

AFAR PASTORALIST DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION QAFAR DACARSITTOH DADALIH EGLA

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OUR GREETINGS, OUR THANKS AND ON INTO 2013 TOGETHER!!

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1. Greetings and thanks

It is a great pleasure to send all our partner - friends a message of both greeting and thanks. Greetings that your celebrations of Christmas and New Year refresh you with joy and pleasure as part of the celebration of living and thanks that you have been such a staunch friend of the Afar pastoralists through another extraordinary year. In the year, we had the enormous excitement of meeting with several of you - you came to our very different world and in some incidents, we met you on your pad. These interchanges have definitely widened and strengthened us as a local organization since we have taken training from you, swapped ideas and seen how you struggle to raise funds for the work we do and you have also taken so much time to listen to us and peer into our world - this is highly appreciated. Moreover, you have acknowledged our work and given us credit. You have made APDA feel alive and growing!!!

This said, we are indeed energized to take another step with our pastoralist community toward development in 2013 and look forward very much to deepening our various relationships - hoping and planning that our 3rd Afar Development Conference might be the launching pad for even more and better activities with our community. Please see details below.

2. 2012: our challenges and the achievements our partnership has produced

APDA's program with the pastoralists is implemented through 6 interlocking sectors and one overriding monitoring and evaluation sector - this 7th sector now leading the program to a closer analysis of where we are going in terms of ground-level achievements as well as the need to adjust to better achieve. In an overview summary, this is how we currently see our program sectors:

a) Afar language and education

This, the pivotal sector for all development still has strong challenges. In the year, we have achieved as follows:

- In February, APDA with the Regional Government celebrated Mother-tongue Week generating a strong ground-swell of appreciation and support for the effort to put Afar language into administration use as well as evaluative reflection on how the community are utilizing the language. The urgent need for more literature and the means of producing it (printing press) was flagged. APDA intends to make this an annual event in collaboration with the government and all stakeholders.
- Afar literacy has begun in 4 previously unreached districts (Erebti, Magaale, Yallo and Guulina all clustered in the central north of the region). In Yallo, Guulina and Magaale bordering to Tigray Region, Afar language and culture has been strongly diluted and Afar literacy provides the opportunity of revival as well as the opening to other development opportunities such as income generation. Eritrean refugees living in Barahale have also been included in the Afar literacy program.
- In an effort to make learning more applicable to the pastoralists, the organization functional literacy manual is in use - this allows literacy to be learnt through the medium of 55 community development messages.

Also, the system of a cassette library has begun with each non-formal and literacy class having a tape recorder as a teaching/ learning tool; a message disperser and more.

- As of September, the number of students being assisted in hostel accommodation to continue education beyond the first primary phase doubled to 100. This year, care was taken to carefully incorporate parent/ community contribution and participation. The great challenges here are that the need is immense: we need in some locations to begin constructing facilities for this; the community remain reluctant to allow girl-students this opportunity; the plan to make such hostels sustainable and self-supporting needs to be established.

- The program has seen the enormous benefit of involving youth in mobilizing the use of Afar language. Youth associations have taken the trouble to change the names of town-areas to Afar; have set up voluntary literacy teaching; have assisted local administrations to utilize Afar in the written form and are popularizing Afar in cultural song and dance as they reported in the November regional Afar Youth Conference. See more below.

The program's water construction teams are deliberately targeting program rural school sites to provide access to water. Community development committees have been encouraged to work through plans to prevent student drop-out due to family/ clan movement. Still, much more needs to be done to make education truly part of the daily life of the pastoralist. ***APDA dreams of having community shops full of simple and yet intriguing reading books on all topics the great need to increase Afar literature with a printing press and a battery of writers.***

Currently female involvement in the education program is 42%.

b) Primary health and maternal health

Our primary health sector took on an added dimension in 2011 when we opened the Barbara May Maternity Hospital as a 20 - bed emergency referral unit but basically works on all aspects of the remote community health need including hygiene and sanitation, nutrition, safe motherhood and stopping harmful practices affecting health through a strong connection with women in the community empowered as agents of change (women extension workers). This year has seen exciting developments as well as still sticky challenges as follows:

- In January, our British volunteer obstetrician and gynecologist began surgery in our Mille Hospital and over 30 mothers have had life-saving caesarians and dozens of women suffering uterine prolapses for years are assisted. In November, a 10 - year experienced obstetrician joined the team tremendously adding to the hospital sustainability. APDA has been challenged to find Afar female midwives as the patients clearly prefer and this has been the set-back in establishing satellite waiting centers for mothers at risk in 4 districts in proximity to the hospital. The waiting center within the hospital grounds functions well.

- In 2012, APDA gave routine vaccination in 6 woredas vaccinating in remote communities using a generator powered refrigerator to keep the cold-chain; health workers walking house to house gaining 83 to 96% coverage. The benefiting woredas included Erebti, Magaale, Afdeera, Teeru, Uwwa and Afambo. In most incidents, this was a hard struggle since the communities are very scattered and the landscape extraordinarily challenging. This has assured disease prevention for 7 diseases in districts highly vulnerable and currently under drought.

- Despite all the challenges and with the great support of NGOs, APDA maintained severe acute malnutrition treatment in 13 program areas. Recovery rate was good once the treatment material was available but, due to the fact these areas are highly affected by thirst and dried pasture, malnutrition has inevitably gone on to affect other children and child-baring mothers. Unfortunately, this activity is all the more needed now with drought in the northern districts.

- Again, we have got through another year without a re-occurrence of Acute Watery diarrhea due to ongoing and massive awareness on hygiene and sanitation through health workers and women extension workers. Construction and rehabilitation of water points has helped this as well the distribution of water purifying chemicals where the water is highly contaminated. Also, APDA's soap - making plant is in full swing. Latrine construction for public use is underway currently in 3 strategic places.

- After the latest training in Erebti, APDA has a total of 1,088 trained traditional birth attendants (TTBAs) that are receiving a delivery set for each delivery and are networked to community health extension workers, women extension workers and APDA's health workers for antenatal checking and care. They are also

familiarized and networked to APDA's emergency referral hospital having been trained to identify which mothers must be referred to institutions for delivery. That they agree to stop 6 traditional practices harming in delivery is a clear contribution to lowering maternal death. However, the government official position is that TBAs should not be part of the safe motherhood team as such. This then leaves Afar pastoralists in a quandary as 93.8% of mothers deliver in their homes and almost all are remote from government health institutions. As of mid-year, the organization is registering all pregnant women in the community and recording their antenatal, delivery and postnatal care on it. APDA is also doing much to build the community understanding of safe motherhood through a newly - produced film on the topic as well as preparing a highly illustrated manual on safe motherhood for all in the community to read. ***Our health dream for 2013 is to develop an agreed understanding between all stakeholders on realistic safe motherhood that leads us forward to the ideal position of each mother delivering in the safety of an institution with a skilled birth attendant.***

c) Empowering women as agents of change

In the year, another 4 districts gained the benefit of trained, literate women extension workers partnering the new Afar literacy teachers mentioned above. Supported by the program harmful practices awareness team that deploys 4 APDA - employed Islamic leaders as well as women that show APDA - produced films to the community using a generator - powered laser projector, dialogue to stop harmful practices is underway now in most of the program areas. There are still pockets of remote communities that the team discovers who have yet to be included in the news that these harmful practices are actually opposed in Islam. The women extension workers provide the daily ongoing pressure to change, monitoring practices and assisting those affected. While female genital mutilation has stopped in its most drastic form, it remains to stop all together since the community generally chooses to undertake the 'lesser' form of cutting part of the clitoris. The challenge is to facilitate the development of heart-felt change but this is coming. Women are able to ask for divorce as needed and forced marriage is disappearing slowly. The marriage age is generally rising but can be as young as 14 years. ***We dream indeed that the community will be confident enough to monitor stopping these practices themselves - this will come through literacy and genuine awareness.***

d) Response to HIV & AIDS and youth mobilization

In the year, we have worked with communities most likely to be affected around the major market towns and support as follows:

- In each and every meeting, training or community discussion, the issue of protecting against HIV transmission is spelt out and how the community can get testing and counseling is discussed. Communities in 2 woredas through their community leadership are now enforcing the need to test before marriage.
- HIV affected people and their families are being assisted through income generation where the highest regional rates are in Sifra and Yallo.
- APDA continues to enforce its own workplace policy on HIV & AIDS encouraging the membership to be tested and to support those affected through treatment and other needs.
- Youth groups are established strategically and trained to be exemplary in living lives to prevent HIV transmission and to mobilize their own communities. Now there are a total of 13 such youth associations in market towns; where roads are newly constructed; with communities who are strongly associated with markets and where there is a cross-border interaction.
- Some 166 youth met for the 2nd regional youth conference in November representing 21 youth associations and coming from 25 of the region's woredas. As in the previous conference, they linked with Afar youth in the Diaspora over the internet as well as benefiting from hearing experiences of 3 prominent Djibouti youth associations. They described what they had achieved since the first conference as well as formulating a plan of action for the coming year. The four main topics dominating their action and their plans were responding to HIV transmission; mobilizing the use of Afar language; actively seeing that harmful practices stop and re-forestation. Youth spoke of being incensed by the destruction of forests in the region. The government has constructed and is facilitating 5 youth centers in towns. ***Our youth and HIV prevention dream is that more is done to facilitate positive youth action in towns in the region.***

e) Community economic development

The year ended with one of the APDA-formed 11 animal marketing cooperatives sharing 4,700 ETB per 10 shares held with its membership as dividend and launching into a more lucrative market. Of these cooperatives, 4 are highly successful and the rest are coming up despite the incredible odds of drought + market inflation. Revolving fund-based saving and credit groups formed on the Islamic standard of taking a service charge rather than interest are particularly successful, especially among women - beneficiaries. In this, we can really see families and extended groups pulled out of poverty: starting with around 1,000 women have reached as much as 15,000 in their hand. Raising income from small - scale animal fattening is most common with the women as well as establishing small shops in their community; selling traditional mats as well as learning new trades such as chicken-raising and bee-keeping and fodder and food-crop production. The latter is connected to our water shed management schemes discussed below. In all, APDA currently has 600 such women earning their own income in 8 woredas and has a plan to increase this by another 400 as mirror-groups in the near future as well as to roll on another around 700,000 ETB into saving and credit revolving fund work. The great achievement here is that, linking these women and all IGA beneficiaries to literacy, they have learnt financial recording as well as developing the culture of saving and paying back. The great challenge however is illiteracy and accessibility to the market - particularly for animals. ***This sector is not only dreaming but planning to begin a market-news publication that will mobile and network these budding entrepreneurial people more.***

f) Relief, water, land-use and protection and animal husbandry

This very huge sector has been extra-ordinary busy in this year. They began in January working on several drought - responses: water trucking, increasing access to water through rehabilitation of non - functioning water points, supporting hygiene and sanitation, animal treatment, supplementary food and shelter to Eritrean refugees, and re-stocking already destitute families. Then they went on to provide supplementary animal feed in near destitute households as well as to continue on to improve water access alongside hygiene and sanitation.

Water being the top priority of the community, APDA's life changed with the acquiring of a front-wheel loader to construct dams and in November, a drilling rig - the generosity of the German Government. That said, in 2012, 43 new rain-water harvesting cisterns were constructed; 12 dams excavated and a new borehole dug just prior to acquiring the rig in an extremely dry area. Also, as mentioned above, much effort was undertaken to rehabilitate damaged water points in many districts of the region. To the thrill of the community, the dams and cisterns did fill when the rain fell. The current challenge is that we agreed with the government to test out the new rig in the most difficult, volcanically formed terrain - we are now - stuck at 145 meters, we are awaiting more tools from Germany. Meanwhile, we have plans to put in 4 shallow wells immediately and a further 29 deep wells over 2 years.

Sub-surface dams and water shed management schemes are bringing truly heartening news with the extreme challenge we work under to get water in such dry areas. Three sub-surface dams were put in this year - 2 now have water and the third is waiting for it to rain on the location. This system allows for hand-pumps to be used to access the water and the water is potable. Water shed management is a similar system - both systems stopping/ slowing the flow of sub-surface water in a gully by blocking it with an earthen or cement wall down to the rock-bed. The water table then rises and permeates the surrounding land giving moisture to the soil. With additional moisture in the soil and the construction of physical features such as hill terraces, bunds and trenches, the flow of rain-water is slowed decreasing soil and water loss through erosion. In time, the area greens and water is available for market gardening growing much needed food and fodder crops - this is what our enterprising women mentioned above have begun since we now have 2 water shed management schemes completed and 3 in process and 3 beginning with another one planned for 2013. This system is bringing tired, eroded land back to life and production and securing the livelihoods for those around. In Mille district, for example, the Mille and Awash river systems will assist these schemes to establish community irrigation farming. This will pull almost relief - food dependant pastoralists back to a sustainable livelihood.

In all this work, the greatest challenge is road -access to get in construction material and water trucks to support the construction. Each time, the community is making a sterling effort to construct the roads as well as to collect rocks, gravel and sand for construction - often this material is not readily accessible either.

This sector's 2013 dream resonates with the current situation of thirst: ***that more water schemes be constructed assisting herds and humans and that what land is available on the permanent rivers be used in an environment - friendly way for small - scale irrigated food-crop and fodder growing.***

Finally, again our greetings - hopefully you can follow more about our activities on our now updated web-page www.apdaethiopia.org.

The plan for a Afar Development Conference is tentatively to hold it from July 4th to 8th just before the start of Ramadan when Afar in the Diaspora can hopefully join in. Our partner NGOs will be invited to join us for the final day as well as community field visits.