



## **Situation Brief April 2011**

### **Drought and its impacts on Security in CEWARN's areas of reporting in Ethiopia**

#### **Overview**

The October-November (2010) pastoral rains were a nearly complete failure on Ethiopian sides of Karamoja and Somali clusters. According to the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS) 'about 80 % of traditional water sources' which provide the majority of water need in pastoral areas were not replenished<sup>1</sup>. Thus, almost all CEWARN Areas of Reporting on the Ethiopian side are currently facing serious water shortages. Similarly, pastures are critically depleted. Existing rangelands are not expected to support livestock beyond the 'end of January 2011'.<sup>2</sup> The forecast for the March to June rains are even gloomier. Below normal performance of these rains is likely expected<sup>3</sup>; almost all AORs are currently reporting no rains.

The impact of this dire situation is beginning to take its toll in all AORs with varying degrees. Seasonal surface water resources are drying up with the exception of major perennial rivers such as the Omo River. Livestock deaths are reported in thousands and the body conditions of those surviving has substantially declined. Availability of milk and other livestock products are declining. The drought situation has triggered an early migration to the dry season pasture reserve areas. As a result, unusual movements of livestock are being reported leading to competition and conflicts in some areas. An outbreak of livestock disease is also being reported in several areas causing further deaths.

#### ***Ethiopian side of Karamoja cluster***

The short rains (Oct-Dec) were a complete failure in Dassenech and Nyangatom weredas as well in the surrounding environs. The situation is also dire in the neighboring border areas of North Turkana of Kenya and East Equatoria of South Sudan. Surface watering points like shallow holes in and around the Kibish River have begun to dry up in Kibish and surrounding areas of the Nyangatom Woreda. In the Dassenech areas, the pasture and watering points near Turkana and Hamar border areas have diminished. Pastoralists are migrating earlier than usual to dry season grazing areas known as as Desset in the case of the Dassenech pastoralists; Tirgiya and Lokilan in the case of the

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<sup>1</sup> FEWS NET, Ethiopia Food Security outlook January – June 2011

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Ibid



Nyangatom. This untimely movement is causing overstocking in these dry season rangelands.

Furthermore, other dry season reserve areas such as a locale near Mt. Kuraz Mountain and Nerema are inaccessible due to security reasons as a result of on going inter-communal clashes between Dassenech, Nyngatom, Turkana and Hamer communities. Bigger ruminants such as cattle and donkeys are dying in large numbers in both weredas. Livestock body condition has deteriorated affecting their productivity causing a significant reduction in milk availability. An outbreak of livestock disease, believed to have originated from South Sudan, also caused deaths of a significant number of livestock.

The impact of the drought on food security has been minimal so far because of fresh harvests in December which were attained through flood recession agriculture along the Omo River following the Meher season. Sorghum and maize production was average and above average in many of the kebeles along the Omo River. For example, 25000-30000 hectares of land has been cultivated in the Nyangatom wereda alone. This has enabled the community to offset the impact of the drought for the time being. However, deficits in food security will likely occur once the current harvest has dwindled. If the upcoming rains perform poorly, as expected, low income or near destitute households will experience high levels of food insecurity. Already a high demand for cereal crops are being observed in many areas, particularly among those groups living at a considerable distance from kebeles along the Omo River.

A large number of Turkana youth groups have come from North Turkana seeking to buy crops from Dassenech communities. Some of them have settled in areas like Lebemuket and Seryet. Considering the animosity between these two groups, the influx of these groups is a telling example of the dire situation in the cross border areas of the Karamoja cluster.

In the Nyangatom community, early migration to areas like Tirgiya which is near the Omo Park close to Surma communities have been witnessed. However, the situation between Surma and Nyangatom communities has deteriorated in recent months with the killings of 4 Surma individuals by the Nyangatom which triggered a retaliatory killing by Surma individuals. This might hinder the Nyangatom from moving deep into Surma land where a vast dry season rangeland reserves are reported to be available. The Nyangatom have also crossed into the eastern bank of the Omo River into Hamer land near Kangaten town in search of pasture.

### ***Ethiopian side of Somali cluster***

According to FEWS' Ethiopia Food Security Outlook in the Ethiopian sides of Somali cluster "pastoral rains were a nearly complete failure<sup>4</sup>".80% of the water resources have dried up. Most of CEWARN Areas of reporting are currently facing serious water shortage. Most of the lands are not expected to support

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid



livestock pasture needs. The concern for drought in these areas is predicted to continue with harsh effects beyond June 2011, if the March –May rainy season fail as expected.

So far the drought has had severe and widespread implications. Livestock deaths, particularly cattle, are being reported in thousands. The deaths have become so overwhelming the focus is now on saving breeding stock. In Moyale Somali wereda, field reports suggest 35% of cattle have perished. The body conditions of the remaining livestock have deteriorated significantly to the extent that they cannot travel long distances. The price of cattle, as a result, has dropped significantly. The communities who rely on livestock products for survival are also severely affected and are forced to heavily depend on relief food supplies from the government and other partner organizations. Families are said to be sharing relief food allotments with their cattle since the cattle cannot find pasture. To make matters worse, children are experiencing malnutrition from lack of food and there are fears that the cattle carcasses left in the villages will lead to an outbreak of disease.

Drying of major water sources has also raised concern. In Miyo wereda major water sources have dried up raising the price of one jerrican (container) of water from 1.50 cents to 4 birr. The wereda is currently receiving major water supply from GOAL Ethiopia. In Somali Oromia were 32 out of 46 kebeles currently depend on water-tanks that are monitored by the wereda administration. However, current supplies are insufficient for the large population that is heavily affected by water shortages.

Shortages of pasture and water are triggering competition over scarce resources and migration. The Magado area of Dire wereda is the only place that has been identified as being less affected by the drought. A large number of communities from neighboring weredas and from North Kenya have travelled to the area leading to a heavy congestion of people and livestock. There are concerns that the ensuing competition might lead to conflict. In Moyale Somali, the unusual movements of Degodia communities from Liben zone in search of pasture has brought them in direct confrontation with the Gerri communities. In Miyo wereda youth groups are deserting their designated herding and grazing areas to look for employment in Kenya. Some youth are also engaging in camel theft which are the only animals that can withstand drought conditions and fetch good price. In Dire wereda, there are individuals who are selling their cattle for low price and heading to Moyale town for daily laboring. There are also highland traders who are taking advantage of this situation, buying cattle at a low price and selling it at a heightened price in other towns.

### **Security implication of the drought (short term and long term scenario)**

In the immediate and short term future the drought may increase competition over meager resources (pasture and water) leading to conflict. There are already signs this is starting to happen in some areas. As stated earlier, the drought has triggered unusual encroachment of pastoralists into other communities' land bringing them into direct confrontation. For instance, in January a



migration of a large group of Degodia clans from the Liben zone of Somali Regional State into Moyale Somali wereda has ignited clashes between these two communities. <sup>5</sup>Likewise, a large contingent of Topossa/Nyangatom from South Sudan has made their way into Surma and Beru lands in Bench Maji Zone. This has created not only tension with the host communities of Surma and Dezi but a number of raids and killings have also been reported.<sup>6</sup>

The push into Surma land comes also from the Nyangatom of Ethiopia. The Nyangatom are currently migrating into two directions in search of pasture – to Lokilan grazing areas to the North East and to Tirgiya, Lomelomor and beyond into the direction of Surma land. While the Nyangatom and Surma have had cooperative relation in the past, the situation has changed since February with the killings of 4 Surma in Lomelomor by Nyangatom groups. A subsequent failure to apprehend the culprits and compensate the families of the deceased has led retaliatory attacks by the Surma who killed 4 Nyangatom's in the same place in April.

Now with a large number of Nyangatom present in Tirgiya and Lomelomor, in close proximity with the Surma, and competing for pasture and watering points, there is a high possibility of this competition transforming into violent confrontations. More over, since the early migration to these dry season grazing areas may soon result in overstocking of the traditional rangelands such as Tirgiya, there is also a high possibility of the Nyangatom moving further into Surma lands, where a large reserve areas along the river banks of Sobat and Omo are reported to be available. This can bring the pressure on the Surma communities where already a large contingent of pastoralists from South Sudan has temporarily settled in the wereda. Hence, a high number of violent confrontations, including raiding and assaults are predicted to occur in these areas among the Nyangatom, Surma and Topossa/Nyangatom from South Sudan.

The severity of the drought is more pronounced in the Somali cluster than the Karamoja cluster. Almost all the pasture and watering points have dried up. The remaining few relatively less affected dry season reserve areas are already overstocked. Communities from distant areas including from North Kenya have squeezed themselves into this few remaining rangelands. Lingering suspicion between Gabra, Borena and Gerri may flare up into conflict ignited by the competition over resources. Already signs are emerging of petty thefts of drought resistant animals, particularly camels, among the communities. This

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<sup>5</sup> Please refer to the January Monthly report for Somali cluster.

<sup>6</sup> Please refer to the January monthly Report for Karamoja cluster, conflict Alert CEWARN Surma Woreda ( Feb 19/2011) , conflict Alert Beru Woreda ( January 18/2011) as well as Situation brief on Surma Woreda ( April 09/2011)



can easily transform into large scale raiding if the situation persists as expected.

According to a UNOCHA report, as per the latest forecast by the National Meteorology Agency the belg/gu rains are generally expected to be below-normal in most receiving areas caused by the continuation of a moderate to strong La Nina phenomenon, potentially through June 2011<sup>7</sup>. This means the dry spell will be prolonged on the Ethiopian sides of Karamoja and Somali clusters extending well beyond June. Hence, shortages of pasture and water are anticipated reaching critical stage. This implies more unusual movements, more competition and by extension a larger number of violent confrontations in the long run. The likely rise of tension among communities might also strain long running community peace processes such as the Dukana/Maikona/Yabello peace agreements.

So far thousands of cattle have died; in the long run more will likely continue to die from the drought as well as from drought related outbreak of livestock disease. Since livestock continue to be the main source of livelihood in these areas, restocking will emerge as a paramount concern. Restocking can be gradually achieved by saving the breeding stock from the drought which seems to be the current focus of all stakeholders. However, restocking may take other forms. Communities may resort to large scale raiding to replenish their lost herds. This can be one possible scenario in the long run to be watchful for in both clusters. In particular, the situation may be more pronounced in areas where there is on going clashes among several communities; one such example is the Surma, Topossa/Nyangatom corridor where escalation of conflict is predicted to likely occur.

On another hand, with most reserve lands overstocked, communities will likely be forced to look for more lands if the dry spell is prolonged as predicted. Communities might be tempted to access grazing areas previously abandoned due to security reasons. If two or more communities which are not in good terms with each other are then vying for previously inaccessible areas, more confrontation and incidents may occur. Such hot spot areas to be watchful in the long run include grazing lands near and around Mt. Kuraz mountain ( between Dassenech, Nyangatom and Turkana) as well as Nerema and Fejej ( between Hamar and Dassenech).

But not all scenarios will lead to an escalation of tension. This can be an opportune moment to further community reconciliation efforts spurred on by the drought. The drought situation can be used as an entry point for the promotion of collaboration and cooperation among communities through negotiated access to rangelands. Already communities are taking initiatives to reconcile with previous antagonists in order to collaborate and withstand the effects of the drought. For instance, Turkana communities from Todenyang and surrounding areas have flocked to Dassenech areas in the west bank of Omo

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<sup>7</sup> UNOCHA, Weekly humanitarian highlights, 7 Feb 2011



River seeking reconciliation and collaboration. The interesting aspect is the majority of them are youth who are said to have now settled in areas like Lebemuket and Seryet among the Dassenech community. CEWARN and

CEWERUs of Ethiopia and Kenya in collaboration with local partners can and should build on this propitious moment by launching and supporting further interactions through continuous peace dialogues and other avenues.

### **Recommendations**

- Rains will likely fail again during the March- May Rain season, which will add more stress on the affected communities. This requires a multi pronged approach by government and humanitarian organizations due to the varied effects the drought is having on the communities. This includes; provision of water by increasing emergency water trucking services through deployment of more water trucks; increase Health and Nutrition management interventions to minimize the impact of on going health and nutrition emergencies and above all carry out commercial de-stocking and provision of supplementary livestock feed to minimize livestock losses and allow pastoralists to earn cash from the sale of livestock at risk of drought. In the long run, the creation of more watering points and pipeline systems need to be considered. In both clusters, cross border resource sharing schemes need to be explored to lessen the effect of grazing and water shortages. This requires enhancing communal ties in order to create the necessary good will for such agreements.
- Security presence needs to beef up in places where large pastoralist communities from diverse areas have converged into for grazing. A joint resource sharing and conflict mediation committee needs to be set up to proactively address the likely occurrences of disputes. One target area that may require such intervention is the Surma Woreda and its surrounding environs where a large contingent of pastoralist communities from within and across the border have settled in. Already signs of tension and violent incidents have started to be reported in these areas. On a similar note, the Nyangatom- Surma dispute also requires immediate intervention. Until the killing of the four Surma by the Nyangatom, the two communities have had cooperative inter-ethnic relationships including sharing of pasture and water points. The failure to resolve this dispute has ignited another revenge attack by the Surma this month. The Nyangatom particularly need the return to normalcy urgently as they are under severe pressure to gain access to reserve lands said to be available in Surma areas.
- The current resource shortages in both clusters could present an opportunity for increasing peaceful communal ties via the creation of sustainable resource sharing ties. This requires good will from most sectors of the community, and an understanding that increased ties and sharing will allow them to withstand the effects of the drought. Communal leaders, government representatives, youth groups and owners of local peace



initiatives need to take the lead in sensitizing the public on the mitigating qualities of resource sharing and they should take the lead in initiating dialogue with relevant communities.

- Roundtable discussions shall be initiated between Nyngatom, Dassench, Turkana and Hamar to ensure negotiated access to grazing lands previously abandoned due to security reasons. Such places include Mt Kuraz and Nerema dry season rangelands. Similarly local administrations officials, CEWERU and Local Peace Committees shall seize the opportunity spurred by the drought situation that pushed the Turkana Youth to voluntarily came and settle in Dassenech areas. CEWERUs, through the on going RRF funded projects in the area, can build up on this improved interaction among these groups to launch a large inter- communal gathering that could pave the way for the much needed sustainable peace agreements in the corridor. **END**

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