

# **UNITED NATIONS EMERGENCIES UNIT FOR ETHIOPIA**

## **FIELD TRIP REPORT WOLAYITA AND NORTH OMO 06-10 JUNE 1995**

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### **SUMMARY**

The purpose of the mission was to observe the actual food situation in the area, monitor ongoing food distributions and employment generation schemes (food for work, cash for work) and to compare the current situation with that of 1994.

Following last year's emergency all governmental and non-governmental agencies working in the region met in a joint effort to prevent future calamities. As a result, Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Committees (DPPCs) have been set up at the zonal and wereda level, food stocks prepositioned in disaster prone areas, early warning systems organized and employment generation schemes planned; all measures which enabled the different relief actors to react in time to the forthcoming food shortage at the beginning 1995. This year, compared to the 1994 situation, considerable progress has been made and no major emergencies have emerged due to food shortages. Regular nutritional surveys, market surveys and crop assessments will ensure the early registration of potential food shortages and allow timely reaction. Also, in order to enable farmers to replenish their household food stocks with the coming harvest, food aid will be distributed for an extended period, whereas FFW activities will be institutionalized on a mid-term base.

In order to stress on rehabilitation/development programmes, the RRC has given priority to employment generation schemes (EGS) through food for work (FFW), with free food distributions (FFD) not to exceed 20% of the total food aid. Given the short time available for preparation, lack of an adequate number of technical staff, necessary hand tools, transport facilities, etc., and a certain inconsistency in food supplies, this ambitious aim has not been met yet, although considerable efforts have been made in each wereda. However, as FFW programmes will continue over the year, this goal may still be met by the end of 1995.

In the health sector, an outbreak of Acute Diarrhoeal Disease (ADD) affecting five weredas in Wolayita needs to be mentioned. The epidemic broke out in March 1995 and is considered to have passed its peak, with adequate measures being taken such as health education, the isolating of patients and therapeutic treatments. The main cause for death has been the delayed arrival of patients at health centres, therefore resulting in severe dehydration.

Climatic conditions have been satisfactory to good on average, and despite the delayed start of the *belg* rains in some areas, crop stand is generally good. Still there are considerable micro-climatic variations within the zone and the maize harvest in some pocket areas may be very low due to rain shortage during the flowering and fructification stage.

As employment generation schemes become increasingly important to the Wolayita area and North Omo Zone, special emphasis has been given to this subject in this report.

## **EMPLOYMENT GENERATION**

Wolayita has a fragile food equilibrium under normal circumstances. Therefore, two years of unfavorable climatic conditions coupled with epidemics in human (malaria) and animal health (Trypanosomiasis), crop pest infestations (army worm), etc., have gradually increased household vulnerability to famine through the progressive depletion of food stocks and capital assets during 1993 and 1994.

If free food distributions have dominated the 1994 relief efforts, the 1995 approach is more of a rehabilitative nature, stressing mainly employment generation through FFW activities. All mandated wereda DPPCs have initiated FFW activities in their respective areas with the aim of channeling up to 80% of food aid through EGS, thus contributing simultaneously to the rehabilitation, maintenance and/or development of rural infrastructures. Also, non-governmental organisations have upscaled their EGS to respond to the prevailing food shortage. In a chronically food-insecure region like Wolayita, this is an important step towards sustained food security in the mid-term.

### ***Food for Work:***

In areas where FFW activities have been initiated, preparation time was relatively short. Consequently problems arose due to shortage of an adequate number of technical staff, lack of sufficient and specific tools, transport facilities and sometimes interruptions of food supplies.

In the past, FFW projects have been characterized by poor technical design and implementation and a lack of community motivation due to their limited involvement in project selection, resulting in low labour productivity and quality standards. As employment generation schemes based on food for work are planned to be continued on a mid-term basis, it would be important to set up adequate strategies and necessary budgets in order to avoid disincentive effects, food aid dependency and to guarantee optimal impact:

*1. Identification:* In order to seek community motivation and project sustainability, activities should be selected according to the common priorities and initiatives of the local communities.

*2. Planing and implementation:* Depending on the complexity of specific projects, the possibility of seeking technical advice and follow up for planning and implementation could increase work quality and durability. In this regard, the creation at the zonal level of a multi-sectoral, mobile technical team, familiar with labour-intensive approaches, could be highly beneficial. Likewise, workshops focusing on labour-

intensive projects could strengthen the wereda DPPC's capacity to plan and implement employment generation schemes.

3. *Budget:* In addition to the remuneration being covered by food aid, some projects would still need additional inputs in the form of material, equipment, transport, etc., to be purchased and/or paid for by the wereda DPPCs, for which adequate small scale cash budgets should be allocated. The Government is planning to make such funds available through its National Disaster Prevention, Preparedness & Mitigation Programme once it is operational, and in the meantime formulated an 80,000MT grain pledge for monetization in order to cover the actual needs; this has so far been met with little positive response. The WFP monetization programme is still in its initial stage of small trials, but WFP is willing to discuss and eventually support credible proposals, if submitted by a lead agency (governmental or non-governmental). This could be a good opportunity to assure necessary budgets for the 1996 activities, if joint planning is done in time and a lead agency willing to take responsibility is identified.

4. *Labour management:* Efficient utilization of labour assumes careful planning, especially in the preparation of detailed work plans with chronological setup of activities, determination of work norms, labour requirements, seasonal labour availability, material, equipment and transportation needs, remuneration standards and requirements (for FFW also timely and continuous food supply), budget, training needs, etc. During implementation, special emphasis has to be given to the rational organization of labour in specific work groups according to a work plan and practical experience, clear work instructions, on the job training and close supervision in order to assure a coordinated work process and the respect of quality standards.

The above mentioned criteria could improve the impact of short to mid-term employment generation schemes, in particular FFW activities, which should not become a means for hidden free food distributions, but an efficient tool for the rehabilitation and development of rural infrastructure, with respect to the dignity of the participants as responsible actors and not merely as receivers of relief aid.

#### ***Ongoing & Planned Road Constructions***

Extensive road constructions are already underway or near implementation in the region. The asphalt road from Shashemene to Arba Minch, implemented by the Ethiopian Highway Authority, has reached Sodo town. Simultaneously, the feeder road to Bedesa is under construction and others may follow with the progress of the asphalt road. Meanwhile, the construction of the Sodo-Bele-Chida road, connecting Wolayita with Jimma, is being started, implemented by Salini Contractors.

From observations in the field and inquiries at headquarters, it became evident that none of these projects apply labour-intensive or mixed labour approaches, but are exclusively capital-intensive, using heavy machinery and little, but very specialized labour. The main reason given for this choice is the short time frame for implementation.

The advantages of a labour-intensive approach in a densely populated, disaster prone area like Wolayita is obvious and the creation of some thousand job opportunities over a three to five years period could have had a very positive impact (income generation, local capacity building, improvement of agricultural productivity, etc.).

Despite the actual trend to favor capital-intensive approaches, labour-intensive works, especially on a cash for work basis, should become a credible alternative and/or complementary means of implementation. Finally, national priority should be given to all projects suitable for this approach.

The Ethiopian Road Authority (ERA) is well aware of the advantages of labour-intensive approaches at the local, regional and national levels. Already, the deployed labour force has to be recruited from within the work area. ERA is running a training centre in Ginchi, focusing on labour-intensive approaches in rural road constructions. To introduce labour-intensive approaches to ERA's overall extensive road construction programme, a national strategy would be needed as well as extensive training facilities, in order to achieve a smooth and successful transitional period. Simultaneously, international funding agencies should clearly favour labour-intensive approaches in order to help strengthen national economies.

As there seems to be little hope for subsequent changes on the already planned and ongoing activities, the construction or improvement of additional feeder roads, leaving from the Sodo-Arba Minch or the Sodo-Chida road, could still be done through labour-intensive works, generating some hundred of employment opportunities over a three year period.

***Employment Generation on a Long-Term Base:***

On a mid-term basis, labour-intensive works will be increasingly essential as complementary means of subsistence, but as they are limited in time and space, they have little impact on long term employment generation. Considering the well known structural problems of Wolayita, where the primary agriculture sector as a means of subsistence is reaching its limits, urgent measures have to be taken to initiate alternative means of income, creating long term employment opportunities in the secondary industrial sector by promoting adequate professional training, small industries (manufacturing, food processing, etc.), credit schemes, etc.

Being a relatively small (~ 1.4 million people), well confined and homogenous area (common language & culture) as compared to other regions of the country with similar structural problems, Wolayita would be a well adapted area for a pilot approach in the above mentioned direction. Also, within the North Omo Zone, there are still natural resources to be found with interesting development potential (lowlands, lakes). These are suitable for employment generation in the primary and secondary sector, as well as in the service sector (tourism). It would be highly beneficial if the international community could take the initiative to start adequate long-term development activities in the North Omo Zone, with special emphasis on the Wolayita area and in close collaboration with the population, the local, regional and national authorities.

## **ACTIVITIES OF GOVERNMENTAL & NON-GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES BY AREA OF OPERATION**

### ***Sodo RRC Coordination Office***

The Sodo RRC Coordination Office is running Employment Generation Schemes (EGS) in five weredas, using 80% of their resources. The remaining 20% is assigned to free food distributions.

According to the RRC Sodo, the general situation is much better than last year and existing problems could be controlled before they got out of hand. This is the result of good coordination between Government Agencies and NGOs operating in the area and the prepositioning of relief food in disaster prone weredas. Since the commencement of the operation in mid-February, two free food distributions and food for work payments have been made in all five weredas under RRC mandate (Kindo Koisha, Boloso Sore, Offa, Damot Gale and Sodo Zuria). A third distribution had just started during this visit. The food stock in all five weredas is reported to be only 2,198 MT. However, a new consignment for phase three of the operation has started and food is coming to all the weredas for distribution.

### ***Kindo Koisha***

*SOS Sahel:* In January 1995 a crop and livestock assessment was conducted by SOS Sahel and the wereda Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Committee. According to the assessment 75 % food deficiency was reported in the wereda as the result of 1993 and 1994 yield reduction and poor harvest due to climatic changes and pest infestation. Based on the findings, SOS Sahel made timely seed distributions to 15,500 households and crops were planted in time. The actual crop and rainfall situation is reported to be average. Cash for work activities, mainly based on road constructions, were employing a total of 1,317 people during the visit. Considering the actual lack of adequate employment facilities in the wereda, the organization is interested in upscaling its labour-intensive cash for work programme if additional funds are made available. As reported by the agency, the pay rate of 3 Birr per man/day (3-4 hours work/day) will be raised to 4 Birr per man/day. Aside of the cash for work programme there is also a plan under discussion to start a participatory land use system (soil & water conservation, afforestation, agro-forestry) to be conducted under employment generation schemes ( EGS ).

The food for work programme and free food distributions are running under the direct supervision of the wereda Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Committee. As mentioned by the wereda vice chairman, the third round of free food distribution is under way with food donated by Save the Children Fund UK (1,500MT of wheat) and priority will be given to the western highlands of Kindo Koisha. The beneficiaries of the fourth round of distribution will be determined by a survey at the end of the current distribution period. As for food for work activities, the wereda vice chairman said they had commenced FFW in December but interrupted activities after the second food for work payment in February, due to a lack of food stocks. With the arrival of new food supplies work has again resumed after three months. FFW activities concentrate on road and school maintenance, nursery development, compost pits and the construction of a farmer model house to be used for extension training. Besides the interruption of food supplies, the implementation of FFW activities faced additional problems due to the lack of a sufficient number of technical staff and appropriate hand tools.

### ***WFP Kindo Koisha***

WFP has started a six month programme in the wereda , based on local level participatory planning since March 1995. A five days training was given in this regard on labour-intensive employment generation schemes in Bele to the wereda Ministry of Agriculture personnel, the wereda Administration personnel and the Ministry of Natural Resource technical staff , by a World Food Programme team, SOS SAHEL and the zonal Bureau of Agriculture and the Bureau of Natural Resource and Environmental Protection. The objective of this programme is to build up the capacity of the wereda Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Committee to plan and implement Employment Generation Schemes (EGS) , and to mitigate and overcome technical and management problems. According to WFP personnel present at the training, the organization assigned five project advisors in the wereda to provide the necessary day to day technical advice and on the job training to concerned technical/management staff, and to assist in the preparation and organization of formal in-service training courses. These are to be carried out at suitable times without hampering the ongoing emergency programme in the wereda. During the recent visit of the EUE mission, the trainees had been sent to 36 different kebeles to study and assess with the community the type of projects to be implemented under the EGS programme and to select work group leaders .

*Health:* Cases of Acute Diarrhoeal Disease (ADD) have been observed in the wereda since the end of March 1995, as stated by Guneno health personnel. Since the beginning of June, seventeen new cases have been reported to the Guneno health centre, out of which 10 patients would be discharged after full recovery, six were still under treatment in the isolation tent as of June 7th. Only one death was reported. GOAL assists the health centre with medical equipment, drugs and personnel. Consumption of river water seems to be the initial source of contamination, whereas lack of personnel and poor environmental sanitation facilitates the spreading. To alleviate the problem, the health centre has formed a committee and is providing health education to the community.

### ***Boloso Sore\_***

*Redd Barna:* In February 1995, a household food availability survey was conducted by this agency in 16 PAs in their catchment area. According to the results of the survey, 12,000 family heads were registered for food for work relief activities (about 30-40% less beneficiaries as compared to 1994). The first round of distribution accounted for 720MT of grain, based on 60kg/20days/household. At the request of the DPPC, food for work relief activities for the second and third round covered about 16,000 participants. The third round distributions are planned to start towards the end of June, as soon as the 1,000MT of wheat donated by SCF UK has arrived. The activities conducted through the programme are check dam constructions and maintenance, road maintenance and communal afforestations.

*Catholic Mission:* Located in Dubo, west of the main town Areka, the Catholic Mission is operating in 15 PAs in the field of health (MCH) and water (spring development, financed by OXFAM UK). According to their information, 1,400 cases of Acute Diarrhoeal Disease (ADD) were reported since the beginning of the epidemic, three months ago. The epidemic started in the highlands, where it is under control, and has meanwhile spread to the lowlands. The epidemic seems to be directly connected with drinking river water. To control the epidemic five isolation shelters

have been set up in the wereda for treatment and health education is given to the population. There were still new cases coming to the health centre during our visit in the wereda. The mission is assisting the wereda Bureau of Health by providing drugs and conducting health education.

The wereda Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Committee is running both food for work activities and free food distributions in the PAs not covered by NGOs. The first round of distribution was conducted on 7 June 1995 for 21,235 heads of families. As to the food for work activities the first phase was finalized and payments were effected for 18,000 family heads during the last month. The wereda chairman further reported that the plan of action for the second phase of food for work activities has been completed and submitted to the zonal DPPC for final approval.

### ***Offa***

*Wereda Administration:* The Offa Wereda is subdivided in 26 kebeles and accounts for a total population of 136,910 people. The Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Committee has registered 111,363 people for food assistance, 84,995 under FFW and 26,368 for free food distributions. The first round of distribution was done in March/April for both food for work as well as free food distribution, with a total of 1004 tons of sorghum and 10MT of CSB distributed.

The second round of distribution started in May for 18 PAs with 523.7 tons distributed, whereas distribution for the remaining eight more isolated PAs (40-75 km) started in June after the arrival of a RRC truck. According to the wereda administration, MSF Holland has been distributing supplementary food for 3,500 people in 17 kebeles since May 1995. The wereda has received 5,370 pieces of hand tools from the distribution done by the Wolayita Development Association (WDA) towards the end of May 1995. However, the ongoing FFW activities require additional hand tools.

*Health:* A recent survey conducted by MSF Holland in Offa wereda indicates the prevalence of Acute Diarrhoeal Disease in this area starting in April. According to this report the number of cases admitted to the local health centre increased during April and May, but with positive counter measures taken in May, numbers of the newly admitted have been decreasing since the beginning of June. MSF Holland has provided medical assistance and started a supplementary feeding programme for the affected since April. A detailed report is available from MSF Holland.

### ***Damot Weyde***

*CONCERN:* The organization is operating food for work activities in all 48 kebeles of the wereda, based on its development programme. These activities include soil conservation, rehabilitation of degraded communal land, coffee tree nurseries and road maintenance. Around 6,000 family heads are participating in the programme, depending on the season. After a proper screening conducted by the agency, 103 family heads have been registered for free food distributions. During the second screening in April, the number of beneficiary households increased to 2,500. However, this figure was reported to be 50% lower than that of last year. The first distribution was done in April, the second in May, whereas the third one will be conducted towards end of June 1995.

*Belg* rains have started in time, but some pocket areas faced rain shortages in May during the flowering and fructification stage of maize; this will result in a poor harvest. Sweet potatoes and haricot beans have performed very well this year. Sweet potatoes (limited area due to lack of planting material) have been harvested since mid-May, whereas the harvest of haricot beans is only starting.

### ***Humbo***

World Vision International is operating in the entire wereda, with the Humbo section covering 25 PAs and Humbo town with a total population of 73,000 people. Their programme employs 4,000 people under a food for work development project based on soil and water conservation activities. The 1995 food aid activities in the wereda started in March and cover 4,000 people under free food distributions and 16,000 under food for work activities. In June, food aid will be extended to cover a total of 26,000 people, with < 80% Food for Work and > 20% Free Food Distribution. A nutritional survey carried out in 25 PAs showed a mean 93% weight for length with 3.6% of the children under 80% WFL. Since early June, Acute Diarrhoeal Disease (ADD) has been reported in the wereda. Through their primary health care programme WVI is taking the necessary actions to control the epidemic.

As the food aid mandate for the Humbo wereda has been given to WVI, the wereda DPPC does not dispose food stocks of their own. Considering the number of food aid beneficiaries low as compared to the actual need, and lacking separate means to initiate complementary activities, they have asked WVI to increase the number of beneficiaries for the coming food distributions.

According to the Humbo Bureau of Agriculture representative, the general crop situation is good. Still, in some parts of the lowlands cereals have been sown late due to a lack of rain. Also, due to last years Trypanosomiasis epidemic farmers are short of oxen.

### ***Arba Minch RRC Zonal Office***

The situation in Gamo and Gofa is reported to be satisfactory except in Zala and Ubamale. About 300MT of food aid bound to those weredas had to be stocked in Gofa due to inaccessible roads. Also, due to transport problems, the Boreda wereda has only received 100MT of cereals out of a 500MT allocation. On the other hand, it has been reported that the Kemba and Kucha weredas are being covered by the Ethiopian Red Cross Society/International Federation of Red Cross (ERCS/IFRC).

In general, the overall situation is considered to have improved in comparison to last year. However, the remaining problems reported by the zonal office, include: food aid allocations not directly transported to the weredas, old short haul trucks and light vehicle stationed in Arba Minch in need maintenance or replacement, and a restricted budget for running costs.