

**NOTE FROM AFAR REGION'S 3rd CRISIS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
MEETING
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THE MEETING

This is the 3rd meeting of Afar Region's Crisis Management Committee held at the regional capital, Semera. USAID, WFP, ICRC, and FAO were represented during this meeting. The meeting was co-chaired by representatives from the region's Rural Development and DPP bureaus. The agenda for this meeting was to discuss on and approve the contingency plan for the next six months and investigate the current situation of IDPs from Elidar woreda.

SITUATION UPDATE

Recent reports and the official government appeal document indicated that zones 2&4 and partially zone 1 in Afar region faced severe shortage of pasture and water and this has resulted in untimely migration of animals and people to neighboring Amhara and Tigray regions. One major reason for this early movement was the failure of 'Dedeha' rain expected in the region in the months of October and early November.

Recent rapid assessments made by the regional Early Warning Department confirmed again that shortage of water and pasture was now a common problem for all zones in the region and not limited to zones 2 & 4. The regional DPPB now believes that the number of needy people in the region reached 588,000.

The problem was aggravated further as December 2004 food was not distributed to the eligible beneficiaries in the region. This made the male family members to move with their animals to the neighboring regions as far as Alamata in Tigray region and the female family members to the nearest towns (Bati, Kombolcha, Kemisse), apparently to beg for food - not a common practice in Afar pastoralist community.

The movement of people and their animals to the neighboring regions has a potential to create conflict particularly during this unusual time when the host community has not yet harvested their crops. To mitigate this problem the regional officials requested the host regions (Amhara & Tigray) for their cooperation and support and facilitate the movement of people. This seems to have resulted in good outcome as no major conflict was reported so far. Effort has also been made to create a committee along the major routes to facilitate easy passage of the pastoralists and their animals.

Most of the animals and people are now concentrated around Cheffa in Oromia zone of Amhara region. This area is believed to have better water and pasture potential, but food for the people is still a major problem. The market demand for the animals is very poor mainly due to the current poor physical condition of the animals and lack of market in the

area. Moreover, pastorlaists could not accustom themselves to the cool weather of the area. The movement of people and animals to these areas is still going on.



Livestock & People on their way to Kombolcha, South Wollo Zone

CONTINGENCY PLAN

It was decided during the last meeting of the Crisis Management Committee to draft a contingency plan. To this end a technical committee composed of members from the relevant bureaus in the region will be formed and bureaus identify and submit their needs to the technical committee for compilation and approval. Though few sectors, namely health, water and DPPB for the food need have drafted their needs, other bureaus did not finalize their proposal. Need for non-food items were not identified. As a result, the contingency plan was not presented and discussed during this meeting. The concerned regional bureaus agreed to finalize it and notify the concerned parties in few days time.

THE INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE (IDPs)

It was reported that few households were displaced from Elidar woreda bordering Eritrea. The current number of the Internally Displaced People (IDP) from Elidar wareda is reported to be about 90 households. The IDPs are now stationed at Bure town. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has provided them some non-food items – plastic sheets. The situation is reported to the Federal DPPC so that their food need is addresses. No reply was obtained so far from FDPPC.

The main reason for their deportation, according to the regional DPPB, was the intimidation from the Eritrean side. The displaced people were given time by which they should leave the area.

NEXT STEPS

The current drought situation in the region was reported to the Federal DPPC and the office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

1. The major concern now is how to reach the people who have already moved to the neighboring regions and alleviate some of their problems. To this end a committee composed of members from relevant bureaus should be formed and travel to the areas to assess their needs. A proposal should be prepared immediately and submitted to the regional council for logistic needs.
2. The Contingency Plan should be finalized within few days and submitted to FDPPC, donors and other concerned parties.
3. The regional cabinet should consider declaring emergency situation in the region and to this end should convene soon. The need for media coverage was also stressed and should be considered.

It was indicated during the meeting that the severity of the drought warrants the need for political leadership and involvement of officials at higher level.

The Crisis Management Committee will meet every two weeks at the regional capital, Semera, until the problem is averted.

REMARKS

Considering the severity of the problem and the urgency required, it seems that the overall coordination at the regional level is not adequate (may be due to capacity). This is in contrary to the attention given by the donors and other UN agencies to mitigate the problem. The regional officials also indicated that no fact finding mission was sent down to the region from Federal DPPC.
