

## MONTHLY SITUATION REPORT FOR ETHIOPIA - MARCH 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

- The start of the main *gu* rains brought much needed relief to the drought-stricken areas of the east and south. While most water relief operations have been scaled down, the focus is now on providing food assistance. Close monitoring of the situation continues.
- Reports from Afar National Regional State indicate that drought conditions are similar to those found in the south and southeast; further need assessments are required.
- A late start to the *belg* rains and failure of the 1996 harvest has led to a severe food shortage in Welayita. The Government, NGOs and UN agencies are calling for an immediate response to avert famine.
- While the *belg* rains started late in many areas of the country, by the end of March levels were reported to be satisfactory in most places. As long as the rains continue until mid-May, no major problem is expected with this year's *belg* harvest.
- Re-registration of Sudanese refugees in the western camps indicates that there are far fewer refugees than had previously been registered

### OVERVIEW

*Rain brings much needed relief to the south and east<sup>1</sup>*

The emergency drought situation in the east and south of the country that was reported in February continued into the first half of March. The most severely affected areas included virtually all of the Somali National Regional State, as well as Borena and Bale Zones of the Oromiya National Regional State and South Omo Zone of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Regional State. The drought was mainly the result of failed rains in October and November 1996. Results of several assessment missions, including four Multi-agency Assessment Teams and two Technical Water Review Teams confirmed the seriousness of the situation. Effects of the drought included stress migration by pastoralists to remote water points (including the reported movement of 72,000 Kenyans and 50,000 Somalis into southern Borena), large numbers of dead and weakened livestock, and isolated outbreaks of meningitis.

Fortunately, the main rains in the south and east started without significant delay. Starting first in the areas north of Jijiga in the first dekad of March, the rains gradually progressed south and eastwards, covering virtually all of the drought affected areas of Ethiopia as well as many of the affected areas in "Somaliland", Somalia and Kenya by the end of the month. Only Daror (in Jijiga Zone) and Liban Zone in the Somali Region were reported not to have received rain by 1 April. Although these rains almost immediately alleviated the most

pressing water problems, many areas had already experienced significant livestock losses and surviving animals are still in poor condition. As livestock are the mainstay of the local economy in these areas, any deterioration in the health or value of livestock directly affects the health and food security of the local population. Planned relief efforts such as food distributions should continue and there is still an urgent need to initiate well and water point rehabilitation programmes in both the Somali Region and Borena Zone.

*Responses to the drought*

The DPPC has added to the amount requested in its Special Appeal, issued on February 28 to include parts of North Omo (9195 MT). It is currently estimated that more than one million pastoralists are in need of immediate assistance. The current amounts requested for all drought affected areas are as follows:

Somali Region	54,000 tons
Oromiya (Borena and Bale)	34,760
South Omo (Hamer Benna)	1,620
<u>North Omo (Welayita)</u>	<u>9,195</u>
Total	99,575 tons

In addition, DPPC has requested assistance in providing water tankering services to the worst affected areas, rehabilitating essential water points, and providing health supplies to avert the danger of epidemics in the area. The Commission deployed 20 trucks to transport water, fodder and food to remote locations. Some delays in distribution, however, were reported due to shortages in fuel and personnel.

To meet the immediate food needs of the affected areas and in the absence of international pledges, the DPPC has been drawing from its own food stocks. As of 31 March, DPPC had diverted 15,000 MT from allocations to other regions for immediate delivery to Oromiya and Somali Regions. Another 9,000 MT was put in the pipeline, also to be diverted from other regions. Despite the fact that the drought has subsided, the DPPC has stressed that the amount requested in the Special Appeal is still needed to replenish the stocks that had previously been earmarked in the December 1996 Appeal for other regions.<sup>2</sup>

The Oromiya Region also transported limited supplies of animal fodder to Borena. This is the first time that the Government has included fodder as part of a drought relief programme.

In response to the drought and in anticipation of a possible delay in the onset of the *gu* rains, DPPC launched a tankering operation in conjunction with UNHCR and CARE to the refugee camps and other affected areas of the Somali Region. The rains began more than a month after the start of that operation, at which time most of the tankers were recalled to Jijiga. Tankered water supply may be resumed to the most needy areas if necessary.

WFP has submitted a request to its headquarters in Rome for 25,200 MT of grain and 702 MT of Famex (a locally produced weaning food). This amount is intended to be distributed to 560,000 beneficiaries for three months (April - June). This figure includes allocations for 125,000 migrants in the Dollo/Moyale areas and 435,000 local residents of South Omo, Borena, Gode, Degahabur, Kebre Dehar, Afder, Warder, and Liben Zones.

UNDP has suggested the reallocation of US\$ 100,000 from Programme 4 funds to be used for water rehabilitation. It has also granted US\$ 150,000 from special emergency funds to be used for assessments, logistical support and monitoring. Specific activities to be carried out under this grant include a Contingency Planning Study to be carried out jointly with the DPPC as well as a Water Point Survey to be undertaken in collaboration with UNHCR and

the Ministry of Water, Mines and Energy. Both projects will be conducted in the Somali Region, Borena Zone, and South Omo Zone.

In response to a direct appeal from the federal government and the Somali National Regional State to international donors for urgent supplies as a result of the drought, UNHCR organized an emergency airlift of essential items. The chartered Ethiopian Airlines flight arrived in Addis Ababa from Amsterdam on 23 March and items were transported by road to Jijiga. The emergency items include 120 palette tanks, with a capacity of 1000 liters each, three vehicles with radios, six submersible pumps, loading pumps and chlorination tablets. Forty trucks were hired to transport water (250,000 liters/day) from Jijiga to the refugee camps and surrounding areas.

USAID has suggested that the Government of Ethiopia consider using 40,000 MT of Title III Development Aid grain to meet the demands of the current emergency. No decision on this had been made by the end of March.

The European Union has received proposals for food donations and has forwarded them to its headquarters in Brussels, but by the end of March no response had yet been received.

NGOs are submitting requests for emergency food assistance in the pastoral areas and Welayita (see below) to the European Union and other donors. Responses to these requests were still outstanding at the end of March.

#### *Drought reported in Afar National Regional State*

Although not included in the Special Appeal, an NGO report from the Afar National Regional State indicates that there is a drought situation similar to that in the south and southeast. The western part of the region has been without rains since September 1996. As a result, grazing lands have deteriorated and large numbers of herdsmen have migrated from Zone 5 to Zone 3. Drought-related animal deaths were reported in Zone 1 and Zone 5. By the end of March, no requests for assistance had been received from the region. However, additional close monitoring of this situation is needed.<sup>3</sup>

#### *Welayita faces severe food shortage<sup>4</sup>*

In January, SCF-UK's Nutritional Surveillance Programme indicated the start of a serious decline in food availability in Welayita. A UNDP/EUE assessment mission to the area at the end of March also reported increasingly severe food shortages, and NGOs working in Welayita are appealing for food to distribute to the most needy. The partial failure of the 1996 crops due to damage caused by excessive rain started the cycle of food insecurity. Conditions were exacerbated by the two months' delay in the onset of the 1997 *belg* rains combined with a widespread attack of sweet potato butterfly, which partly destroyed the sweet potato crop.

The *belg* rains did finally begin in the third dekad of March. Many farmers replanted; the late planting might affect the 1997 harvest prospects. It will take 2 ½ - 3 months until the beginning of the *belg* harvest. expected from the sweet potato, haricot bean, or cabbage crops. Also, most of the *ensete* plants (the main dietary staple in Welayita) are immature and not ready for consumption. There are no food stocks in the fields, whereas household food stocks from last year and cash reserves are mostly depleted.

Signs of distress are becoming evident with people consuming immature *ensete* (without milk), selling greater amounts of fire wood and charcoal and children coming to urban areas seeking help. The nutritional status of children has declined significantly, to the point of

reaching critical levels in some parts (between 92-94% WFL for the lowlands according to the preliminary results of SCF/UK March survey and probably 90% or slightly below for the highlands) the situation will rapidly deteriorate without an immediate and adequate relief response.

## **AGRICULTURE AND RELATED ISSUES**

### *Prospects and implications of the belg season*

The onset of the *belg* rains was late in many highland areas. This presented a particular danger to North Shewa, North and South Welo, and South Tigray, which are the most dependent on *belg* crop production (on average 19-21% of annual food supply, according to FEWS). By the second dekad of March, however, rains were reported in most areas to be normal to above normal. Farmers who planted early in some places had to replant their crops, but it is expected that most should have had sufficient seed for replanting given the highly successful 1996 harvest. Unless there is inadequate or sporadic rainfall during the remainder of the season (until mid-May), no significant problems are expected for the *belg* production prospects.

### *Fertiliser availability in 1997*

Due to price deregulation and other factors, the 1997 national fertilizer requirement has been reduced from 400,000 to 300,000 tons. With 160,000 tons carried over from 1996, and 160,000 received this year, all requirements have now been met.<sup>5</sup>

## **FOOD AID AND LOGISTICS**

### *Food aid pledges*

Response to the December 1996 Appeal for Emergency Food Requirements has been limited. The DPPC reports that the only positive responses from the donor community so far have been from the European Union, which has invited applications for relief food from NGOs and the Canadian Government. Exact amounts of these donations have not yet been confirmed. SCF/UK has appealed to the EU for 10,000 MT of food to be distributed to the Somali Region and Welayita. A gap of 80,000 MT of needed food remains unmet.

From the total amount of 8876 MT of supplementary food requested in the December Appeal, NGOs have provided approximately 370 MT. The DPPC has reportedly purchased 1000 out of a total 2000 MT for supplementary rations.

USAID has requested delivery of 42,210 MT of food commodities as part of its Title II "Food for Peace Programme." This food is expected to be delivered before July. It will be distributed in food deficit areas with low agricultural productivity by CARE, Catholic Relief Services, Food for the Hungry International, Relief Society of Tigray, Save the Children/US and World Vision.

Transport of food to areas in need has already begun, in anticipation of the rains hampering access to some remote areas.

### *EFSR storage capacity*

The Emergency Food Security Reserve currently has in-country stocks of about 121,884 tons in its warehouses with the following breakdown: Kombolcha 70,022.4 tons; Mekele 20,124.73 tons; Nazareth 19,422.73 tons; Shashemane 11,517.77 tons; and Dire Dawa 794 tons. This represents 57% of the total storage capacity of the five sites.

#### *Local purchase programme*

The European Union local purchase programme is progressing on schedule. Contracts have been prepared for 15,103 MT and deliveries to the EFSR warehouses are underway.

## **HEALTH, NUTRITION & SANITATION**

### *Epidemics*

*Meningitis:* According to NGO sources, the drought situation in the south and east of the country sparked sporadic outbreaks of meningitis in five Peasant Associations of Borena, three weredas of South Omo Zone, and isolated areas of North Omo Zone. In addition, some meningitis cases were reported in at least 12 weredas of the Amhara National Regional State. In South Omo, the Zonal Health Department reported by the end of March that it had vaccinated 11,000 people in Hamer Benna, Kuraz, and Bako Gazer weredas and planned to continue to provide vaccination to at least 32,500 more people in April, focusing particularly on pastoralists in areas outside the catchment of the health care facilities. No official report was available from the central Ministry of Health on these outbreaks, but it appears that in all areas the situation is now under control. Despite this, continued vaccination is needed to mitigate the possible recurrence of the epidemic.

*Measles:* Outbreaks of measles were reported by CARE in the Dire, Teltele and Yabello weredas of Borena. The Afar Relief Association (ARA) also reported measles in several areas of the Afar National Regional State. Rural communities surrounding Assaita and Dubti have been particularly badly affected, with 19 child mortalities recorded during early March in Gablayto and Orkombo near Dubti. Deaths were also reported at Handug, 4 km from Assaita. Reports from Zone 1 of the Afar Region of sporadic outbreaks of measles and whooping cough.

*Danger of Cholera:* With the onset of the rains in the south and east comes the danger of cholera outbreaks. On 24 March, ICRC (via *Agence France Presse*) reported an outbreak of cholera in southern Somalia town of Wanlaweyn, which had killed more than 430 people between mid February mid March. Continual assessment is needed throughout the rainy season, particularly in densely populated areas, to avoid a similar problem occurring in Ethiopia.

## REFUGEES IN ETHIOPIA

### *Refugee/returnee statistics<sup>6</sup>*

#### Sudanese refugees:

The re-registration of refugees in the western camps, begun on 28 February, was completed in March. Results show far fewer refugees in the camps than had previously been registered (73,108 reported in February 1997). The new population figures are as follows:

Bonga	11,449
Dimma	5,834
Fugnido	11,787
<u>Kunche</u>	<u>6,428</u>
Total	35,498

UNHCR and ARRA will continue to monitor new arrivals from Sudan.

#### Somali refugees:

The reported populations of the nine camps in the Somali Region did not change dramatically during March. Of a total population of 285,074 the breakdown by camp is as follows: Aisha 15,282; Camaboker 36,120; Daror 49,388; Dharwanaji 42,994; Hartisheik 58,722; Kebrebeyah 10,366; Rabasso 28,381; Teferiber 43,821. The changes from February (which had a total reported population of 286,442) are mainly due to those who participated in the assisted repatriation to North-west Somalia. Unconfirmed reports have been received of large numbers of spontaneous repatriations from some camps to the Hargeisa area of North-west Somalia during March.

#### Other refugees:

Populations of Kenyan, Djiboutian and Addis Ababa assisted refugees in Ethiopia remain unchanged from February (at 8,671; 8,000 and 764 persons respectively).

### *General refugee issues*

Joint interagency missions to the east and south, led by DPPC, confirmed the presence of an estimated 125,000 persons from Kenya and Somalia who had entered Ethiopia in the past few months, reportedly as a result of the drought and civil conflict in their areas of origin. As it was difficult to distinguish between genuine refugees and drought victims, it has been agreed that an initial one month of assistance will be provided within an interagency framework, and that once the drought subsides, UNHCR and ARRA will do a screening of the residual migrant populations in these areas.

#### *Sudanese refugees:*

Between 23 - 28 March, 1,478 refugees were transferred from Kunche to Sherkole in three convoys. Sherkole, located approximately 60 km from Asossa, the capital of Benishangul-Gumuz region, is a new camp designed to accommodate a maximum of 8,000 people.

High rates of malnutrition were reported at Sherkole and Fugnido (17.35% and 17% < 80% weight for height in children under five, respectively). At Sherkole, emergency food rations were distributed and a supplementary feeding program is being established to assist children and other vulnerable groups. At Fugnido, improvement of the supplementary feeding programme and review of the monitoring system are underway.

## REPATRIATION

#### *Repatriation to North-west Somalia*

The second organized movement of the pilot voluntary repatriation operation of Somali refugees from eastern Ethiopia to North-west Somalia resumed on 22 March. By the end of the month 279 heads of household (HoH) with 1453 total persons were repatriated from Teferiber in six convoys. This brings the total repatriated since the start of the operation on 18 February 1997 to 2558 persons. The registration continues in Hartisheik camp.

#### *Repatriation from Kenya*

A total of 2,264 Ethiopian refugees were flown back to Gode and Dire Dawa from Dadaab, Kenya, between 13 February to 8 March. The Ethiopian refugees, who opted to return voluntarily to their respective villages in and around Gode and Jijiga areas of the Somali National Regional State were flown in from Dadaab by Southern Air Transport (SAT) and Ethiopian Airlines. The flights were organised and paid for by UNHCR. Upon arrival, the returnees were provided assistance by UNHCR to reach their final destinations and be able to integrate in their home areas.

#### *Repatriation from Sudan*

The repatriation of Ethiopian refugees from Kassala was successfully completed in two convoys bringing 591 HoH with 949 total persons. Of the total, 362 HoH/579 persons were destined for Tigray and 243 HoH/369 persons returned to Amhara, Oromiya and other regions.

Returnees received their food, non-food and cash assistance in Gonder, with the exception of returnees to Tigray Region, who collected their cash assistance in Gonder while the food and non-food items were distributed at Indaselassie. Returnees were given 790 birr per person plus a travel and in-transit feeding allowance, which brought the total cash assistance to 1000 birr/person.

A larger repatriation operation from Sudan is expected to be implemented before the rains start in July.

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> For more detailed information about the drought in the east and south, see the following UNDP/EUE reports:

*Borena and Liban Affected by Drought: Situation Report on the Drought Affected Areas of Oromiya and Somali Regions*, by Joachim D. Ahrens and Dr Ahmed Yusuf Farah, 20 Dec. 1996

*Impact of Insufficient Deyr Rains on Nomad Access to Food in the Former Eastern Hararghe Area of the Ethiopian Somali National Regional State (ESNRS)*, by Dr Ahmed Yusuf Farah, 19 Feb. 1997

*Major Findings of the Joint Mission to Shereti and Dollo - 12 February 1997*, by Dr Ahmed Yusuf Farah, 26 Feb. 1997

*Impact of Insufficient Deyr Rains on Nomad Access to Food in the Central Area of the Ethiopian Somali National Regional State*, by Dr Ahmed Yusuf Farah, 26 Feb. 1997

*Monthly Situation Report for Ethiopia*, Feb. 1997

*Emerging Drought Conditions in Southern and South-eastern Ethiopia: A General Synopsis and Overview*, 10 March 1997

*Field Trip Report to Negele (Oromiya Region) and Filtu (Somali Region)*, by Admassu Haile Yesus, April 1997

*Rainfall Alleviates Drought Impact on Somali Region - A Field Visit to Jijiga and Degahabur Zones of Somali National Regional State (25 March - 1 April 1997)*, by Joachim D. Ahrens and Tahir M. Nour, April 1997

*Summary of Rainfall Information - Southern Areas of Ethiopia*, March 1997

<sup>2</sup> Source: *Update on the Emergency Situations and Responses in the Southern and Eastern Parts of Ethiopia*, DPPC, 31 March 1997

<sup>3</sup> Source: Afar Relief Association Situation Report, February to March 1997

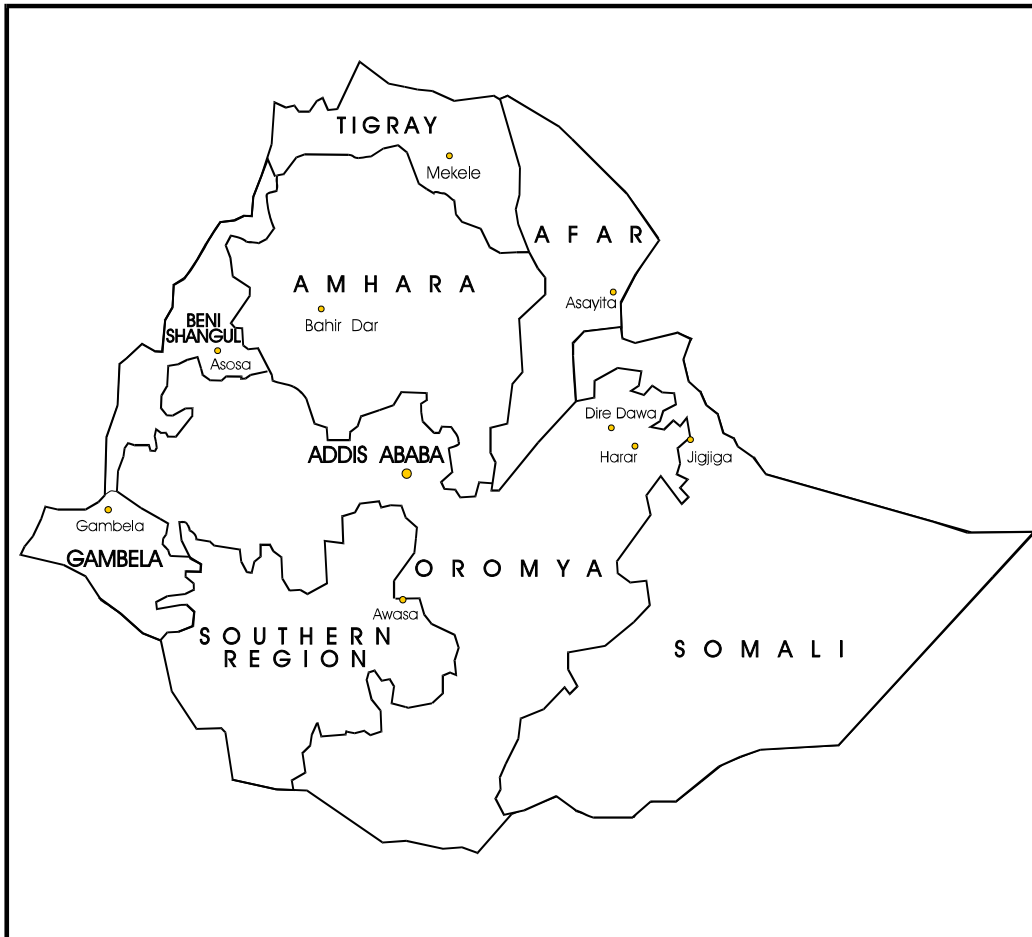
<sup>4</sup> For further information about the Welayita food shortage, refer to:  
*Field Trip Report to Welayita and North Omo (30 March - 3 April)*, by Ralph Klingele, UNDP/EUE Field Officer, April 1997.

<sup>5</sup> Source: NFSI, 14 April 1997.

<sup>6</sup> Source: UNHCR Programme Section, Addis Ababa; March 1997



# Administrative Map of Ethiopia



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## SOURCES:

UNDP/EUE field reports; CARE; Afar Relief Association; 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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