

# AFAR PASTORALIST DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION QAFAR DACARSITTOH DADALIH EGLA

## Our greetings for Christmas and the New Year – for standing us through a very dark year, thank you

December 18<sup>th</sup> 2021

### 1. 2021, perhaps the toughest year for Afar people on record:

As time inevitably takes us into another year, we stand here amazed that you are all there with us: for you the horror unfolding that Ethiopia may break, for us the daily pain the country is enduring to reach out to nationhood. Indeed, the conflict with Tigray in northern Ethiopia is forcing us to evolve through change: the beleaguered confusion of why the Tigray forces would see the need to utterly obliterate the means of ‘normality’ – schools, health service, protected water from water schemes, markets – all shattered/ rendered dysfunctional as they stamped out their trail of invading conflict while a new flower of Ethiopian unity is appearing as people across the world including those here in Ethiopia join hands to repair, comfort and treat. For this, APDA is utterly grateful and uplifted, because of your support feeling strong to go on and see the recovery and the healing the people now yearn for.

While we firmly say we would not want to see the horrors of 2021 again, peace is still illusive; the TPLF forces are actually out of Afar Region as of December 3<sup>rd</sup> but each day brings news of theirs and their counterparts, the Oromo forces’ efforts to come back in. Along the 2,000 – odd long border with both Tigray and Amhara Region, Afar people cannot return home as sounds of war continue and for some 3 to 4 thousand families, the home was burnt or ripped apart anyway. Almost 700,000 Afar people endured displacement from their normal habitat, some remaining as much as 4 and 5 months without returning. Food insecurity engulfed the entire Region, markets totally disrupted and unable to get supplies; extortion – levels of inflation and a beleaguered market for the animals. All in all, the task ahead is daunting: living on in an atmosphere of uncertainty to daily fighting and the tremendous task needed to rebuild back to pre-conflict stability.

Actually, a STOP PRESS: TPLF came in as of last night into ‘Aba’ala town, the Afar town junction to the road leading from Afar Region into Mekele, the Tigray capital. Afar forces fought back bitterly and as of this afternoon, they are out of the town but around 15,000 are displaced running around 35 kilometers into Erebti; the mosque, police station and health center are destroyed – this is news rung in from Afdeera as contact is down to ‘Aba’ala – very concerned that they may have destroyed the zonal hospital there...



*Government map of Afar Region showing Tigray/ Afar conflict – affected areas in blue – actually Barhale in the north should be shaded. The affected areas also coincide with where the most severe malnutrition is. Again the south east of the Region is engulfed in the affects of the Issa/ Afar conflict also causing malnutrition.*

### 2. What APDA is doing and done responding to conflict affected people with your generous assistance

Firstly, being so related to the community, APDA was first on the scene in all incidents of the conflict disrupting the community and has continued to follow closely. APDA’s backbone for this is the health workers and the women extension workers living in the communities who in several cases have suffered themselves – homes burnt and looted, relatives dead and wounded. APDA now

continues to work on getting daily information from its members on the ground and to mobilize these members that they walk through the displaced communities working to detect diseases, provide immediate treatment, support with awareness, offer protection and most importantly, identify the most needy. This then means APDA's efforts extend into rural areas where displaced people are behind fighting lines and away from transport and communication networks.

Assistance is and has been as follows:

- a) Water trucking/ borehole generator support in displaced camps and communities such those in Samara, Logya, Dubte where loss of electric power has meant no water supply for the past 7 weeks. Truck numbers have varied according to the need. Currently 17 trucks from Barahale to Sifra are being deployed.
- b) Hygiene and sanitation support through NFIs (jerricans, soap, where turbid water is being drunk, water PUR, buckets) throughout the displaced communities utilizing a total team of 95 mobile health workers
- c) Two significant water scheme repairs in northern Afar and latrine repairs where people are gathered as displaced. The plan now is for 4 temporary latrine blocks for 70,000 – odd people displaced in Sifra
- d) Special alert care for pregnant displaced mothers through continual nutrition screening among displaced people, particularly supporting pregnant and breast-feeding mothers with supplementary food. Very sadly, 6 mothers reportedly died – 4 in labor and 2 at term in Sifra, health workers unable to break through the TPLF fighting lines to get to them. Barbara May Maternity Hospital ambulance has averaged 4 to 5 calls daily bringing in both desperately ill delivering mothers as well as war – injured. All surrounding hospitals are now unable to assist with obstetrics due to the pressure of war injured including Dubte and Bati hospital, the latter TPLF damaged. Yesterday, there were 26 maternal cases in the hospital and 6 wounded men (the hospital has 35 beds).
- e) Child vaccination has begun in both Magaale and Afdeera where lack of food brought these two districts into famine conditions leading to the outbreak of measles and whooping cough – to date, 9 children have died in the last months due to these preventable diseases. The organization plans to vaccinate in another 2 such – affected districts, each district having four campaigns 1 month apart providing a total of 10 different antigens from diseases.
- f) Equipment to re-furbish Kalwaan district hospital is being bought that the hospital is again able to serve upwards of 350,000 people in emergency needs, the hospital having been totally disabled from TPLF looting and destroying all the most essential material in October 2021.
- g) Supporting displaced people to re-build their traditional houses through supplying one home with 6 dried – palm leaf mats. To date, 630 homes have been supported but all in all, APDA estimates there are upwards of 4,500 homes that TPLF either burnt or deliberately ripped apart. Mat support has been found for a further 52 households from literally brotherly Ethiopians and another 400 households will be supported.
- h) Supplying food to the most needy. This is quite a dilemma as there is an absolute food shortage throughout the conflict – affected areas. APDA has however understood there are those in dire need who literally cannot help themselves since they have no assets (either from before or lost in the conflict) and those who do have goats for sale or even money but there is no food on the local market and when it comes is astronomically over-priced. Therefore APDA is giving both direct assistance to the extremely poor as well as conflict – widows and then supporting local cooperatives to kick-start a food market that people can have food at a reasonable price. For the latter strategy, APDA has 2 projects in the planning stage while 7,000 kilograms of wheat flour will go out today as collected by Ethiopian Diaspora and local communities; another support for 687 people is also ready to move and again for 2,400 households. All these assistances support for a limited 30 days period.
- i) Most importantly but hardly considered, emergency support for school children is being mobilized in 2 districts. Very few of the government schools are functioning but APDA has deliberately kept its particular strategy of mobile schools for first- level learners going. Again, support for 10 sites supporting informal learning for displaced children and youth is underway.
- j) Providing emergency veterinary service in areas where high malnutrition already exists and people are endangered of losing their remaining herd – asset. This is currently in Bidu and Eli Da'ar on the Eritrean

border but there are plans to expand.

Please turn to our webpage to see pictures justifying and showing this amazing work that you and your organizations have enabled. To return to this message's opening statement, APDA is buoyed along with the stunning reality that the WORLD DOES CARE.. Ethiopians internationally as well as in Ethiopia are fully coming on side to partner us in assisting.

### **3. Our plans now with your help**

The conflict has taught us much: perhaps Afar Region was the most dependent in the country not having its own market or significant food production being almost wholly herd – dependent. Now that the umbilical cord that joined Afar Region to Tigray is cut and mother Tigray has declared she is NOT going to breast-feed baby Afar, Afar is now growing up with a start: Afar are realizing they must diversify and work with the market, that dependency has crippled the society in finding its own development.

With this perspective in mind, APDA and the community are eager to work for recovery, even as the noise of guns can be heard..

#### Markets:

In 2021 APDA has been supported to inject income generating skills and support into the people of Konnaba and Magaale putting 300 poor/ displaced women into income generation. Already, the reverse of the market is visible: Afar have become/ are becoming the suppliers of food/ basic commodities for their own community as well as for Tigrayans – Tigray women in particular are stealing into Afar Region in the dead of night to buy from Afar women. Still actual perishable food production is low but there are plans to increase this in Konnaba and Dallol, the most northern district that produce is available to the northern Afar who are currently enduring the insatiable pain of child – malnutrition. It is hoped this will reverse with market support alongside immediate treatment and care.

Afar Region has 3 major markets: Assaita on the eastern border close to Djibouti, Yallo adjacent to southern Tigray and Sifra. With the total downfall of Yallo and Sifra from where upwards of 35,000 goats were marketed into Tigray and northern Amhara Regions weekly, the entire Region has slumped into market – driven poverty that is accelerating food insecurity.

APDA now has agreed support to work to revive Yallo market and is hopeful to repeat this in Sifra through supporting cooperatives to bring in supplies and buy up goats; support petty trade through microfinance (chiefly female – implemented) and advocacy in the Region to open market links with Djibouti and even Eritrea. Local town markets must also be networked in that those able can continue to support their household rather than being food – relief dependent.

#### Food production:

Already, with highly successful horticultural community plots along the Mille River, from the channels of the Awash River in Garani and planned for in Dallol and Konnaba, Afar pastoralists are eagerly adding food – crop growing to their livelihood. Afar families are learning to eat spinach and Afar – grown vegetables are slowly appearing on a once all – highland vegetable market. This is achieving food diversity as well as income generation toward community economy revival. More pictures on the webpage of fast – growing pawpaw, bananas, avocado and the like. Even communities like Geega who have never cultivated and hardly eaten an onion now have boreholes in 2 sites that will produce market gardening. This is a real change for the Afar. The TPLF – damaged irrigation from the Mille River in Uwwa that had function for only 12 months will be repaired.

#### Education crisis:

With the conflict, learning is not simply happening in so many areas and in others hardly. Anyway, with education least funded in the Region and the actual system of bringing learning to an Afar child just not on an appropriate, useable course, APDA needs to put more effort into supporting a change at the Regional level to revive teacher – interest as well as having a curriculum that herding children can relate to. This is a top – priority WISH for APDA realizing the system is failing the children, the youth and then the fulfillment of human capacity.

Gaps and needs in immediate assistance:

With the contributions APDA now has, it is underway with a plan to fill gaps other agencies and NGOs are not filling in food, shelter, health and WASH needs. This gives APDA the upper hand of flexibility to immediately act to avert further suffering. More blankets, cooking pots, shelter mats, sleeping mats, soap, emergency school stationery, food, supplementary food is being purchased. This then, with the Regional government knowledge, will be sent out to any upcoming disaster but also to the current needy area gaps. APDA will account for this on its social media platform as well as directly to local media and the government.

With those now waning under livelihood deprivation having had their herd decimated during fighting and to feed thousands of TPLF soldiers need the support of re-stocking.

Having written perhaps in overwhelming detail, APDA brings this message to a conclusion to again thank each and every person who has walked/ is walking this difficult and unknown path with us – Afar need to go on to self-sufficient development and now we need to disentangle ourselves from the catastrophe of loss and hurtful harm. While it may have been Corona that stopped you from visiting us, we are most certainly looking forward to peace that we can host you in 2022!! Please come and please keep enquiring of us!!