Activity Name: Rapid Assessment in Sitti Zone
Reported by: Siyad Abdi Mohammed
Dates of travel: April 28 to May 5, 2015
Area Visited: The entire 7 Woredas of Sitti Zone
Reporting date: May 7, 2015

Highlights of the findings:

- In addition to 207, 566 beneficiaries identified in the HRD, about 54,860 people are currently in need of food in need in Sitti Zone.
- More than 967,000 livestock are affected and need emergency feed and drug intervention.
- The onset of Karan 2014 rain was on time in Sitti zone and continued until the end of August except in Aisha, North of Erer and Shinile, and Hadhagala Woredas where the onset was late and cessation was early. Gu/Dirra 2015 rain started third week of March in the entire zone. However, the rain was only for on 21 and 22 of March and ceased the remaining time in March and the whole of April. The amount received during those two days was normal in some localized areas, and below normal in the most areas of the zone.
- The below average of Karan 2014 rains in the northern parts of, and in Aisha and Hadhagala woredas in Sitti Zone and the poor performance current Gu 2015 in most parts of the zone led to over grazing in most parts of the zone including those areas that had a better rains. Therefore, availability of pasture, browse and water is a serious concern in all woredas of Sitti Zone;
- Livestock body conditions deteriorated starting late March and resulted in livestock deaths in Aisha, Hadhagala, parts of Shinile, parts of Dembel, northern part of Erer, parts of Afedem and Ma’eso. The most affected ones are shoots (both goat and sheep).
- Abnormal livestock migrations from northern parts of the zone to Oromia adjacent areas were observed for all types of livestock.
- Tensions among Oromo and Somali ethnic groups erupted and some human deaths were reported in RUKI, GUBANTI AND DAR-ELE areas in Afedem woreda.
- There are serious water problems in the zone and about 73,360 individuals from 33 kebeles are in need of water. Current water trucking is going on in Aisha and Hadhagala Woredas only.
- Although it was not possible to support with nutrition data, widespread visible sign of malnutrition were seen on adult pregnant/lactating women in the visited woredas.
- Drought also affected the education sector and the most affected schools are Alternative Basic Education ABE. Accordingly, about 65 (36% of the total ABE schools) ABE schools are closed in the five visited woredas where children moved with their livestock and families.

Weather condition:
Generally the main rainy seasons in Sitti are Dirra/Gu, from mid-March to mid-May and Karan, from July to mid-September. The onset of Karan 2014 rain was on time in Sitti zone and continued till the end of August, with the exception of Aisha, North of Erer and Shinile, and Hadhagala Woreda of Sitti zone, where the onset was late and cessation was early. Gu/Dirac 2015 rain started on time in all woredas with two consecutive days rain on the 21 and 22 of May. The amount received in these two days was normal in parts of Dembel (Dembel areas bordered with Oromia and Dire Dawa council), Parts of Ma’eso (between Afdhaba, Mule and Nasahablod) and some areas of Afdam (Ruki, Gubanti and Dar-ele) and Erer district (border areas of Erer with the Oromia). Whereas Aisha, Hadhagala, and North of Shinile, Erer, Afedem and Ma’eso woredas received much below normal and most of these woredas are currently facing critical water shortage and lack of pasture due to limited water sources, degraded landscape/terrain, coupled with low rainfall amount. However, the rain ceased after these two days of rains and there was no rain in the remaining period of March as well as the whole of April in most parts of the zone.

Seasonal agricultural performance:

- No seasonal agricultural activities are undergoing in all parts of the Zone, due to poor Gu rains in the agropastoral areas. While land preparation was undertaken in early March, crops are not yet planted due to moisture stress. Furthermore, the agro pastoralists decided not to put a single seed on the ground looking at the poor start of the seasonal rains. The traditional community early warning experience also suggested that this season will be bad since it fails on Saturday, which is called in Somali SABTI SEASON. They said this season is SABTI and rain started SABTI is not favorable.

Water pasture and livestock condition:

- The poor performance Karan 2014 and the below average performance of the Gu 2015 rains so far in Aisha, Hadhagala and North of Afedem, Erer, Ma’eso and Shinile Woredas in Sitti Zone had severely affected availability of pasture, browse and water. The abnormally dry and hot conditions in these areas have caused substantial deterioration of livestock body conditions (mainly shooat and cattle) and negatively impacted livestock productivity, market value and weakened their resistance to diseases and caused more deaths in Aisha, Hadhagala, parts of Shinile, parts of Dembel, northern part of Erer, Parts of Afedem and Ma’eso. Most of the deaths are reported for shooat, (both goat and sheepe), while death of cattle was also reported in Ma’ayso woreda. For instance, in Shinile (Bisle, Harey), Hadhagala (Hore, Gurgur), and Aysia Woredas (Biyokabobe), the team witnessed a significant number of morbidity and mortality and emaciated cattle and shooats which cannot stand by themselves and needs human supports. In Aysia woreda about 2,000 livestock died in April. As shown in picture 1 above,
one of the most critical cases observed was sheep being fed the wool above the skin of other sheep in Gurgur kebele of Hadigala woreda on May 2015.

- Currently, pasture and browse conditions in most parts of Shinile, Ayshia and Hadigala is significantly deteriorating due to long Jilal coupled with poor Gu rains. Competing for invasive species (trees) like *Prosopis jolliflora* as a source of livestock feed is pronounced in Shinile, Erer and Hadigala which is an evidence for depletion of pasture and brows.

![Image of livestock deaths in Hadigala and Aisha woredas](image)

*Picture 2: Carcasses of livestock deaths in Hadigala (right) and Aisha woredas (left) of Sitti zone in May 2015.*

- Moreover, plateaus along the sides of Oromia Mountains have small amount of pasture since these areas are previously less grazed and all the livestock species are concentrated in these areas for grazing/browsing. This has caused resources competition conflicts between Oromo and Somalis in Afedem, Ma’eso and Erer woredas.

- The most critical case observed by the assessment team was mass deaths of livestock particularly shoats that began in late March in Shinile, Hadigala and Aisha woredas, but the average daily loss of animals has risen in the last three weeks of April 2015 due to lack of feed/pasture coupled with critical water shortage (see Picture 2 above).

- According to the data collected from household in the visited villages, the current situation is the cumulative result of the frequent droughts. Households consider the situation now as one of the worst since 1999/2000 drought.

- Drought also affected the education sector and the most affected schools are ABE in pastoral areas, 65(36% of the total ABE schools) ABE schools in the five visited woredas were closed where children moved with their families and livestock.

**Market condition:**

- Livestock price declined in all northern parts of the zone due to deteriorating physical body conditions. In some areas the team observed goat prices declined by about 67 percent compared to December 2014.

**Health and nutrition:**
• Except for the seven health posts closed (Aisha 3, Haghigala 1, Afedem 3) due to the critical water shortage and migration of the pastoralists, most of the health facilities are functional. There is no disease outbreaks officially reported. However, communities reported diarrheal cases in all age groups caused by critical water shortage and consumption of meat from sick animals in 16 kebeles in the zone; Ayshia (Dawanle, Biyobadan, El laelay, Mara adays); in Erer (urdale, Abuli, Aydora, Tibi and Sideta sub kebele), in Mieso woreda (AfAsse, Madane, Kaaha and Haradin) and Hadhigala (BiyoGara’o, Harriso and Gurgur).

• Vitamin A deworming Supplementation campaign is ongoing in all Sitti woreda while Ayshia woreda is implementing Enhanced Outreach Strategy (EOS) screening which will facilitate the assessment of the food security and nutrition situation in the woreda. There is no nutrition data available at the woreda level to analyze the nutrition trends and the team couldn’t conduct rapid MUAC screening due to the drought induced stress at community level and time constraints. However, widespread visible sign of malnutrition were observed across the visited woredas/kebeles in adult pregnant/lactating women.

Water

• Delay of the current Gu rainfall coupled with the long dry Jilal season has caused critical water shortage in all woredas of Sitti zone. According to the general observation and information compiled from different interviews at the visited community and woredas administrations, water from underground water sources declined compared to the normal time and the assessment team observed more livestock awaiting the queue around underground water sources. Over pumping of the water sources caused technical problems and caused break down of some water sources. With the dry spell continued, more livestock and human are suffering serious water shortages. Furthermore, all Birkas and ponds dried earlier than normal that forces households in these areas to migrate to the nearest water sources. For instance, three main boreholes out of the total five boreholes in the zone are non-functional. These are Dawanle (Genataor replacement), Mara-madobays (Electro mechanical) and Biyodiddle (Solar sytem) in Oxfam GB will rehabilitate from ECHO funded resilience program in Sitti zone. These Boreholes were important source of water in these areas and for the nearby areas when such droughts occur. Currently, the people in Dawanle kebele are fetching water from insanitary water source that might cause serious health uncertainties for humans. 73,360 individuals are currently in need of water interventions in Sitti Zone.

Responses:

• Woreda heads with the consultation of their respective cabinets decided to distribute the third round relief food assistance without considering implementing public work activities. Some woreda administrators already requested the release of 5% of PSNP contingency budget allocations while the other administrators are in the process of releasing contingency budget allocations.

• Oxfam GB started 15 days water trucking from their internal funds for the most seriously affected kebeles in Hadhigala (Hariso and Gur gur) and Ayshia woreda (Sinujif) while Afdem woreda conducted water trucking for Asli kebele and Sub kebeles of Ali jir for the month of April from the budget however, this effort was exhausted due to lack of budget to continue.
Food Security Situation

- Food security situation in the zone is deteriorating due to poor start of Gu 2015 rains and below normal performance of the last Karan 2014 in most of the zone specially northern parts of Sitti Zone and Hadhagala and Ayshia woreda. The declined rain impacted milk availability and caused more livestock migration to longer distance within the zone. Many schools and Health Posts were closed due to drought. Milk yield declined due to deteriorating livestock body condition. Mass livestock death were observed in all woreda specially Hadhagala, Ayshia and northern parts of the zone. Water problem is the highest priority, while water intervention is going on in some localized areas of Hadhagala and Ayshia Woreda in middle of the main Dirac/Gu season by Oxfam GB. Livestock price declined more than half compared to normal in all northern parts of the zone, due to deteriorated livestock body condition.

- Furthermore, as more livestock are concentrated in southern parts of the zone, over grazing and conflicts were reported in the southern parts of the zone. These will cause further deterioration in livestock body conditions and productivity until end of July 2015 unless the rains improved significantly in May. The situation of malnutrition signs were observed in all woredas of the zone especially for lactating and pregnant mothers. Although the railway construction is undergoing in these areas that attracts labor from other parts of the country, there are no adequate employment opportunities are available in these drought affected areas affecting households income.

- Therefore, due to declining income from livestock sale and signs of malnutrition observed mainly in poor families (lactating and pregnant mothers) which is likely to increase, an estimated additional number of 53,860 individuals from poor and middle income group are now require lifesaving humanitarian assistance and livelihood support between now and September 2015. Even the anticipated normal Karan rains will not be able to improve household food access unless supported by improvement interventions.