

UNITED NATIONS
Emergencies Unit for Ethiopia

Field Trip to Regions 1 and 3
29 March - 14 April, 1995
prepared by
Hans Spiess, UN-EUE Field Officer

1. INTRODUCTION

A field trip was carried out to assess the progress of food distributions linked with food for work activities in Regions 1 (Tigray) and 3 (Amhara), and to obtain information on the progress of the *Belg* rains in Southern Tigray, North and South Welo zones.

Limited food distributions have been carried out in the most affected areas of the two visited regions over the past few months. Although the current conditions in these areas are relatively better compared to one year ago, there are areas which still need close attention, namely the highland parts of North and South Welo zones and Simada and Tach Gayint weredas in South Gonder zone of Region 3. In Region 1 the conditions are somewhat better and, except for Dima wereda in the Western zone where there are acute shortages, food aid is required only in certain pocket areas.

The 1995 food distributions have started slowly and have been carried out inconsistently, causing confusion in some weredas. One of the reasons for this confusion has been the difficulty many areas face in implementing the policy of 80 percent of food aid to be distributed through FFW and only 20 percent free allocated to the elderly, disabled and children. Low stocks and an uncertain pipeline in the coming months are also a cause for concern among most of distributing agencies.

The progress of the *Belg* rains has been satisfactory in the *Belg* producing weredas of Southern Tigray and the lowland weredas of North Welo, whereas the situation in the highland weredas of North and South Welo zone has deteriorated due to lack of rainfall and is now critical.

2. REGION 3 (AMHARA)

2.1. Relief operations

The regional RRB has now given a "go-ahead" to all Non-Governmental Organisations involved in relief to commence with the food distributions as available stocks from the last harvest have been depleted. According to zonal and wereda officials, the quota of 80 % FFW and 20 % free distributions has been maintained by the regional Relief and Rehabilitation Bureau. In practice, food distributions are carried out differently. The Ethiopian Relief Organization (ERO), as the lead relief agency in Belessa (North Gonder zone) and Ibnat (South Gonder zone), will distribute food through the food for work activities during April and May, but plan free distributions from June to October as it is assumed that at this time farmers have to work on their fields. According to ERO, food distributions linked to FFW activities will resume for the period November and December. With this plan of action, at the end of the year food distributed through food for work activities will probably amount to approximately 45 percent of the total food distributions in these weredas. ERO's plan has been approved by the regional RRB.

North Gonder zone

In North Gonder zone, after a post-harvest assessment in February, the zonal Disaster Prevention Committee has re-allocated the zonal quota for the affected weredas as follows:

WEREDA:	No. of benef.:	Agency:
Belessa	53,191	ERO
Janamora	52,191	EOC
Beyeda	46,691	EOC
Telemt	23,000	
Wegera	22,900	
Denbia	20,100	
Debark	13,500	EOC
Gonder Zuriya	12,700	
Lay Armachiho	7,600	
Adi Arkay	7,500	
Dabat	6,000	

Total: 11 weredas 265,373 beneficiaries

In Belessa wereda ERO has started distributions through FFW. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) is transporting food to Debark and plan to commence distributions for Beyeda, Janamora and Debark in May.

The zonal RRB representative reports a lack of communication, logistic and field equipment, inputs which are important in ensuring effective Employment Generating Schemes (EGS). As a result, EGS will initially be implemented in easily accessible weredas and used as pilot projects and will later be extended to more remote areas. EGS are not feasible in the weredas of the Simien mountain at the present time due to these constraints.

South Gonder zone

In South Gonder zone, ERO has started food distributions in Ibnat wereda and Food for the Hungry International (FHI) is providing assistance in Simada and Tach Gayint weredas. EOC has been pre-positioning food in Lay Gayint wereda and plan to commence distributions in May.

North Welo zone

The situation in the highland weredas of North Welo zone is deteriorating according to the zonal RRB in Weldiya. Unless distributions start soon, large-scale migration is expected. EOC as well as RRB are transporting food to the weredas of Bugna, Meket, Gidan, Wadla, Dawnt and Delanta and the zonal Disaster Prevention Committee considers the situation serious enough that food has to be distributed freely for the time being. Contrary to last year, the situation in the eastern weredas of Kobo, Gubalafto and Habro is satisfactory.

South Welo zone

Although the *Belg* rains started in the second half of March in the highland weredas of South Welo, there is not much hope that it would be sufficient for a good harvest. The rainfall started too late and has remained minimal.

The Ethiopian Red Cross Society and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (ERCS/IFRC) have continued distributions in Tenta wereda. Save the Children (SCF/UK) has provided relief food for two months in Mekdela, Kelala and Lege Ambo weredas and is now transporting food to three additional weredas: Wegedi, Debre Sina and Sayint. RRB also transported some food to Wegedi, Sayint, Debre Sina and Legehida weredas.

2.2. Wag Hamra zone

Since the middle of 1994 the area around Sekota became a zone of its own with Sekota as the zonal capital. The majority of the population is speaking Agaw, but Amharic and Tigrinia are also widely spoken. The newly established zone, formerly part of North Welo, is comprised of six weredas:

Wereda:	Wereda Town:	Total pop.:	Affected pop. according to regional RRB:
Sekota	Sekota	132,860	} 71,050
Gazgibla	Asketema	54,140	
Sequala	Siska	66,511	} 18,700
Sahla	Mesehala	18,489	
Abergele	Neronak	20,040	11,000
Dehana	Amde Werk	94,000	21,000
Total population		386,040	121,750

A zonal representative estimates that following a poor 1994 *Meher* harvest caused by insufficient rains, locust and armyworm infestations as well as flooding in some areas, the number of people in need of food assistance may increase to 70 percent of the total population in the next few months.

Up to the end of 1994, ERCS/IFRC and JRP/EOC distributed food regularly. ERCS/IFRC pulled out of the zone at the end of 1994. At the time of the field visit JRP/EOC's plans for 1995 were not yet known to the zonal administration. Currently ERO, running a rural integrated development project in the surroundings of Sekota town, is the only organization working in the zone.

The EOC relief office in Addis Ababa reported that food aid for 15,000 beneficiaries is being transported to Hamusit (60 km west of Korem) for distribution in May.

Road constructions are underway around Sekota and the wereda is expected to be linked to Lalibela and the Chinese road to the south and with Abi Adi (Region 1) in the next two years. The construction of the new Korem - Sekota road is progressing slowly due to difficult terrain. Once these road constructions have been completed, communication with the zone will improve considerably and it is anticipated that the entire population will greatly benefit from these road projects.

3. REGION 1

3.1. Relief operations

During the past months a total of 248,000 beneficiaries received food rations distributed by REST in the Western, Central and Eastern zones of Tigray. 117,000 beneficiaries were provided with food rations by JRP around mid-April. ERCS/IFRC have already started food distributions for Hintalo, Adi Gudom and Wajirat weredas.

In Maychew, Alamata, Korem and Quiha a total of 40,432 beneficiaries who are mostly town inhabitants received rations in February.

No information was available as to how much of the distributions are connected with FFW activities.

The food pipelines of REST and JRP in the coming months are causing these agencies much concern. Food distributions by JRP is carried out partially from their 1994 carry-over stocks.

3.2. Dima wereda (Western zone)

During previous visits to Region 1, Dima wereda was referred to by both regional and zonal officials as the wereda with the worst conditions. The wereda is located between the Tekezi river and the Simien mountains, east of the Gonder - Axum road. Previously it was part of Gonder province, but is now part of the Western zone of Region 1. The population is Tigrinia speaking. The wereda town can be reached from May Tsemre on a road constructed by TPLF/REST during the war (90 km). Dima is comprised of 20 tabias¹ of which 19 are located in the lowlands and only one tabia in the mid-highlands. The total population of the wereda is approximately 55,000.

In January 1995 the central RRC sent relief food to Dima for 5,000 people (15 kg ration). After an assessment by the wereda disaster prevention team in February 9,188 people were registered as to be in critical conditions. The regional RRB accepted a quota of 8,000 and instructed the wereda administration conduct another screening. At the time of the visit (April 1) small RRC trucks were transporting emergency food to the wereda.

Last year's harvest was poor due to lack of rain, armyworm infestations, hail damage and flooding.

There are no NGOs present in the wereda. The Tigray Development Association (TDA) has built two blocks to serve as primary school, and wereda administration together with the participation of the population is constructing a clinic in Dima town.

3.3. Progress of the Belg rains in the Southern zone

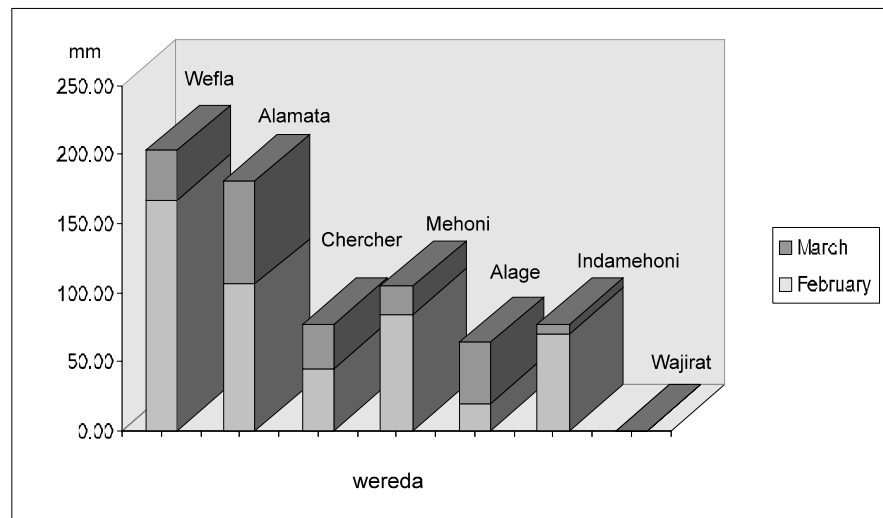
¹ Tabia is the lowest administrative level of a wereda, consisting of a group of kushets or villages.

This year's *Belg* season is considerably better as compared to last year, when it was an almost complete failure. However, the rainfall pattern and cultivated area varies considerably in the seven *Belg* producing weredas. An assessment by the zonal Disaster Prevention Committee had just completed at the time of the field visit (April 12) and revealed the following facts and findings:

Rainfall data for February and March 1995:

WEREDA:	February:		March:		Total
	mm	days	mm	days	
Wefla	167.6	11	35.9	7	203.5
Alamata	106.0	10	75.0	6	181.0
Chercher	45.0	4	32.5	4	77.5
Mehoni	85.0	7	19.5	4	104.5
Alage	20.0	2	44.0	6	64.0
Indamehoni	70.3	12	7.1	4	77.4
Wajirat	N/A		N/A		N/A

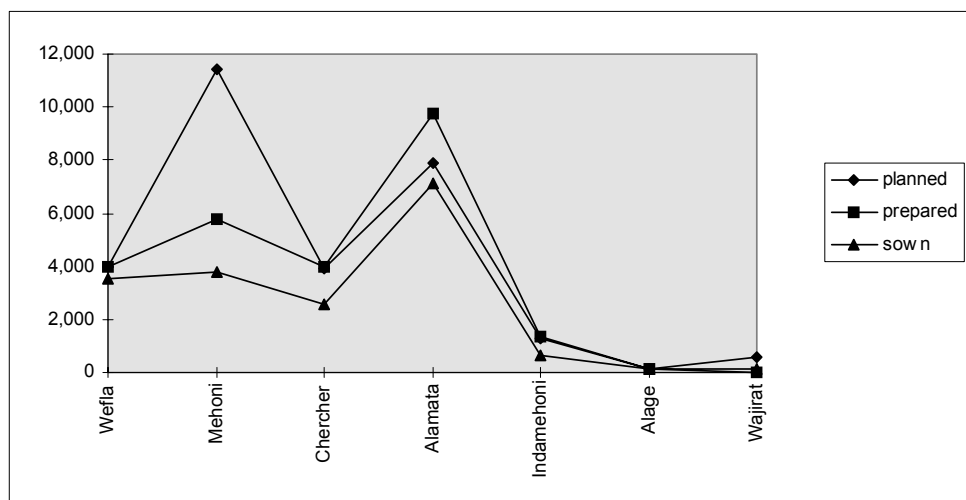
Rainfall during February and March 1995



The rains continued at the beginning of April, particularly in Alamata and the eastern part of Wefla wereda, but with very irregular distribution. One kebele in the eastern part of Chercher wereda has not received any rain so far and have not been able to prepare land for cultivation.

Hectares of land planned, prepared and sown in the *Belg* producing weredas of the Southern zone

WEREDA:	planned	prepared	sown
Wefla	4,000	4,000	3,529
Mehoni	11,429	5,781	3,809
Chercher	3,935	3,980	2,591
Alamata	7,910	9,750	7,115
Indamehoni	1,275	1,353	658
Alage	132	150	150
Wajirat	601	N/A	133
TOTAL	29,282 ha	25,014 ha	17,985 ha



With the continuation of the rains in April it is estimated that the planted areas of Wefla and Alamata weredas will have been sown completely. However, as a result of last year's experience some farmers were reluctant to immediately cover all their land, but there is a belief that after good *Belg* rains, the *Kiremt* rains tend to be insufficient. Subsequently, many farmers decided to plant the land they normally put aside for *Meher* production.

Prepared by
UN-EUE
P.O. Box 5580
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Tel. 251 1 511028/29
Fax 251 1 511292
email: UNEUE@padis.gn.apc.org