

REPORT ON EMERGENCY NEED ASSESSEMENT IN AFAR REGION

I. General

- 1.1. Duration: The assessment was done during January 14-20, 2004
- 1.2. Team members:
 - Ato Gedlu Beyene A/Head, DPR Unit
 - Ato Bejiga Abdo DP Officer
 - Ato Tegen Awgachew Secretary, Afar Branch
- 1.3. Area visited: The team has visited areas, which are found to be the most important for the assessment. The team arrived Semera via Awash and then deployed to selected woredas in Afar and the neighboring woredas of Amhara region namely South Wollo and North Wollo Zones. Important areas where Afars have been settled namely Habru, Kalu, Dawa Chefa, Worebabo, Mersa(Harbu), Guba lafto and Kobo weredas have been visited.
- 1.4. Organizations/officials contacted
 - ICRC- Afar sub deligation office
 - Afar region Disaster Prevention and Prevention Bureau(DPPB)
 - Aura woreda administrators
 - Chifra Woreda administrators
 - Mille woreda administrators
 - Ewa woreda administrators
 - Harbu woreda
 - Kobo woreda
 - ERCS- Afar, S/Wollo, N/Wollo branches and Kobo and Kombolcha sub branches
2. **Objective:** The objective of the assessment is to know the emergency situation in Afar region and notify ERCS management for subsequent actions
3. Methodology. During the assessment, the team has followed the following methodologies.
 - Literature survey. The last Meher pre-harvest assessment report and reports from the regional offices have been reviewed to have a bird eye view of the current situation in the region.
 - Discussion with government and non-government organization. Discussion was done with Afar sub delegation office of the ICRC to have the current situation of both conflict and disasters in the region. Moreover, discussion was done with the regional DPPB, woredas and local community officials
 - Discussion with local community. Discussion was done with the local community in Afar and Amhara region at the selected and visited areas.
 - Personal observation: The team has made personal observations and observations have been summarized to arrive at common consensus.

- Triangulation of information. Information obtained from different sources has been triangulated to check their validity.

4. Background information.

Afar National Regional State is one of the national regional states in the country with an area of 97,256km² and administratively divided to 5 zone and 29 woredas. It is one of the disaster prone regions in the country as per ICRC-ERCS classification.

The 2005 food supply prospect report issued by DPPC on December 23,2004 indicated that the meher(karma) rain on set in the region was late by one month and the withdrawal was also earlier by 3-4 weeks from the normal. The rain was erratic and uneven in distribution with dry spells. The report indicated that the rain didn't have notable impact on the improvement of pasture and water especially for sheep and cattle, which remain critical especially in zone 1,2 and 4. The performance was relatively better in zone 3 and 5. The report alarmed that a total of 207,025 populations require emergency food assistance for 6 months as of January 2005.

The report from Afar branch of ERCS dated 14/04/97 also indicated that the situation is getting critical and the scope of the emergency situation has increased. Moreover, 160 people have been displaced at Bure due to security problem at the locality.

Appreciating the problem, the ERCS management had deployed a study team to Afar region to conduct rapid emergency need assessment, which can serve as an input for subsequent actions.

Accordingly, the team has made the assessment and came up with the following findings, conclusion and recommendations.

5. Assessment findings

5.1 Weather

It is noted that the last Meher rain performance particularly in zone 1,2, and 4 was below normal and the situation shall become critical if the expected short rain/ dede'a/, which normally occur in Novemebr and Decemebr, fails.

The survey came up with the finding that dede'a rain has completely failed and complicated the life of Afar pastoralist. When the team was at the field, the sign of rain was observed and some parts of the region was cloudy. The interviewed Afar community also expressed that they have not totally lost the hope concerning the short rain and expect it till the first week of February 2005.

5.2 Water and pasture availability

According to the information obtained from different sources and observation, the water and pasture resources of the region has been depleted. Pasture at those woredas like Chifra, which had had relatively better position have been already depleted and pastoralist are moving to the neighboring regions. The cattle population of the region is almost out of the region searching for pasture and water.

The team has observed the pasture and water conditions of selected amahara woredas. The inflow rate is found to be high and the pasture at Chefa, Girana, Guba lafto and Kobo is found to sustain for a short period of time. Moreover, there is competition for resources among the dwellers and displaced community, which is a potential threat to be a cause of social conflicts.

Woreda administrators of concerned Amhara neighboring woredas also expressed their fear that the case may be critical after a few period of time unless and other wise cases have been reversed. They regret that things are moving in contrary to their land use regulations, which prohibit open grazing. At some areas like Grana where there are irrigation practices, the case is more serious.

5.3 Migration.

The poor performance of the meher/karma/ rain resulted in crop failure, failure in regenerating of pasture and water resources, and finally diminishing of livestock products especially milk. The case has been exacerbated due to failure of the deda'e rain and pastoralists have left their locality searching for pasture and water within the region and the surrounding neighboring regions.

The migration within the region started in September 2004. After depletion of the existing resources within the region they start migrating to the neighboring woredas in October 2004. In fact, the pre-Meher assessment conducted in November also indicated that there was a huge livestock migration to Tigray region (Wajerat, Mehoni and Edagahamus weredas). The northern and western parts of Afar have migrated to Tigray and Amhara respectively whereas zone 5 has migrated to zone 3 of the region.

The team has tried to observe the displaced community and confirmed that most part of zone 1 and 4 have been migrated to Amhara. The migrated community are with a cattle and limited number of camel and concentrated at Chefa, Boboksa(warababo), Girana(Mersa), raya vally which extends from Doro-Gibir to Kobo. Information obtained from the local community also prevailed that there are a large number of livestock population at the corridor of Amhara and Afar regions, which are on movement to the Amhara region. Those who were at Bati for two months have also been moved to Chafa and it is found difficult to get the exact number of migrated people.

The officials have tried to give the rough estimate of cattle. Accordingly, there are about 30,000-40,000 cattle at Chefa, 30,000-40,000 at Girana and 30,000 in Raya valley (Doro-Gibir to Kobo). The team has tried to make a rough estimation of population based on the average estimated livestock holding which is a minimum of 100 cattle per person. It is estimated that there can be about 700-1000 people who are migrated with their cattle. The figure doesn't include that population at the corridor of Amhara-Afar, those settled at Boboksa and migrated to Tigray.

The Afar DPPB informed the team that the case is distress and mass migration, which is comparable to that of 1977 E.C. However, pastoralist voiced that parts of their family members especially youth, mothers and unable persons are still at their locality looking after goats and camels. Field observations also show that herders, women and children have been migrated and the number of children and women is estimated at 10% of the total population.

5.4 Livestock condition

The livestock condition at large is poor. According to the judgment of the team, those, which are at Chefa, are at very poor condition and those at north Wollo are at poor conditions. Livestock health is one of the major concerns of pastoralist, the local community and administrators. There is an anxiety of disease outbreak, which can cause mass destruction and can affect the human health. The study team observed that a team from Afar agriculture office was rendering veterinary service with the plan to outreach the migrated livestock population.

5.5 Human health and nutrition

Human health is the prime concern of pastoralist. They are not in a position to resist the cold weather condition at the Amhara neighboring woredas. The case is serious for children and women and the team conformed that the case is serious which need due attention and timely response.

Food is also one of the major problems. The availability of milk has been drastically reduced or almost not available. Cattle have traveled a lot under stress condition, lost their weight and the terms of trade is not in favor of pastoralist, which is a source of income to purchase food items. Nonetheless, the physical condition of the pastoralist is okay and the sign of malnutrition is not observed except for health problem on some children.

5.6 Food and non-food items availability

According to the information obtained from the Afar DPPB, the emergency needy population has raised to 560,030 which is about 50% of rural population in the

region. According to the same source, 29%, 26%, 17%, 15% and 14% of the population are from zone 1,2,4,3 and 5 respectively.

The regional DPPB has deployed six water tankers to selected areas of zone 1,4,5 and 2 to provide limited water for emergencies. The DPPB also informed that there was food aid distribution but for the month of December. The team also observed that DPPB was distributing food and non-food items namely blankets, biscuit and milk at Chefa and Girana for limited number of beneficiaries. The ERCS-Afar branch also distributed 120 blankets at Chefa for the needy population.

The team perceived that the overall food and non-food availability to the needy community needs special attention. The food supply prospect also seems catastrophic especially if the current small rain fails for the coming few days.

5.7 Markets

The team tried to visit some markets in Afar and Amhara region. According to the interviewed personnel and observations made, the supply of cereal at Afar is found to be very low accompanied by high prices as compared to normal year. In contrary, price for livestock has been drastically failed and the terms of trade is not in favor of pastoralist.

At the market surveyed in Amahara and additional information obtained, there is no as such significant change in cereal and livestock price caused as the result of new arrivals. In fact this may be due to the short period of time since they arrived at the locality. On the other hand, pastoralist voiced that they are saling their livestock at extremely low price since cattle have lost their weight traveling long distance under stress condition.

5.8 Conflicts and displaced population

According to the information obtained from ICRC- Afar sub delegation office; there are 354 Internally Displaced Population/IDP/ around Bure. ICRC, in cooperation with ERCS-Afar branch had provided non-food assistance for 78 persons. The rest are at about 20-30km from Bure and ICRC couldn't access them. The office informed the team that still there is a need for assistance to these IDP.

The Afar region DPPB appreciated the case of IDP at Bure but underlined that it is a case in the ocean and informed the team that their priority area of concern is those population affected by disaster and migrated

6. Conclusion

The Meher (karma) rain poor performance has been followed by the total failure of small rain (dada'e) and put the pastoralist life under pressure. Pastoralist has been forced to leave their locality searching for pasture and water for their livestock. The emergency food assistance needy population has been drastically increased and 560,030 are in need of assistance as opposed to 250,000 needy populations in the last year.

Water and pasture resource of Afar region has been depleted and the population are migrating to the neighboring regions as of October which is earlier as compared to the normal year. Currently, almost all pastoralists, except for those at the corridor of zone 3, are either outside of their region or at the border of Afar and the neighboring regions with alarming outflow rate. If the current trend is not reversed through implementing appropriate measures or the current short rain in which pastoralist are expecting for the coming couple of weeks rained, things will be complicated and worrisome.

The team perceived that the grazing lands are getting over their capacity at neighboring region/ Amhara in this case/ and available pasture couldn't sustain the ever-growing number of livestock for a longer period of time.

There is also potentials for conflicts amongst the pastoralist and the inhabitants due to competing and management of resources especially pasture and agricultural lands.

The case has also been challenging concerning the implementation of directives issued by Amhara region/ Wollo in this case/, which prohibit open grazing for the inhabitants.

The weather condition at neighboring areas is found to be too cold for Afars and they voiced that it is their prime concern and problem for the coming times. The same is true for food supply which is under shortage and critical especially for those under 5 aged children and lactating women.

7. Recommendation.

The team has tried to scrutinize the extent and severity of the problem by making rapid assessment, prioritize problems and the following recommendations have been suggested for implementation.

- a. The provision of blanket. The team agrees that the community is not in a position to cope up with the cold weather and recommend blanket distribution for a total of 700-1000 households.
- b. Food is ranked as the second most important emergency assistance. Hence, the provision of food including supplementary foods is recommended. ERCS can distribute milk for children/locating women,

which is estimated at 10% of the displaced population; About 100 people or provision of biscuit for 700-1000 people.

- c. The provision of FAFA for 700-1000 population is also recommended.

The implementation of these recommendations can be based on the availability of resources under ERCS disposal. The team recommends that interventions to be selected have to address the cloth and food problem, which is the prime concern of the community.