

MONTHLY SITUATION REPORT FOR ETHIOPIA - APRIL 1996

Prepared by the Information Section of the UNDP Emergencies Unit for Ethiopia

OVERVIEW

Relief needs and operations

Relief interventions and food distributions by the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (previously the CDPP) and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) continue in the most food insecure areas of the country, including parts of Tigray, North and South Welo, Wag Hamra, North and South Gonder (Amhara Region), Welayita area of North Omo (Southern Nations Nationalities Peoples Regional State), West and East Hararghe, Bale and Borena (Oromiya Region). In many of these areas food distributions were already in January to deter population migrations and maintain nutritional status at acceptable levels.

The need for emergency nutritional interventions and the extent of general relief distributions so early in the year after a very good 1995 harvest are issues of concern. The current situation in the country highlights the fact that significant population groups in Ethiopia continue to have limited access to food, even in times of national food self-sufficiency or surplus. For millions of peasant farmers this is mainly a result of poverty, i.e. lack of resources to purchase food, even when it is available, in order to complement the often inadequate household harvest. Physical restrictions also play their role, with much of the population living in areas practically inaccessible to markets, especially during the long rainy season. Therefore, in Ethiopia, national food self-sufficiency, as experienced in 1996, does not necessarily imply improved household food security for the poorest segments of the population.

DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

UN-ECA Consultative meeting

A high-level consultative meeting was held in Addis Ababa between the UN Economic Commission for Africa and the donor community on the restructuring of ECA and its new vision for development partnership in Africa. Among the main issues discussed by the participants were the five strategic directions of the restructured ECA, which include: economic and social policy; food security and sustainable development; development management; information for development; and regional co-operation.

The meeting was also attended by a UNDP delegation led by Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, Assistant Administrator and Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa. During her five-day visit, Ms. Johnson-Sirleaf also met with a number of government officials, scholars and national and international experts to discuss the issue of building and utilising capacities in Africa.

Conference on public health

A regional conference on public health in the Horn of Africa was jointly organised in Addis Ababa 2-5 April by the Ministry of Health, the Directorate General for Development Co-operation (Italy), Istituto Superior di Sanita (Italy) and the World Health Organisation. The meeting, which was attended by delegations from seven countries of the Horn of Africa (Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda), was convened to discuss the three major public health problems of tuberculosis, diarrhoeal diseases and malaria.

The conference identified a number of constraints for the full implementation of health systems and made a series of recommendations, including: establishment of a Health Desk under the auspices of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD); with the full commitment and involvement of all Ministers of Health in the sub-region. In addition, an initiative for connecting Ministry of Health focal points in the sub-region through electronic mail and remote access systems is being reviewed by WHO in collaboration with the ECA Pan African Development Information System (PADIS).

AGRICULTURE

Belg harvest prospects

The *belg* rains, which started at the end of the first *dekad* (10 days) of March, have continued to cover all the main *belg*-producing areas. Heavy rains have helped farmers to complete *belg* crop planting in the northern parts of the country¹ and initiated planting of long season crops in southern areas. However, reports from pockets in Southern Tigray and parts of North and South Welo indicate a more ambivalent *belg* performance. Some of these areas had a late and intermittent start to the rains, but their overall impact on agricultural production is too early to predict. March and early April rains have been the heaviest observed during the same period in recent years.

The overall pattern of rains has been characterised by rainy periods alternating with short sunny days, proving advantageous for crop growth as well as land preparation for the main agricultural season. As a result of the delayed planting, however, the performance of *belg* crops will still depend on the extension of the rains. The exception to the generally positive trend are areas, especially in Borena zone (Oromiya Region), where meteorological stations recorded much of the monthly rainfall within a short period of time i.e. one day.

To monitor the general situation and development of the *belg* season in parts of the country where unevenly and erratic rains have coincided with deteriorating nutritional status of the population, Save the Children (UK), World Food Programme, European Union (Food Security Unit), USAID (Famine Early Warning System) and the UNDP Emergencies Unit for Ethiopia are to conduct a joint rapid survey around mid-May. The survey will cover parts of North Welo, South Welo and North Shewa and will consist of an assessment of the impact of *belg* rains on household food security, and a review of the general situation including road accessibility during the current *belg* and later *kiremt* (main) rains. This rapid field survey is likely to be followed by a *belg* harvest assessment sometime in June.

¹ The main *belg*-producing areas of the country are: North and South Welo, North Shewa (Amhara Region, Bale and Arsi (Oromiya Region) and Southern Tigray.

Fertiliser situation

According to FAO, at the end of April fertiliser pledges for the 1996 cropping seasons remained unchanged at 358,900 tons with the following breakdown: International Development Association (World Bank) 50,000 tons; Netherlands 25,000 tons; Germany 50,000 tons; Japan 24,900 tons; Sweden 22,000 tons; Italy 32,000 tons; European Union 50,000 tons; and National Bank of Ethiopia 100,000 tons. Of the total pledges, 121,900 tons arrived in Assab and Djibouti between January and March and were transported inland. April arrivals at the two ports amount to a total of 68,000 tons. A remaining 99,674 tons (Assab) and 31,400 tons (Djibouti) of fertiliser are expected to still arrive between May and June.

REGIONAL UPDATE

DPPC's revised food supply situation

At the beginning of April, the Early Warning Department of the DPPC issued the Revised Food Supply Situation and Assistance Requirements in the country. The DPPC estimates, which are based on the 1995 post-harvest assessment carried out in the *meher*-producing regions of the country, indicate an increase of 521,900 people in need of relief assistance, bringing the total number of beneficiaries to 2,783,600 in comparison to 2,261,700 people as stated in the DPPC's December 1995 appeal². The main reason for this increase has been stated as the unfavourable short rains in pastoral areas and damage to crops due to untimely rainfall at the time of the harvest. (A complete table of revised beneficiary numbers and corresponding food needs is attached in the annex.)

The following outlines the situation in the regions visited by EUE and NGO staff during the reporting period:

Tigray Region

In Tigray, the number of beneficiaries has remained unchanged at 751,200. However, the situation in the Southern zone and some localised areas of the Western zone needs to be closely monitored in the coming months. The overall start of the *belg* season has so far been similar to 1995, with poor and average rains reported in most areas that have experienced rainfall. Planted crops in the *belg*-producing areas seem to be slowly maturing, and the majority of villages have not been affected by major problems as yet.

SNNPRS (Welayita area of North Omo zone)

The *belg* rains, although starting after a delay of two weeks, have so far been good. Practically all arable land has been cultivated and most fields in the highlands and mid-highlands planted by mid-April. According to zonal agricultural officials, the area planted this year has increased by about 10% in comparison to the previous *belg* season (1995). No major crop pests have so far been reported in Welayita area. Some areas, however, particularly parts of Damot Gale and Bolosso Sore weredas have reportedly suffered from heavy hailstorms and localised floods.

² Food requirements were revised to 295,575 from the December figure of 253,118. This revised figure now corresponds more closely with the WFP figure of 290,658.

Ethiopian Somali Region

In addition to the areas outlined above, specific concern has been expressed regarding an emerging drought in North-west Somalia "Somaliland" and may have implications for the Ethiopia Somali Region. According to a recent report by UNDP/EUE field staff the short rainy season *Gu* rains have been late throughout much of Somaliland, with most of the eastern areas already showing signs of emerging drought and suffering from a severe shortage of water. The same situation has been reported in adjacent parts of the Ethiopia Somali Region, from Gaashamo east towards the Somali border. Although the situation is probably not as dramatic as some unconfirmed reports from this area suggest, relief measures similar to those taken across the border may be called for. Furthermore, recent rains around Jigjiga may have extended east and helped to alleviate the situation. The South-East Rangeland Research Project (SERP) is currently monitoring the situation, but have so far not declared an emergency in the area.

FOOD AID / LOCAL PURCHASE

Food aid status

The Emergency Food Assistance Programme (EMOP) of WFP was approved in mid-April. The EMOP consists of 30,600 tons of cereals and 1,080 tons of vegetable oil to be targeted through the DPPC to some 550,000 beneficiaries in the most acute food deficit areas of Ethiopia (69% through Employment Generation Schemes and 31% free distribution).

With the approval of the EMOP to Ethiopia, pledges against a total 1996 relief and regular food aid requirement of 135,000 tons of cereals and pulses now amount to 161,471 tons. This means that pledges exceed estimated relief and regular requirements by 26,471 tons. However, three important assumptions need to be kept in mind in regard to these figures:

1. When projecting the 1996 relief/regular food aid requirements as 135,000 tons, the FAO/WFP November crop and food assessment mission assumed the full availability or local purchases of 1995 carryovers during 1996, amounting to some 46,000 tons. Should part of these pledges not be realised by donors, this would increase 1996 requirements by the same quantity.
2. The 1996 relief and regular requirement also assumes a normal *belg* harvest of approximately 335,000 tons of cereals and pulses. A *belg* harvest less than this would increase the relief food requirements.
3. Of the total relief/regular pledges of 161,471 tons, 52,720 tons are pledges by WFP through food for work and the newly approved emergency operation. Although WFP is confident of resourcing, donors for these pledges still need to be identified.

Emergency Food Security Reserve

As of the end of April, pledges against the 100,000 tons requirement for the EFSR amount to 85,950 tons. So far, only 20,651 tons of the 1996 pledges for cereals have been delivered, including 2,000 tons of local purchase.

DPPC relief distribution plan

In mid-April, the DPPC issued its nation-wide Relief Plan of Operation for 1996 in accordance with the revised beneficiary numbers in the regions. According to this distribution plan, relief needs and allocations by regions could be summarised as:

Tigray Region	99,828 tons;
Amhara Region	97,028 tons;
Oromiya Region	32,211 tons;
SNNPRS	32,390 tons;
Afar Region	2,250 tons;
Somali Region	9,450 tons;
Benishangul Region	4,995 tons;
Gambella Region	3,420 tons;
Dire Dawa	3,204 tons;
Addis Ababa	10,800 tons.

Given the concern expressed by several NGOs regarding the difference in distribution figures at central and regional levels, a panel discussion was organised by the DPPC at the end of April to review the figures with interested donors and NGOs.

1996 local purchase programme

The ten suppliers awarded contracts for the European Union local purchase of 51,000 tons of grain (24,000 tons of maize, 18,000 tons of wheat and 9,000 tons of sorghum) are in the process of delivering the commodities to the Emergency Food Security stores. Contracts for an additional 21,000 tons of grain for the EFSR tendered by the EU in Amhara, Oromiya and SNNPRS Regions will be awarded soon. This brings local purchase commitments to 72,000 tons out of the initial 75,000 tons of grain for the EFSR. According to the European Union, one lot of 3,000 tons was cancelled by the supplier and will be re-tendered at a later date.

The second tender by Euronaid for 35,000 tons of sorghum closed in the third week of March. As the results of this tender still showed high prices, offers by the four participating suppliers were not accepted. However, it is expected that Euronaid will re-issue its tender for sorghum in Tigray, following discussions with the regional officials and the DPPC.

The local purchase steering committee

The local purchase steering committee has been reviewing the alternatives regarding further local purchases. The size of the marketable surplus of grain in Ethiopia remains a key factor in determining the impact on prices of continued local purchases. According to WFP, there is no reliable information on how much grain is available on the market but, as indicated by the prevailing low cereal prices, it is likely that further grain purchases can be undertaken in Ethiopia without serious inflationary effect on prices. Nevertheless, while the government recognises that the local purchase programme has major economic benefits for the country, there is, in spite of the prevailing low prices, some concern that continued large scale local purchases could result in increased cereal prices.

The local purchase steering committee, which is expected to next meet in early May, may recommend to proceed with purchases but with relatively small quantities, combined with close monitoring of cereal prices. The possibility that some of the local purchase pledges for 1996 could be deferred until the next harvest, starting August/September, has not been ruled out.

A complicating factor in the programme is the fact that many of the planned purchases, in total some 60,000 tons, would be repayments of loans to the EFSR. These loans were originally taken as wheat and, as per agreements, should be repaid in wheat. However, in order to support local farmers, the bulk of the local purchases are planned to be maize, which the EFSR is reluctant to accept in large quantities as repayment of wheat loans. Also, there is likely to be much more maize than wheat available on the market. Donors and Government are still negotiating the interchangeability of wheat, maize and sorghum for loan repayments to the EFSR.

Grain prices in Ethiopia

Prices of grain in the country appear to be quite low, indicating a reasonably big marketable surplus. According to estimates based on responses to the EU tender, the wholesale price of wheat is below the import parity price in many areas, depending on location. Maize prices are ever lower and its availability better, but again depending on the location of purchase. It is, however, possible that prices of wheat and maize will begin to rise as soon as traders start buying in order to fulfil their contract obligations with the European Union.

Prices of sorghum seem to vary considerably from one part of the country to another. In Dire Dawa, sorghum has been offered below the import parity, whereas in Tigray, the major sorghum-producing region of the country, prices offered are much higher than import parity prices.

LOGISTICS

Movement from ports

As mentioned in the March situation report, due to the low level of deliveries of 1996 food aid pledges and reduced import requirements in favour of local purchases, fertiliser shipments now constitute the main cargo for Assab and Djibouti ports. In an attempt to expedite deliveries from the ports to Ethiopia, the Ministry of Transport has instructed all transporters to deploy their long haul vehicles on the Assab corridor to transport fertiliser consignments. It appears that the instruction applies to all long haul vehicles of public, private and NGO operators. The duration of this instruction is unknown, but is expected to be valid until fertiliser stocks have been transported from the ports, possibly by the end of May. The transport sector in Ethiopia has expressed its concern on this forced deployment of vehicles as it interferes with free competition.

NGO transport fleet

The issue of privatisation of the NGO transport fleet remains unresolved. Plans are for part of the fleet to be deployed in the regions and the remaining to be sold to the private sector. However, the formalities remain to be finalised for the sale of these trucks and it seems unlikely that the majority of the NGO long haul trucks will be sold before the end of 1996.

HEALTH AND NUTRITION

Epidemics

Malaria: there have been reports from different sources of a persistent malaria epidemic in Benishangul Region. A joint DPPC/UNICEF mission conducted to clarify and initiate appropriate control measure, however, has indicated that the situation is more of an endemic nature, and is similar to last year. Both Gambella and Benishangul Regions are in the malaria belt, prone to outbreaks during the rainy season when conditions become favourable for transmission.

A malaria outbreak in three weredas of North Gonder zone has been successfully controlled through spraying and medical treatment. Elsewhere in the country, active surveillance programmes are being carried out by regional health authorities and malaria control workers.

Meningitis and Acute Diarrhoeal Disease: both diseases are currently being monitored in the different regions. UNICEF were recently requested to provide Oral Rehydration Salts (ORS) in response to reports of outbreaks of ADD in and around Jigjiga. Reports of outbreaks of meningitis in Gode area have not been confirmed but, as the possibility exists, the area is being closely monitored.

Nutritional status

In mid-April Medecins Sans Frontieres (Holland) started an emergency nutritional intervention programme for six months in Offa wereda of Welayita area (SNNPRS). This programme is the result of a survey carried out by MSF, indicating a high level of malnutrition already at the beginning of the hungry season, poor or no household food stocks and the absence of coping strategies. The programme aims to reduce and prevent excess mortality and morbidity related to acute food shortages. It is targeting some 3,000 children under five through supplementary feeding and another 500-1,400 children through therapeutic feeding.

A recent nutritional survey by Save the Children (UK) has detected a deteriorating situation in Adwa and Tembien areas (located in the eastern and western parts of the Central zone of Tigray Region). According to the survey, the decline in nutritional status has been significant in Tembien, with the mean weight for length dropping below the 90% cut-off point. Subsequently, immediate food assistance has been recommended in this area. In Adwa wereda, although the nutritional status is more stable, further declines can be expected in the short term if current relief assistance is not increased.

REFUGEES IN ETHIOPIA

A joint WFP/UNHCR mission is scheduled to visit Ethiopia in mid-May. The mission will review the overall socio-economic and food supply situation of refugee populations in Ethiopia as well as the implementation of food and non-food assistance requirements to the refugee and returnee programme. The mission is expected to visit the different camps in the country and hold discussions with donors and Ethiopian authorities.

Sudanese refugees

As at the beginning of April, the number of Sudanese refugees assisted in the three settlement sites in western Ethiopia reached 63,853 with the following breakdown by camps: Bonga 16,636; Fugnido 36,068; and Dimma 11,149.

Reports of an influx of 10,000 - 15,000 refugees, mainly women and children, to the Asosa area (Ethiopian Benishangul Region) as a result of fighting in southern Sudan have not been confirmed. It is anticipated that a UNHCR mission will be fielded to this areas to review and verify these reports.

Somali refugees

The total assisted Somali population in the eight camps in eastern Ethiopia has remained unchanged at 275,189, with the following breakdown: Hartisheikh 58,675; Kebribeyah 10,106; Darwanaji 43,008; Teferiber 46,369; Camaboker 31,920; Rabasso 24,865; Daror 44,964; and Aisha 15,282.

REPATRIATION

Repatriation from Sudan

Plans are underway by UNHCR and the Ethiopian Government to resume repatriation from the Sudan. It is estimated that in the coming phase of the programme up to 20,000 Ethiopian refugees could be repatriated from the Sudan before the onset of the main rainy season in June. A recent census in the eastern refugee camps of Sudan show low population numbers; Safawa camp is nearly empty, with only some Eritrean refugees. The objective of this phase of the operation would therefore be to finish repatriating all the Ethiopian refugees in the camps.

So far, however, this phase of the repatriation has not commenced due to the postponement of meetings between the representatives of the Governments of Ethiopia and Sudan.

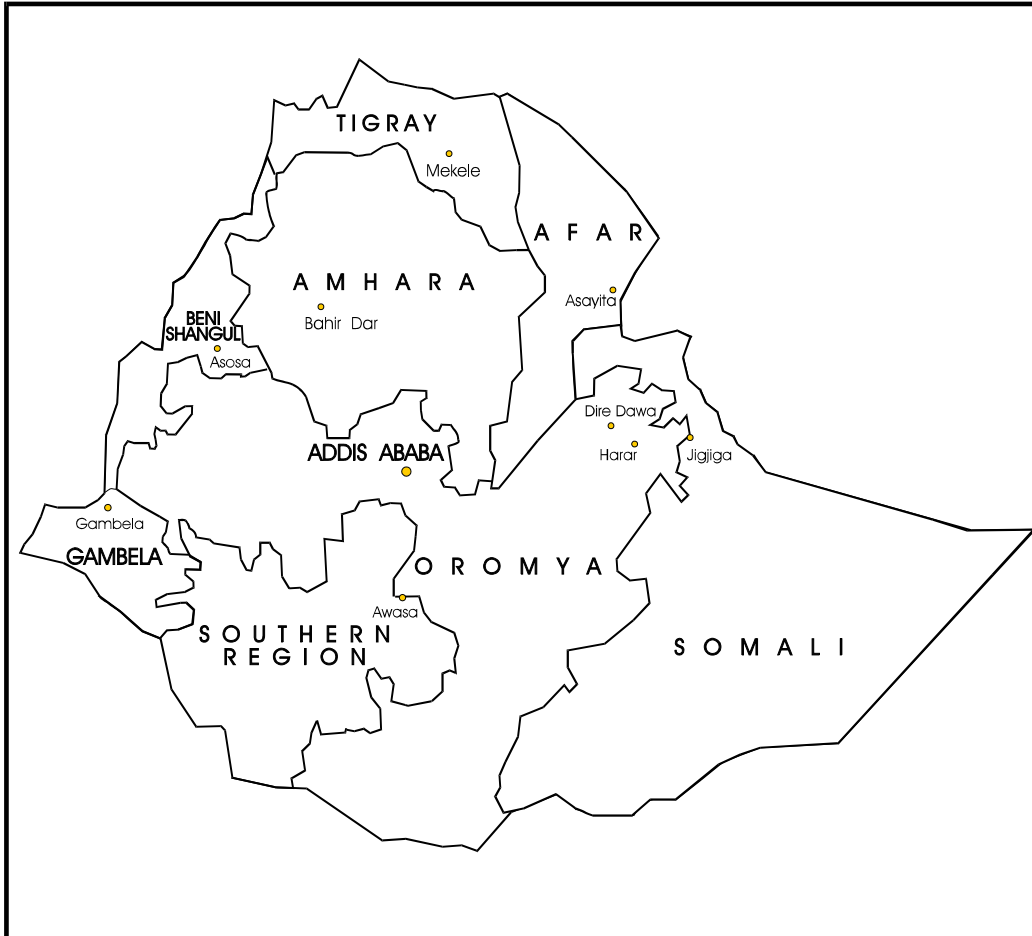
Repatriation to Somalia

A pilot project for the repatriation of 10,000 refugees from the Somali camps in and around Jigjiga and Aware areas to North-west Somalia "Somaliland" is being organised by UNHCR and the Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA). So far, some 3,000 refugees have reportedly expressed their readiness to repatriate and have requested registration.

Repatriation from Djibouti

The first convoy of Phase IV of the repatriation of Ethiopia refugees from Djibouti arrived in Dire Dawa in the third week of March, carrying 1493 returnees from Ali Ade camp in Djibouti. This convoy represents the largest single movement since the voluntary repatriation started in September 1994. An additional 2,500 Ethiopian refugees, who are currently in the Holhol and Asamo camps in Djibouti, have registered for voluntary repatriation and will be transported into Ethiopia as soon as the representatives of the Ethiopian Government finalise screening. Since the start of the operation in September 1994, a total of 33,258 Ethiopians have been repatriated by train from Djibouti to Dire Dawa.

Administrative Map of Ethiopia



DISCLAIMER

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SOURCES:

UNDP/EUE Field reports; Early Warning Department of DPPC; European Union; FEWS; regional and zonal bureaux of Disaster Prevention and Preparedness; SCF (UK); UNICEF; WFP; WHO;

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UN-EUE
PO Box 5580,
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Tel.: (251) (1) 51-10-28/29
Fax: (251) (1) 51-12-92
Email: UNEUE@padis.gn.apc.org