

# AFAR PASTORALIST DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION QAFAR DACARSITTOH DADALIH EGLA

P.O. Box 592, Addis Ababa  
[afarpda@yahoo.com](mailto:afarpda@yahoo.com), [afarpastoral@ethionet.et](mailto:afarpastoral@ethionet.et), [www.apdaethiopia.org](http://www.apdaethiopia.org)  
Telephone: (251) 011 5159787, (251) 033 5500002  
Fax: (251) 011 5538820, (251) 033 5500352

## Update on the Critical Situation in Afar Region and Highlights of APDA's New 5 – Year Plan

July 19<sup>th</sup>, 2009

### In summary:

As of early July, the rains of 'Karma', the main rainy season have begun. So far, so good: even Buure in the far north of Eli Daar received a heavy, one-night storm relieving thirst. News of Kori also sounds promising but as is now the pattern of rain, storms are localized and very severe. In Eli Daar and Hayyu towns, most of the houses have been de-roofed, for instance. The season normally continues through August and September so we hold out hope.

#### a) The status of pasture and the animal herd

Prior to the rains, the population were extremely scattered with considerable numbers in adjoining Amhara and Tigray Regions looking for pasture. Particularly in Sifra, Uwwa and Awra, this has caused tension and conflict with the neighboring communities was troublesome in the past month. Herds are very weak and there are several pockets of disease outbreak. Now the herds will begin to come back and to move where pasture is rejuvenated.

#### b) A major outbreak of AWD

As reported as starting in early May, acute watery diarrhea (AWD – the fast killing diarrhea and vomiting disease) spread to affect 15 woredas of the region: all 6 woredas in Zone 3 reported cases (Middle Awash districts); 3 woredas in neighboring Zone 5 and 6 woredas in Zone 1. Disease spread had two origins: a) the highly contaminated waters of the Awash River and b) daily laborers working enmasse in irrigation farms along the banks of the Awash as well as in the salt farms of Eli Daar. In all affected districts, the local Afar community was quickly infected and to date, over 3,500 people have been treated and almost 160 have died. As of the time of writing, the outbreak is relatively contained due to the vigorous response of the Bureau of Health, UNICEF, WHO and other NGOs. APDA took the role of sending teams of health workers and women extension workers deep into the hinterland to search out cases giving frontline treatment and raising awareness on a house to house basis. A total of 136 such community development workers were mobilized in 8 affected communities teaching over 30,000 people and treating some 600 – odd cases. Soap, water – treatment material and ORS was distributed in each affected household.

This outbreak, now the third consecutive year of such a disaster, demonstrates the extra-ordinary urgency to establish sanitation in towns and settlements and to facilitate the pastoralist community with a system of hygiene and sanitation that they can use. While the rain may well dilute river contamination, it is a well known fact that diarrhea is among the highest 3 morbidities and mortalities in the region. There are remarkable outcomes from this crisis including that investors have constructed latrines for workers and in Gawwaani have established the means of pumping clean water to affected communities from spring water. However, it is very clear that there is a need to build on these beginnings to lessen the threat of outbreak.

#### c) Malnutrition

Again, just prior to the rains, there was a rise in the cases of malnutrition in all the 6 districts APDA is treating severe acute malnutrition. Total number cases treated for June was 905. It is expected to be higher in July due

to general lack of food in the household and the extreme low productivity of animals. Again, APDA health workers have been performing MUAC rapid assessment in Buurimudayto and Gawwaani where AWD has been ravaging the community for just over 2 months. Cases of malnutrition requiring treatment have been identified. The issue is household food security: aside from the affects of AWD that can develop into malnutrition, there are so many destitute and near destitute households that urgently need recovery assistance – re-stocking. APDA has lists of around 500 households identified in economic surveys in January/ February and still not assisted.

#### **d) Volcanic eruption**

10 days ago the volcano that erupted for the first time in August 2008 sent up a second eruption killing one man and severely affecting the surrounding population with lung-irritant gases. The site of the volcano is between Diyyelu and Dabaaho in Teeru.

#### **e) Urgent needs to abate further human tragedy**

- Restocking of animals

This is the ideal time with rains and with pasture rejuvenating. Without re-stocking, there is no way out for the destitute households than food assistance/ malnutrition treatment once they succumb.

- Sanitation and hygiene interventions

Here the essential issue is to maintain intensive awareness in the community of AWD; provide strategic construction of latrines; assure clean water supply where possible and access to soap, water treatment material for all in the community.

### **Refugee news**

Since the Red Sea Conference of May 15<sup>th</sup>, the refugee youth in particular have become highly organized: they have formed their own organization with the objective of mobilizing and assisting their fellow refugees as well as working to assure that they continue education. Already, they have begun teaching Afar literacy in the Assayita refugee camp and are working to raise money from whatever means they can so that some of their members can study.

As previously, the trickle of refugees entering Ethiopia continues. Some of them are coming in the most shocking state of malnutrition. APDA has now placed a health worker in the Assayita camp.

### **Highlights of APDA's new program strategic plan**

As of July 7<sup>th</sup>, APDA has formulated 2010 to 2014 Strategic Plan: the highlights are summarized below. APDA plans to complete this into a document for circulation and for the website ([www.apdaethiopia.org](http://www.apdaethiopia.org)) as from August. Again, the organization wants to gather all partner – donors that have representation in Ethiopia in Addis to discuss the plan in the last week of August. For this, APDA would love feed-back as to what date is best for the majority for such a gathering.

APDA plans to remain the Afar pastoralists' leading community – based NGO, upholding its former vision and mission to facilitate pastoralists into sustainable, self-sufficient development that deliberately empowers women to manage their own lives. In view of the current situation, threats and achievements to date, the following is the plan in summary:

#### **Major program component and new focuses**

The assembly decided that **Afar education complemented with Afar language development** should continue to be the lead - component of the next 5 years pastoralist development. The new admission to this rank is that of **environment protection**. There was universal agreement that in the light of recurrent drought; declining household food security in the pastoralist household, it is vital that APDA put top-energy into

facilitating the community into literally rescuing the balance between land-use and land – protection enabling the pastoralists to survive.

The third component that has been much more defined is that of **community sanitation** along with safe water supply arising out of the now third consecutive year of AWD.

### **The need for program expansion:**

Realizing that the program has to reached most of the woredas in Zones 2 and 5, APDA believes that in order to do this, it must support like-minded locally – based NGOs in those zones to actually implement while APDA remains the core information resource and training organization.

The following are the major points of each component:

#### **1. Afar Education**

- APDA needs to continue to reach out to Afar communities without access to education, mobilizing them through Afar literacy that they can benefit from non-formal education
- Deliberate effort must continue to facilitate female participation through a program – wide campaign
- Build the capacity of APDA teachers through distance education along with the program health workers and women extension workers that they can be more mobile in development with the government and other agents
- Pilot at least one community boarding school aiming to get up to 40 males and 40 females through education to be the leaders and innovators of development
- Send Afar senior – school students (grade 8 and above) to rural communities each long vacation to campaign for Afar literacy and other issues thereby giving the students the real sense of their own culture and development as well as raising awareness in the community.

#### **2. Afar language development and organization publicity**

- APDA will re-establish an Afar writing center to work in parallel with the Afar Language Development and Enrichment Center in the Bureau of Education aiming to write much literature as well as hold annual language development conferences. The center will also serve as APDA's information office and requires its own secretariat allowing APDA to better publicize itself in Afar and English. To this end, APDA needs to research and develop 'best practices' documents displaying lessons learnt in the most appropriate methodologies – most urgently on pastoralist women empowerment and stopping FGM.
- Promote government use of Afar within administration as well as toward using Afar as the medium of learning as far as Grade 8
- Establish Afar language literacy classes within APDA for Logya and the surrounds
- Hold annual 'mother – tongue days' to popularize the use
- Open an Afar shop in Logya selling Afar literature, artwork, handicraft and music
- Mobilize Afar youth to campaign for the use of the language and culture with their peers and the community

While the development of community radio was a major issue in the previous 5 – year plan that was not achieved, it is now seen that there are other opportunities in the region that will allow this without expensive capital: the Bureau of Education has begun an education – radio and are currently offering APDA 1 hour per day. Again, a group in Gawwaani is establishing community FM radio that APDA could collaborate with.

#### **3. Primary health**

- APDA will continue to take EPI vaccination to remote districts using refrigerators and generators
- Program health workers need capacity building that they can study nursing and midwifery
- Effort to establish safe motherhood will be accelerated
- Mobilization on family planning should begin in earnest
- APDA will model sanitation mobilization and implementation in Logya town aiming that it can be replicated

#### **4. Women extension and stopping harmful practices**

- Activities empowering females will be cross-cutting to the program
- Women extension workers should be greatly increased in the program and given opportunity to upgrade through distance education as well as train as health workers
- APDA will facilitate the regional government in benefiting from the example of family law and female protection in Djibouti that it can be replicated in the region through the construction and implementation of a rescue center for females physically or mentally endangered
- Facilitate woreda – level establishment of by-laws protecting females rights implemented by government and clan law.
- Mobilization of the Islamic teaching on women's rights must increase. Women extension workers need full awareness on this
- Mobilization of females and work ethic is needed to increase female workers and their commitment to work
- Issues of harmful practice response and HIV response should be protected as the prerogative of the Afar community to be implemented by and through the Afar culture, religion and leadership

#### **5. HIV and AIDS response**

- APDA's example of VCT will be strengthened and those positive will be encouraged to illustrate that AIDS is just another sickness
- APDA will work more and more with care and support as the need arises
- Youth will be mobilized to direct response on safe sexual practice as well as other issues of marriage and stopping kaat chewing

#### **6. Relief and drought response, water access, roads, animal husbandry, environment**

- Traditional knowledge and judgement will guide all environment actions
- Current level of environment damage will be surveyed to be understood by all stakeholders
- Native grasses and trees will be promoted
- Drought enclosures will be promoted
- Community will be taught how to make use of prosopis julante
- Community planning and participation must underpin all activities
- APDA should promote local animal fodder production
- Alternative construction material and cooking fuel will be sorted out
- Sub-surface dams should be tried along with more rain-water harvesting
- Careful animal husbandry of a smaller healthier herd will be promoted
- Animal medications and vaccines will be made available to the community through veterinary cooperatives on the basis of payment. Commercial pharmacies need to be supported and illegal sale of medicines policed with government collaboration.
- APDA needs a contingency relief fund to make immediate response in the case of any disaster.

Finally, APDA will continue to keep careful surveillance on the condition of refugees entering into the region from Eritrea aiming to respond to their humanitarian needs as well as support them in development as far as possible.

#### **7. Community economic development**

- Animal market as far as promoting unions and a league to gain profitable cross-border market as well as the production and sale of animal products will be promoted
- As far as possible, females will be supported to involve in economic development
- Proper collection, exchange and distribution of market information will be promoted facilitating market networking
- Work to promote micro-finance suited to Islam and the pastoralists particularly among women.

## **Building APDA's capacity to implement the plan**

In this the last but most vital issue: the meeting saw **uncertainty in funding** as well as **insufficient human capacity** as the greatest limiting issues on which all other challenges hang. Again the issue of NGO collaboration and overall coordination with the government was raised.

### **Finance:**

APDA needs its own capital to respond to emergencies, protect from uncertainties in funding and develop self-sufficiency in implementation. There are many opportunities in the Afar Region that APDA would like to work with using the principles of community development to enable pastoralists while actually making money for the organization.

- The organization currently has no reliable vehicles: youngest organization vehicle is 5 years old and marks up 100,000 kilometers annually.
- The actual field office space is very limiting and needs expansion

### **Human capacity**

Persons working with APDA need to be trained to the fullest capacity that they ARE the acknowledged experts and can manage the program without outside support. This will involve a strategy of development scholarship: APDA requires community development degree holders; water engineer, veterinary doctor; midwives; nurses; nutritionist; environment protection experts; journalists; Afar accountants and managers.

### **Collaboration and coordination with stakeholders**

The meeting again saw this as vital to sustainable achievement and discussed that the now existing Afar Pastoralist Development Forum should be strengthened and any allied forums/ platforms such as the Afar Education Development and Coordination Platform and the Forum of NGOs implementing to stop traditional and modern practices harming women.