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Update of the Critical, Looming Drought and Displacement Disaster in Afar Region and Appeal for Practical Assistance January 13th, 2004

- This follows on from the assessment report of Teeru Woreda 5th to 9th January, 2004

1. Vast herds moving in search of pasture

The following information is taken from the Head of Mille Security and from a day's visit in the Chefa Valley, Dawe Taffa Woreda, Amhara Region where he is managing the displacement.

During January, there have been major, unprecedented movements of Afar with their herds in a drastic effort for the herdsman to rescue their dying household assets, their remaining cattle. The most massive movement has been of whole clan groups from Goolina, Awra, Uwa, Yallo Woredas of Zone 4 and Sifra and Mille Woredas of Zone 1. Even some group of Afar men from Teeru Woreda have journeyed firstly to the grasses of Yeldi in Mille Woreda and finally to the Issa – conflict zone between Adayto and Gowaneh in Zone 3 – a total distance of almost 350 kilometers from their home. According to the Head of Security, Mille Woreda who said he had been on the highland asphalt road for the past 3 months negotiating the safe passage of herds – families and securing relations with the neighboring groups, movement has been as follows:

- Firstly, 4 months ago, after the failed main rains in Zone 4, huge numbers of cattle came to graze the grassland of the Yeldi plain in southern Mille Woreda. Having grazed the plain out, the herds split two ways: some going even further south into the disputed conflict zone between Afar and Issa in Gowaneh woreda, Zone 3 and the others moving due west into Amhara Region. In Gowaneh Woreda, according to the security officer, they are risking conflict daily to utilize the grazing in the area and this is making grazing risky. The second group moving toward Amhara Region first spent around 2 months in Bati Woreda, then on to Kallu Woreda and finally moving into the Chefa Valley a week ago. Still this movement is going on and to date, 35,000 cattle and around 5,000 people are in the valley from Mille, Sifra, Uwa and Awra Woredas.

- Yet another group have moved up into the Raya Kobo area of southern Tigray coming from Goolina Woreda. This report does not have numbers on that movement.

The Head of Security reported that he is regularly negotiating with the local farmers as hungry herds devour highland crops. He claims that they ate out 200,000 ETB worth of grassland in the hills of Kallu Woreda and he is appealing to the Regional Government to settle this amount.

The drastic thing of this movement is that, because they are moving without the usual plan and understanding/ agreement of the communities, the pastoral families are going almost without possessions: no house, almost no clothes or cover and no facility to feed themselves. What APDA witnessed in the Chefa Valley is that mothers and children as well as their men are sleeping out in the open, unable to use any form of fuel, selling off what animals they can to get 'cooked' food (packets of biscuits mostly), totally exposed to the highland cold. Women interviewed said they left their home districts with their men since the pasture was exhausted and there was no other food for them in their home woredas.

Within the region, herdsmen are so desperate that 1,000's of cattle have broken lines in the Dubte Tendaho Cotton Plantation and are now eating through 38 hectares of cotton crop before it had had its second cotton harvest.

The people in Chefa Valley¹ urgently need:

- **500 Blankets** (DPP&FSB are in the process of purchasing 500 blankets)
- **Warm clothes** – especially for small children and women (tops)
- **Medical care** (APDA would like to put 10 health workers among them)
- **Shelter**
- **Food that does not require cooking** – there is no firewood in the

2. Eritrean border people displaced due to insecurity

350 households so far have entered the Assab Roadside village of Boore fleeing from insecurity in their border – home district of Daabo, northern Eli Daar Woreda following an incident in late December. Apparently people are still coming by the night in ones and twos. Of the 350 families that arrived, 30% brought animals with them. International agencies have visited them and verified their status. These displaced people claim they cannot return since they will be assumed as anti-Eritrean government. In Boore, they are sheltering with relatives or in a group together. ICRC has met some of their non-food needs but the situation deserves careful monitoring in view of the war – time experience of this community and the fact that they claim there are others who will similarly flee.

3. Urgent unmet needs to address the crisis in Teeru

As of early January, the regional government had begun moving relief grain to Teeru to commence a full distribution. Too, assistance is being sort to establish animal treatment. However the remaining vital components of the rescue package are that of animal feeding and human health service.

a) Animal feeding

Since drying grazing fodder for cattle and sheep is the root factor of these herd – type deaths, animal feed is vital to save a selected milking/ breeding herd in the affected households. To save this herd, in the end will be around 30% of the cost per head to re-stock the family from destitution once the herd has died. The added advantage of securing milk in the household is also paramount. Please contact APDA and Action Contre le Faim regarding this project.

b) Needed emergency human health service

This community lives under the immanent danger of catastrophic disease outbreak since the environment is continually littered with dead and dying animals. Too, the people are living on a highly inadequate diet. APDA wants to put 20 health workers among this community for the coming 3 months until the expected short rainy season. The health workers will monitor, health educate, burn carcasses, perform basic treatment and generally be the link between the affected community and the rest of the region. APDA has costing for this and invites any contribution.

Digital photos of both the situation in Teeru Woreda and the Chefa Valley, Amhara Region are available on request.