an estimated crop loss of 20,212 quintals. Finally, in Zequala, from an affected area of 17,224 hectares, a total crop loss amounting to 96,118 quintals was expected.

In general, a total crop loss of 130,426 quintals is being anticipated from a total cultivated area of 23,865 hectares reported to be affected by the above mentioned factors.

Based on the first crop assessment, the Zonal Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Department (DPPD), has registered a total of 100,000 people in the three weredas who will need food assistance starting January 1997, with resources expected from central government and NGOs operating in the area.

<b>Breakdown by wereda</b>			
<i>Wereda</i>	<i>Total Population</i>	<i>Population in need</i>	<i>Provision of food</i>
Dahana	96,000	12,000	EECMY
Zequala	48,000	31,000	DPPD/ERO
Sekota	140,000	57,000	DPPD
Total	284,000	100,000	

Source: Zonal DPPD

#### **North Welo Zone**

Out of eight weredas in the zone, three, namely Kobo, Habru and Bugna were reported to be variously affected by infestations of Welo Bush Cricket, excessive rain and a shortage of rain.

Based on the official pre-harvest assessment, the total number of people in the zone expected to be in need of food assistance during the coming year (189,278) has increased by about 13% over that of last year. Moreover, it was reported by the Zonal Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Department, that unseasonable rain in November had caused serious crop losses in three weredas, namely, Meket, Gidan and Bugna. A technical committee comprising Zonal Agriculture Department and DPPC experts had been dispatched to assess the extent of the damage.

#### Kobo wereda

The *kiremt* rains in the wereda were reported to have commenced late and finished early. According to the agriculture office, the wereda received less than 30 days of rain during the 1996 *kiremt*. This was followed by an infestation of Armyworm, Grasshoppers, aphids, Stalk borer and shoot fly which had a seriously negative effect on total production in 1996.

According to the post-harvest assessment conducted in October, from a cultivated area of 51,276 hectares, a total of 407,819 quintals was reported to have been harvested. As learnt from agriculture experts in the wereda, this amounts to a 15% reduction in yield as compared with that of last year.

Though the lean seasons does not normally commence in this wereda until June, this coming year relief intervention may be required as early as March or April.

### **South Welo Zone**

The *meher* rains were reported to be timely in starting and even in distribution. However, later in July too much rain stunted the growth of crops. Also, the early cessation of rains in August was reported in some parts of the zone. Based on the official pre-harvest assessment, a total of 183,295 people will require food assistance in the coming year.

Almost all weredas in the zone were reported to be affected by the unseasonable rain that occurred during November. During the EUE visit, the zonal technical committee was in the field to assess the extent of damage.

#### Were Ilu wereda

According to the wereda agriculture office, 1996 *meher* rains began early but stopped before the crops had fully developed.

Based on the pre-harvest assessment conducted in October, out of a total 29 kebeles in the wereda, 40% to 60% crop damage was suffered in 17 kebeles and 25% to 35 % in 12 kebeles was registered as the result of too much rain, hail storms, flood and pest infestation.

From a total cultivated area of 39,258 hectares, a total of 399,784 quintals is expected to be harvested in the wereda. However, final production figures were yet to be confirmed at the time of the visit with the official post-harvest assessment expected towards end of December.

26 December, 1996

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