

## Field Trip Report to East and West Hararghe Zones of the Oromiya Region (Region 4)

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### Introduction

A short mission was carried out to East and West Hararghe zones of the Oromiya Region by the United Nations Development Programme Emergencies Unit in early April 1996. The purpose of the trip was to assess the general situation and obtain information regarding the *belg* (short) rains, *meher* (long season) cropping prospects and ongoing activities of the Government and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). The team visited concerned line departments and NGOs operating in both zones.

During the mission various agricultural bureaux, branch offices of the Commission for Disaster Prevention and Preparedness (CDPP) and several NGOs, including CARE and the Hararghe Chatolic Secretariat, were contacted.

### Background

Hararghe is both *belg* and *meher*-dependent. However, the *belg* production is very insignificant in both East and West Hararghe zones. *Belg* contribution to the total annual production is estimated to be 4-7 % in limited highland areas with barley the dominant crop in both zones. *Chat*, which generates additional income for farmers, is a perennial crop in the highland and intermediate zones.

The 1995 *belg* season started and ended on time, with favourable amount and distribution in all *belg* dependent weredas of the two zones. In East Hararghe, the onset of the 1995 main season rains were late by two weeks. Following the late start, erratic distribution and inadequate amount of rainfall towards end of July and beginning of August were reported mainly in the lowland weredas. Other than in timing of the onset, the same climatic conditions were reported in the lowlands of West Hararghe during the main season. This trend did not seem to seriously affect the 1995 crop production performance in the highland and intermediate agro-ecological zones of both East and West Hararghe. The 1995 crop yield proved to be higher than that of the previous year.

The onset of the 1996 *belg* rainfall was reported to be late by two weeks, slowing the planting process in West Hararghe. However, about 50% of the targeted land for *belg* cropping has been planted in East Hararghe. Land preparation for the long cycle crop has been progressing well in both East and West Hararghe.

In East Hararghe, the Central CDPP in their December 1995 provided the figure of 30,000 people in need of assistance (revised to 52,100 in April), whereas the zonal Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Committee reports that 70,190 beneficiaries will require assistance in the 15 weredas of East Hararghe during 1996 (through free food distributions and Employment

Generation Schemes according to a 20-80% quota). It was reported that this high number of beneficiaries is a result of poor 1995 main (*kiremt*) rains and pest infestations (stalkborer), mainly in the lowlands.

Based on their estimate of 70,190 beneficiaries, the zonal DPP planned relief interventions for nine consecutive months until the next *meher* harvest. These activities were to be carried out with food provided by CARE and Harerghe Catholic Secretariat (HCS) in their respective operational areas.

The total food requirement for the beneficiaries as stated by the zonals DPP is 98,089 quintals. CARE has presented its capability to provide 22,697 quintals of food for 34,708 beneficiaries in the six weredas of their catchment area, out of which 20,375 quintals are grain, 815 quintals are oil and 1,507 are supplementary food. HCS have reported that they are able to provide 12,635 quintals of grain, 505 quintals of oil and birr 425,332 for cash for work programmes for 42,120 beneficiaries in the five weredas where they are operational. The above estimate of beneficiaries, which is 76,828, is more than the zonal DPP figures indicated above. It seems that the operations of CARE and HCS have planned based on the number of beneficiaries provided by the Oromiya regional Bureau for DPP (179,010 people).

The 1995 post harvest assessment beneficiary figures in West Harerghe zone also seems unclear. According to the zonal Bureau for DPP, different beneficiary figures were obtained from the zonal Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Committee (DPPC) and the central CDDP regarding the assessment conducted in December 1995. According to the first assessment of the zonal DPPC, it was reported that there are 141,084 beneficiaries in the eight affected weredas of the zone. The December 1995 appeal of the central CDPP indicated 61,000 people will require assistance in the same weredas (this figure was revised to 84,300 in April). On the other hand, the relief plan prepared by the regional Bureau for DPP and sent to the zone shows that planned activities are according to the zonal figure of 141,084.

Programmes that are to be implemented in the anticipated food shortage weredas had not yet commenced at the time of the field visit, as the relief plan prepared by the concerned line departments had not been submitted to the NGOs implementing relief activities. However, regular food for work activities are being carried out by NGOs in different areas of East and West Hararghe zones.

### **Visited governmental organisations in East Harerghe Zone**

#### *Zonal Bureau of Agriculture*

East Harerghe consists of 15 weredas, of which six are known to be *belg*-dependent. *Belg* rains in the zone usually starts towards mid-February, but were late by two weeks this year. Following this late start, rainfall amount and distribution was also erratic and inadequate.

According to the zonal Bureau of Agriculture (BoA), a total of 41,963 hectares was targeted for 1996 *belg* cropping, with a yield expectation of 353,630 quintals. From the targeted land coverage about 50% has been cultivated and 722 hectares had already been planted at the time of the field visit. Though planting was late in comparison to 1995, the targeted land coverage has reportedly increased by 68% this year, and rainfall has so far been relatively favourable for land preparation for the main *meher* season. Also, it was mentioned that a total of 342,262 hectares has been targeted for the *meher* season, with a total yield expectation of 4,958,929 quintals. Land

preparation for the long cycle cropping has also been progressing well. Furthermore, the BoA has indicated that EGS have been planned in five weredas, to be carried with resources made available by CARE and HCS. The activities conducted through EGS include terracing, nursery development, road maintenance and spring development.

### **Bureau for Disaster Prevention and Preparedness**

Based on the finding of the assessment that was conducted by the zonal DPPC in December 1995, the 70,190 beneficiaries needing assistance in 15 weredas according to the 80/20 quota will require a total of 98,089 quintals of food aid. CARE and HCS have reported their ability to provide 35,837 quintals of food in their respective operational areas for a total of 76,828 people. According to obtained information, activities that are to be conducted will start as soon as the relief plan prepared by the zonal DPPC is received by the NGOs. However, regular food for work activities are ongoing in the operational agencies' catchment areas.

### **CARE Dire Dawa**

The agency is currently operating in six weredas of East Harerghe zone. According to information obtained from the agency, the 1995 main season production was favourable in most parts of these weredas. However, a production shortfall (50%) has been established on sorghum and maize crops in 36 lowland kebeles of Gursum, Grawa, Bedeno and Kurfachele weredas, due to erratic and inadequate rainfall distribution and amount.

The Care Ethiopia Food Information System's (CEFIS) December 1995 assessment indicated that a total of 37,250 people in the above mentioned kebeles would need to be assisted through EGS for a period of three months starting from June. The survey by the Save the Children (UK) nutrition surveillance team in February, however, showed that contrary to low cereal price and improved terms of trade, the nutritional status continued to decline in the above mentioned operational areas in the early months of 1996. Based on these findings and further investigations, CARE have now determined that relief programmes should commence earlier (in April) in these areas, as soon as they receive the zonal relief plan. CARE further reported that in addition to EGS carried out in the affected areas regular food for work activities are ongoing in other sites. Activities undertaken through food for work programmes include road construction, school renovation, water schemes, terracing, soil and water conservation and earth dam construction.

From the total requirement of 8,000 quintals for the EGS programme, available stock during the field trip was reported to be 5,000 quintals.

The onset of the *belg* rainfall was two weeks later than normal in these areas, starting the first week of March. The rains were later interrupted towards the end of the month.

### **Hararghe Catholic Secretariat (HCS)**

The Hararghe Catholic Secretariat (HCS) are conducting regular food for work activities in five weredas of East Hararghe zone, but also have a cash for work programme for the reintegration of ex-soldiers. Activities such as soil and water conservation, pond construction and road maintenance are covered under the regular programme, whereas cash for work programmes mainly concentrate on building the assets of the demobilised soldiers by providing loans for oxen, tools and seed purchase.

EGS are to be conducted in the five weredas of the operational area where food shortages are anticipated. These programmes will commence as soon as beneficiary numbers for 1996 are obtained from the zonal DPPC. Regular food for work activities are also ongoing in all weredas. The total food requirement for the planned EGS programme is said to be 60,000 quintals. However, during the field visit the available food stock was reported to be 30,000 quintals. A request has been forwarded to USAID through Catholic Relief Services (CRS) for the remaining 30,000 quintals.

### **Governmental organizations in West Hararghe**

#### *Zonal Bureau of Agriculture*

West Hararghe zone consists of ten weredas, out of which six are reported to be *belg*-dependent. During the short season barley, wheat, haricot beans and oats are the main crops planted in this zone.

The onset of the rains was delayed by three weeks. Following this late start, rainfall distribution and amount has been erratic and inadequate. Also, a ten-day dry spell in early April hampered planting in many *belg* areas. The BoA report that 3,269 hectares have been cultivated and 2,676 hectares planted. Land preparation for long cycle crops has also commenced, with planting taking place in some pocket areas.

Outbreaks of livestock diseases such as anthrax and blackleg were reported to some extent between January and April. However, these outbreaks have reportedly been controlled through immediate treatment and vaccination by the zonal veterinary section.

### **Zonal Bureau for Disaster Prevention and Preparedness**

The 1996 relief plan of the regional Bureau for DPP has been finalised based on the data sent by the zonal DPPC. The relief plan includes the number of beneficiaries, food requirements, type of activities by wereda and cash inputs. Food resources are expected to be provided by CARE, but the source of cash inputs has not been identified. Activities planned through EGS include pond construction, road construction, spring development, hillside terracing and irrigation infrastructure development.

According to the plan, activities were to start at the beginning of February 1996, taking place mainly in Miesso wereda. However, due to the delay in the preparation of the relief plan, CARE could not obtain beneficiary numbers and commence the programme as planned.

As reported by the head of the Bureau for DPP, the total amount of food required for the programme, mainly for EGS, is 135,270 quintals. Of this amount, 31,500 quintals would be allocated to food for work. At the time of the field visit, however, available food stocks in the zone was reported to be only 12,000 quintals. As available stocks will not be able to cover all the affected weredas, the DPPC have decided to start the programme only after priorities have been established. Accordingly, Miesso wereda and the lowland parts of Chiro wereda have been given first priority, whereas programmes in the remaining weredas would commence as soon as resources are available.

## **CARE Asebe Teferi**

The agency is currently operating in eight weredas of West Harerghe zone. During the field visit it was reported that regular food for work activities are ongoing but EGS have not started yet due to a delay in receiving beneficiary figure from weredas where shortages are anticipated. According to CARE Asebe Teferi's crop assessment of December 1995, crop production in the highland and mid-highland areas was generally good, but was poor in the lowland areas of six weredas. Based on the findings of the assessment, about 153,046 people are estimated to require food assistance in 1996.

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