

# AFAR PASTORALIST DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION QAFAR DACARSITTOH DADALIH EGLA

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## Our Christmas and New Year Greetings

December 15<sup>th</sup> 2015

### 1. Warm greetings from all of us in APDA!!!

As APDA works through its responses to the on-going emergency, we need to stop a minute to see how you have journeyed with us in 2015 – each of us in the team thank you for your commitment and determination to see that projects do go ahead in Afar Region – it has not been an easy year!!

Indeed, with Christmas and the New Year, it is a great opportunity to reflect – perhaps there were many things we would have wished to do in 2015 and they did not happen but in other ways, we were greatly heartened and strengthened by your partnership making possible other opportunities for community development and now relief of some extreme need. Examples of these include the response to the current crisis as mentioned below that is allowing development to continue; increasing the number of children supported in the 4 program hostels allowing children from remote areas to continuing schooling; exciting gains in stopping harmful practices at the community level through the confrontation of the need to treat the girl/ woman suffering the consequences of FGM; the opening of a new partnership on supporting quality education for pastoralists; accelerating and improving the way we are responding to the erosion of grazing land through water spreading weirs and the amazing service the hospital offers to extremely needy women in their time of maternal and gynecological crisis to mention a few.

As the world winds down to celebrate Christmas and the New Year, we trust that you are able to find enjoyment and refreshment and we certainly look forward to walking on through 2016 with you!! We look forward to your visiting us when you can and hope that our partnership will continue as a productive two – way dialogue!!

### 2. Confronting the growing food crisis

Following the catastrophic loss of animals in August when the Afar government estimated that as many of 560,000 head of animals (mostly goats and sheep) died throughout the region, the region has stooped further and is now classified as fully in the status of food insecurity – all 32 woredas (districts) were classified as hot-spot 1 for emergency in December (there were initially 17 districts under this classification). The chief problems identified are lack of food and water. As of early December 28<sup>th</sup> water trucks were deployed delivering drinking water – the combined effort of the government and NGOs.

APDA has and is responding as follows:

#### **Water trucking:**

Supported from two separate projects, APDA has a truck delivering water in Guulina for 90 days and 2 trucks in northern Eli Daar and one in Kori. This assistance will complete in late January. All beneficiaries had almost not seen rain since 2013. Water trucking is enabling education to go on as well as preventing people from dying of thirst in the target sites. The regional government is directing the water trucking operation with weekly meetings adjusting the plan as needed.

#### **Supplementary feed in households where there are less than 10 surviving goats:**

APDA has just completed supplying supplementary goat feed in 1,267 households (the target was 1,050 households) for 4 months in northern Eli Daar, Saha and Bargaale in Dubte and Bidu – having begun the 4 months with a daily milk production averaging 801 ml per household having begun at the level of 106 ml per household on average. This was achieved through feeding these goats, treating them and giving them one

round of vaccination. Similarly, 500 households in Kori and 300 in Ami Bara began this assistance in December for 4 months. In all cases, THE most destitute households are selected to benefit; households with less than 10 remaining goats and having people in the household who are malnourished. The outcome is both to reduce malnutrition and to strengthen that highly vulnerable herd that it reproduces and establishes the trend to recovery.

#### **Animal treatment and vaccination:**

As mentioned above, animal treatment – particularly internal and external parasite treatment and infectious diseases played a strong role in re-establishing milk – production in the target goats. Too, other animals in the vicinity of the project target area were treated to lessen the disease transmission. Beyond the actual project districts mentioned above, animal treatment is being carried out wherever animals died en masse alongside the systematic burning of carcasses. This has effectively lowered what were outbreaks of animal diseases and has served to slow down and prevent ongoing animal deaths.

#### **Malnutrition response:**

Now malnutrition can be found in the communities of almost all districts in the region. Thus surveillance and treatment has become a mammoth task. APDA is contributing by

- a) Providing food ration (maize, pulses and oil + fammix for 35% of the target community considered most vulnerable) in Guulina and Ami Bara. This amounts to benefiting 3,000 people in Guulina (Guulina received extremely minimal rain in the short and long rainy seasons of 2015) and 5,771 in Ami Bara. Ami Bara where agro-pastoralists lost both herds and farming – the latter swept away by flood in October 2014, 400 women are being supported with cash for work to re-develop their irrigation canals and small farm plots.
- b) In order to support the district governments in their response, APDA is using the community management of acute malnutrition (CMAM) strategy working from November to April 2016 in Kori and Gala'alu and in southern Teeru over the same period. This strategy both involves the existing government health team in the district alongside APDA's health team whose job is to reach communities too far from the health institutions. To enforce sustainability of the activity, each community forms a group of 5 volunteer women to identify malnourished children and to see that only the patient eats the supplied sachets as well as supporting the effort to prevent diarrhea outbreaks with such vulnerability. In January APDA will begin a 9 - month project carrying out CMAM in Afdeera, Teeru, Eli Daar, Magaale and Erebti.

Wherever malnutrition in pregnant and breast-feeding mothers is found in other areas, the program health workers and women extension workers are giving lentils and fammix – maternal malnutrition carries the risk for both mother and child.

#### **Improving access to water and hygiene and sanitation activities:**

Eight new water-storing cisterns have been completed and 5 ponds excavated aiming that the most vulnerable communities in Ei Daar, Dubte, Bidu have improved access to water for animals and humans. A further 5 new cisterns are now being constructed in Kori as well as one in Mabay, Teeru and one in Geega, Dubte and 5 dams in in water-short areas of Teeru and northern Dubte. As well there are plans to rehabilitate 2 wells in Gala'alu and 2 in Ami Bara. All beneficiary communities will form/ re-establish a hygiene and sanitation committee that will be trained to manage the protection of the respective water source from contamination as well as in the maintenance and rehabilitation of the source into the future.

#### **Lowering contagious diseases through vaccination:**

APDA's health teams are working with the respective local governments to vaccinate under 1 – year old children with the 9 routine antigens as well as tetanus toxoid for reproductive – aged females in Guulina and Kutubla in Assaita woreda. The plan is to undertake such campaigns in Eli Daar, Teeru, Afdeera, Erebti and Magaale in the coming months. Each community is vaccinated with 4 – round campaign-styled coverage aiming that all remote children are reached. Essential messages to lessen disease transmission are give a part of the campaign and soap and water purifying chemicals given out to the most vulnerable households.

Contributing to the need:

While APDA does not have online banking as the organization account is in local currency, our sister organization, Afar Friends, Sweden have established an account whereby they will transmit to APDA regularly as follows:

**IBAN: SE02 9500 0099 6034 0766 1580**

**BIC-code (SWIFT-address): NDEASESS**

(details about the bank can be found at <http://www.nordea.com/en/index.html>). This hopefully is the solution to our overseas friends asking for this facility.

### **3. Recovery:**

As much as immediate relief, the communities affected need recovery that they are not dependent on ongoing malnutrition assistance and break the cycle of communicable disease vulnerability. In Daboore and Namma Gubi in Afdeera, 400 households that lost their entire herd in 2013/ 2014 are each being re-stocked with 9 breeding female goats and one male. This project is protected through participatory community planning; seeing that the purchased animals are able to survive in the targeted locality; that the goats are in top health condition at distribution and if it is needed, supplementary animal feed will be given during the period till the next – expected rains in March/ April. This will relieve the community from supporting these destitute people as is Afar culture to do so thereby lifting the entire community to a less drought-vulnerable status.

Again, activities to rehabilitate drought – damaged, eroded grazing land began in November: one watershed management scheme is being constructed in Maska, Eli Daar that includes the re-diversion of the river that the main grazing forest is dependent on; gully closures and hillside terracing and 6 water –spreading weirs in Kori where grazing pasture has drastically diminished in the past 10 years. The weirs will be dug into riverbeds and have side wings that spread any water flowing enabling the increase of soil moisture as well as the accumulation of water. In all constructions, the communities will construct benefiting from cash for work.

### **4. On-going emergency situation**

Both scientific and local meteorology is predicting extremely sever rains in January/ February as part of the El Nino effect in the Horn of Africa. Extremely dangerous floods are expected and the pertinent communities are being warned to move.

## **Continuing in Development**

### **1. Quality education**

APDA began a new NGO partnership beginning a project aiming at both improving access to basic education for pastoralist children and modeling the quality of education at middle-school level. The districts of Daali Fagi and Tallalak in Zone 5 (southwestern area of the region) were chosen since the level of education accessible to pastoralists is so low there – the district head in Daali Fagi says he has 2 Afar teachers out of a total of 49 for a population of around 72,000. He estimates a minimum of 85% of all school –aged children are currently not learning. The project will establish 31 sites of alternative basic education that will provide first – phase primary on a mobile basis as needed – teacher moving with the community and teaching in community-constructed shelters or under trees. Then the challenge will be that the children who do pass through to the equivalent of grade 4 are able to continue on. For this, the project will work with the government teachers help 3 existing schools to be sufficiently innovative that children can attend and are attracted with community support and that the learning delivered is of replicable quality standard. For APDA, this is a very exciting project to be launching into as it is dependent on a close relation with the government education system as well as an NGO well-equipped and committed to developing quality education. It is hoped in the process, for instance many new reading books will be written and activated for children. Along the way, the issues that hinder and inhibit Afar communities from involving in education will be tackled since a community – driven baseline study is being conducted.

### **2. Community radio**

As of mid-December, community FM radio is being trialed in Afar Region ready for the real thing. The community radio is already registered governed by a strong and eager board of directors. APDA is playing the role of facilitation that the radio is established and has secured running costs for one year. The Federal

government contributed the equipment and studio – the entire system now only lacks transmitters to attach to the mobile phone network pylons that there is a region-wide coverage. Currently, already experienced Afar radio journalists support the radio. The plan is that all issues that will trigger greater community ownership of the development process will be part of dialogue; reporting and planning on radio. Afar education will have a dedicated time that the community can really grasp the importance and participate as well as all the essential messages to improve maternal and reproductive health. For example, it is hoped the difficulty of getting immediate blood donors at the moment of critical need will be much lessened through community dialogue.

### **3. Particular ways to partner with APDA**

For those looking for particular ways to partner with APDA in relief, recovery and development, here are a few ideas:

- a) Assist in the support of malnourished mothers and their children at the rate of 200 grams of lentils daily. Lentils cost 25.00 ETB/ kilogram requiring 150 ETB for a person per month – around 7.2 USD
- b) Establish a community paravet who will respond immediately to animal diseases at the cost of 4,500 ETB for start-up medicines and equipment – 214 USD – APDA will place this paravet within a community development committee and take reports from him/ her.
- c) Relieve a destitute household through restocking – good quality breeding goats cost 1,000 ETB including the treatment and vaccination. Ten goats per family is ideal. This then would cost 10,000 ETB or 476 USD
- d) Start a destitute family in alternative income generation such as a mobile shop; buying and selling animals; selling home-produced mats with the start-up capital of 2,500 ETB – 119 USD – this fund will then be revolving as micro-credit
- e) Sponsor a child who has completed primary phase from the remote community to continue school through hostel – living in a town at 32 ETB per day. This would then be 960 ETB per month or 45.7 USD. This will feed and house the child as well as paying for sundries such as schoolbooks and health needs. For this, APDA is happy to establish a line of contact between the child and the sponsor
- f) Support a women's community intervention such as women/ girls making their own jewelry for the tourist and the Diaspora markets – around 5,000 ETB will kick-start a community in this (238 USD); support poor urban women to make menstrual pads for Afar school girls – again needs around 5,000 ETB for the sewing machine

The banking facility mentioned above can be utilized for this or funds transferred to APDA's Afar Region account – please discuss with us as there are plenty more ideas.

### **4. 2016 – planning together**

APDA will critically watch and work to stay on top of the current crisis aiming that school drop – out is minimized and that pregnant mothers are not nutritionally compromised adding to the maternal disasters of the region. There MAY be the need for school feeding in APDA's mobile schools later if the dry season persists in remote communities.

Now that there is a newly elected Afar Regional Government, we can plan for the Afar Development Conference we had formerly wanted to hold in 2015 – it has been suggested the best month to do this would be July or August. Other suggestions are welcome.

The Barbara May Maternity Hospital will complete its second wing allowing the outpatients, laboratory, pharmacy and administration facilities to be housed away from the main block that will serve inpatients and be able to increase bed-capacity to 35 from 20. The issue of totally unsatisfactory electricity supply is not yet solved. Solar power was considered the best in terms of getting a sustainable answer.

For all this and more, we look forward to walking on with you through the coming year. Above all, APDA dreams to become increasingly self-sufficient that the needs of the pastoralists can be addressed as directly and sustainably as possible. This includes the organization having the capital to raise funds; having a strong administration and implementing capacity linked to a proper succession plan.