

## MONTHLY SITUATION REPORT FOR ETHIOPIA - FEBRUARY 1997

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Consolidated UN report prepared by the Information Section of the Emergencies Unit for Ethiopia from information and reports provided by specialised UN agencies, the Government and NGOs

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Deteriorating water supplies and pasture in southern and south-eastern Ethiopia have led to serious concern over the plight of thousands of pastoralists.
- Indications by the National Meteorological Agency that the main *gu* rains in the agro-pastoral areas of Borena and the Ethiopian Somali Region will commence in March have led to hopes for quick pasture recovery and a return of food security.
- The short (*belg*) rainy season is expected to have a slightly late start in March, but to proceed normally after its initial delayed onset.
- Fertiliser availability in 1997 is expected to be sufficient to meet the requirement of farmers for both *belg* and *meher* agricultural seasons.
- After months of delay, the re-registration of refugee caseloads in western Ethiopia commenced at the end of February.

### OVERVIEW

#### *Emergency needs and operations*

While Borena and Liban zones in southern Ethiopia were considered drought-prone even in mid-1996, the situation in neighbouring northern Kenya and south-western Somalia deteriorated more rapidly, giving rise to movements of over 10,000 pastoralists and their livestock into Ethiopia in search of water and pasture in the latter half of the year. These movements, coupled with the failure of the short *deyr* rains in the last quarter of 1996, and further in-migrations and over-grazing of available pasture, have resulted in acute shortages of water and pasture in both the Ethiopian Somali Region and Borena zone.

In response to the current situation, the Commission for Disaster Prevention and Preparedness has commenced relief food distributions in the most affected areas and, at the end of February issued a special appeal for emergency food (88,760 tons to assist 986,200 pastoralists for a period of six months), water and health interventions in support of affected populations in the Ethiopian Somali Region, South Omo zone of the Southern Nations and Nationalities Regional State, as well as Borena and Bale zones in the Oromiya Region.

CARE Ethiopia is assisting the Oromiya Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Bureau in repositioning food for relief distributions in Borena. Other NGOs and donors are also reviewing appropriate preparedness and assistance measures that may be needed in the short

and medium terms. However, to provide a realistic picture of the food security situation in these and other vulnerable areas of the country as it evolves in 1997, frequent monitoring missions by the Government, donors, NGOs and the UN are being jointly planned for the coming month, based on the outcome of which relief allocations may have to be reviewed in the most needy parts of these region.

Efforts are underway to overcome water shortages in the affected areas, especially as local authorities are currently reporting over 72,000 Kenyan and 50,000 Somalis have migrated into the southern parts of Borena zone. With the deterioration of water supplies and pasture in Borena zone (Oromiya) and Somali Region, market prices and food supply in the most affected parts of the two regions are rapidly changing. In most markets grain prices have doubled, while livestock prices have shown a significant decline.

The National Meteorological Services Agency reports that the main (*gu*) rains in eastern and south-eastern regions of the country will commence on time in March. If on time, these rains should lead to the rapid recovery of pasture, improved access to water and the restoration of food security to the primarily nomadic population of these peripheral areas. However, the failure of the *gu* rains would most likely set the stage for a major crisis, and could ultimately result in large movements of people (pastoralists from affected regions as well as in-coming herders from adjacent countries) towards urban centres and even into relief camps, as seen in previous drought emergencies in the early 1990s.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Food aid for export to neighbouring countries*

Given the exceptional 1996 main season harvest in Ethiopia (with over 400,000 tons in surplus), the World Food Programme and the European Union are currently considering local purchases in support of relief programmes in Somalia, Kenya and Uganda. WFP have over 3,200 tons in the pipeline for export to drought-affected pastoralists in Kenya, and 600 tons for Uganda. WFP have also indicated that these amounts may be increased should the need arise.

The WFP 1997 local procurement programme in Ethiopia also anticipates the purchase of up to 95,000 tons of grain for distribution to the vulnerable regions of the country itself.

The European Union are planning local purchases of up to 30,000 tons in Ethiopia for export to affected areas of Somalia. The initial phase of these purchases anticipates prepositioning approximately 9,080 tons of food in the two major towns of Jigjiga and Gode in the Ethiopian Somali Region for export to North-west Somalia (Somaliland).

#### *Food security prospects in coming months*

Although the food security situation in most grain producing areas remains stable, traditionally vulnerable and food insecure areas of northern Ethiopia and Welayita (SNNPRS) have registered varying degrees of decline in nutritional status and still require monitoring in the approaching lean season. This is the period after the main season crops have been consumed and before the 1997 *belg* harvest becomes available around June-July.

A recent report by CARE on the food security prospects in their operational areas of East and West Hararghe zones and East Shewa zone (Oromiya Region) indicates a significant improvement in the overall food security situation in these zones. The report, however, still

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<sup>1</sup> For further reading on the emergency in Borena zone and the Ethiopian Somali Region refer to the UNDP-EUE report: *Emerging Drought Conditions in Southern and South-eastern Ethiopia - An Overview - 5 March 1997*.

recommends relief assistance and monitoring of those vulnerable weredas where transitory food insecurity is to be anticipated.

## **AGRICULTURE AND RELATED ISSUES**

### *Prospects and implications 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. First, *belg* crop production accounts for about 6% of the annual cereal harvest, but in some areas (such as Bale and parts of North Shewa) it may account for more than half the year's production. Second, the *belg* rains are important for land preparation for the main season in the *meher* producing regions of the country. Thirdly, rain at the *belg* time contributes to the replenishment of surface water supplies and pasture for draught animals.

According to the National Meteorological Services Agency (NMSA), the onset of the 1997 *belg* season has been slightly delayed but is expected to be normal after the first *dekad* (ten days) of March. NMSA predictions have also indicated, however, that there may be no substantial rain in eastern, north-eastern and northern Ethiopia during April and May, the period during which planted *belg* crops are developing and at their maturing stages.

While it is too early to make any conclusive statements, when the *belg* rains do come, the relatively late start will almost certainly mean a later harvest for the *belg* season crops and will affect long cycle *meher* crops, which rely on the early rains for land preparation and sowing. If the late start is not compensated by an extension of the rains well into May, the subsequent crop to be harvested between June and August could fall below initial forecasts. On the other hand, a good *belg*, even if late, will be crucial to the food security of the areas such as North Omo, Welo, North Shewa and Southern Tigray in the second half of the year. It would also limit livestock losses and increase the chance of a good *meher* harvest at the end of the year. A poor *belg* season, however, would push vulnerable areas like Southern Tigray, Wag Hamra, North and South Welo (Amhara Region), Welayita (SPNNRS) and Bale (Oromiya Region) into a crisis situation, signalling increased relief requirements for those areas.

### *Fertiliser availability in 1997*

Pledges against the 1997 national requirement of 400,000 tons remain unchanged at 199,000 tons with the following breakdown: Government of Ethiopia 100,000 tons; Government of Germany 60,000 tons; Netherlands 30,000 tons; and Japan 9,000 tons. The Government and German consignments of 160,000 have arrived, whereas the Japanese contribution is expected before the end of April. Confirmed fertiliser commitments for the 1997 agricultural season, together with revised carry over stocks of 150,000 tons from the 1996 season, places fertiliser availability at 349,000 tons.<sup>2</sup>

## **FOOD AID AND LOGISTICS**

As at the end of February, pledges for 1996 relief and regular food aid requirements remained unchanged at 216,202 tons against a requirement of 152,386 tons. Of the 1996 pledges for relief and regular programmes, 92,005 tons were delivered by the end of February and the remaining balance is due in 1997. Pledges against the 1996 cereal requirement of 100,000

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<sup>2</sup> The revised fertiliser carry over stocks show an increase of 20,000 tons over the last reporting month. Source: FAO, Addis Ababa, 3 March 1997.

tons for the Emergency Food Security Reserve also remain at 95,750 tons. No pledges have been announced against the 1997 Government appeal for 79,369 tons emergency food aid.<sup>3</sup>

#### *EFSR storage capacity*

The Emergency Food Security Reserve currently has in-country stocks of about 167,294 tons in the various warehouses with the following breakdown: Kombolcha 77,644 tons; Mekele 33,106 tons; Nazareth 28,788 tons; Shashemane 20,983 tons; and Dire Dawa 6,773 tons. In addition, the reserve has a total of 112,718 tons in outstanding loans with the DPPC, WFP, EGTE and NGOs.

#### *Local purchase programme*

Deliveries of the first phase of the European Union local purchase of 75,000 tons in 1996 for the EFSR are progressing, with over 64,000 tons already delivered at warehouses. Suppliers for the 15,107 tons balance remaining to be procured under this phase of the EU local purchase programme have been identified, and deliveries are expected to proceed soon.

Following approval by the Local Purchase Steering Committee, Phase II of the local purchase programme, most of which will be repayment to the EFSR, started in January. Under this phase, tenders for the purchase of a total 73,610 tons of grain have been so far launched by WFP and Euronaid. WFP tenders for a total quantity of 45,160 tons (25,610 tons wheat, 18,000 tons maize and 2,000 tons sorghum) would be in repayment to the Emergency Food Security Reserve. In addition, WFP have reported over 113,500 tons in the pipeline for local purchases for other projects (no timeframe available regarding these purchases). Deliveries of all tendered grain are expected to be completed by the end of May 1997.

Meanwhile, the European Union has indicated that 24,000 tons will also be locally purchased to bring the Emergency Food Security Reserve to its mid-term level of 307,000 tons.

Market availability of cereals, both for local consumption as well as for export, remains good, reflecting the bumper 1996 *meher* harvest and increased cereal flows into the main marketing centres. Although cereal prices in the Ethiopian markets normally decline in the period immediately after the main harvest, i.e. December to April, maize prices in some areas have increased, probably due to the fact the large quantities of maize have been purchased by the Ethiopian Grain Trade Enterprise (EGTE) for export to neighbouring countries. EGTE have signed contracts for the supply of 40,000 tons of maize to Kenya; an additional 77,000 of maize is also being planned for export. Despite this, indications are that average prices of other grain commodities in the country remain lower than the same period in previous years (by as much as 20-30 %).

## **HEALTH, NUTRITION & SANITATION**

### *Epidemics*

*Measles:* There have been reports of measles epidemics in various parts of the country since January. Following requests received from several bureaux of health, a joint Ministry of Health/WHO mission was fielded in late February to establish the magnitude of the problem in affected regions in order to initiate an adequate response. Training programmes for health personnel are also ongoing in malaria-prone areas.

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<sup>3</sup> December Government of Ethiopia appeal for food and non-food assistance. This figure does not include requirements for pastoral areas, which have been stated as 88,760 tons.

*Malaria and diarrhea:* Reports that the prevalence of diarrhea and malaria in some north-eastern areas of the country (including northern parts of the Afar Region) has contributed to an increase in malnutrition rates are being verified by the Ministry of Health and regional health bureaux.

#### *Nutritional status*

In Welayita, a recent report by the nutritional surveillance programme of Save the Children (UK) reveals a decline in nutritional status in the eastern highlands and western lowland areas, indicating that food assistance requirements in these areas are likely to increase in the coming months of the "hungry period." According to the survey the eastern highlands of Welayita will require special attention as nutritional declines so early in the year will normally take much longer to reverse or halt.

Another survey by SCF in Central, Eastern and Western zones of Tigray and the traditionally food deficit North Welo zone of the Amhara Region shows a satisfactory nutritional level and overall improvements due to recent optimal harvests in these areas. However, the survey recommends the continuation of relief food interventions in the *belg* dependent weredas of Kobo, Habru and Guba Laftu in North Welo, where the nutritional level shows a seasonal decline and may necessitate increased food aid for already resource-poor households.

A recent mission to Benishangul Region by UNICEF has reported decreasing nutritional status of children in Kurmuk and Gizen weredas. The mission indicates that declining nutritional levels are attributable to the diminishing household food supplies as a result of both local ethnic conflicts (which limits the access of the local population to hunting and gathering of food as well as agricultural activities) and the recent influx of refugees from bordering areas of Sudan (many of whom are Gumuz clansmen who are sharing the resources of their relations on the Ethiopian side).

## **REFUGEES IN ETHIOPIA**

### *Refugee/returnee statistics<sup>4</sup>*

Sudanese refugees: The previously reported number of assisted refugees in the three settlement sites in western Ethiopia (73,108 with the following breakdown: Bonga 17,203; Dimma 12,484; and Fugnido 43,421) is expected to be substantially reduced as a result of the re-registration the began on 28 February.

Somali refugees: The total assisted Somalis in the eight camps remained 286,442 with the following breakdown: Hartisheik 58,708 ; Kebribeyah 10,305; Darwanaji 43,006; Teferiber 45,261; Camaboker 36,120; Daror 49,379; Rabasso 28,381; Aisha 15,282. This overall caseload has decreased by 1,111, reflecting the repatriation of the first group to North-west Somalia (Somaliland) in February.

Other refugees: Previous missions report a number of displaced in the Dollo area, but it has been difficulty to distinguish those fleeing drought from those fleeing insecurity. A total of 8,671 Kenyan refugees continues to be assisted in Moyale and Dokisso areas, while assessments are being carried out to verify new arrivals into Ethiopia from Kenya due to both drought and ethnic conflict.

### *General refugee issues*

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<sup>4</sup> Source: UNHCR Programme Section, Addis Ababa; 3 March 1997.

*Sudanese refugees:* Movements into the Kunche area of Ethiopia's Benishangul region continue, although somewhat abated, with UNHCR estimating that about 5,970 had arrived by the end of February. UNHCR and the Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA) together with regional authorities are currently investigating reports of other small groups of arrivals near the border. Meanwhile, preparations are underway to move the registered population in Kunche to a new site identified by the regional government at "Cherkole", approximately 60 kms from the main regional town of Assosa.

The priority at the present time is the relocation of this group before the onset of the rains in March-April which would otherwise make access and provision of humanitarian assistance difficult. UNHCR and WFP estimate that the March rations could be directly delivered to the new site. According to UNHCR, the site at Cherkole will be able to accommodate a maximum of 8,000, and additional sites may need to be identified if the deteriorating situation in Sudan and counter-offensives launched by the Sudanese Government result in more refugee movements across the border, or if the presence of additional groups in Ethiopian territory is confirmed and they are moved into the present site. Community-based interventions are also being considered, especially if the new groups along the border are Gumuz who have moved across to join their kin.

An assessment mission by the Sudan Future Care Amal Trust<sup>5</sup> to the Sudan-Ethiopia border area to evaluate the humanitarian needs of displaced people as a result of fighting in the Blue Nile Province of Sudan has identified an immediate need to develop water resources on the Ethiopian side of the border, in Al Mahal and Mankush villages in Benishangul Region. The mission also recommended emergency preparedness measures be undertaken in case of an escalation of the crisis inside Sudan.

Re-registration of the refugee population in the three settlements in western Ethiopia (Fugnido, Dimma and Bonga) commenced on 28 February. Although actual figures are not likely to be released until later in March, preliminary indications are that there have been significant reductions in the overall caseload.

*Somali Refugees:* Water shortages in the three eastern Aware camps have led to temporary emergency water tankering from Jigjiga town. Although this short term measure will help relieve the increasingly difficult situation in these camps, preparation are also underway for the construction of *hafir* dams, and earthmoving equipment has been moved into Rabasso settlement for the the construction of additional dams.

## **REPATRIATION**

### *Repatriation to North-west Somalia*

Repatriation of Somali refugees who have expressed an interest in returning to North-west Somalia began on 18 February, with the movement of a first group of 1,111 into the Boorame, Dilla and Gabile areas. Officials in North-west Somalia have requested a one-month break before the next convoy is moved; arrangements are therefore being made for the repatriation of a second group from Teferi Ber in mid-March.

This pilot phase for the repatriation of 10,000 Somalis is expected to be completed by May 1997. In view of the relative stability and ensuing peaceful period after the recent re-election of Ibrahim Egal as President of the self-declared Republic of Somaliland (North-west Somalia), it is hoped that full scale repatriation from the refugee camps in eastern Ethiopia

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<sup>5</sup> The Sudan Future Care Amal Trust is a charity trust based in Asmara, Eritrea.

can commence immediately thereafter. This is likely to depend, however, on the extent to which reintegration assistance can be mobilised by the international community.

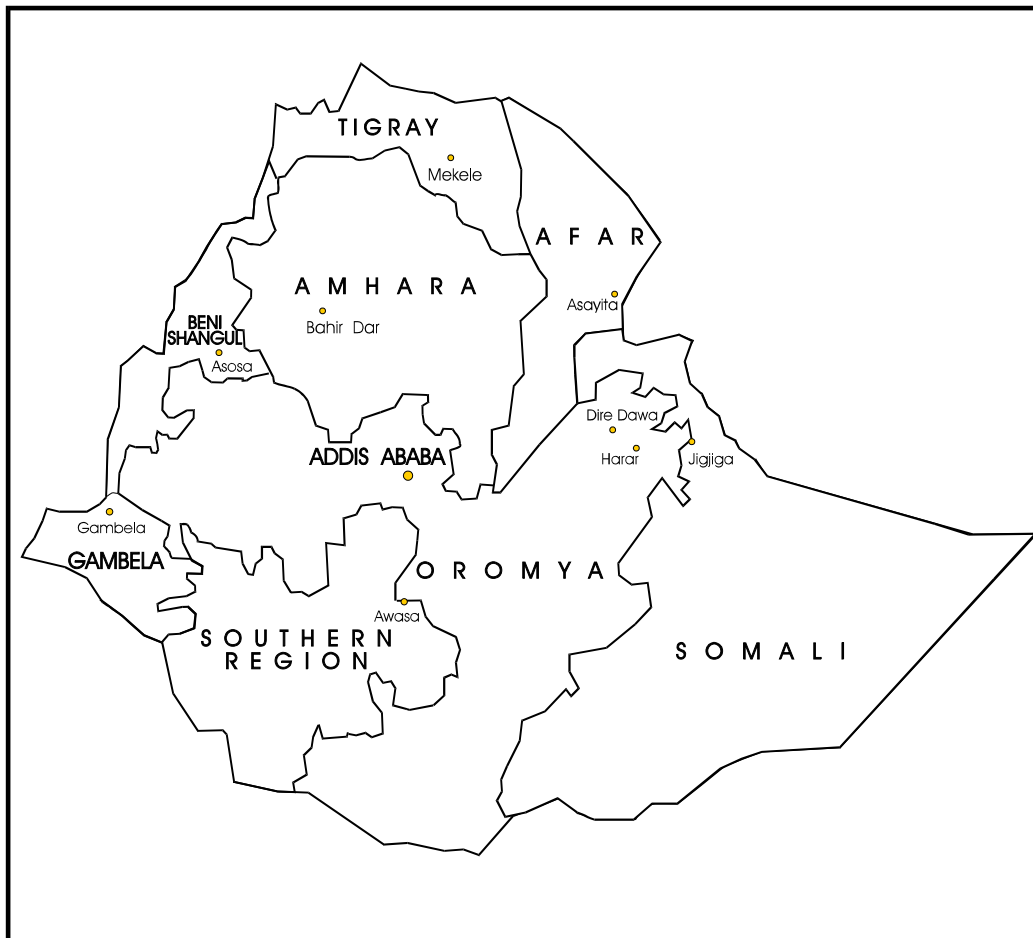
*Repatriation from Kenya*

From 13-28 February, a total of 1,391 Ethiopians repatriated by air from Dadab (Kenya) to Gode (Ethiopian Somali Region).

*Repatriation from Sudan*

While the mass repatriation of 23,000 Ethiopians expected to return from the Sudan is still on hold, an initial movement from Kassala commenced on 4 March with approximately 750-1,000 Ethiopians repatriated to Gonder (for onward dispersement in the Amhara Region and other regions of Ethiopia) and Inda Selassie (for dispersement in Tigray).

# Administrative Map of Ethiopia



## DISCLAIMER

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## SOURCES:

UNDP/EUE field reports; CARE; Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (DPPC); European Union; FAO; FEWS; National Meteorological Services Agency (NMSA); Grain Market Research Project (MEDaC); SCF (UK); UNICEF; UNHCR; WFP Food Aid Information Unit; WHO.

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