

# AFAR PASTORALIST DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION QAFAR DACARSITTOH DADALIH EGLA

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## RECOVERY: HOPING FOR RAIN AND WORKING ON LIVELIHOODS

July 21<sup>st</sup> 2013

### 1. The main rains are eminent

At the peak of the hot season, the Region now awaits expectantly for rain: with temperatures in the high 40's; daily dust storms and much of the central and northern grazing lands tinder-dry, it's a daily wait. July marks the first of the 3 main rainy season months – in some of the region's southern areas the season has begun while there are rumbles and a couple of storms to date in central and western areas. In the north, distant lightening and storms in the adjacent highlands gives hope. All herdsmen are currently highly scattered and the most vulnerable in the northern drought-belt remain under extreme stress requiring emergency assistance.

### 2. Addressing today's needs

#### - Water

Aside from a short spell when the community drank rainwater that fell in early April, APDA continues to truck water daily in Kori and Eli Daar to around 13,000 people and, once the fund terminated, APDA took over from the government assisting another 9,000 thirsty people in Barahale in the north-west.

#### - Food

In Dallol on the north-west Eritrean border where there was an extreme food shortage and rain had not fallen for 5 years, APDA is currently distributing the 4<sup>th</sup> month of a 6 month plan for over 2,000 households. This has brought remarkable relief since food grain was literally not available, otherwise selling at an exorbitant 600.00 ETB per 50 kilograms. With assistance, the price has dropped and the most needy are being assisted. Here and in 12 other woredas, malnutrition is being screened and treated – APDA's role here is to assist those who live remotely using the health team to walk with camels undertaking house to house screening and treatment. In Eli Daar, Erebti, Magaale, Dallol, Afambo and 'Adda'ar where the April rains brought no change to the pasture, numbers affected is persistent.

#### - Supplementary animal feed and treatment

The long-requested assistance for almost destitute households in Eli Daar, Kori and Teeru will now about to begin – households with less than 8 remaining goats and affected by malnutrition will get 3 months animal feed for milking goats. This action is expected to impact on this malnutrition as well as stalling the current attrition of these remaining goats. As the goats are fed, they are also necessarily treated for diseases and vaccinated. The organization has just completed such a project assisting 493 households in the most drought-devastated kebeles of Sardo and Saha in Dubte district with 4 months supplementary animal feed. From hardly getting enough milk for a cup of tea from a goat to getting just over a liter per day per goat and reviving the goats from emaciation to reproduction are two of the most apparent outcomes. Malnutrition in the community dropped to 25% of the start-up rate.

#### - Enabling students to complete the school year

1,680 students were supported with protein-based food for 75 days making it possible for them to secure the year's learning by mid-July and, with solar lights, given the option to learn at night. The community development committees who battle daily with the prospect of student-drop out and work to see that the community are mobilized toward education are being strengthened to run community shops selling the items most essential to development as part of the push for emergency education support. See below.

#### - Refugees in Barahale

APDA has just begun work in the northern of the two Eritrean refugee camps in the region. Till now, aside from food assistance, little of significance has been done to make life any easier in this very crowded camp on the edge of Barahale town. Refugee women are now beginning to make traditional palm-tree mats so that they can improve living conditions from plastic sheeting tents to local – made homes. Afar literacy and school is beginning and there are other ideas to teach them income generating skills.

### **3. Beginnings of improved food security**

With the support of its partners, APDA has been able to establish the fundamental structure that will lead to increasing food security coupled with a more diversified household diet aiming to feed into improved local economy through household plot irrigation of both food and fodder crops in 6 districts of the region. The organization has now completed constructing 8 watershed management schemes as well as a highly engineered irrigation scheme planned to support 300 households once it is entirely operational on the Awash River in Mille. In this scheme, an onsite nursery and demonstration plot will demonstrate various crops and plants both to improve household diet and to market including fast-growing fruit trees. Currently Afar people have extremely small input to the market and where they do grow crops, it is most commonly maize. In order to sustain the community management of these schemes enabling the most needy to be assisted, the target community has established a cooperative in each site to take management responsibility and lead in participatory production. The irrigation scheme on the Awash River in Mille will begin production in the coming months. Another 5 smaller irrigation schemes developed as part of eight of the above – mentioned watershed management schemes will also be up and running once the schemes have had adequate rain to charge the scheme – constructed dams. This then is a way forward that APDA envisages: linking environment rehabilitation to rain-water/ watershed harvesting and the planned cropping of adequately watershed allotments by the community managed by development – centered cooperatives.

### **4. Afar language's historic day!!!**

July 8<sup>th</sup> was the beginning of utilization of Afar language in the regional administration!! All the line-bureaus now use Afar as the language and communication – a letter written in Amharic is now refused.. This is a historic break-through as Afar Region, unlike the other autonomous national regions in the country, has not used the local people's language creating another obstacle to Afar involvement in their own development. As of the start of the new school year, Grade 1 will be taught in Afar with annual increment of the consecutive grade from then on. Currently, it is just alternative basic education as conducted in rural areas by APDA that uses Afar as the medium of learning. This current situation is a very important opportunity for APDA to work with – one of the most urgent things that needs to happen is a rapid increase in the volume of available Afar literature: reading books for all ages and all interest groups; journals; news-sheets; advertising in Afar and so on. Then this material needs to be readily available in all communities – literally local bookshops everywhere. That is when community development will take off with new energy!! To this end, APDA is trying to find the means to run a printing press.

### **5. End of the school – year: looking forward to the new year**

Carrying on from the strengthening of language use and printing books, another awesome challenge is how to create and secure opportunity for children/ students from remote communities to continue education beyond the 3 levels of alternative basic education that APDA and the government offers. What APDA is piloting is the facilitation of hostel-style living in towns that have a school for the students to continue on in for these students. To date, a mere 112 students are being accommodated in 4 different hostels: 30 students in Uwwa; 20 in Awra; 40 in Logya who are students from Geega and Kori and 22 in Assaita who are from the Kutubla community. The need is comparatively vast: hundreds of children complete Level 3 each year, and without the opportunity to continue on, will most likely not go on. Again, of the 112 students, only 9 are female. While the community are increasingly persuaded females have the right to education and allow them participate in the community school (some of the program areas now have over 50% female participation), the community leadership does not permit them to leave home and learn elsewhere. This requires an enormous amount of concentrated awareness to work through this as well as the provision of safe places for girls to live and study in towns. APDA is now preparing to

utilize the time before the new school – year opens in early September to mobilize the community toward permitting females to participate in higher learning.

Again, the organization is using the break period when temperatures are at the annual hottest to re-train all program teachers: 179 Afar literacy and numeracy teachers completed 2 months training on July 14<sup>th</sup> and those teaching alternative basic education will come into training at the end of Ramadan on August 12<sup>th</sup>. Training provides the wealth of opportunity when teachers from across the program meet, strengthen ties and involve together in the excitement of establishing education within the Afar society. The program has very few female teachers but necessarily, these are women of extraordinary ability and will to succeed.

APDA is one of three organizations working on a consortium to improve girls' access to education in 8 districts over the next 2 ½ years – APDA is taking responsibility for Mille and 'Adda'ar. By the end of the project, it is aimed that 18,600 girls have benefited.

#### **6. Improving the facility of APDA emergency maternity hospital in Mille**

APDA is about to construct additional buildings including an outpatient clinic to house the twice-weekly antenatal and gynecological clinics that are currently held in a very small examination room; a small administration block including a medical store and a hospital canteen. These facilities will make a huge difference to this now regionally unique health service that is working on issues ranging on treating the girl suffering urinary retention as a result of female genital mutilation (FGM); the all too common prolapsed uterus; genital tract growths and tumors; prevention of mother to child HIV transmission and more as well as life-saving delivery for pregnancies in distress. Too, the hospital will get a new ambulance, the original vehicle having been literally run to the ground in picking up cases from a rough circumference of 300 kilometers that mothers get lifesaving treatment. One of the greatest factors securing this type of referral is the solar torches that recharge a mobile phone – the telephone network reaches much of the region, particularly by climbing to a high – point to get it. The program has distributed these torches to most of trained traditional birth attendants and is looking to increase them to each of the mobile health workers.