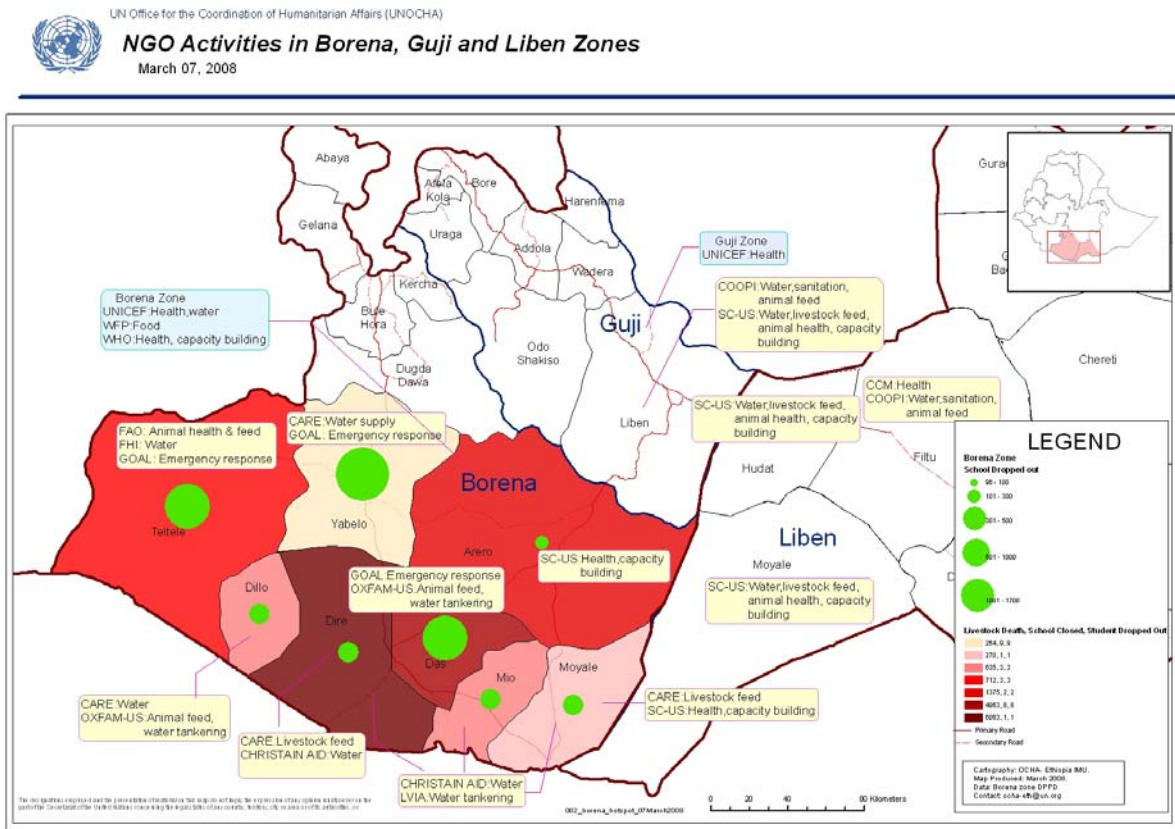




SITUATION REPORT: EXTENDED DRY SEASON IN LOWLAND AGRO-PASTORAL AREAS OF OROMIYA REGION¹ – 11 MARCH 2008

The deteriorating situation with regard to human health, food security, livelihoods, and livestock health initially reported in Borena zone has spread to Bale, East Hararghe, Guji and Liben zones of Oromiya Region. Poorly performing rains for the upcoming rainy season forecasted by the National Meteorological Agency are likely to exacerbate the existing situation in the lowland agro-pastoral areas of Oromiya Region. In addition to the situation in Oromiya Region, UN agencies and humanitarian partners have reported the emergence of hotspots in SNNPR in the following zones; Gamogofa, Hadiya, Kenbata, Sidama, South Omo and Welayita.



An estimated 88,000 people in affected woredas in Borena zone require emergency assistance from government, humanitarian partners and UN agencies. This estimate is expected to be revised when the requirements of communities in Arero, Teltele and Yabello are taken into consideration. Recent field assessments have identified additional beneficiaries in Bale and Guji

¹ This situation report is based on information gathered from a variety of sources including; UN agencies, NGO and government partners.

zones of Oromiya Region who will require emergency food assistance over the next four months. WFP field officers on the ground report rapid deterioration of the food security situation in East Hararghe zone with serious food shortages in Midhega Tola, Chenaksen, Kurfa Chelle, Metta and Bedeno woredas.

OCHA assessment teams have documented a steadily increasing number of livestock deaths due to limited availability of grazing land for pasture and lack of water. Water shortages have reached a critical level and majority of water sources (traditional wells, boreholes, cisterns, ponds, rivers) are drying up leaving communities extremely vulnerable to deterioration of health and loss of livestock. WFP report serious water shortages in Babile, Gursum, Meyu Muluke, Gole Oda woredas of East Hararghe zone. Humanitarian partners working in SNNPR report critical water shortages in Boricha and Loka Abaya woredas in Sidama zone and Bedawocho woreda in Hadiya zone. UN agencies and NGOs have been alerted to increased level of migration by pastoralist communities in search of water and grazing pasture for livestock in the Oromiya region. According to information shared at the Regional Emergency Coordination meeting in Borena zone, 29 schools in the eight affected woredas have been forced to close due to water shortages and approximately 3700 children have dropped out of full-time education. Humanitarian partners attribute outbreak of bush and forest fires in Bale and Guji zones to extended dry conditions in the region.

The extended dry season is already beginning to have serious consequences for human health in the region. Health partners and child protection agencies are particularly concerned about nutritional consequences of poor livestock condition upon children and vulnerable groups. Health officials highlight urgent need for the supplementary feeding programmes in order to avert malnutrition of children, nursing mothers and pregnant women in Adola, Girja, Liben, Odo Shakiso and Wadera woredas of Guji zone. The Regional Health Bureau and health partners are already contending with outbreak of measles in the region with the measles outbreak already affecting a number of communities living in Hambela, Kercha and Odo Shakiso woredas in the Guji zone. Measles cases have been reported in four woredas in Borena zone. WHO have reported a number of sporadic cases of Meningitis in Oromiya Region.

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

1. The regional government has sent a number of teams to the affected zones to assess requirements within specific sectors.
2. Oromiya Regional DPPC is distributing 621 Metric Tonnes (MT) of hay for approximately 5920 heads of cattle in Miyo and Moyale woredas.
3. CARE has sent 80 MT of FAMIX and 2.5 MT of locally produced Ready to Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF) to Moyale Woreda under the ECHO project. This intervention will target children under the age of five years, nursing mothers and pregnant women. CARE is distributing approximately 900 MT of hay and concentrated animal feed for 9200 heads of livestock in Dhas, Dire, Miyo and Moyale woredas.
4. Danish Church Aid is delivering water rations to 2,700 households in Borena zone.
5. GOAL is concentrating support to affected communities in the Dhas woreda. GOAL has dispatched two trucks to Dhas woreda to facilitate water tankering activities and are

continuing to implement Community Therapeutic Care (CTC) to reverse malnutrition rates.

6. Norwegian Church Aid is delivering water to communities in the Liben woreda of Guji zone.
7. MSF-Belgium, in partnership with the Regional Health Bureau, WHO and UNICEF, is carrying out a measles immunization campaign and case management activities in Hambella and Kercha woredas in Guji zone.
8. Oxfam USA is supporting partner agency AFD to carry out rehabilitation of water schemes with funding totaling US\$105,000. Oxfam USA and AFD are delivering water to communities in Dhas and Dilo woredas through water tankering programme.
9. World Vision is implementing an emergency livestock health programme in Borena zone.
10. OCHA have supported local officials to reactivate coordination meetings in the Borena zone to facilitate better information-sharing and coordination of interventions.
11. OCHA/Humanitarian Response Fund (HRF) has provided US\$2.5 million for response to situation in hotspot areas of Borena zone (Arero, Dhas, Dillo, Dire, Miyo, Moyale, Teltele and Yabello woredas) through Care, Save the Children US, Christian Aid/AFD and FAO. Priority issues include; animal health, animal feed and water provision. In addition, OCHA/HRF have supported WHO to implement a measles response campaign in Guji zone.
12. UNICEF has sent 5 emergency drug kits to Borena zone and 5 to Guji zone. UNICEF continues to provide technical assistance to health officials to respond to the measles epidemic.

GAPS IN THE RESPONSE

1. Specific sectoral priority requirements must be clearly prioritized and shared with partners for immediate response.
2. To date the majority of responses have been in following programmatic activities; water tankering, water rationing, animal feed and provision of food supplies. Health professionals working in the affected regions continue to highlight the urgent need for specific response to the health risks associated with deterioration of livestock health and lack of water.
3. The Federal Ministry of Health, with support of WHO, requires financial support from donors to improve preparedness and response capacities to combat possible Meningitis epidemic in the country.
4. Measles vaccination activities in 24 woredas in Guji and Borena zones continue to be delayed due to lack of secured funding.
5. The Early Warning Group should reconvene at the earliest opportunity to act as a forum for analysis and agreement of joint responses.
6. Humanitarian partners should continue to support information sharing and strengthen coordination systems to facilitate enhanced emergency response.
7. UN agencies and humanitarian partners need to ensure that rigorous monitoring of activities on the ground with particular attention to operational issues such as truck maintenance.

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