

AFAR PASTORALIST DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION QAFAR DACARSITTOH DADALIH EGLA

P.O. Box 592, Code 1,110 Addis Ababa
afarpda@gmail.com Telephone: (251) 011 5159787, (251) 033 5500002
Fax: (251) 011 5538820, (251) 033 5500352
www.apdaethiopia.org

Extra-ordinary emergency update

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1. Daily accelerating deterioration...

Having only shared updating information just on 5 weeks ago, the region now trembles in fear as the prospect of a failed main rainy season looms. Normally, the main rains begin early to mid- July. Now with the unremitting heat, each day brings communities into tragedy. Scattered clouds have been so far unproductive aside from one seductive rainstorm on July 8th – where rain fell, communities have gravitated and any collection of water is now tittering on dried out. The Afar traditional meteorologists say that the searing hot winds we are experiencing are all in the wrong direction to allow rain clouds to be productive. They are very worried and predict a much below average season with vast areas left dry.

Community leaders are walking into APDA office begging for water intervention help to save the life of their herds and even food for their children.

On thirst:

According to the regional government, 26 water trucks are needed to break the back of thirst – currently 10 are operating with support only for the coming month: 2 trucks in Eli Daar; 2 in Kori; 2 in Barahale, 1 in Dubte and one in Gawwaani (Gawwaani town has been without water for over 8 months now). Only yesterday, the Geega community came in stating they believed several children and women would die unless APDA acted immediately – office employees put together funds for 3 days vehicle hire.

Animal loss:

Everywhere communities are at their most dispersed and everywhere animals are dying. They are malnourished trying to eat the last dry stalks of pasture and are then utterly vulnerable to animal - contagious 'stress' diseases such as pasteurolosis – this is killing in large numbers now.

Market impediment:

Inflation is as never before: in Logya, shiro (basic food powder to make source to eat with injera or bread made of ground chick-pea) is currently 50 ETB/ kilogram for the not-spiced product. Ground grain has sky - rocketed to around 700 ETB for 50 kilograms from a recent 350/ 50 kg bag. Sugar is 25 ETB/ kilogram – this is where there is market road access. In the region's extremities, again prices are multiplied to cover the cost of distance and poor roads. Market animals are now too weak to fetch a price more than 300 to 400/ goat. The situation is indeed perilous for almost 70% of families (estimating that over 40% of the population has less than 20 remaining goats and a further 30% is either destitute or unable to meet immediate home needs with less than 10 goats surviving – the 30% have no milk in the household and market ability for other food items.

Human malnutrition and stress:

In the scorching heat, women are walking ever-distant places to get water leaving behind small children – they always fear they will come home to find they have perished through thirst. Without adequate protein nutrition, children, pregnant and breast-feeding mothers are unable to resist communicable diseases. Small and growing pockets of measles and whooping cough are scattered through the pastoralist communities where vaccination coverage was inadequate. Poor nutrition is rampant while acute moderate and severe malnutrition is growing

daily. It is always difficult to assist such weakened people beyond the catchment of the health institution and all the more difficult now that communities are at their most dispersed trying to save the life of the remaining herd.

The most affected woredas:

All the northern woredas into central Afar Region are already seriously affected. While there are 9 woredas in the region described by the early June – breakdown on the severity of household food insecurity, that number has most certainly risen in June/ July. Eli Daar, Kori, Bidu, Erebti, Barahale, Dallol are all in critical condition. Yallo, 'Adda'ar, Gala'alu, Ami Bara were among the previous seriously affected but now all of northern Dube is equally as engulfed; vast numbers of animals that congregated on the banks of the Awash River in Mille have died and Teeru and Awra have seriously deteriorated.

APDA's fears

Without rain in the next days, the development gains that are in the community will be pulled to stifling halt: alternative basic education; acting on health education; working toward stopping harmful practices through community consensus are put on hold. If the rain does not come in August, then such activities will be inconceivable compared to respecting the loss the community is facing. Therefore help is urgently needed today:

2. Immediate and urgent needs:

- Water trucking in Geega, Dagaba road; in Eli Daar, in Kori and Bidu – APDA would like to support a minimum of 4 trucks
- Supplementary animal feed: APDA is supporting 700 households in Eli Daar; 100 in Bidu and 250 in northern Dube – this number needs doubling. The organization is also requesting to support in Kori, Gala'alu and Ami Bara. Animal treatment along with vaccination when the animal's condition permits must accompany the supplementary feed that the animals survive and produce milk and even re-produce.
- Support to prevent and mitigate disease outbreak: vaccination; awareness raising; disease surveillance
- Support to undertake nutrition surveillance where the government health team do not reach

APDA needs to literally respond to with immediacy to disease/ malnutrition outbreak that the development activities can go on. In fact, it comes to that, APDA needs to temporarily forego development activities that the development gains are protected. This scenario will be apparent if the August rains fail.

3. The latest news



Rain that fell the night of 2nd August on the grazing plain of Bahari in Erebti central northern Afar Region.

This rain, preceded by a blinding dust-storm came into Erebti from Barahale. Driving just 15 kilometers further toward Afdeera, the land was dry. This rain in the first place is actually dangerous in the immediate time as

people drink dirty water and the weak animals shiver with the cold of the rain – this kills them. Again, this rain needs to be repeated up to 3 times in the one place for grass that will support animal recovery to grow – short grass that quickly burns in the heat will come through but this is not sustainable. The hope then is that this extremely late season can now continue with force – all the predictions however are contrary – both scientific and traditional. The overriding challenge remains that already for many families, the bulk of the herd has died in progressive droughts leaving them with too smaller herd to feed the household.

Now August 7th – aincredibly huge storm fell last night – now we live in fear of flooding in the Middle and the Lower Awash Basin as well as along tributary rivers that are heavily silted up. Reports are coming in from most woredas that huge numbers of goats died as the rain fell: kerosene is needed to burn carcasses; diarrhea is threatening – rehydration salts, water purification chemicals and soap are vitally needed along with lentils for people whose food supply is washed away and may well be already malnourished. Assistance of any kind, small or larger is urgently needed – APDA as part of the community MUST respond.