

7 March 2016

### Key Issues

- The strategic multi-agency coordination meeting was held on Friday, 4 March. Chaired by Commissioner Mitiku Kassa of NDRMC, the meeting was attended by representatives from the donor, humanitarian and development partners. In addition to availing resources to urgently fill gaps in response, *belg* seeds distribution, livestock feed, water trucking support, and logistics challenges were some of the key priority areas identified.
- Delayed and incomplete food assistance, as well as limited access to water and sanitation services in drought-affected areas are increasing the risk of communicable diseases.
- According to regional estimates, 838,000 households require *belg* seeds urgently, before the planting window closes.

**Ethiopia is responding to an El Niño-caused drought emergency:** The El Niño global climactic event has wreaked havoc on Ethiopia's summer rains. This comes on the heels of failed spring rains, and has driven food insecurity, malnutrition and water shortages in affected areas of the country. A well-coordinated response is already underway and expanding rapidly, although the scale of the developing emergency exceeds resources available to date. Given the lead times necessary for the procurement of relief items, the Government and its international partners have called for early action to this slow onset natural disaster.

### The impact of delayed food and water assistance on health

Delayed and incomplete food assistance, as well as limited access to water and sanitation services in drought-affected areas are increasing the risks of communicable diseases. Reports of disease outbreaks increased in the past month. For example, eight active measles outbreaks were reported in Oromia, SNNP and Somali regions in February compared to four outbreaks reported in January. There is a higher risk of morbidity and mortality when measles is combined with malnutrition. The Ministry of Health, together with health partners, seek US\$10 million to vaccinate 25 million children under 15 years in 505 drought-affected and at-risk *woredas*.

In Moyale areas of Oromia and Somali regions, 149 new cases of acute watery diarrhea (AWD) were reported between January and February. Enhancing disease surveillance, improving WaSH access and strengthening cross-border collaboration with Kenyan counterparts are the main focus of intervention to contain the spread of the AWD outbreak. The health sector is also working to contain scabies, meningitis and dengue fever outbreaks, and is facing a gap of \$28.5 million to address all health requirements.

### Relief food distribution status

The food prioritization committee met on Friday 4 March and discussed relief and PSNP food dispatch and distribution and challenges to speed-up the process. Reasons given for delays included transport and distribution capacity. Localized security incidents, particularly in Oromia and Somali regions also caused delays.

### Enhancing the efficiency of delivery of food assistance

The Government allocated additional trucks to ease transportation bottlenecks and ensure that food assistance reaches the beneficiaries on time. The Government is also taking measures to increase capacity at the various warehouses to speed offloading of trucks and minimize the waiting period. Humanitarian partners recommend dedicating one of the three berths at Djibouti Port for humanitarian shipments.

### Seed needs for the *belg* planting season.

According to regional estimates, 838,000 households urgently require *belg* and long-cycle *meher* crop seeds before the *belg* planting window closes. NGOs plan to distribute seeds to 180,000 households. The Emergency Seed Working Group released emergency seed guidelines to harmonize seed distribution throughout the country. Meanwhile, the rapid irrigation assessment in drought-affected areas in eastern Amhara and Tigray regions concluded. The assessment aimed to explore immediate means of improving household water access for short cycle crop production. For more information, contact: [ocha-eth@un.org](mailto:ocha-eth@un.org)