



SERIOUS HUMANITARIAN CONCERNS IN AFAR REGION

The situation in Afar continues to deteriorate according to NGOs and UN agencies in the region. The regional government has declared an emergency in the region and reported that the beneficiary numbers have increased from 500,000 to 600,000. The number of people receiving initial food aid is about 200,000 while the actual figure requiring relief food assistance is 560,000, according to regional authorities which means about 300,000 additional people require immediate relief food and non-food assistance. The Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission says the January allocation of 6000 MT has begun to be dispatched to the region. The regional government has requested assistance for 50,000 people displaced from zones 1, 4 and 5 for supplementary foods and clothing. The NGO Afar Pastoralist Development Association (APDA) which has recently completed an assessment in Teeru woreda warns of pending human starvation and massive livestock deaths from disease. It estimates at least 20,000 people are at critical risk in the woreda. Pastoralist families who migrated to the highland areas of Amhara Region in search of pasture remain there creating possible tensions with local communities. A plan of action is being finalised by the regional government. Water tankering operations are underway in the most affected areas but additional tankers are needed until the "sugum" rains commence in March. A regional crisis management committee meeting is scheduled for the 25 January in Samera. For more information contact: ocha-eth@un.org

BENEFICIARY NUMBERS TO RISE

WFP reports that the monthly number of beneficiaries in need of emergency food assistance will rise from 2.4 million in January to 2.9 million in March; this number includes the safety net beneficiaries for Afar and Somali Regions. The number of beneficiaries is expected to reach a peak in May and June 2005, when it is estimated that as many as 3.2 million people will be in need of emergency assistance. In addition chronically food insecure people will be covered by the Government's Productive Safety Net Programme, through either cash or food transfers. WFP aims to assist approximately 2 million of these chronically food insecure people through recovery activities. For more information: wfp.addisababa@wfp.org

MSF-SWITZERLAND CONDUCTS A RAPID ASSESMENT IN SOUTH OMO REGION

MSF-Switzerland conducted a rapid assessment in South Omo Region from 15-22 December 2004. The assessment was done in Jinka, Kuraz, Hamer and Salamago woredas to assess food security and reported cases of Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM). According to the findings some of the woredas are food insecure and have limited pasture. Despite this there was no large increase in cattle death and there are extensive local coping mechanisms in place. In addition the Productive Safety Net Programme will provide the highly affected populations access to food relief. Mortality and SAM are low, below emergency thresholds. For more information contact: msfch@telecom.net.et

CRS CONDUCTS NUTRITIONAL SURVEY IN TIGRAY ZONE

Catholic Relief Service (CRS) in collaboration with the Ethiopian Catholic Church Mekelle office conducted nutritional survey in Alamata Woreda of Tigray Region from 27 December 2004 to 6 January 2005. According to the team the situation is poor due to crop failure and rise in price of cereals at this time of the year, which was normally food surplus season. The price for cattle has gone down and water supply is unsafe. Severe cases of malnutrition are observed in most of the visited woredas. The team strongly recommends that general food distribution should be continued until the situation improves and close monitoring of nutritional status of children should be strengthened by the woreda health office. For more information contact: mekdimen@crsethiopia.org

ETHIOPIA RECEIVES IMMUNIZATION AWARD FROM AFRICAN TASK FORCE

Ethiopia has received an award for its successful implementation in immunisation of preventable diseases in 2004. The immunisation coverage has increased by 13% in 2004 while comparing with the previous year. The Ministry of Health acknowledges the technical and financial assistance of WHO and UNICEF in its success. The Ministry has also declared that the award will encourage the Ministry and its partners to further strengthen their collaborative efforts in the fight against preventable diseases. For more information contact: solomonf@et.afro.who.int

ASSISTANCE FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A COMMON MARKET FOR BASIC FOOD PRODUCTS

A technical cooperation project that aims to give assistance for the establishment of a common market for basic food products has been launched by the African Union in collaboration with FAO to improve the deteriorating performance of agriculture in Africa. Despite the importance of agriculture in the African economy, trade in agricultural products amongst the African countries has remained at a relatively low level. As a result FAO was requested by the African Union to provide technical assistance to implement a project which addresses this problem. FAO will provide US\$ 333,000 for the project which is expected to last for 18 months. For more information contact: fao-ethiopia@fao.org