

Field Trip Report from Belg Dependant Areas of Northern Ethiopia

Prepared by Ralph Klingele, EUE Field Officer, April 1997

Summary

A short field trip to the *belg* dependant areas of Northern Ethiopia was conducted between the 16 and 25 April 1997 to monitor the current development of the 1997 *belg* season and to update the figures of affected people according to the latest conditions

Information was gathered from the zonal disaster prevention and preparedness departments of North Shewa, Oromiya, South Wollo, North Wollo and South Tigray.

Actual Situation of the Belg Season

In all visited zones, the onset of the *belg* rains has been late by one to one and a half months. Also, the amount of rain and its distribution has not been satisfactory. During the time of the mission, a dry spell of one to two weeks was reported all over the area, with rains resuming again at the beginning of the third dekad of April.

Farmers of some areas in Wollo and North Shewa took advantage of the early January rains to plant some *belg* crops, which have survived the dry period until the late start of rains in March.

While the late onset, uneven distribution and unsatisfactory amount of the *belg* rains is of some concern, it is still too early to predict the possible outcome of the 1997 *belg* season. Much will depend on the future development of rains, which is equally crucial for the planting of long cycle *meher* crops.

Number of People in Need of Relief

Post-harvest assessments have been conducted in all visited zones except North Shewa, resulting in some changes of beneficiary numbers as compared to the DPPC 1997 Appeal. South Tigray has reduced its beneficiary numbers from 20% to 13% of the total population, whereas South Wollo has increased its beneficiary numbers from 8% to 11% as per the post-harvest assessment, and finally to 13% after a special assessment was conducted in three disaster stricken weredas. The other zones kept similar beneficiary numbers as per the DPPC 1997 appeal, with some changes for certain wereda figures in North Wollo.

In South Wollo, alarming early warning data from three weredas (Sayint, Tenta & Mekdela) have led the Zonal Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Committee to

organise a special assessment in early April, which confirmed the deteriorating food security situation in the respective areas. The zone sent a special report to the region to justify additional beneficiary numbers and to emphasise the need for immediate relief interventions for the affected weredas.

North Shewa Zone

Belg rains have started with a delay of around one and a half months. Actually, the plantation for *belg* crops has been completed, but due to the late onset of rains, only about 70% of the prepared land has been planted. The future development of the *belg* season is now mainly important for the long cycle *meher* crops.

Gera Midir/Keya Gebriel, Gishe Rabel and Mama Midir/Lalo are the only three weredas requiring relief assistance in North Shewa. These weredas have faced regular food shortages since the last big drought of 1984/85. Due to the actual problems, farmers are selling animals in large quantities and migrating to neighbouring weredas in search of employment. Relief assistance, planned to commence in April, has not yet started for lack of food supply.

Based on figures received from the three weredas, the zonal Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Department reported that the beneficiary number has risen from 39,000 people (DPPC 1997 Appeal) to 45,510. The zonal Early Warning Committee is organising an assessment to study the prevailing situation and to determine the number of affected people and the relief period.

Wereda	1997 Total Population*	DPPC 1997 Appeal (Dec.96)			
		food assistance		close monitoring	
Weremo Wajitu, Mida	80,653				
Lay Bet/Tach Bet	108,104				
Siyadebirna Wayu Ensaro	133,830				
Moretna Jiru	84,387				
Gera Midir, Keya Gebriel	145,925	14,000	10%	1,000	1%
Gishe Rabel	56,039	9,000	16%	1,000	2%
Antsokya/Gemza	80,208				
Efratana Jile	109,827				
Mama Midir/Lalo	113,767	13,000	11%	1,000	1%
Mafud/Mezezo/Mojana/Warena	148,587				
Kewet	117,626				
Angolela & Tera/ Asagirt	96,288				
Ankober	73,280				
Hagere Mariam/ Kesseem	49,997				
Berehet	33,641				
Minjar/Shenkora	108,620				
Debre Berhan	42,308				
Debre Berhan Zuria	122,575				
Total Zone	1,705,662	36,000	2%	3,000	0.2%
Eritrea Displaced		430			

* Based on 1994 census and readjusted by an annual growth rate of 3%

Oromiya Zone

The *belg* rains have started with one month delay, beginning March. The rains have been sufficient to restore pasture, but too scarce for crop production. Farmers are expected to switch to the long cycle *meher* crops. Accordingly, the Zonal Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Department expects no *belg* production and fears a negative impact on the overall crop production of this year.

The eastern part of the zone, bordering the Afar National Regional State, is mainly inhabited by semi-nomadic agropastoralists. Due to the late onset of rains, they had to move their livestock west into the swampy areas of Chefe valley during the month of February. With the pasture restored, they moved back eastwards again.

The results of the post-harvest assessment have been approved at regional and central levels. The relief period for Chefe/Gola/Dewerehamedo wereda covers the months of May up to July; for Bati wereda the months of April up to September; and for Artuma Jile wereda the months of June up to August.

Wereda	1997 Total Population*	DPPC 1997 Appeal (Dec.96)				Zonal Post-Harvest Assess.	
		food assistance		close monitoring			
Chefe, Gola, Dewerehamedo	179,887	-		3,000	2%	5,852	3%
Bati	158,341	23,200	15%	-		23,259	15%
Artuma Jile	167,652	-		13,000	8%	13,336	8%
Total Zone	505,880	23,200	5%	16,000	3%	42,447	8%
Eritrea Displ.		960		-		960	

* Based on 1994 census and readjusted by an annual growth rate of 3%

South Wollo Zone

The *belg* rains started the 10 of March. Amount and distribution of rains are uneven and part of the newly planted crops are wilting. The fields planted in January have survived and show good performance. All prepared land for *belg* has been planted. If the remaining season performs well, a satisfactory result is expected.

After the post-harvest assessment, the situation in the weredas of Sayint, Tenta and Mekdela has deteriorated. A team sent by the Zonal Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Committee observed the following situation:

- significant decrease in school attendance
- increased cases of kwashiorkor & marasmus
- migration of family heads
- high amount of animals sold in the market, sharp drop of prices
- significant increase in cereal prices

A special report was sent to the region on 8 April to justify additional beneficiary numbers and to emphasise the need for immediate relief interventions. As the

response to the new request might not reach the zone in time, the ZDPPC intends to reshuffle the food allocations from Kutaber and Dessie Zuria to the three weredas for quick response.

The relief period for Tenta, Mekdela and Sayint weredas covers the months of May to September. In addition, relief interventions for Kutaber, Dessie Zuria and Legambo weredas (which were not originally included in the 1996 Appeal) should also start immediately. Relief activities for the remaining weredas cover the period of July to September. Local authorities are concerned that no relief food has yet reached the weredas, as all but the eastern weredas will become either inaccessible or or hardly accessible to trucks during the rainy season.

The post-harvest figures of affected people are considered to be low, but if the total amount of food is made available, people should be able to cover the remaining gap by their own coping strategies.

Wereda	1997 Total Population*	DPPC 1997 Appeal food assistance		Zonal Post-Harvest Assessment		Zonal DPPC Special Assessm.	
Mekdela	116,305	10,200	9%	17,775	15%	27,775	24%
Tenta	150,154	10,100	7%	15,680	10%	25,680	17%
Kutaber	138,564	-		11,660	8%		
Ambassel	121,481	16,300	13%	27,320	23%		
Tehuledere	130,297	-		-			
Werebabu	98,768	23,300	24%	23,280	24%		
Kalu	186,335	37,000	20%	31,765	17%		
Dessie Zuria	220,112	-		10,145	5%		
Legambo	173,509	-		8,625	5%		
Sayint	211,570	10,100	5%	18,560	9%	38,000	18%
Debre Sina	136,729	9,900	7%	16,000	12%		
Kelala	127,861	16,400	13%	18,815	15%		
Jama	117,321	-		-			
Wereilu	131,339	38,500	29%	40,000	31%		
Wegedi	110,935	10,000	9%	16,000	14%		
Kombolcha	43,126	-		-			
Dessie	106,338	-		-			
Total Zone	2,320,744	181,800	8%	255,625	11%	295,065	13%
Eritrea Displ.		21,900		21,900		21,900	

* Based on 1994 census and readjusted by an annual growth rate of 3%

North Wollo Zone

After some showers by the end of the year, the *belg* rains started only at the end of February, with a two weeks dry spell in April. Rains until now are considered to be insufficient in the highlands, the main *belg* producing areas. But with a good performance for the remaining season, no major problems are expected for the *belg* crops and the planting of long cycle *meher* crops.

The relief period in North Wollo is considered from April up to December. Distributions have started with carry-over stocks from 1996, and new food supplies are now arriving in the weredas. Actual stocks were considered to be sufficient for April distribution. Timely distributions have halted starting migration and people now remain in their areas.

The results of the *belg* assessment, which should be available by end of June, should determine to what extent additional relief assistance might be needed for *belg* dependant areas.

Wereda	1997 Total Population*	DPPC 1997 Appeal (Dec.96)				DPPC Zonal Post-Harvest Assessment	
		food assistance		close monitoring			
Bugna	187,221	32,000	17%	7,000	4%	33,709	18%
Kobo	191,837	37,000	19%	-		25,194	13%
Gidan	148,398	7,500	5%	-		19,863	13%
Meket	211,643	19,000	9%	-		17,734	8%
Wadla	116,574	10,000	9%	-		12,911	11%
Delanta Dawnt	158,884	22,000	14%	-		34,716	22%
Guba Lafto	152,054	22,000	15%	5,000	3%	29,447	19%
Habru	183,766	51,000	28%	-		38,329	21%
Weldiya	26,808	-		-		-	
Total Zone	1,377,185	200,500	15%	12,000	1%	211,903	15%
Eritrea Displ.		1,500		-		1,463	

* Based on 1994 census and readjusted by an annual growth rate of 3%

South Tigray Zone

Belg rains started late, during the first dekad of March, with a two weeks dry spell in April. The *belg* situation in general is considered to be unsatisfactory, especially in the lowlands. *Belg* in relevant areas contributes up to 40% of total production in good years.

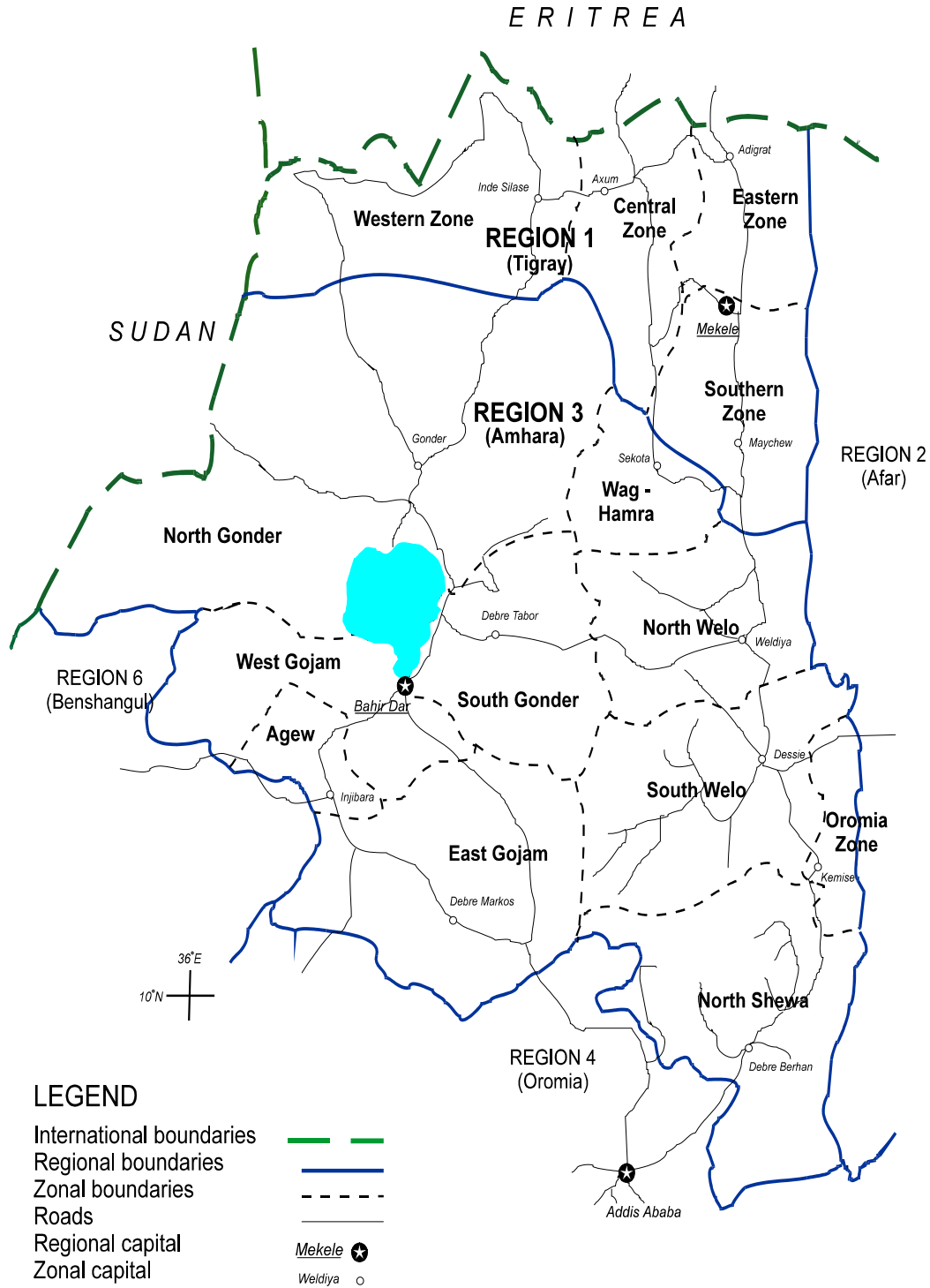
Last year's *meher* season was good as compared to the 1995 production, with the exception of Inderta and Hintalo/Wajirat weredas, where *kremt* rains stopped early, in August. These weredas face a serious situation. Beneficiary numbers could still be reduced considerably, however, as alternative employment is offered for the construction of a dam and the new airport in Mekele.

The relief period is considered from April up to September. Some distributions have started with last year's carry-over stocks, but new food supplies are eagerly awaited.

Wereda	1997 Total Population	DPPC 1997 Appeal (Dec.96)				Zonal Post-Harvest Assessm.	
		food assistance	close monitoring				
Seharti/Samre	96,926	14,800	15%			11,882	12%
Inderta	115,626	91,900	80%			49,530	43%
Hintalo/Wajirat	121,212	32,400	27%			25,844	21%
Alaje	91,453	5,500	6%			4,117	5%
Indamehone	89,229	5,100	6%			4,205	5%
Raya Azebo	95,765	-				-	
Alamata	102,344	5,200	5%			4,205	4%
Ofla	136,027	12,400	9%			9,913	7%
Total Zone	848,582	167,300	20%			109,696	13%

* Based on 1994 census and readjusted by an annual growth rate of 3%

ETHIOPIA Regions 1 and 3 Administrative Map



Prepared by the UN-EUE Information Unit
 31 March 1995, c:\data\graphics\coreldr\wrth_adm.cdr

The designations used do not imply the expression of any opinion of the U.N. regarding the legal status and delimitations of regional and zonal boundaries.