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Food Aid Use and Impact Survey

The survey was carried out by WFP, in consultation with the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (DPPC), in six regions (Afar, Amhara, Oromia, SNNPR, Somali and Tigray). ►

Food Security in Pastoralist Areas



Photo: PCI/OCHA

A lively discussion on food security in pastoralist areas was prompted by the delivery on Monday 16th February of a presentation by the eminent food security specialist Dr Stephen Devereux. The event presented the results from a preliminary enquiry and launched a more comprehensive study into food security issues in Somali Region, jointly owned by the Ministry of Federal Affairs, Somali National Regional State and UNOCHA/Pastoralist Communication Initiative. Dr Devereux's presentation drew a response from Ato Luelseged Ageze, the head of the Pastoralist Development Department in the Ministry of Federal Affairs.

Dr Devereux's address focused on Somali region, and addressed themes including the paradox of relative wealth and absolute vulnerability, the dangers of food aid dependency and gender dimensions of vulnerability. He reviewed pastoralism and indeed smallholder agriculture in Ethiopia, and argued that alternative visions are needed.

Paradox of Wealth and Vulnerability

In his address, Dr Devereux noted that, far from its image as an economic wasteland, Somali region is actually the least poor of Ethiopia's rural regions. Somali region, he said, has only 38% headcount poverty compared to Afar's 56% and 61% in Tigray. In terms of food consumption too, Somali region emerges top. Dr Devereux said that by this measure it was arguable that Somali region is the only food secure region in the country.

Despite this apparent wealth, food security outcomes indicators such as child stunting and wasting show Somali region faring less well. 48% of Somali children are stunted. How, Dr Devereux asked, could Somali region be so wealthy and at the same time so clearly vulnerable to famine? The key to the emergence of the 2000 famine was, he said, a combination of Lack of market access, (particularly due to the 1998 Gulf livestock ban), drought and restrictions of movements caused by conflicts over land.

NEWS ►

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Update on Relief Food Pipeline: Unresourced Amount = 500,000 Tonnes

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UNDAC Induction Course to be Provided for 30 Disaster Managers from Various Parts of Africa

Mr. Gerhard Putman-Cramer, along with Pamela Jennings of the OCHA Emergency Services Branch (EBS) were in Addis Ababa from 16-19 February to establish an UNDAC (United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination) team in Africa with an UNDAC induction course for 30 disaster managers from various parts of Africa. ►

Food Aid Dependence

A sensible and pragmatic strategy to address these vulnerabilities must include better drought risk management, effective conflict resolution mechanisms, and support for livestock marketing. Instead, Dr Devereux said, Somali region has had thousands of tonnes of food aid every year since the famine.

The dangers of food aid dependence are well established. Foreign wheat distorts local markets and, as local farmers can't compete against free food, many may give up growing wheat altogether as Dr Devereux found has happened in Jijiga plains. Something has to be done before Somali Region becomes part of the chronic food aid dependency that affects other parts of Ethiopia.

But is Food Security Through Farming Viable?

It is usual in Ethiopia to assume that pastoralism is unviable and that the alternative is small-scale agriculture. Dr Devereux challenged this view, arguing that pastoralism, a way of life in the Horn of Africa for thousands of years, has not suddenly become unviable for all. Yet this is a view he said was widespread among technical experts and policymakers. Drought and disaster, he said, should be seen as part of the system, and pastoralism is well adapted. Dr Devereux argued that the 2000 famine was primarily a markets issue, and said that pastoralists were far from being cut-off nomads. He suggested that pastoralism could continue to be viable if attention is paid to improved livestock marketing, conflict management and livelihood diversification. He then turned the question around – is agriculture unviable in Ethiopia? Possibly, yes.

Most of Ethiopia's 4-5m chronically food insecure people since the late 1990s have been highlanders. Dr Devereux presented some alarming data from Wollo which showed the numbers of sustainable households plummeting and vulnerable households rising alarmingly to form the majority since last year. He said that achieving food security through smallholder farming in the highlands looked very challenging indeed.

A Virtuous Cycle

Dr Devereux then advocated for a livelihoods approach to food security, to take us, he said, beyond environmental determinism. Livelihoods could be protected through safety nets and risk management, improved through better livestock marketing, and finally transformed through education and diversification.

As an example of this 'virtuous cycle,' Dr Devereux suggested a school feeding scheme safety net. When a drought strikes, parents will not need to withdraw their daughter from school to fetch water and look for food, and the child will grow up literate and enjoy livelihood options outside agriculture.

Tough Questions for the Future

There were questions on the Ethiopian government's Development Policy for Pastoralists, which advocates for turning pastoralists into agro-pastoralists or settled farmers through sedentarisation. Apart from articulating the negative views of farming among many pastoralists, Dr Devereux said that Ethiopia's high population growth rate would cancel out attempts to transfer Somali pastoralists to the riverbanks. He also challenged the view that smallholder agriculture is the solution to Ethiopia's food security problem.

Instead Dr Devereux suggested investment in alternative employment opportunities for large numbers of Ethiopians. Urbanisation, he said, didn't have to mean millions of beggars descending on Addis Ababa. Instead, small rural towns should be established, offering employment, markets, services and information.

Water harvesting, if properly done, helps bridge the dry times between the rainy season to the benefit of human and livestock consumption and for agricultural and garden production through irrigation.

This sort of investment would, he said, generate real economic growth throughout rural Ethiopia.

Dr Devereux left the audience with a final thought: famines don't happen in towns and cities except during wartime. Urbanisation, he said, is a great famine prevention strategy.

Policy Explained

For the government, the head of the Pastoralist Development Department in the Ministry of Federal Affairs, Ato Luelseged Ageze, agreed that marketing and urbanisation are important solutions, but also mentioned livestock development and sedentarisation, emphasising that the settlement of pastoralists was to be purely voluntary. Indeed in Somali region, he said, most 'pastoralists' are not really mobile anyway, and it would be better to recognise them as agro-pastoralists.

Ethiopians and the donor communities would need to have patience, Ato Luelseged said, before they could see the success of the government's Development Policy for Pastoralists. The pastoralists themselves, he said, wanted the policy to have been implemented yesterday.

With over 20 years experience in food security, poverty and rural development, and the author of books on the field, Dr Devereux is currently conducting a research program in Somali region on food security issues in lowland pastoralist areas of Ethiopia. This research study has been jointly commissioned by the Ministry of Federal Affairs Pastoralist Development Department and OCHA/PCI. The next phase is due to start in April.

For the full text of Dr Devereux's presentation, please contact PCI through Meron on myohannes@un.org.

Food Aid Use and Impact Survey

A draft version of the WFP Food Aid Use and Impact Survey, made during September and October 2003, is now circulating to regional government offices for their comments, and will be released following this process. The survey was carried out by WFP, in consultation with the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (DPPC), in six regions (Afar, Amhara, Oromia, SNNPR, Somali and Tigray). The survey covered mainly WFP food aid distributed through DPPC between January and August 2003, and interviews were conducted with both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries.

The objective of the Food Aid Use and Impact Survey is to measure the performance of the WFP Emergency Operation against its stated objectives. In particular, it provides specific measures of household welfare – poverty measures, coping strategies, expenditure analysis, asset holdings; food aid related issues - community perceptions of distribution, target efficiency, opportunity costs of food aid distribution, food aid utilization; and the impact of food aid distribution on local markets.

Data was collected by about 120 WFP field monitors and temporary staff. A total of 32 zones, 83 woredas, 185 PAs and 374 villages were covered under this survey. Household Interviews were conducted with 3,740 households, comprising a total of 21,880 individuals, of whom 49% were females and 51% males. This suggests an average

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family size of 5.8. The proportion of children under-five in the surveyed areas was 15.5%. On average, a woman headed 16.5% of the households. Over 53% of the respondents to the household questionnaire were females.

A large majority of the households (82%) reported having received food aid (general ration) between January and August 2003. Beneficiary families have on average received food aid five times during the eight month period (against an average of six planned monthly distributions), suggesting a relatively high coverage of food aid and a regular distribution schedule. Reports from the beneficiaries indicated that 94% of the commodities supplied were cereals; less than the planned supplementary commodities were received due to pipeline breaks for oil and pulses.

Households assisted during the period January-August 2003 received 51% of the food aid through free distributions and 49% through the Employment Generation Scheme (EGS). Water harvesting (24%), road construction or maintenance (22%), soil/ bund construction or maintenance (17%) and public building construction or maintenance (15%) were among the most frequent EGS activities.

The average general ration received during the period January-August 2003 was reported to be 9.5 kg of cereal per person per month, when the official ration size was 12.5 kg in January-July and 15 kg in August. The lower average ration of 9.5 kg was mainly the result of family rations being shared among family members or with other families, or distributions made within a community to a larger number of people than the original assessed number. In addition, families eligible for supplementary food reported to collect 2.8 kg of oil per household per month and 11.6 kg of blended food or pulses per household per month (planned ration was 0.75 kg oil per person per month and 4.5 kg blended food or pulses per person per month). It also appears that the size of the family significantly affected the quantity of food received. The family ration being in some occasions limited to a maximum of four people per household, the larger households (with five or more members) have been consequently disadvantaged.

Although food aid is usually collected at the distribution site by men, findings showed that women are responsible for deciding of the utilization of food aid and the repartition of its benefits among the family members in almost the three-quarters of the beneficiary households. It is planned that elements of the survey methodology be mainstreamed into routine WFP monitoring as a way to help to track changes in food insecurity over a period of time and contribute to WFP efforts to institutionalize the Result Based Management methodology.

NEWS

Mr. Jean Ziegler, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food on Visit to Ethiopia

Mr. Jean Ziegler, Special Rapporteur of the UN human rights commission on the right to food, who is undertaking a country mission to Ethiopia from 17 to 28 February 2004, briefed SDMT members on the purpose of the mission which include: a) analyze the status of the realization of the right to food, including the availability of and access to food, infant and child malnutrition and other issues and situations holding implications for the realization of this right; b) Develop practical recommendations for the realization of the right to food, through consultation with the Government and other actors including civil society and the international community;

Although food aid is usually collected at the distribution site by men, findings showed that women are responsible for deciding of the utilization of food aid and the repartition of its benefits among the family members in almost the three-quarters of the beneficiary households.

c) Report the findings of the mission to the Commission on Human Rights. The Special Rapporteur will be presenting his preliminary findings of the mission in his oral presentation to the Commission on Human Rights in April 2004. The full report of the mission containing the findings and recommendations will be finalized during 2004 and submitted to the Commission. The Special Rapporteur will have discussions with Government officials, UN agencies and international organizations, civil society and non-governmental organizations, bilateral donor agencies, and development, research partners and will travel to SNNP and Tigray regions.

UNDAC Induction Course to be Provided for 30 Disaster Managers from Various Parts of Africa

Mr. Gerhard Putman-Cramer, along with Pamela Jennings of the OCHA Emergency Services Branch (ESB) were in Addis Ababa from 16-19 February to establish an UNDAC (United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination) team in Africa with an UNDAC induction course for 30 disaster managers from various parts of Africa. The main objective is to have teams for deployment of natural and quick onset disasters on the African continent. The training session is scheduled to take place, the first time in Africa, in Addis Ababa in November 2004. The mission also wants to identify emergency managers and develop stand by arrangements for deployment for 3 - 6 months for complex emergency coordination support. The team met with ERCS, DPPC, SC UK, Netherlands embassy, Norwegian embassy, UNCT and OCHA Ethiopia.

Update on Relief Food Pipeline: Unresourced Amount = 500,000 Tonnes

Though overall humanitarian needs for 2004 are reduced significantly from 2003, the population in need of food assistance is 3.6 million in February, 4.7 million in March and peaks at around 7 million in April, May, and June. Food requirements in the "2004 Joint Government and Humanitarian Partners' Appeal" are 980,000 tonnes. This includes 761,000 tonnes of cereals, 105,000 tonnes of fortified blended food, 76,000 tonnes of pulses, 23,000 tonnes of vegetable oil and 1,300 tonnes of iodized salt. It also includes 14,000 tonnes of commodities for emergency school feeding. Carryover stocks from 2003 including 2004 confirmed contributions currently total 476,000 tonnes including 156,200 mt from the USA; these can cover relief food requirements through to the end of May. The unresourced food requirement for 2004 stands at 504,000 tonnes. WFP intends to cover part (up to 40 percent) of the overall relief food requirements, with the remainder met from bilateral donations to the Government's Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (DPPC) or to NGOs.

New Contributions Announced at DPPC Donor Meeting 13 February

Apart from the contribution of 156,200 tonnes (valued at US\$62 million) of food aid to NGOs (Joint Emergency Operation) announced by USAID (see above), the government of the UK announced US\$9 million for emergency cash-for-work and local purchase of emergency food aid, details of which are to be confirmed. Regarding non food requirements, the Government of USA and UK respectively announced contributions of US\$6 million and US\$9 million. Canada had earlier confirmed a contribution of 5,600 tonnes (US\$2.4 million) for 2004 emergency food needs to WFP.

Cereal Availability Study - 300,000 - 350,000 Tonnes Available for Local Food Aid Purchase

A joint European Commission/Swedish International Development Agency/World Food Programme "Cereal Availability Study" has

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estimated the amount of maize, wheat and sorghum available for local purchase for humanitarian operations in 2004 between 300,000 - 350,000 tonnes. With outstanding 2004 cereal requirements currently over 400,000 tonnes, there is scope for local purchases to cover part of this shortfall. Pulses and famix (fortified blended food) can also be bought in substantial quantities in Ethiopia. If procurement is effected (or announced) in the early months of the year, this is expected to help to stabilize commodity prices and benefit local farmers.

FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment

Mission

An FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission visited Ethiopia from 5 November to 6 December 2003. Findings are as follows: The overall agricultural performance in Ethiopia in 2003 was much better than last year, primarily as the result of favourable weather conditions that began with a good belg season throughout the country and culminated in rains that continued until October in many places. More specifically, after a good belg harvest of some 500 000 tonnes of cereal and pulses, an early start to the meher season allowed timely land-preparation routines, promoted the sowing of heavier-yielding, late maturing maize and sorghum crops in favour of short-cycle crops, encouraged early sowing of the short cycle cereals and pulses and encouraged farmers to invest in inputs that resulted in increases in improved seed and fertilizer use by about 600 percent and 17 percent, respectively. In 46 of the 59 zones and special woredas visited by the Mission this year, evenly distributed rainfall during the season eliminated any necessity for replanting, positively affected vegetative growth, encouraged the use of top-dressing and supported seed-set and grain-fill. Unfortunately, the demand for fertilizers, as evidenced by the emergence of a parallel market with prices at double the official rates, rapidly depleted supply in the major surplus producing areas, limiting the advantages gained. Other staple and cash crops such as enset, sweet potatoes, coffee, cotton and chat are noted to have performed as expected. Cereal and pulse production this season was comparatively pest and disease free. Much better rainfall in the central highlands and in the northeastern pastoral areas resulted in increased availability of forage and water, which improved the condition of the livestock condition and decreased mortality rates of young stock, making early, unseasonable migration of herds and flocks unnecessary. Pastoral areas in Somali did not share similar benefits and are still undergoing water and forage shortages with associated difficulties. Following the poor harvest in 2002/03, grain prices rose sharply and have remained high compared to the same period last year owing to a reduced supply on the market. However, with prospects of a good crop this year, prices are expected to decline when the full harvest reaches the market. Overall, the Mission estimates total pulse and cereal production at about 13.3 million tonnes, comprising 13.05 million tonnes from the meher harvest and a predicted 300 000 tonnes from the belg harvest in 2004. At this level, cereal and pulse production is about 11 percent above the average for the past five years. As a result, cereal imports in 2004 are estimated at about 210 000 tonnes, with commercial imports forecast at 50 000 tonnes and food aid in pipeline and pledges currently amounting to 160 000 tonnes. For 2004, it has been estimated that 7.2 million people will require assistance to meet their minimum food requirements; while 2.2 million more will require close monitoring (i.e. they do not need immediate food assistance, but have been identified during the assessments as under stress and warranting close monitoring). Full document is accessed at <http://www.fao.org/docrep/006/J1341e/J1341e00.htm>

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SC/US Provides Community-based Therapeutic Care in Sidama

Save the Children US (SC/US) provides Community-based Therapeutic Care (CTC) to managing severe and moderate malnutrition in three districts of SNNP, Sidama Zone since September 2003. In December an anthropology survey was conducted to understand the acceptability of the CTC program by the population and to improve coverage. The survey revealed that no systematic barriers to the program existed. In addition, the community showed a remarkable consistency of understanding the types of malnutrition and which individuals needed to be assisted. Traditionally, kwashiorkor is recognized as a food issue, marasmus is less so. Health seeking behaviors involve primarily local healers providing naturalistic treatments. Some of these local treatments include harmful practices: daily inducement of vomiting in wasted children, food restrictions in swollen children, and withholding fluids in children with diarrhea. Inappropriate caring behaviors for infants are persistent: colostrum replaced by plant saps, late introduction of weaning, un-adapted weaning foods and diet – exclusively based on Enset and Corn. Home visits by the survey team indicated that both supplementary and therapeutic foods were being shared, especially the CSB. The findings of the survey are useful in developing the health education and sensitization programs at all levels from caretakers to traditional healers and community workers. In January 2004, a coverage survey was conducted, using the centric systematic area sampling (CSAS) approach, to assess CTC program coverage in two districts -Outpatient Therapeutic Program (OTP) and Supplementary Feeding Program (SFP). The coverage results were excellent: OTP coverage was 78.3% and SFP coverage 86.8%. The success of the CTC program is largely due to the intensive outreach program where outreach workers closely monitor children of affected communities, including health education and social mobilization. The Argebona CTC has 1 outreach worker per Kebele (OTP coverage 86.4% and SFP coverage 92.6%). The Hulla CTC has 1 outreach worker per 2 kebeles (OTP coverage 70.8% and SFP coverage 77.6%). Hulla district is very mountainous and access to distribution sites, even if located as close as possible to the affected communities, is hard. The findings of the survey are assisting the CTC program to improve access. For more information on CTC programs:<http://ennonline.net> and <http://www.fantaproject.org/ctc/workshop2003.shtml>

The survey revealed that no systematic barriers to the program existed.

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