

Field Trip Report: Welayita Area & Kemba Wereda - North Omo (9 to 13 June)

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Current Situation

Recall: Last years excessive *kremt* rains resulting in a lower harvest than expected, a widespread attack of sweet potato butterfly heavily damaging sweet potato crops during the dry period and a two months delay of the 1997 *belg* rains are the major causes for an increased need of relief food during this years extended stress period in Welayita.

Current Situation in the Agricultural Sector: After two months of rain, Welayita shows again its usual, predominantly green scenery with most agricultural land under cultivation. Still, the crop stand is at a development stage which in normal years is reached in April. In addition, the recent dry spell of two to four weeks hampers the development of maize crops and affects the future harvest of haricot beans, now at flowering stage. Crops are wilting in the lowlands and from Humbo southwards, they are even starting to dry. During the field visit rains resumed, but only in the higher elevations of the northern part of Welayita. Hailstorms had some damaging effects in pocket areas of four weredas.

Since around one week there has been a light army worm infestation reported in several PA's of all weredas but Kindo Koisha. Measures have been taken by the different wereda offices of agriculture, backed up by the zonal MOA department, to control the pest.

The overall livestock conditions are good. Aside from the usual endemic diseases, no epidemic outbreak has been reported, except for a still unidentified eye disease on cattle in Boloso Sore.

Human Conditions and Relief Activities: With an early start and a prolonged duration of the stress period, conditions are becoming increasingly difficult. Even better off farmers have by now exhausted their food stocks and cash earnings, while there is practically no food yet available in the fields. Thanks to a relatively good supply of relief food (in the average 75% coverage of the needs) and a generally improved targeting of the most needy people by the wereda DPP committees, a significant decline in living conditions has been prevented until now. The general conditions can be described as going from just stable to declining, with variations from wereda to wereda and within the weredas.

The nutritional status of children under five also goes from stable to declining, but with the ongoing creeping hunger the number of malnourished children is reported to be significantly higher than last year. If supplementary food is mainly distributed through the wereda health services to the needy children, it is very difficult to assure the necessary close care and follow up of more severely malnourished children on the basis of a house to house care.

A significant increase of malaria cases in most of the lowland areas, including Kemba wereda, is another indicator of the severity of the situation, as resistance is declining with the increasing levels of poor nutrition.

Some migratory movements were observed three months ago, but now more people are coming to the wereda main towns in search of work, assistance and to sell wood, grass and even *ensete* roots, which are normally not marketed. Market trends have worsened, with a sharp price increase for maize and a slump for animals. Some farmers are reported to be selling part of their coming maize harvest by rows.

Future Prospects

With no further climatic hazards, the period of stress is expected to last until the end of July: up to the harvest of green maize. To allow people to recover and in order to avoid recurrent rehabilitation needs, relief activities should continue until end of August. With most of the relief food supplies already distributed and considering the low coverage in some of the affected weredas (see table in annex), continued and increased relief assistance is still urgently needed.

In this regard, Redd Barna has obtained 2'000 MT of wheat (half of initial request) and 100 MT of supplementary food from the Norwegian government, which is being delivered to Boloso Sore and Damot Gale weredas equally. Further supplies are envisaged but not yet confirmed. SCF UK has obtained 3'000 MT of cereals from the EU and 2'000 MT (2/3 of initial request) from ODA, as well as 200 MT of locally produced high protein biscuits, to be distributed to the seven weredas of Welayita. Continued supplies from the DPPC are also expected.

With the delay of the *belg* rains the current cropping season is shortened, having a negative impact on the overall harvest in 1997. Should climatic hazards persist, prospects would look very dark towards the end of the year.

Long Term Prospects

As already repeatedly stated by a number of observers, the vicious circle of progressive impoverishment will continue to have its devastating effects in Welayita and North Omo as a whole, as long as the root causes of an ever increasing vulnerability to disaster with progressive structural food deficit are not eradicated through adequate long term development activities.

It has to be understood that one can no longer concentrate exclusively on the agricultural sector, which, despite a still possible increase in production and productivity, will not absorb an ever increasing number of people in a viable manner.

Innovative development strategies have to be elaborated and implemented, situated in other sectors of the national economy, in order to solve the prevailing basic problems of the area. The main concern is, how to generate a maximum of alternative employment opportunities to ease the oversaturated agricultural sector.

Trying to help initiate the discussion about possible initiatives to tackle the prevailing problems on a long term base, we would like to outline hereafter just one possible approach.

North Omo has a high potential for wood production. The development of a wood industry can therefore be mentioned as a concrete example of a possible long term activity, which could generate many jobs in the secondary sector while simultaneously improving farmers income. The production of the raw material (wood & by-products) could be assured by the agricultural sector, while the processing and manufacturing would be taken care of by the secondary sector.

Long term planning could be handled by national experts of the forestry sector, etc. and would concentrate on the following main fields:

- *Wood Production*: Production of wood, especially for timber, needs time and has to be planned well ahead of industrial development. It is the starting point in view of a future development of the wood industry. The time factor has also to be taken into account on behalf of the farmers, main producers of the raw material. Most farmers cannot afford long term investments and specific strategies have to be developed to meet farmers interest. For example, farmers could get paid for planting and taking care of trees (timber).
According to the different agroecological zones existing in North Omo, a vast variety of wood and by-products could be produced like timber, charcoal, tannin, gum, etc., allowing the development of different industrial branches.
- *Human Capacity*: Successful development in the secondary sector can only be achieved with skilled professionals. Professional education is therefore a key factor for future success. According to the possible range of industrial activities, professional schools have to be established.
Taking into account the scarcity of financial resources not only for the establishment of such schools but especially for the payment of the running costs, professional schools should be conceived in a way to assure a high degree of self-financing.
- *Wood Industry*: Having assured a continuous production of raw material and a growing force of skilled professionals, the wood industry can develop. In order to facilitate the establishment of micro- and small to medium scale enterprises, a clear investment policy with adequate credit facilities has to be established.
Finally, the commercialisation possibilities of products have to be studied and facilitated.

North Omo: Evolution of Number of People in Need of Relief Assistance

WEREDA	1997 Total Population*	DPPC 1997 Appeal (Dec.96)		Mid-March Zonal EWC Assessment		Reg. Assessment May 1997	
Boloso Sore	270'165	26'000	10%	98'000	36%	98'000	36%
Kindo Koisha	153'733	19'000	12%	82'668	54%	83'791	55%
Ofa	121'713	12'000	10%	66'147	54%	76'147	63%
Sodo Zuria	219'492	15'000	7%	38'051	17%	38'051	17%
Damot Gale	237'490	19'000	8%	69'000	29%	53'473	23%
Damot Weyde	163'530	15'000	9%	29'258	18%	41'582	25%
Humbo	105'604	11'000	10%	62'417	59%	63'006	60%
Total Wolayita	1'271'727	117'000	9%	445'541	35%	454'050	36%
Kucha	112'112	12'000	11%	18'650	17%	23'796	21%
Dita/Daramalo	119'542	-	-	28'927	24%	30'000	25%
Kemba	108'917	4'700	4%	45'535	42%	45'535	42%
Bonke	119'590	-	-	20'337	17%	15'000	13%
Boreda/Abaya	108'931	10'000	9%	15'774	15%	15'774	15%
Chencha	96'204	-	-	10'025	10%	6'000	6%
Arba Minch Z.	167'789	2'700	2%	10'266	6%	5'000	3%
Loma/Bosa	101'507	-	-	22'790	23%	14'423	14%
Mareka Geno**	95'927	-	-	2'609	3%	609	1%
Esera Tocha**	101'260	-	-	13'853	14%	9'811	10%
Konta**	57'173	-	-	3'793	7%	3'793	7%
Melekoza	81'870	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mesketo	36'795	-	-	383	1%	-	-
Gofa	181'448	-	-	29'552	16%	24'984	14%
Zala/Ubamale	83'654	8'000	10%	17'383	21%	20'000	24%
Total N-Omo	2'844'446	154'400	5%	685'418	24%	668'775	24%

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

** Displaced people, relief needs related to conflict, not to climatic hazard

Wolayita Area & Kemba Wereda: Relief Food Needs, Supplies and General Trend

WEREDA	1997 Total Population*	May 97 Regional Assessment Report People in Need of Food Assistance		Cereal Requirement Mid-April to Mid-June MT	To Date Cereal Supply MT**		Supplementary Food in Quintals		General Situation of Stress Period
							Faffa	Biscuit	Actual Trend
Boloso Sore	270'165	98'000	36%	2'940.000	2'778.000	95%	396.00	543.00	just stable
Kindo Koisha	153'733	83'791	55%	2'513.730	2'224.500	89%	325.50	417.00	just stable
Ofa	121'713	76'147	63%	2'284.410	1'260.000	55%	207.00	216.00	just stable to declining
Sodo Zuria	219'492	38'051	17%	1'141.530	691.750	61%	90.00	270.00	declining
Damot Gale	237'490	53'473	23%	1'604.190	1'934.450	121%	265.00	342.00	just stable to declining
Damot Weyde	163'530	41'582	25%	1'247.460	608.450	49%	131.00	-	just stable***
Humbo	105'604	63'006	60%	1'890.180	680.000	36%	80.00	-	declining
Total Wolayita	1'271'727	454'050	36%	13'621.500	10'177.15	75%	1'494.50	1'788.00	
Kemba	108'917	45'535	42%	1'366.050	476.940	35%	115.00	-	declining

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

**According to informations gathered from Regional DPPC, Sodo Coordination Office & Wereda Administration when informations differ: according to 2 coinciding figures or average

*** In addition to DPPC relief supplies, for settlement on state farm 2'100 MT from EU through Concern, distributed by WDPPC & 510 MT for 2 PA's to compensate last year's hailstorm damage