

**UNITED NATIONS
EMERGENCIES UNIT FOR ETHIOPIA
SITUATION REPORT FOR FEBRUARY 1995**

OVERVIEW

Political Developments

Following the announcement by the Transitional Government of Ethiopia, that national and regional elections would be held on 7 May, 1995, it was agreed by the international community that the early establishment of an election environment and process monitoring unit, under the auspices of a Donor Group Steering Committee for Election (DGSCE), would ensure that the international observation of the May elections is coordinated in an efficient and systematic manner. Furthermore, by instigating a coordinated international monitoring operation, it would be possible to build confidence in the process and help ensure greater participation.

Accordingly, a Donor Election Unit (DEU) was established at the end of February through a cost-sharing arrangement with interested donors. Reporting directly to the DGSCE, the Unit will function as a coordination and advisory body for monitoring teams comprising staff from both the DEU and participating embassies.

Meeting between TGE and opposition parties

In February, the US Congressional Task Force on Ethiopia sponsored a four day conference in Washington between officials of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia and members of four leading opposition parties¹. At the conclusion of the talks, agreements were signed by all parties calling for a multiparty forum committee responsible for maintaining the dialogue between the various Ethiopian political movements.

ICRC/OAU Seminar on Land mines

The International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC), in collaboration with the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), organised a regional seminar held in Addis Ababa 23-24 February to discuss the global problems caused by the indiscriminate use of land mines and the role of the 1980 UN Weapons Convention in regulating their use. The seminar was attended by government representatives from 12 African countries, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and the United Nations.

AGRICULTURE

Progress of the Belg season

The short rainy season, the *Belg*, is highly variable but normally falls between February and May. It has three major impacts on food production and food security in different regions. *Belg* crop production accounts for less than 10% of national annual production, but in some areas (such as Bale and parts of North Shewa) it may account for more than half the year's production. The *Belg* rains also help in land preparation for the main (*Meher*) season. Rain at the *Belg* time is also considered important in pastoral

¹ The four opposition parties represented are: the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), the Southern Ethiopia People's Democratic Coalition (SEPDC), the All Amhara People's Organisation (AAPO) and the Coalition of Ethiopian Democratic Forces (CEDF).

areas and for replenishing ground water supplies.

According to the National Meteorological Services Agency (NMSA), the onset of the *Belg* season was up to two weeks late in some areas, but proceeded positively with significant rainfall activity observed over some parts of the *Belg* producing areas of the country during the first *dekad* (ten days) of February. These rains, however, in most cases have only benefited land preparation activities as rainfall decreased during the second and third *dekads* of the month.

With the stabilising of the *Belg* at the end of February, increased rainfall is expected from the first *dekad* of March with, it is hoped, a normal pattern until the end of May.

Locust situation

Favourable ecological conditions during the latter months of 1994 and early 1995 along the Red Sea coasts of Egypt, Sudan and Eritrea as well as the coastal plains of Saudi Arabia, have led to a new upsurge of desert locust, starting from these areas and gradually spreading into the spring breeding areas of Eastern Ethiopia. So far, ground surveys from the Ministry of Agriculture have detected swarms in areas of Eastern Hararghe, Dire Dawa and Jijiga, and control operations are underway.

In response to a request for assistance in surveying and control of desert locust launched by the Ministry of Agriculture, the Desert Locust Control Organisation of Eastern Africa (DLCO-EA) has mobilised resources to conduct surveys and control operations in these areas. Surveys are also being conducted in other susceptible areas such as the Southern and Eastern zones of Region 1 (Tigray), North and South Welo zones of Region 3 (Amhara), Region 2 (Afar) and Region 5 (Somali).

Fertiliser situation

As at the end of February, 80,499 tons of fertiliser had arrived at Assab. This is approximately 35 percent of 1995 donor pledges for the procurement of fertiliser through (AISCO). According to FAO, the quantity of fertiliser already moved to marketing centres is sufficient to meet the demands for *Belg* crops.

REGIONAL UPDATE

The general situation in Tigray, Welo and Eastern Hararghe is expected to deteriorate in the coming months as food stocks from the 1994 main harvest are depleted. The Relief and Rehabilitation Commission expects to have to intervene with increased distributions in these areas from March onwards. These areas account for the majority of the four million people² facing food shortage in 1995.

The plan to distribute free food assistance to only 20 percent of the population in need of assistance and to concentrate 80 percent through food for work activities has not been fully implemented yet. Plans for Employment Generation Schemes are still being discussed and finalised at the regional level and will need to be put in place quickly

²

The RRC figure for affected population in 1995 is 3,994,000 people.

North Omo zone (SEPAR)

Parts of Wolayita remain critical. Several nutritional surveys were recently conducted to assess the extent of the problem in the area. An SCF/UK nutritional survey has revealed alarming conditions in a number of lowland weredas which face acute food shortages. SOS Sahel reports that the results of their crop assessment in Kindo Koisha wereda confirmed that the area is highly susceptible to another severe food shortage and indicates that over 100,000 people will require food assistance in the next seven months.

A combined RRC/NGO relief operation resourced with a loan from the Emergency Food Security Reserve (EFSR) is currently underway.

Malnutrition and diseases such as malaria may exacerbate the situation, and measures need to be taken to ensure nutritional monitoring and health assistance is provided to avoid a deterioration in the health status of an already vulnerable population.

North and South Welo zones (Region 3)

South Welo has been the scene of conflicting reports over the past months. An area which has experienced a relatively low main harvest, it is especially dependent on the production of maize during the *Belg* season. To clarify reports of rising concern over the general food security in South Welo, a team of experts from the Ethiopian Red Cross Society/International Federation of Red Cross Societies (ERCS/IFRCS) were conducting an extensive survey in this area at the end of February.

Certain weredas in North Welo have been experiencing a serious shortage of food, as a result of a below average 1994 *Meher* harvest. Delanta wereda is emerging as the most affected in North Welo. Both *Belg* and *Meher* crops failed in the wereda in 1994. According to the Relief and Rehabilitation Bureau in Region 3, more than 50 percent of the inhabitants of Delanta will require food assistance in the coming months. The RRB have already started some distributions using carry-over stocks from 1994. Malnutrition is a cause for concern as deaths have been reported in Delanta.

North and South Gonder zones (Region 3)

Recent post harvest assessments carried out in North Welo by the RRC have established that more than half the weredas, mostly located in the eastern parts of the zone, will require food assistance in the coming few months. The reduction of the 1994 *Meher* crop production was due to the early withdrawal of the long rains, water-logging and pest infestation.

The situation in South Gonder, although better than North Gonder, will still need to be monitored as many of the weredas did not benefit from consistent rainfall during the 1994 *Meher* season. Food for the Hungry International (FHI) and the Ethiopian Relief Organisation (ERO) are already prepositioning food for distribution in the zone.

FOOD AID AND LOGISTICS

Food aid status

As at 28 February 1995, from the total import requirements of 1,032,000 tons for 1995, the notional pledge level remains little changed at 570,972 tons with a breakdown of 266,099 tons for relief/regular programmes and 304,873 tons for programme aid.³ In addition to cereals and pulses, there are 18,906

³

Notional pledges are indications from the donors of possible commitments and are not confirmed pledges.

tons of notional pledges of oil.

Logistics

Although overall pledging is encouraging, the usual pattern of few shipments early in the year is being repeated. Deliveries in 1995 have so far been 52,196 tons of food aid, all from the United States of America. No other shipments are confirmed, despite significant notional pledges.

According to WFP, ports activity for food aid was low in February, with the transport of fertiliser comprising the bulk of movement in-country.

Refugee and returnee operations

The situation in Northwest Somalia seems to have settled, but tension persists in the clan areas of those which have recently crossed into Ethiopia. On the Ethiopian side, there is no sign that the new arrivals plan to return to Northwest Somalia in the near future. So far, the troubles in Moqdishu have not resulted in movements across the southern Ethiopian border with Somalia, although some tension has been reported as well as an increase in security incidents around Dollo.

The WFP/UNHCR planning figures for refugee and returnee assistance in 1995 remain at 331,600 refugees and 88,250 returnees. WFP will be presenting a new project proposal reflecting these numbers to the forthcoming spring meeting of the Committee for Food Aid Policies and Programmes (CFA) in Rome, for their approval.

HEALTH, NUTRITION AND WATER

Epidemics

The incidence and prevalence of diarrhoea and malaria in some pocket areas of the country is believed to have contributed to the increase in malnutrition. In order to maintain a sustained nutritional support to needy areas, UNICEF has provided various government sectors with supplies of supplementary feeding.

In order to strengthen the control and prevention of epidemic and infectious diseases in the country, a WHO sponsored training course was carried out for health programme managers between 13-25 February. This course was attended by WHO representatives from Geneva and Ethiopia, representatives from the regional relief and rehabilitation bureaux and the Ministry of Health.

A first quarter field trip was carried out by WHO and MoH at the beginning of February, to monitor WHO supported programmes and the progress of partially damaged health facilities in North Gonder, South Gonder and West Gojjam zones of Region 3. The team also attended a review meeting of the Regional Health Bureau and zonal health departments to discuss the current status of the assisted projects.

Support to health services

In February, UNICEF emergency activities were directed at strengthening the health facilities in the regions in order to improve their service coverage and enable them to cope with disease outbreaks. To this end UNICEF activities included:

- conducting microplanning workshops aimed at preparedness for possible outbreaks of Acute Diarrhoeal Diseases (ADD), and promoting Oral Rehydration Therapy (ORT) and Expanded Programme of Immunisation (EPI);
- monitoring UNICEF-funded emergency projects and providing supplies of drugs medical equipment to different regions.

In response to requests by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) dealing with emergencies in different localities of the country, shelter material and relief items were provided to these agencies.

Water and sanitation

UNICEF signed agreements with a local NGO in Region 5, to carry out construction of hand dug wells and rehabilitation projects in Afder and Liben zones of Region 5. UNICEF also reached agreements with the Region 4 Administration to commence with water projects in Eastern Hararghe.

In Southern Ethiopian People's Administrative Region (SEPAR), a water scheme has been completed for a hospital in Hosana with the assistance of UNICEF in the supply of material.

A sanitation workshop was conducted in Harar between 6-9 February for participants from Eastern and Western Hararghe zones and Harar. The objectives of this workshop were to provide the participants with training on the simple concepts of health education and social mobilisation for the promotion of sanitation activities, and to develop a plan of action on sanitation activities in these zones.

REFUGEES AND RETURNEES

Sudanese refugees

The assisted population reached 52,670 with the following breakdown: Fugnido 25,712; Bonga 15,261; and Dimma 11,697. Despite concerns that dry-season fighting in the Sudan would lead to an increased influx into Ethiopia, the number of registered new arrivals actually decreased from 526 in January to 427 in February. Nevertheless, physical inventories of relief stocks in the western settlements were undertaken to ensure that repositioning was adequate to cope with a sudden influx.

Somali refugees

The assisted population reached 262,458 with the following breakdown: Daror 39,395; Camabokor 31,920; Rabasso 24,865; Hartisheik 58,607; Kebribeyah 10,100; Teferiber 46,356; Darwanaji 42,933; and Aisha 15,282. This included the 184,900 beneficiaries whose ration cards were revalidated in September/October 1994, and 77,558 new arrivals which have been listed since the outbreak of fighting in Hargeysa on 1 November 1994.

During February 1995, 7,838 new arrivals were listed, the majority of whom (6,404) arrived at Daror camp. This camp is populated primarily by Garhajis, the group which includes most of the militia in opposition to the Egal administration. This increase does not reflect a new influx from Northwest Somalia, where the situation has been relatively stable since the 11-12 January Egal offensive, but

rather the resumption of listing suspended earlier. In this process, a large number of false claimants have been rejected.

Distributions of food and non-food items continued without any significant problems. Following reports of two cases of meningitis in the Jijiga area the week of 7-13 February, precautionary measures were taken to contain any possible epidemic. At Hartisheik, the new arrivals were relocated closer to available health and nutrition services with the assistance of SCF/UK. The UNHCR Refugee and Technical Units also analysed the additional sanitation, health and nutrition staff required by the Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA) to provide continuing care for the new arrivals

Water continued to be problematic, particularly in Camabokor. As the reservoirs dry up, they are being de-silted and lined with plastic tarpaulin to increase their holding capacity once the rains resume, normally by April. Meanwhile, water must be purchased from owners of private cisterns ("birka").

In a separate development, groups of Somali have been reported crossing from Humera, in north-western Ethiopia, into the Sudan.

Kenyan refugees

The estimated 8,270 Kenyans in the Moyale area continued to be assisted, with WFP trying to deliver food directly to the large group of Adjurans near Dokiso. However, the murder of the WFP food monitor in February, following the murder of the UNHCR field officer in December 1994, has kept UNHCR from re-opening its field office in Moyale.

Djiboutian refugees

The difficulties in monitoring assistance to the estimated 10,000 to 18,000 Djiboutians refugees was further aggravated by the increasing politicisation of relief in the Afar Region 2. The Ethiopian Relief and Rehabilitation Commission has reportedly refused to provide food for the needy local population until responsibilities are clarified. The Administration for Refugee/Returnee Affairs (ARRA) has withdrawn its coordinator and the vehicle which was essential to monitor assistance to those along the Assab road. The two water tankers operated by ARRA have also been withdrawn, reportedly for repairs. WFP food has been looted on several occasions. Following the ARRA/UNHCR mission at the end of January, another mission was sent to the region at the end of February.

REPATRIATION

Repatriation from Djibouti

Weekly trains from Djibouti to Dire Dawa carried an additional 4,474, bringing the total repatriated in 1995 to 7,488 and the total since the current operation began in September 1994, to 15,033.

Repatriation from Kenya

The long-awaited repatriation from Kenya finally began on 22 February with the first flight to Addis Ababa. By the end of the month, three flights had brought 158 returnees (86 families) to Addis Ababa and 56 returnees (11 families) to Dire Dawa. In addition to these 214 returnees (97 families) repatriated in February, further flights to Dire Dawa, Jijiga and Gode, plus an overland convoy to Moyale, are scheduled for March.

Individual repatriation

During February, three individual cases totalling 9 persons repatriated from the USA (1), Russia (1) and Iraq (7).

Repatriation from Sudan

Planning resumed in mid-February following a reversal of Ethiopian government policy, whereby Ethiopian refugees are encouraged to return to their villages of origin in the highlands, but will not be assisted to settle in the lowlands bordering Sudan. A draft operations plan and information leaflet have already been agreed between UNHCR Ethiopia and the ARRA and non-governmental implementing agencies. Registration should begin in the Sudan in early March, with the first movements to Ethiopia planned for mid-March.

DISCLAIMER

The designations used above may refer to old regional or awraja names for the sake of familiarity. However, 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 delimitations of its frontiers or boundaries.

Information in this report has been provided by specialised UN agencies. Reference is made to any other source of information as necessary.

Prepared by:
UN-EUE
c/o UNDP
PO Box 5580
Addis Ababa
Ethiopia

Telephone: 00 251 1 511028/9
Facsimile: 00 251 1 511292
e-mail: UNEUE@padis.gn.apc.org

7 February, 1995