



Advancement for Recovery Initiative for Safer Ethiopia (ARISE) Project

**Mobilize
for relief:**
Emergency
response to
flood affected
communities
in Afar



This publication was developed along with the After-Action Review of ARISE interventions for flood affected communities in the Afar region. It was compiled and published in April 2022.

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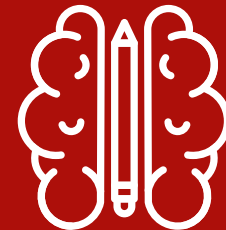


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Background

Floods are the most prevalent catastrophes in Ethiopia. The country has experienced about 53 flood incidents (46.9% of total disasters) every year between 1980 to 2020¹. Flash floods are increasing in frequency and intensity as a result of deforestation, land degradation, climate variability, and changing settlement patterns. Climate change is expected to further exacerbate the risks and magnitude of flooding in Ethiopia. Flood events in 2020 left 1.1 million people affected and over 313,000 national displaced². The most affected region included Afar, Amhara, Gambella, Oromia, Somali and Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People (SNNP).

Phase II of the “Advancement of Recovery Initiatives for Safer Ethiopia” project (ARISE II) was established to support people in the Afar region. The project’s vision was to ease the daily challenges that communities face while restoring normalcy and income channels to resume their livelihood.

ARISE project was implemented by the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC) in partnership with the Ethiopian Disaster Risk Management Commission (EDRMC) and with financial support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (the foundation).

¹ <https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/country/ethiopia/vulnerability>

² <https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/eastern-africa-humanitarian-snapshot-october-2020>





Purpose

The project works with the Government of Ethiopia to strengthen emergency response, rehabilitation, and early recovery efforts. Affected communities were provided non-food items (NFIs) to assist in recuperation. These interventions were part of a larger mission to better manage the 2020 flood emergency and early recovery needs of affected communities in the Afar region.

Achievements

Successful efforts go beyond immediate support for impacted communities. They are a catalyst for actors to expand their perspectives and potential for more effective disaster response. The ARISE II Project achieved the following outcomes:



Establishing working relations and coordination mechanisms

The government and partner organizations have advanced prospective working relations and coordination mechanisms. It also amplified high-level government engagement and commitment for improved decision-making and expediting implementation processes.



Enhancing knowledge and awareness

Stakeholders such as government partners, non-government partners, and community representatives are more informed about flood preparedness and responses. Joint planning and implementation experience instill such proficiency in these actors.



Securing quality assurance of NFIs

4,000 households were given emergency shelter/non-food items (ES/NFIs) and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) assistance to meet their everyday needs and support their recovery efforts. These supplies were obtained according to the national ES/NFI quality and procurement process to ensure standardization. The condition of these items was aligned with the standards established by NFI and WASH clusters.



Capturing best practices and reflections

An After-Action Review (AAR) and good practices publication were developed to highlight the overall success in the planning and implementation of the project. The documentation endeavors to provide learning opportunities for similar efforts in the region and beyond.

Facing the aftermath of the flood

The Afar region was one of the worst affected areas during the 2020 floods largely due to the overflow of the Awash River - 162,921 people were affected and 128,242 people were displaced across the state. The stories illustrate the perseverance of the ARISE-II beneficiaries. It highlights the power of a little support to communities that are determined to resume and recover better.

Ethiopia has the largest livestock population in Africa³.

65 million cattle



51 million goat

49 million chicken



40 million sheep

8 million camel



National herds support
more than
11.3 million
rural households.



Livestock is a key source of



export commodity



nutrition



power for farmland, crop cultivation,
household energy



transport



financial security and income

The sector contributes to⁴



40% of the agricultural Gross
Domestic Product (GDP)



20% of total GDP

³ https://livestocklab.ifas.ufl.edu/media/livestocklabifasufledu/pdf-/LSIL_Livestock_Systems_Overview_Ethiopia_2021_08.pdf

⁴ <https://infomineo.com/agriculture-in-ethiopia-3/>

Case Studies



Life is connected to the land in Bonta Kebele for **Kedija Hebhaba**. The 45-year-old mother of nine raises cattle and rents out her small land to cotton farmers for Ethiopian Birr (ETB) 300 per month. She was hired to guard the cotton against animal and human intrusions.

Kedija lost some of her livestock during the 2020 floods, *"We were not able to save five cattle and three donkeys. I was only able to save my goats and four cattle when I moved out before the flood."*

She returned to her village to find a home that had also been taken away. Kedija was able to support her family and construct a shelter with the NFIs. She is taking small steps to rebuild her life,



"I sold one of my cows to buy clothes and food for my family. The NFIs like the cooking items give my family one less matter to worry about."



Abitu Helem, 38, and his eight children were stranded when the flood reached their village. His sole focus was to reach a safer space with his family - "The flood broke out at midnight and reached our village the next day. By the time we tried to escape, all of the exit roads were flooded."

The Search and Rescue mission evacuated Abitu and other stranded local villagers by emergency helicopters. However, many families like Abitu's had to leave everything behind, "I used to earn a living from farming cotton." He owns five hectares of land and the ready-to-harvest cotton was destroyed by the flood.



"The flood killed my goats and washed away our household items and my motorized water pump."

Abitu was unable to resume farming with a water pump to irrigate his land. He believes determination will bring back the regular harvest, "We received food, household, and shelter items that were essential for my family. They may not be enough for all affected people but with our diligence, we can recover what was lost during the floods."





Everyday labor is even more difficult for **Mohammed Ali Elema**. The father of five is disabled with just one leg and earns living rearing livestock in Bedhamo Kebele. He lost more than three-fourths of his stock during the floods, *"I had 20 goats and 10 cattle. Only two goats and three cattle survived. I could have earned ETB 108,000 from selling all of the goats I had."*

Mohammed managed to save his children and pregnant wife by walking to the hilly area close to his village. Escaping to elevated planes is a common practice for rural communities during floods. Mohammed's family met with a plethora of challenges when they returned to the ground, *"Two of my children were forced to drop out of school to support the family. My third son is able to go to school with the charcoal I make and sell."*

The loss of livestock has impaired Mohammed's community, *"Although we received food and support items, cattle is a lifeline for herders."* He puts his faith in God and the prospect of better opportunities.



"I wish to support my children to complete their high school education. Their future seems more uncertain without a dependable source of income."

Abahina Balla, 45, puts on many hats to be the breadwinner of her household. She grows crops, raises cattle, sells clothes, fruits, and vegetables, and mills grains for multiple sources of income. The single mother understands the importance of a steady livelihood, *“I have learned to expand on my revenue sources to support my son and three daughters. The additional money covers any expenses for their education.”*

The village is heavily reliant on the Awash River Bank which makes it susceptible to flood events. Abahina connects the greater impacts to misinformation, *“We were told by our neighbors that there would not be such big impacts and emergency workers were controlling the situation. However, most of us escaped to nearby hilly areas as the water reached our compounds.”*

Although her family was safe, Abahina lost her clothing store, mill, and two of her donkeys. She moved back to a damaged home after two months of living in a safe location provided by the government and humanitarian organizations. Abahina recalls the emptiness of her home as a reminder of how they had fallen into troubling times, *“I know the disaster was from God but solutions are also from a higher power. The cooking utensils, temporary shelter provisions, and WASH and dignity kits gave my family some semblance of normal life again.”*

Abahina knows that no matter the circumstance, her family relies on her for stability. She works at one of the local farms that have resumed production,



“I work as a casual laborer to support my family. I hope to make enough regain income sources. I know my determination will restore the success that took years to build.”



"We did not manage to collect most items. We walked six hours to reach the (IDPs) camp."

Ahmed Ali's good fortune is surrounded by a flock in Bonita Kebele. He would look after 20 goats and 10 cows and rent five hectares of land to cotton investors - *"I would earn around ETB15,000 - 20,000 per year. The money provided food and a house with a corrugated metal roof for my wife and nine children."*

Impacts coupled with the loss of income intensify rehabilitation efforts for rural community members like Ahmed, *"The floods destroyed my house and killed five cattle. Matters became even worse because I did not receive any payment in 2020 because the cotton farm was ravaged."* He recalls receiving timely warning messages from the Woreda office, *"I passed the updates to our communities so they would evacuate before the flood. Sadly, only some members evacuated on time with their cattle."*

The floods had reached quicker than expected. It left Ahmed and his family with little time to gather what they needed and escape,



He remembers the military coming in to support relocation - *"They evacuated people because the flood had blocked roads. Many were stranded and finally rescued by helicopters and boats."*

Ahmed returned to a house with no roof after three months in the camp. The courage to return was scarce as many locals preferred to live in the shelter over going back to see nothing was left in their village. Ahmed's communities received a package of 16 items categorized as NFIs serving for cooking, washing and sanitation, and making makeshift houses: *"The support is hope that we can replace some of what we needed. It may not be enough but it is an incentive for us to rebuild better."*

Annual flooding is an unfortunate expectation in **Kidist Woldemichael's** village in the Amibara Woreda. The community believes that the flood during the rainy season would be the same as every year. Kidist, her three brothers, and her mother also hoped that they would be able to continue life after the flood, *"We are very aware of the flood during the rainy season. I work as a laborer on a cotton farm so leaving would mean losing income. I focused on supporting myself and my mother."*

The local Kebelea administration has been active in sharing flood alerts and exchanging information with the community. Kidist recollects how the administration was proactive in strengthening the community, *"We received a call from the kebele administration to gather near the river to do flood prevention works, such as reinforcing dykes with sand sacks."*

The village was in a constant state of alert before the flood. Kidist was outside with everyone to share and get updates on the status of the flood, *"The local administration informed us to pack our stuff and leave for a hilly area near our village. Food and shelter were scarce during the first week of evacuation because too many people were inhabiting a small space."* She was especially disturbed seeing children hungry and helpless in the shelter.

ADPC provided Kidist's village with cooking utensils, plastic plates, sleeping mats, jugs, Jerri cans, tarpaulin, cups, water purifiers, and a package of sanitary kits. The emerging entrepreneur took this as a sign of initiative, *"I was able to start my own business with the support. I use the items to make coffee and tea as well as cook potato and haricot beans to sell. I was able to buy my first inventory with the money I saved from the support."* Kidist believes that it may take years but the perseverance to recover will bring everyone together,



"We need communities and governments to cooperate as one. It's the best way to address the problem and forge ahead."

Lessons learned

Use of government structure – existing government mechanisms and organizational structures from the national to community levels were useful in successfully implementing the project. Utilizing the government system provided an opportunity to be timely and cost-effective in response to procurement, transportation, storage, and distribution of the supplies.

Participatory approach from start to finish – national and local government stakeholders, as well as community members, participated in the process of designing and implementing the project. The presence of community members and local-level government administration brought a better understanding of the local context. It led to more effective beneficiary targeting and verification, as well as distribution and complaint handling mechanisms. Communities and government structures were better empowered as a result of this participatory approach in the implementation process.

Strengthening proactive approach – past trends have demonstrated that stakeholders have been more reactive to flood response. Certain flood prevention measures have been more proactively enacted by regional governments and local communities based on early warning alerts. These actions need to be further developed to minimize the impact of future flood disasters.

Non-food emergency response – planning, coordination, and distribution of NFI and WASH items addressed the immediate needs and recovery activities of affected communities. These items addressed the critical needs of targeted IDPs in the context of the humanitarian response actions needed to rehabilitate them into their communities.



Implemented by



Supported by

BILL & MELINDA
GATES *foundation*

This publication is based on research funded by (or in part by) the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The findings and conclusions contained within are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

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