

Drought and Floods Stress Livelihoods and Food Security in the Ethiopian Somali Region

Assessment Mission Reports: October 5 – 17 and October 27 – November 2, 1999

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Summary

This report covers two field assessment missions¹: The first was concerned with East and North Somali Region, covering Gode, Korahai, Warder and Jigjiga zones. The second mission covered Liban and Afder zones.

The Ethiopian Somali National Regional State, with a population of about 3.4 million, depends very heavily on natural rains. Nearly 80% of the people living in this state are pastoralists and subsist through herding of livestock. For more than 30 months rain has been poor and intermittent, placing the herds in danger and diminishing the resources of a population who have only limited coping mechanisms in the best of times. The situation was, until recently, exacerbated by a ban on livestock export to the Gulf States and the local demand for livestock could not make up for the loss of this market. Because of erratic rainfall and poor pasture most of the pastoral people and their herds are now moving long distances in search of grazing.

So far, this difficult situation has not reached the stage where pastoralists slaughter more animals to substitute meat for grain but very recent reports from Gode Zone indicate that the situation in this area may have deteriorated sharply in the last month². The terms of trade (livestock versus grain) are better than a year ago and the purchasing power of the pastoralists has remained at a steady level. However, the danger that the situation will soon deteriorate is very real. The short rainy season (*deyr*), which should have commence in late September, has so far been very unsatisfactory; grain reserves are growing scarce and the health of livestock will deteriorate further if pastures dry up. The situation could become alarming if the rains do not improve during the course of this season.

Much of the normally cultivated land relies solely on rain and was not planted for the last few seasons because of inadequate moisture. There is, however, some irrigation by pumps is seen in the lower part of the Wabi Shabelle River and around Dolo -Ado in Liban Zone where the Dawa and Ganale rivers converge. Although there are prospects for a reasonable crop in Jigjiga zone, farmers who lost their livestock because of the prolonged shortage of rain are not able to wait until their crops mature and have started harvesting and consuming the immature crop. Relief assistance is needed from now until the harvest.

The condition of livestock being a decisive economic factor in this region, it can be said that at the time of the mission the condition of livestock in Korahai and Filtu districts could be termed above average while livestock in Gode Zone are in the worst condition and much below normal³. Foot and

¹ See map in annex

² Because of increasing concerns about the situation in Gode zone, the EUE field a follow-up mission to Gode in very late November. An update on the Gode zone will be issued around 10 December 1999.

³ This has been confirmed by a more recent mission from SCF/USA. In mid-November the SCF team observed hundreds of dead and dying cow/calves and sheep in and around Gode.

Mouth disease affecting cattle and shoats (sheep and goats) and Camel Pox are seen in many parts of the region. In Gode wereda, a disease called Babesiosis (or « *Hulumbe* » in the Somali language) is currently very prevalent and killing numerous sheep.

A real problem is the lack of drinking water for the non-nomadic population not living along rivers. Filtu town in Liban Zone, Boh town in Warder Zone and many parts of Gashaamo Wereda must be supplied with water from far away by means of tanker trucks.

According to information from the NGO Ogaden Welfare Society (OWS) and subsequently from the Federal Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (DPPC), while drought remains prevalent in the region, on October 23, 1999, the lower basin of the Wabi-Shabelle River was inundated by a sudden flood, which led to the death of several people and livestock and destroyed houses and crops. *However, according to Save the Children Federation USA who fielded a mission to gather facts on the flooding in mid-November, the real problem in the area around Gode remains the drought that has grown much worse and reached "alarming proportions and effects"*

Introduction

The Ethiopian Somali region is known to be drought prone, and for the last few seasons the rains have been erratic and well below normal. There have been reports of long distance movement of the herds, and there have been rumours that livestock started dying in numbers. Similarly, the regional government has officially declared the existence of the drought in the area. In this regard, the UN Emergencies Unit for Ethiopia deployed a team to the region to undertake a rapid assessment of the extent and the effects of the drought and to obtain a general overview of the current food security status.

Since the Somali region is in most respects a very homogeneous area, to study four (out of the nine) administrative zones in north, east and central areas of the region – and visit the two most western zones – gives an adequate picture of the situation in the state. Consequently, a team visited Gode, Warder, Korahai, and Jigjiga, from October 5 to 17, 1999. Most of the weredas in Gode Zone are along the Wabi-Shabelle river with an altitude below 300 m.a.s.l, while most of the weredas in Jigjiga Zone are on the northern highlands of the region lying between 1,200– 2,000 m.a.s.l. The other two zones are considered the most typically pastoral areas of the region and were covered by a second trip to Liban and Afder Zones in the most western part of the region. Both Liban and Afder are bisected by perennial rivers and extend from an altitude of 1,300 m.a.s.l. to 300 m.a.s.l. In both zones several small towns with 6,000 to 8,000 inhabitants pose special problems, different from the challenges the pastoralists are facing.

Background

The Somali National Regional State is one of the ten administrative regions of Ethiopia with a population of around 3.4 million, and an estimated area of about 250,000 Sq. km. Nearly 80% of the population are rural pastoralists and agro-pastoralists.

The region is characterised as semi-arid with the average rainfall of 500 mm per annum. The region has a potential annual evaporation rate of 3,100 mm and as a result, the area is deficient in moisture in all the months of the year. The precipitation varies from 0 mm in the months of July/August during the dry season, to an average of 110 mm in April during the rainy season. Temperature varies from 19°C to 36°C, occasionally reaching 40°C at Gode. Most of the area is rangeland laying in the arid zone and semi-arid zone and is highly susceptible to drought.

In addition to a number of traditional hand dug wells, and ponds, there are a total of 103 boreholes and potable water schemes in the region of which 30 serve the rural community. According to the

Regional Water Resource Development Bureau, 23 of these are momentarily out of use, due to lack of water or technical reasons. The coverage of potable water is below 8% compared to the national coverage, which is 26%.

Similarly, much below national average are the figures of children with access to formal education and the general health coverage.

There are four distinct seasons known in the region. However, their beginning and end varies from place to place and from year to year. The four seasons are:

- Gu'* - The main rainy season, from late March up to early June.
- Hagaa* - Dry and windy with some cloud but rarely rain, late June to early September.
- Deyr* - Small rainy season between late September and early December.
- Jilal* - Hot, dry season between late December and early March.

Gu' and *deyr* seasons are the two seasons when the livestock, especially camels, breed. It is also the main season for planting the crops on most of the rain-fed farms.

Although Jigjiga Zone and some parts of Shinile Zone experience rain during the *hagaa*, which is called the "*kiremt*" in highland parts of Ethiopia, in all other areas of the region the annual rainfall distribution is bimodal with peaks in April and October. The rains are however very variable both in amount and distribution, and therefore, drought is a frequent occurrence.

In the pastoral areas, the mainstay of the economy is livestock (camel, cows/calves, and shoats). Along the perennial rivers traditional farming is practised. In good years there is enough grain produced to meet the basic market requirements in the region. The best cropping area is the lower basin of Wabi-Shabelle valley where rain-fed agriculture is regularly supplemented when the river overflows and enhances the fertility of the soil. Normally, the Wabi-Shabelle river overflows its banks biannually which helps farmers use the flood in the seasons of *gu'* and *deyr*⁴

Gode, Jigjiga, Kabridehar and Shilabo are all accessible by domestic air services provided by Ethiopian Airlines. There are only two all weather roads in the Somali region: one joining Jigjiga and Gode and passing the main towns of Degahbour and Kabridehar. The other giving access to Filtu and Dolo-Ado in Liben zone via Negele in Oromiya Region. Remaining parts of the region can be inaccessible by road during rainy seasons.

The region has important trade links with Somalia's Indian Ocean and Red Sea ports (especially Bosasso and Berbera), and with Kenya. There are more trading activities across the border to Somalia and to Kenya than with the other Ethiopian regions. Although the Ethiopian Birr is the official currency of the region, the Somali Shilling is the main circulating currency. Vehicles with no plate numbers or with Somali plate numbers are widely used, and move and work anywhere in the region except the regional capital of Jigjiga

The Livelihood of Pastoralists in the Somali Region

Pastoralism and resource management

Livestock herders, while following a very general pattern of seasonal movement, are in fact opportunistic in choosing pastures for their animals. Milk and meat still constitute the main staple food, although grain is becoming an increasingly important part of the diet. Pastoralists are

⁴ The floods that devastated many farms along the Shebelle River at the end of October were seasonal but surpassed by far the expected magnitude.

considered to be dispersed, isolated and uncommunicative. Pastoralists are often in a generalising way perceived to be poor but this is not necessarily the case.

But the pastoralists' world is changing too. The rearing of sheep and goats has become increasingly prevalent in the last ten years. Previously, « *Adhiley* », meaning sheep and goat herders, were considered to be lower in status in the society. Similarly, the use of donkeys as a means of transportation was totally abhorred by the camel herdsman and even taboo in some areas. Many farmers have even taken up poultry production. And as for being generally poor: FAO estimated the value of livestock moving through the ports of Berbera and Bosasso alone to be US \$120 million in 1984. 80% of this livestock was coming from Fafen and Jerer valleys, and from Borena. The pastoralists' herds are a tremendous asset. What is needed is better resource management.

Pastoral drought coping mechanisms

The ways in which pastoralists cope with drought varies from place to place and depends on the standard of the wealth (see *Table I below*). Some of the common ways of reacting to hard times are:

- Selling of the strong he-camels and lactating camels
- Reducing meals
- Trekking long-distance with livestock in search of better grazing/water.
- Fuel wood collection and selling in the local markets
- Collection and selling of some local building material
- Changing the livestock type e.g. by selling the cattle and buying goats
- Sending some younger family members to relatives in urban areas
- Out migration of the able bodied in search of labour (normally to Somalia)
- Slaughtering of more animals to substitute meat for grain as last resort.
- Petty trading
- Collection and selling of gums and frankincense
- Burning charcoal and exporting to Somalia (normally practised in Warder/ Degahbour)
- Begging as a last resort, especially in Jiggiga Zone

Table I: Wealth Ranking

Wealth Category	Wealth (Head/House Hold)					Remark
	Camel	Cattle	Shoats	He-camel	Donkey	
Very Poor	0	0	20-30	0	1	They live very near to the bigger towns in search of other opportunities
Poor	0	5-10	40-50	0	2	They are the biggest sector as agro-pastoralists
Normal	20-30	20-50	50-70	1	1	They also rear other livestock belonging to their relatives living in the towns.
Rich	80-100	0	80-100	3	0	Their livestock make distance movements in search of grazing
Very Rich	150-200	0	150-200	5	0	They also have <i>Birkas</i> , and they are also involved in petty trading

Source: Different discussions with the community during the field visit

Situation in Eastern, Northern and Central Areas of the Somali Region

Weather and status of pasture and water sources

Rainfall has declined since the beginning of 1997 and the status of the ponds, water wells and ground birkas has deteriorated for the last two and half years. The 1999 *deyr* rains have so far proved unsatisfactory. As of the end October 1999 it had rained to the northeast of Gode town (covering a 20 km radius), between Warder and Boh, and northeast of Kabridehar (covering almost 40 km radius), and in almost all of Jigjiga Zone. The extent of the rain was from one hour to four hours. Although the ponds, reservoirs and *birkas* were not replenish with water, the rain refreshed pasture in some areas and resulted in the movement of the herds to the areas that had turned green. There is no doubt that if more rain is not forthcoming these areas will soon be overgrazed.

Market condition and livestock terms of trade (see Annex I)

Presently, there are some local traders buying livestock and keeping the animals ready for export to the Gulf States for the month of Ramadan that is approaching. In addition, there is a positive mood in the livestock market to be felt after the livestock ban to Arab countries was lifted in May 1999. The price of livestock increased considerably from July 1999 onwards, reversing a decline from 1997 up to mid-1999. In September 1998, the terms of trade were much below September 1999. In almost all the markets, the price of one quintal (100 kgs) of sorghum, which was equivalent to 5 goats in September 1998, is now equivalent to around 2 goats. But, on the other hand, grain stocks are diminishing causing a hike in grain prices.

Crop condition

There are good prospects for crops around Jigjiga Zone and along the Wabi-Shabelle River (although the October floods caused extensive damage to crops between Kelafo and Mustahil). Overall, it appears an above average harvest is expected in Jigjiga, which could help stabilise the price of the grain in the whole region. However, until this harvest is brought in, the situation looks much grimmer: Many farmers in Jigjiga Zone, for example, lacking other resources, started harvesting early and consuming the immature crop. These people may require relief assistance.

Herd movement

It is very unusual to see almost all the herds, especially camels, from Gode, Korahai, Warder and Degahbour congregating in and around the Dire -Dawa area. Herds are also said to be scattered around the Babile area. Such long distance movements of herds in search of pasture and in these numbers perhaps only occurs every ten years. That it has happened this year is clearly an indicator that pastures and potable water resources in the remote areas of the Somali region are depleted.

For such long distance movements the mobile nomads divide their livestock herds into two – « *Horwein* » and « *Irman* »: non-lactating and lactating. For the owner of 100 camels, not more than 20 could be lactating at a time. The lactating camels will be left with the women, and younger children and usually stay around the water wells. The remaining non-lactating and a very small number of those that give milk will move freely in search of grazing and wet land.

Human and livestock diseases

According to the regional authorities, the health condition of the people and livestock are affected by the climate and to some extent by the food and drinking water conditions. Malaria and TB are prevalent though currently the extent of these sicknesses is considered to be normal.

Many sheep have died and are still dying of Babesiosis and Tick-borne diseases for the last two months in Gode Wereda. Livestock diseases such as Foot and Mouth Disease of cattle and shoats, and Camel Pox are also reported from all over the area.

Food security prospects

The mainstay of the pastoralists' economy is livestock rearing. The pastoralists sell their animals, and animal products, and in exchange buy food, clothing, medicine etc. The effect of the livestock ban and the erratic behaviour and intermittent shortage of the rain for the last two years resulted in a loss of purchasing power in the rural community.

There was renewed hope for livestock export opportunities after the lifting of the livestock ban in May 1999. Merchants usually come twice a year to buy animals for export, especially, sheep, goats, and young he-camels. Stormy seas however halted the upswing during the *hagaa* season that caused merchants to hold back on their purchases. Because of the unsatisfactory condition of pastures, animals are losing weight and might become unmarketable for export, or market prices might drop considerably unless the *deyr* rains improve. This needs very close monitoring as the economic status of the pastoral community will be very seriously impacted if the rains do not recover and the market price of the livestock falls.

Some twenty years ago the Lutheran World Federation began assisting farmers in the Kelafo area to construct and operate modest sized irrigated farms along the Wabi Shabelle River. Unfortunately, the infrastructure and machinery were largely abandoned and looted during the intervening years. Currently, there are 6 farming settlements each having 55 hectares in Kelafo and 4 settlements each having 400 hectares in South Gode. All these fields are irrigated by motorised pumps and the farms largely distributed to returnees from Somalia as part of a rehabilitation and resettlement programme. Although there have been some successful growing seasons in recent years, the programme has yet to become sustainable. With continued support and training, however, prospects for the future are good.

Livelihoods along the Wabi-Shabelle River

As the Wabi-Shabelle River area constitutes in many ways a special entity in the Somali region we add here some remarks on it pointing out the differences.

Sources of livelihood

According to the information obtained from Gode Zonal Administration, 80% of the people in the lower basin of Wabi-Shabelle River are sedentary farmers and 20% are pastoralists. In other parts of the zone the ratio is about 50:50.

Despite the potential for small and large-scale irrigation, the agricultural practices of the farmers living along Wabi-Shabelle River are largely based on rain-fed crop production supplemented with the occasional floods of the river. Normally, the Wabi-Shabelle River overflows its banks biannually which helps farmers practice flood-recession agriculture in the *gu'* and *deyr* seasons. In terms of crop production, most of the farmers interviewed consider the flooding of the river much more

important than the rain. However, as the seasonal floods are becoming more unpredictable, some of the richer farmers have installed modern irrigation systems using small diesel-powered pumps.

The division of labour among the farmers as a whole is culturally determined and largely based on sex and age. The allocation of manpower within the family is the responsibility of the father or the head of the household. According to the zonal authorities, the average annual food consumption of the richer farmers living along the sides of Wabi-Shabelle for a family consisting of 10 persons, is 517 Birr/month. In the sample household balance sheet given in Table II, such a family would produce a surplus grain during a good year, selling the grain surplus to buy all the family needs.

Table II: Sample Household Income/Expenditure

Food Item	Unit	Quantity	Value/Cost (Birr)	Produced/ Purchased
Cereals	Kg	1450	4350	Produced
Milk	Litres	365	547	Produced
Meat	Kg	20	100	Purchased
Sugar	Kg	180	720	Purchased
Salt	Kg	36	36	Purchased
Spices	Kg	12	24	Purchased
Oil	Litres	72	432	Purchased

Coping mechanisms

The Wabi-Shabelle area has traditionally been a surplus producer of grain. In particular, the Rer-Barre tribe, which is the dominant tribe in the lower-basin of Wabi-Shabelle, has been recognised for their expertise in practising flood recession agriculture along the banks of the river.

Besides the motorised pumps used in the three ongoing rehabilitation projects² in the area, there are a total of 40 pumps in Kelafo, 10 pumps in Gode, 2 in Imi, and 5 in Mustahil which can irrigate from 8 up to 150 hectares per pump. These pumps generally belong to rich families. Many poorer farmers are employed by the bigger landowners. They usually receive only food as pay and quite often not enough to feed their families.

In contrast to pastoralists in other parts of the region, the largely sedentary farmers in around Kelafo and Mustahil have few options to cope with the effects of severe drought. Poor people take up loans of grain from those who are better off but often these loans cannot be paid back and the borrower is compelled to work for the money/food lender on his fields. It is not unusual to find whole families who work for the repayment for years. The only coping mechanism in hard times becomes a sort of “bondage to borrowing”.

Wabi-Shabelle Floods

Although the Wabi-Shabelle River has great economic importance, it has become a threat and danger on many occasions because of sudden over flooding. In 1996, floods devastated three weredas. This year, on October 23, the river unexpectedly over flooded in the middle of the night in Kelafo, destroying homes and crops in 14 out of the 117 kebeles in the wereda. In Mustahil Wereda the river flooded 29 out of the 46 kebeles. According to the local authorities, 34 people and an estimated 750 livestock died, with 70,000 affected by the floods and in need of assistance.

² The three rehabilitation projects are (1) South Gode 1600 ha and (2) Kelafo 330 ha both of them were Previously funded by UNDP/DPPC and (3) OWS Kelafo 210 ha.

An assessment team from Save the Children Federation USA completed a mission to the flood affected areas on November 19. With the floods receding, the team reported that the effects of the prolonged drought in Gode Zone is considered more serious having reached alarming proportions. Cows/calves are dying in large numbers. The dead animals are buried in dugout crevasses or thrown into the river. The SCF-US team fears a worsening of the nutritional status of the population soon.

Situation in the Southern and Western areas of the Somali Region

To complement the picture of the findings by the Emergencies Unit team to the northern, central and eastern parts of the Somali region, a second mission was later deployed to the southern and western areas (Liban and Afder Zones). The general indications were the same as for the first mission: a prolonged drought or near drought situation that has developed over a 30 month period; the fact that the expected *deyr* rainy season has yielded no significant relief until the end of October, rumours of dying livestock and severe shortage of drinking water for part of the population. Liban and Afder Zones are among the more heavily populated regions in the state and amount together to more than 25% of the population in the Somali region.

Liban Zone comprises 4 weredas:

Filtu	41 Kebeles
Dolo Ado	71 Kebeles
Moyale	36 Kebeles
Huded	35 Kebeles

Huded is a new district, created from parts of Filtu and Moyale districts. Out of a population of 477,000 inhabitants, 80% are considered pastoralists; the rest are farmers, government employees or petty traders and live mostly in or around the towns Filtu, Moyale and Dolo-Ado.

The Dawa and Ganale rivers – which are both perennial – are heavily used as a source for both drinking water and irrigation in the immediate vicinity of the rivers. Overgrazing along these rivers has been a long-standing phenomenon. Access to Liban Zone is by the all-weather road from Shashemane via Negele to Filtu and on to Dolo-Ado (border town to Somalia). This road enters the Somali region from the northwest at an altitude of 1,600 meters and gradually descends to 300 metres. Moyale and vicinity can be reached via the paved road from Addis Ababa. The rest of the connecting roads, especially to the north and east of the Somali region, are in bad condition and are not all-weather.

Afder Zone comprises 8 weredas:

Dolo-Bay
Barre
Afder
Imi-West
El Karre
Cherreti
Gurra-Damole
Goro-Bakaksa

Officially, there are a total of 380,000 inhabitants in the zone, 80% of which are pastoralists.

Afder is situated between the Wabe Shebelle and the Genale rivers. The Weib River bisects the zone from north to south. There is only one bridge where vehicles can cross the Weib River, thus severely restricting access from the south during the rainy season.

As is to be expected, the territory along these rivers is overused but nevertheless contributes significantly to the economy. The Afder territory falls from the border with Bale Zone of Oromiya Region (1,300 m.a.s.l) to the border with Somalia (300 m.a.s.l); the northern "mountainous areas" being considered good pastures for animals feeding on shrubs (camels, goats). Beyond the rivers the territory can only support a pastoralist way of life. In addition, there is one resource in Afder Zone that is unique: Salt is extracted from a salt lake (God-usbo) in El Kerre wereda for distribution and sale all over Ethiopia and parts of Somalia. The lack of year-round all-weather roads in Afder Zone, however, not only limits the potential of the salt business but also makes it difficult for the population to gain access to markets and hampers relief actions when these are necessary. The zone's first all-weather road is presently under construction and will connect Gode in the central part of the region to Hargelle (capital of Afder Zone).

Situation as of end October 1999

Drinking Water

All of the three weredas of Liban Zone are suffering from a severe shortage of rain and water. All informants pointed out that for more than 30 months neither the main *gu* rainy season in April/May/June, nor the small *deyr* rainy season (October-December) have yielded any sizeable amount of water. Some of the rainy seasons have failed completely. But even when it did rain, it was never enough to fill the ponds and at the time of the mission most of the hand-dug wells were running dry. In Filtu district, only six of the local *birkas* (underground tanks, usually a few hectolitres in capacity) contained water and all of the 13 hand-dug ponds in the district were empty.

There are three boreholes in Liban Zone. The two in Filtu wereda – at Seera, two hours west of the town of Filtu and Ayinle, two hours east – are at the moment not functioning as the equipment is under repair. There were no indications as to when these boreholes could be used again. For weeks Filtu has been dependent on water ferried in by two tanker trucks from Negele. The trucks carry a combined capacity of 24,000 litres. The five hours round trip between Negele and Filtu is undertaken twice a night, as Negele allows filling of the trucks only at night. This means that only 8 litres per person can be distributed in Filtu to the estimated 6,000 inhabitants. Much of it has to go to domestic animals. A third tanker truck was in disrepair and could be used for lack of serviceable tyres.

Although the pond at the outskirts of Filtu dried up completely beginning of October, at the time of the mission some people were digging holes into the earth up to 2.5 meters deep to collect the seeping water and sell it in town. The quality of this water was poor, probably contributing to the generally bad health condition of the population. PCAE (Pastoralist Concern Association of Ethiopia), an NGO working in Filtu, reports incidences of fights between people for the last drops of water at distribution time.

In Moyale district there is a borehole at Chelenko that is functioning but heavily overused by humans and animals as all ponds in the wereda were dry. Repeatedly it was pointed out that even if the 1999 *deyr* rains were to finally arrive, there was little chance that they would provide the quantity required to fully replenish the normal surface water sources. Experience has shown that the *deyr* rains nearly always cease towards the end of November – even when the rains arrived late. As mentioned, only the people along the rivers Dawa and Ganale can count on secure supply of drinking water, although it has to be pointed out that these waters are of doubtful quality as far as human consumption is concerned. The town of Moyale, at the extreme west of the zone has its own water system piped from a borehole 35 km away at El Gof, which is reported to be functioning.

Pastures

In an area that is so heavily dependent on the pastoral economy, rain becomes an absolutely decisive factor for survival. At the time of the mission the picture in both zones looked rather grim. Whereas the pastures at the higher elevations in the eastern part of Filtu and Moyale districts and in the northern, mountainous parts of Afder Zone have received some minor quantities of rainfall in the last month, for the vast majority of the pasturelands this is not the case and herds have problems finding grass or shrubs. In Dolo Bay wereda and in all of Afder Zone an increase in animal mortality has been noted since the end of September. In Dolo Ado wereda authorities put the loss of cows and calves over the last year due to drought as high as 75%. More recent figures on dying livestock given for Dolo Bay were 30 cows/calves per day, while Cherreti reported approximately 40 shoats and 20 cows/calves per day.

According to the local authorities in Afder, lions, hyenas and jackals have been preying on the herds. In order to save cows, newly born calves would be destroyed and the cows not milked either for human or animal consumption. There is a considerable long distance movement of herds in search of pastures. Once found there is no doubt that these areas will soon become overgrazed. *(There were some good rains on the weekend 31 October/1 November in northern Afder Zone. This could help the pastures considerably. However, these areas are far from the normal grazing grounds for shoats and cows and might be difficult to reach by the already weakened herds.)*

Food Security

The federal Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission have recently updated the number of beneficiaries in need of relief assistance in Liban and Afder Zones based on a survey undertaken in August. The new figures⁵ indicate 105,000 people in need of food assistance in Liban Zone until the end of 1999. This is roughly 20% of the population. The figures for Afder Zone are 90,900 out of a total official population of 380,000 (24%).

The last recorded delivery of emergency food assistance arrived in the area in June and was calculated to cover needs for a three-month period. *(In the first two weeks of November 1999 Norwegian Church Aid have provided 700 MT of grain for Liban and Afder Zones. This delivery is intended for a one-off one-month ration. At 12.5 kg per beneficiary this should feed roughly 6,000 people. On the advice of DPPC a delivery of 200 MT is also being prepared by NCA for the Filtu area in Liban Zone for December)*

Reacting to the infrequency and inadequacy of food deliveries, the authorities in some towns and kebeles practice their own mechanism of distribution. Kebele elders decide who among the population is to be considered in need at the time of the emergency food delivery. The amount of food received is then divided up among these families.

Authorities in both zones stress that it is the poorer members of their communities who are suffering the most. Cases of malnutrition have appeared. The segment hurting most appears to be those returnees from Somalia (most of whom arrived in 1991-92) who have yet to re-establish themselves as farmers or in any other sustainable livelihood. In the area of Dolo the numbers of returnees living under these conditions is estimated at 7,000. In addition there are an unspecified number of refugees from Somalia living in the area. They have no support. In serious condition are furthermore pastoralists with only few animals, usually only a handful of goats and sheep.

One of the common and last coping mechanisms of the pastoralists and agro-pastoralists is the substitution of the staple food wheat and rice by slaughtering more of their own animals and consuming more meat. By doing so they diminish their already small livestock, which is imperative

⁵ Update on the Current Food Situation and Relief Needs From October to December 1999; DFPC 15 October 1999

for survival in the future. Whether this process has begun could not be determined in the short time of the visit.

The farmers along the rivers are this year wholly dependent on irrigation from rivers. Planting in areas dependent solely on rain was not possible this year. Pumps are few and thus the arable land is restricted to a few hundred meters from the banks of the river. Farmers who are/were able to produce receive relatively good market prices. The price for 1 quintal of maize is app. 50% higher than last year. (180 Birr compared to 120 Birr in 1998). However the authorities complained about a “new” sickness in plants after using river water exclusively. We were unable to elaborate on these now forms of sicknesses.

Health

According to the local authorities, there seems to be above normal numbers of Malaria and TB cases. Malaria seems to be a constant sickness during these months of the year. In neither zone is there sufficient health infrastructure in place to be able to effectively assist the population. In the town of Cherrite, for example, a new hospital, built a few years ago by Medicines Sans Frontiers Holland, has had to be closed for lack of health personal. In Dolo Ado complaints were voiced concerning the high levels of anaemia in the population. In the central district of Gore Bakaksa in Afder Zone there were reports of an outbreak of Measles.

The weredas of Dolo Bay, Bare, Imi, and Afder (especially the main town Hargele) were considered to be the most severe affected by the drought. Here there were anecdotal reports of people succumbing to the effects of severe malnutrition. These claims could not be verified. In Liban Zone isolated cases of malnutrition were observed, but there was little doubt that among the poorer population who do not possess livestock the number of cases will increase. *(A recent report by SCF-US⁶ puts the malnutrition rate of children in Liban and Afder Zones at 26% (2.3% severe malnutrition, 24.1% moderate malnutrition) which is alarmingly high. SCF-US is about to introduce a special feeding programme in Moyale district)*

Livestock health

Foot and Mouth disease has been reported in both zones for cows/calves and shoats. New and previously unknown is “Lumpy Skin Disease” on cattle. This sickness renders the animals weak; they lose weight and eventually die. Camel Pox is prevalent in camel herds.

NGOs working in the area

Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) was operational in Liban and Afder Zones from 1993 to 1996. Following a policy shift, NCA is now working through EECMY (Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus). NCA is actively supporting food security and water supply projects. The new improved pond at Filtu was financed by NCA as are the water trucks operating between Negele and Filtu.

Save the Children Federation US has offices in Dolo Ado (animal health/conflict mitigation) and in Negele (water/animal health/nutrition/general health) and is working in the Filtu area through Pastoralist Concern Association of Ethiopia (PCAE). PCAE is a local NGO operating in Afder and Liban Zones in Partnership with SCF-US in the field of veterinary training, vaccination, potable water and advocacy.

⁶ Bulletin of early warning system : Information & Food Security; Issue No. 12

Conclusions

The meteorological patterns for the Somali region have deviated from the norm for more than 30 months. The two rainy seasons that usually allow the pastoralists a secure, if very hard life under harsh conditions have become very irregular. Several times the rains have arrived too late, bringing only a fraction of the water needed or have failed altogether.

In several areas of the region livestock herds have suffered and were decimated. Diseases in the herds have led to a diminished demand in the market.

The 20% of the population that earns its livelihood from settled cultivation could not count on a regular harvest. Sometimes it was not possible to plant, other times the failure of the rains harmed crops and diminished the harvest. Irrigation by pumps is possible along the four perennial rivers, but this is expensive and technically demanding and as a result only a few small pumps exist and quite often even these are not functioning due to poor maintenance.

The biggest problem for population centres located some distance from permanent water sources (lakes, rivers) is potable drinking water for humans and animals. Many ponds, boreholes and hand-dug wells are dry – sometimes for lack of maintenance or expertise. Trucking drinking water for 5–7 hours to supply a town the size of Filtu is not a viable long-term solution.

Emergency food aid has reached the region irregularly. The authorities cannot count on receiving the promised allocations. This has made targeting difficult.

There is an extensive system of tracks and seasonal roads in the Somali region, but these are not adequate to ensure access to the population in terms of markets, the delivery of basic services, for the purposes of effective civil administration or in terms of delivery of emergency assistance during times of crisis. In the entire region the school system is very basic and health facilities are in short supply.

Recommendations

There are a number of weredas which should be promptly supplied with emergency food aid: The farmers in Jigjiga Zone, which could look forward to a good harvest, have consumed their immature crop for lack of other food and need relief now. The drought and flood victims in Gode Zone, where animals have also started to die in great numbers, and the drought victims in Afder Zone (Weib River area, Dolo and Hargelle) are also in need of assistance. The last group needing attention is the residual population of returnees along the Somali-Ethiopian border, especially in the area of Dolo-Ado).

Supplementary food is equally required in these areas, provided that this can be tied to the delivery of adequate general rations or if the assistance could be targeted through a mechanism such as the health system.

As weather patterns can change abruptly, the areas currently considered the most seriously drought-affected should be monitored closely for the emergence of increased animal deaths and higher levels of malnutrition among the population.

While unfavourable meteorological patterns cannot be remedied by human means, the preparedness for crises and emergencies can be improved. Among the areas for priority action in this regard are the rehabilitation of hand-dug wells and boreholes, including provision of equipment and technical support, rehabilitation of irrigation pumps and the construction of *birkas* in population centres that are remote from rivers. Also, the use of water bladders could help ease the distribution problems at locations like Filtu town, Boh town and parts of Gashaamo Wereda during

times of drought. Water trucks and water tanks should be maintained in preparation for emergency situations.

The dependence of poor farmers on grain-loans to survive in hard times should be reduced through appropriate development strategies. A feasibility study looking at small credit schemes, which could bring some relief, should be conducted. For a population so dependent on animals, veterinary projects and animal husbandry projects have considerable potential. Healthy animals survive a crisis better than sick ones. The mysterious cow disease in Afder Zone and “Babesiosis” which is killing sheep in Gode must be studied and hopefully a remedy found.

Towards a long-term development strategy

The whole of the Ethiopian Somali region is susceptible to drought and occasional floods. Little can be done to avert this. However a coherent development strategy, leading to sustained investment in the region could ease the strain that is put on the population in times of crisis. Among many points to be considered the following ideas were brought to the attention of the EUE missions:

Encouraging more NGOs to work in the area thereby opening up new channels for donor funding and support in the region is seen as vital. Partnerships between international NGOs and local NGOs is a way of building capacity as well as providing a source of local knowledge important when undertaking development activities in what is perceived as a difficult and sometimes insecure area. Making more use of the Rural Technology Centre constructed in Gode may have a positive impact on the general food security of the region,

In the longer-term, education may be a key point of entry to initiate a process of change, benefiting the poor. Finally, there are few functioning health institutions in the Somali region. So at least the existing facilities should be used to capacity. The lack of trained health personnel is a major obstacle. Instigating a programme for the training of local nurses could be a valuable first step to alleviate the problem.

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The designations employed and the presentation of material in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever of the UN concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

29 November 1999

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ANNEX I

Table 1: Livestock Market

Type of Livestock	Age	Price in Birr/Head					
		Sept 1998			Sept 1999		
		Gode	Warder	K/dahar	Gode	Warder	K/dahar
Camel	He Camel (Small)	200	300	280	600	700	700
	He Camel (Old)	450	400	360	1300	1400	1400
	She Camel (Small)	300	250	260	650	780	780
	She Camel (Old)	250	300	310	500	610	610
Cattle	Lactating Cow	300	300	300	500	600	600
	Ox	200	200	190	400	500	500
Sheep/goat	Age 1 year	18	25	28	60	70	70
	Age 2 years	26	36	39	70	80	80
	Age 4 years	35	40	45	140	135	135

Source: OWS

Table 2: Grain market

Commodity	Unit	Price In Birr					
		Sept 1998			Sept 1999		
		Gode	Warder	K/Dahar	Gode	Warder	K/Dahar
Maize	Quintal	190	-	-	220	-	-
Sorghum	Quintal	210	200	190	280	-	260
French Beans	Quintal	300	-	-	340	300	-
Rice	Quintal	430	370	380	450	400	400
Sugar	Quintal	390	300	305	400	320	390
Oil (Sesame)	KG	-	-	-	-	-	-
Milk	Ltr	2	2.6	1.8	2.8	3.2	3
Wheat Flour	Quintal	400	380	380	430	408	410
Wheat	Quintal	195	-	-	250	-	-

Source: OWS

Table 3: Existing Boreholes & potable water schemes

Zone	Number of Boreholes and Potable Water Schemes						
	Rural			Urban			Total
	Functional	Not Functional	Under Construction	Functional	Not Functional	Under Construction	
Shinile	8	1	0	9	2	0	20
Jigjiga	5	4	2	15	7	0	33
Fik	0	1	0	1	1	0	3
Degahbour	2	0	0	3	0	0	5
Korahai	2	0	0	6	3	1	12
Warder	0	0	0	6	1	1	8
Liban	5	2	0	12	1	0	20
Afder	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gode	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
Total	22	8	2	54	15	2	103

Source: Water Resource Development Bureau Of SNRS, *Water Supply Scheme Status*, 1999.

ANNEX II

NGOs currently active in the SNRS, especially in the food security sector

SCF-UK (Save the Children Fund UK)

Main programme focus in Jigjiga Zone and some part of Fik and Shinile zones.

Programmes include:

Child support

Seeds and farm implements

Training of farmers

SCF USA (Save the Children Federation USA)

Has offices in Dolo-Ado (Animal Health/Conflict mitigation) and in Negele (Water/Animal health/Nutrition/General Health) and is working in the Filtu area through PCAE (Food security)

Oxfam-UK

Main programme focus in Jigjiga and Shinile zones and now started work in Gode, Afder, and Liban zones in partnership with OWS.

Programmes include:

Potable water supply

Seeds and farm implements

Micro-credit schemes

OWS (Ogaden Welfare Society)

Working in Korahai, Warder, and Jigjiga zones, and now starting a new project in Gode, Afder, and Liban zones in partnership with Oxfam-UK.

Programmes include:

Rural water supply

Relief food aid

Micro-credit schemes

Seeds and farm implements

ACF (Action Contre la Faim)

Working in Korahai zone in partnership with OWS
Programmes include:
Rehabilitation of existing potable water systems

Medecines Sans Frontiers Belgium

Working in Degahbour town
Programmes include:
Health and nutrition support services

Norwegian Church Aid (NCA)

Directly operational in Liban and Afder Zones 1993 – 1996. Now working through EECMY (Ethiopian Orthodox Church Mekane Yesus) in the areas of food security and water development. (The new improved pond at Filtu was financed by NCA as are the drinking water trucks operating between Negele and Filtu.

PCAE (Pastoralists Concern Association of Ethiopia)

A local NGO operating in Afder and Liban zones in Partnership with SCF-USA in the field of veterinary training, vaccination, potable water and advocacy.