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## EUE-UNSO-Field Report SNNPR No. 2

# Critical Emergency Situation in Kambaata-Tambaaro Zone and Alaba Special Woreda

*Rapid Assessment Mission: 19–26 June 2003*

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### 1 Introduction and background

Alaba is one of the 8 special woredas and 13 zones of SNNPR. It lies at an altitude of 1700 to 2200 meters above sea level and is well known for its cash crop (hot pepper) and food crop production (maize & haricot beans) as well as for livestock rearing. These pillars of livelihood were adversely affected by last year's drought, which reportedly led to a decline in production of cash and food crops by an estimated 95%. The livestock is affected by diseases such as anthrax<sup>1</sup>, pasteurellosis, black leg, and infectious parasites aggravated by lack of pasture and water. The woreda suffers from persistent water problems. Except for the Blate River, there are no other creeks and springs. The underground water table is very low, with an average depth of 200 meters. Ponds are the main source of water.



*Severely malnourished children in Lower Arsho Kebele, Alaba (Photo Wolde.S. Abbute, OCHA-EUE. June 2003)*

Last year's rain failure has affected all the 78 kebeles. As consequence, a high percentage of the population is depending on relief food. The number of needy is continuously increasing with the growing breakdown of the people's livelihood strategies. Currently the emergency-situation is very critical in twenty-seven<sup>2</sup> kebeles of the

<sup>1</sup> Anthrax is reported endemic to the area and its outbreak is said to be common at times of pasture shortage when the contact of the grazing animal's mouth with the soil (containing the cyst bacteria) is higher.

<sup>2</sup> These worst affected kebeles include: Lower Arsho, upper Arsho, West Gortancho, East Gortancho, Geerama, Wishamo, Chambula, Holegebba-Kuke, muuda-Mayafa, muuda-Dinoqisa, Ello-Leqa, Habibo, Qanche-Yaaye, Bando, Anshokora, Ajo, Tiita-Ditora, Kale-Wodesha, Kullufo, qobo-geto, Qochobare, First Qonnicho, second Qonnicho, Asore, Asheka, Maja, and Sanbata.

woreda. The UN OCHA-EUE mission<sup>3</sup> visited and observed the situation in one of the worst affected kebeles called *Lower Arsho*. In two sub-kebele villages, known as *Motoqoma* and *Labaqo*, the mission found a particularly serious emergency-situation.



*Father and child suffering from malaria in Waro Kebele, Omo-Sheleko Woreda (Photo by Wolde-Selassie Abbute, OCHA-EUE, June 2003)*

**Omo-Sheleko** is one of 4 woredas of Kambaata-Tambaaro Zone. Crop production (cereals, cash & root crops) and livestock rearing are the main livelihood strategies. However, they have been disrupted and since a long time the woreda is vulnerable to severe food insecurity due to a combination of rain failure, decline of soil fertility, and population pressure. This year 26 of the 31 kebeles in the woreda are affected by drought. Paradoxically, 5 kebeles (including the very few in high altitude, which were not affected by drought) were hit by a severe hailstorm on 24 May 2003. The number of relief needy increased continuously alongside the growing disruption of the people's livelihood strategies. The emergency situation is reported to be very critical in sixteen<sup>4</sup> kebeles. The UN OCHA-EUE mission<sup>5</sup> visited and observed the situation in one of the worst affected kebeles called *Waro*, in particular one sub-kebele village known as *wacho*.

## 2 Critical emergency situation in Alaba

### 2.1 Shortage of relief food and ever-increasing needy

Based on last year's main harvest assessment results, the Alaba woreda DPPD requested an immediate relief support for 67,676 beneficiaries. However, only 40,000 people were granted relief by the central DPPC. The remaining 27,676 people were left without support. An additional estimated 8,500 people were under close monitoring at the time of the appeal 2003. They also received no relief so far. Both groups reportedly need immediate support.

Due to the border readjustment between Kambaata-Tambaaro Zone and Alaba Special Woreda, six kebeles were incorporated from the former to the latter (apart from five kebeles similarly incorporated earlier). From the newly incorporated kebeles additional 5151 beneficiaries were selected and are entitled for



*Malnourished child in Lower Arsho Kebele, Alaba Special Woreda (Photo by Wolde-Selassie Abbute, OCHA-EUE, June 2003)*

<sup>3</sup> During the visit, Ato Adamseged Negussie, Head of the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Desk and W/ro Simret Girma, Expert of early Warning Systems (DPPD) of the Alaba Special Woreda were present.

<sup>4</sup> These worst affected kebeles include: *Ga'icha, Waro, Farsuma, Oshato, Mandoye, Gidansonga, Belela, Bachira, B-Zambaara, Soyame, Ferzano, Durgi, A-Bultuma, Bohe, 1<sup>st</sup> Tunto, and 2<sup>nd</sup> Tunto.*

<sup>5</sup> Due to the severity of the problem, those present during the visit were Mr. Ashenafi Abore, Chief Administrator, Omo-Sheleko Woreda; Mr. Taddese Hirigo, head, DPPD, Kambaata-Tambaaro Zone; Herano Helebo, Head, COSA, Kambaata-Tambaaro Zone; Mr. Paulos Atebo, Head CBCO; Mr. Feleke Libbe, Woreda DPPD Representative; Getachew Shamebo, Woreda Health Office Representative; Mr. Samuel Awano, General Nurse, Woreda Health Office; and Mr. Mentasse Makkiso, DA, Farsuma Kebele.

relief support. These incorporated kebeles have many returnee peasant farmers from the Derg resettlement program in Metekel and Gambella of which an estimated 3300 need immediate relief support. Altogether 39,476 additional people need food aid immediately. Clear indicators for the seriousness of the problem are an increase in begging, shrinking wages for manual labourers, and a large number of people making charcoal and selling fire wood.

## **2.2 Targeting problems and lack of flexibility**

The needy stressed a serious shortage of food as well as targeting problems at the grass-roots level. The NGO World Vision, which is managing relief food distributions for the 40,000 beneficiaries in the special woreda, introduced a card system by which only people receive relief, who are in possession of a card. Local people though complained, that this system is too rigid and lacks flexibility. Peasant farmers’



*Malnourished adult in Lower Arsho Kebele, Alaba Special Woreda (Photo by Wolde-Selassie Abbute, OCHA-EUE, June 2003)*

representatives and some of the local woreda staff, stressed that, “had it not been for the NGO’s ‘rigid’ card system, it would have been possible either to distribute the limited relief food on an alternating/rotating basis to those in the same critical situation or to distribute smaller rations among the many needy instead of providing proper rations only for few for an extended period”.

A result of the relief food shortage is growing frictions between those who receive relief and those who don’t. Anger is also directed at the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness committees at kebele and sub-kebele levels. One furious farmer shouted at the woreda DPPD staff who accompanied the UN OCHA-EUE mission: “please, *either* provide enough relief food for all the needy or keep away the insignificant amount of wheat available, which is nurturing conflicts among us and eroding our traditional ties!”

## **2.3 Malaria and malnutrition**

Health officials reported that malaria aggravated by the food shortage is epidemic in the area. They reported severe malnutrition among children is prevalent in many kebeles. The UN OCHA-EUE mission observed many children who were in a critical condition in the visited kebeles.

## **2.4 Livestock health**

Diseases such as anthrax, pasteurolosis, black leg, as well as infestations by infectious parasites affect livestock. Anthrax is reported endemic to the area and its outbreak common at times of pasture shortage when contact of the grazing animal’s mouth with the soil that contains the cyst bacteria spores, is high. There is serious shortage of pasture.

## **2.5 Water shortage**

The woreda also suffers from persistent water problems. Only source of running water is the Blate River. The underground water table is very deep with an average depth of



200 meters. Ponds are the main source of water and ideal breeding grounds for Malaria Mosquitoes.

### **2.6 Livestock prices down, food crop prices up**

Despite a drought-related production shortfall, the price of hot pepper, for which the woreda is well known, has dropped significantly. Reason is bad quality. The loss in food crop production is estimated at 95%. Livestock prices deteriorated while prices of food crops went up.

## **3 Scary malaria epidemic and food shortage in Omo-Sheleko**

### **3.1 Shortage of relief food and ever-increasing needy**

In Omo-Sheleko woreda 40,000 people are eligible for relief while another 23,000 are under close monitoring based on the results of the main pre harvest assessment. However, due to aggravating factors like a malaria epidemic, livestock diseases, and *belg*<sup>6</sup> rain failure, the number of people in immediate need of food aid has risen to 54,261 while 21,039 are under close monitoring according to woreda officials. So far though the 14,261 additional needy are not yet entitled to relief and are in a critical situation.



*Mother suffering from malaria in Waro Kebele, Omo-Sheleko Woreda (Photo by Wolde-Selassie Abbute, OCHA-EUE, June 2003)*

### **3.2 Targeting problems and tradition of relief food sharing**

Targeting problems, which used to be common before, are largely eliminated. However, one critical problem remains, associated with local culture. Beneficiaries complain that they are forced by tradition to share their ration with those who are in a similar situation but are not entitled to relief support. While this practice seems to provide for some fairness, it seriously dilutes rations and subsequently leads to malnutrition.

### **3.3 Malaria epidemic - critical and alarming**



*Transporting a malaria patient to a clinic in Omo-Sheleko Woreda (Photo by Wolde S. Abbute, OCHA-EUE, June 03)*

Omo Sheleko is suffering from a serious malaria epidemic with 16 of the 31 kebeles badly affected. The woreda tried to address the problem by providing mass-treatment with the distribution of 128,000 tablets of Chloroquine and 39,000 tablets of Fansidar. However, the medicines brought only temporary relief and the problem prevails. The epidemic is even expanding into those kebeles, which previously were unaffected. The woreda officials reported the situation is scary and beyond their

control. Instead of curative measures only, preventive spraying against mosquitoes is urgent. The combination of food shortage, lack of clean water and lack of preventive

<sup>6</sup> 25% of the agricultural area of the woreda is dependent on *belg* production

spraying aggravated the situation. The UN OCHA-EUE mission observed a mass-treatment of peasants in one of the malaria-affected kebeles. Since January 2003, 14,959 people were treated. Ninety-eight people died of malaria. If there is no immediate action taken, then the epidemic will get totally out of control and claim more lives.

### **3.4 Malnutrition prevalent**

Severe malnutrition among children is prevalent in many kebeles. Up to now 7,871 cases of marasmus and kwashiorkor are reported among children and 800 cases of severe malnutrition among lactating and pregnant mothers. A nutrition survey conducted by World Vision, which is operating in the area since 1984, showed increased global acute malnutrition (GAM) of 13% and severe acute malnutrition (SAM) of 1.7%.

### **3.5 Livestock health**

Diseases such as anthrax, pasteurellosis, black leg, and infectious parasites affect the livestock. There is serious shortage of pasture and water.



*Sick and weak cattle due to disease and shortage of pasture in Omo-Sheleko Woreda (Photo by Wolde-Selassie Abbute, OCHA-EUE, June 2003)*

### **3.6 Water shortage**

The woreda suffers from a serious shortage of water. The visited kebele Waro has no water source of its own and the only deep well is not functioning due to maintenance problem. To fetch water people have to travel to neighboring kebeles, which on average takes six hours.

Those taking mass malaria treatment were seen swallowing the medicine using dirty brown water, which they gathered from rainwater ponds. This of course is a health threat.

### **3.7 Crop failure and market price**

The woreda reported a total total loss of *belg* crop production in a quarter of its *belg* producing areas. As a result, the number of needy has increased dramatically. What compounds their problems is the fact that livestock price went down and food crop prices went up. This reduces their ability to cope with the sale of livestock.

## **4 Livestock epidemic in Angacha Woreda**

Angacha is one of 4 woredas of Kambaata-Tambaaro Zone. 14 of the 35 kebeles in Angacha are affected by food shortage and eight<sup>7</sup> are in a critical condition. 15,000 beneficiaries are getting relief food at the moment. However, the number of relief food needy has increased to 23,000. *Belg* rain failure after crops were sown made matters worse. The 8,000 needy who are not yet entitled to relief are in a critical situation.

Their main food reserve for times of shortage, false banana or Enset (*Ensete ventricosum*) is seriously affected by **bacterial wilt** and another new disease locally

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<sup>7</sup> Hanja Gotma'na, Hanja Lalo'amo, Adancho, Buucha, Bonga, Qa'ilaama, Hobbicho, and Daato-Darhaboora

called *Qay Qinqin*. In this heavily overpopulated area, the loss of *enset* plants has serious consequences for the food security of the people. Its leaves are also important as livestock feed. Livestock in Angacha woreda is suffering from lack of pasture because all former grazing areas are cultivated. It was reported that 18 cattle died in one kebele called Hanja-Gotma'ina due to feed shortage related diarrhoea. Six kebeles reported an epidemic outbreak of the cattle disease *Lump Skin*, which seems expanding. The woreda veterinary doctor said he reported the epidemic to the zone and region but no measures were taken so far. He stressed that the woreda absolutely has not veterinary medicines in store and also no logistics to monitor the situation. *African Horse Sickness* is threatening neighbouring Lisana Kebele of Lemu Woreda in Hadiyya Zone. This also needs immediate intervention.

## **5 Hailstorm destroys crops in Kacha-Bira Woreda**

Kacha-Bira woreda is part of Kambata-Tambaroo zone. All its 27 rural kebeles are affected by food shortage, 19 of them severely. 18,000 beneficiaries receive relief food but the number of needy has increased to 33,278 which leaves 15,278 needy in a critical situation. Also here the agricultural population density is very high.

The already dire situation was aggravated by *belg* rain failure after *belg* crops were sown and by meagre production of *enset*, which was harvested before maturing due to lack of food. Like in Angacha, many plants are attacked by *bacterial wilt* and by the new disease *Qay Qinqin*.

On June 5 a hailstorm destroyed 401 hectares of crops and *enset* in two kebeles. The livestock in the woreda lacks fodder due to lack of pasture - a result of population pressure - and dwindling *enset* production. Most livestock is susceptible to diseases related to feed shortage. Many cattle died in the lowland kebeles near the Omo Valley bordering Omo-Sheleko Woreda.

The woreda staff stressed the need for strengthening the capacity of their DPP desk so that they can deal better with the ever-growing emergencies.

## **6 Severe food shortage and malnutrition in Kadida-Gamela Woreda**

Kadida-Gamela Woreda is part of Kambata-Tambaroo zone, with 27 kebeles that are affected by severe food shortage. 24,000 beneficiaries receive relief food. However, the number of needy increased to 51,763 which leaves 27,763 people in shortage of food. This woreda has similar problems like Angacha and Kacha-Bira.

Current increased food shortages are caused by a) failed *belg* production with an estimated loss of potatoes 80%, haricot bean 90%, and maize 60%, b) dwindling production of *enset*, resulting from premature harvesting, *bacterial wilt* and *Qay Qinqin* (cf. Angacha & Kacha-Bira).

The Taza Catholic Church Health Centre operates a TFC for severely malnourished children nearby Durame, the administrative center of the woreda with support of SC/USA.

The livestock in the woreda suffers from the same problems like in Angacha and Kacha-Bira: shortage of grazing space as a result of population pressure and dwindling *enset* production.

## 7 Recommendations

- It is imperative that in the affected woredas immediate action is taken by concerned agencies, which have the necessary capacity.
  - Beneficiary numbers must be increased, where there is a discrepancy between the needy and the beneficiary population
  - To reduce the threat of Malaria local health services need to be strengthened and equipped with the necessary means and medicines. Preventive measures need expanding.
  - To curb the spread of epidemics veterinary medicines need immediate dispatching to Woredas with livestock diseases.
  - Woredas with persistent water problems need water development support.
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