



PASTORAL AREAS ASSESSMENT TEAMS DEBRIEF

Findings from the *meher* pre-harvest emergency needs assessment in pastoralist areas were presented on 22 December. The debriefing focused on Afar and Somali regions, with some highlights on pastoralist area of Borena zone in Oromiya Region. The performance of the *meher* (*karma*) rains for Afar Region is reported to be normal in zones 1 and 3, partial in zones 4 and 5, and very low in zone 2. While onset, distribution and amount of rains were normal to below normal in almost the whole region, the cessation took place three weeks earlier than average in all the woredas of zone 2, part of zone 4, two woredas of zone 1 (Elidar and Dupti) and one woreda of zone 3 (Argoba). Therefore, overall water, pasture and grazing conditions are of concern as they may not be sufficient to replenish the stocks and at the same time address the needs of the coming months. Most woredas of the zones have an estimated one to two months' availability of water and pasture while in zone 2 the situation is already described as critical. It was underlined that this situation is to be correlated to the cumulative effect of the past droughts in the region. In addition, locust infestation had been reported to affect the grazing areas in zone 3 and 5. Subsequently, the food security prospect for next year in Afar is not promising and emergency food assistance could start in the early months of 2006. In Somali Region, the *meher/deyr* rains have been much below normal, with late onset, erratic and inadequate amount and distribution in most of the region (Degehabur, Warder and Korahe zones). The *deyr* rains have failed in Afder, Liben and parts of Gode zones. Consequences are visible especially in these three zones with water shortages and fast depletion of pasture due to insufficient regeneration. Overgrazing is observed and some migrations of livestock have been reported, increasing pressure on pockets areas where pasture is available (Filtu and Hudet woredas in Liben zone). In parallel, confirmed herds migrations from Kenya and Somali land to Afder, Liben and Warder zones constitute aggravating factors in terms of food security. The food security situation is a concern and it has been recommended to ensure a multi-sector approach in order to address the emergency needs. Meanwhile the regional DPPB reported that a multi-sectoral response plan is prepared and will be shared with humanitarian partners in the coming two days. Concerning emergency food response, food assistance has recently been allocated by the DPPA and is currently being dispatched to the affected woredas. For more information contact: wfp.addisababa@wfp.org

UNHCR TO REPATRIATE 14,000 SUDANESE REFUGEES

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that the repatriation of Sudanese refugees from Ethiopia will start as of February 2006, with 14,000 registered volunteers. The return process, which will be carried out both by road and air, follows the signing of a tripartite agreement between Ethiopia, Sudan and UNHCR. Ethiopia currently hosts 73,427 South Sudanese refugees in five camps. In addition to providing the 'repatriation package', UNHCR in collaboration with donors and development agencies will construct health and educational centers to facilitate the reintegration process. The voluntary repatriation exercise is part of the planned return of 500,000 refugees who fled southern Sudan during the two decades of civil war which ended following the signing of a Comprehensive Peace Agreement in January 2005. According to UNHCR, the entire project of repatriating all Sudanese refugees from seven African countries, including Ethiopia, is believed to take two to three years and a total budget of US \$60 million. Meanwhile, as per the new "cluster" of responsibilities, UNHCR may begin to play a role related to conflict induced IDPs for protection and coordination of response in 2006. However, Ethiopia is not one of the initial countries where UNHCR is piloting such support. Contact: GEGZIABK@unhcr.org

BIRDS TEST NEGATIVE FOR AVIAN FLU

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MOARD) reported the results of tests of birds that were suspected of having contracted avian flu in Ethiopia came out to be negative. The scientists that came from Egypt to carry out the tests revealed that the birds had died from Newcastle disease, which according to the United States Department of Agriculture is an infectious poultry disease in the world. However, MORAD reported that due to the potential threat, the ban on imports of all poultry products from high risk areas remains in place. The tests were carried out on dead and live birds and chickens from different parts of the country including Addis Ababa, Afar, Somali and Oromiya regions. In Somali Region, the dead birds, all non-migratory local pigeons, were discovered around drinking wells in Degehabur in late November. Meanwhile, MOARD has set up bird flu monitoring stations to keep track of any suspected cases. It also launched a public education programme to raise awareness among the society. In addition, the regional states in East and Horn of Africa are meeting this week to coordinate monitoring and develop a response. Ethiopia is one of the countries along the rift valley that is at greatest risk of avian flu. For more information contact: raey_mulu@yahoo.com

UNICEF APPEALS TO DONORS

UNICEF in its last humanitarian update of the year appealed to major donors to fill a US\$ 15.7 million gap in funding. The funds will be used to address some of the critical child protection issues linked to the recent civil unrest and to improve access to clean water in drought affected areas particularly in Somali Region. Response to measles outbreak in Afar Region and support to outreach feeding centres for 8,000 severely malnourished children are also other crucial areas to be addressed. Almost a year following the Joint Humanitarian Appeal, UNICEF's 2005 emergency campaign is still 63 percent short. For further information contact: mapped@unicef.org

NORMAL NUTRITIONAL CONDITION IN DAMOT WOYDE WOREDAS, SNNPR

Concern conducted a nutritional survey in Damot Woyde woreda, Wolayita zone, SNNPR from 26-30 November and reports 4% GAM and 0.3% SAM with 0.58/10,000/day U5MR. This normal nutrition condition is attributed to the combined effects of good rainfall, satisfactory harvests and effective health and food security intervention. The survey recommends for a nutritional survey to be conducted in six months to monitor the situation and food security prior to the *belg* harvest season. For more information contact: Ethiopia.cd@concern.net