

# REVITALIZING COMMUNITIES: APDA'S MARKET RESTORATION PROJECT IN CRISIS-AFFECTED AFAR, ETHIOPIA

## CASE STUDY



The Afar zone is situated in northern Ethiopia, the project area is in "Zone 4"

## Background and conflict situation:

The arid Afar region in north-eastern Ethiopia is predominantly inhabited by pastoralists relying on livestock herding. This case study assesses the impact of an innovative project by the Afar Pastoralist Development Association (APDA), funded by the German Federal Foreign Office through the ToGETHER project's Humanitarian Operation and Innovation Facilities (HOIFA). The project addressed urgent food needs in Ewa district in western Afar (zone 4 on map), following the recent devastating conflict in northern Ethiopia.

The conflict in Tigray, between the Ethiopian federal government and TPLF, caused massive losses of essential social services such as healthcare and education. The conflict led to widespread displacement, leaving the communities in a destitute situation. Traditional homes were destroyed, livestock was stolen, local markets disrupted, and water systems were damaged. Particularly vulnerable groups like children and pregnant women faced particular challenges, including malnutrition and urgent food needs.

## APDA's response:

When security concerns caused international NGOs and UN agencies to leave the region, APDA became one of the few local organizations that continued to offer vital humanitarian aid. With support from the German Federal Foreign Office, APDA initiated a project aimed at revitalising the disrupted market system in Ewa district. For this project, APDA worked together with a local cooperative.

## Project objectives:

One immediate goal was to offer urgent food aid to the most at-risk households. Another goal was to re-establish the market by involving local cooperatives in the distribution of essential goods. The aim was to guarantee that crucial food items like rice, edible oil, and beans remained accessible at reasonable prices, which subsidy programmes made possible.

## Engaging local communities:

APDA worked together with various local government offices, including the district Cooperative Management, the Cooperative office (This office established by the government to support local cooperative technically and facilitate smooth market chain in the area), disaster risk management office, cooperative leaders, and community leaders, to make the project as effective as possible. The government officials participated by witnessing the signed MoU between the cooperative and APDA as well as providing follow-up support. This included the district head, the district representative of the pastoralist and natural resource development bureau and the district cooperative organization and promotion desk. After a comprehensive evaluation of their performance and alignment with the goals of APDA, Millagis Cooperative was chosen as the project partner. APDA specified that they provide food at reasonable prices, with costs limited to operational expenses. This collaboration facilitated direct access to essential food items for the community grappling with the crisis.

## Achievements and impact:

The project bolstered the cooperative's operations, bringing stability to the local market and diminishing malnutrition rates. The initiative also encouraged cooperative members to improve their efforts. Currently, a total of 3,780 households have reaped the benefits of the cooperative's consistent provision of reasonably priced food.

## Challenges and lessons learned:

Drawing on the infrastructure, knowledge and capacities of existing socio-economic structures like local cooperatives during an emergency, enabled APDA to continue to provide life-saving services to affected communities. In fact, communities were able to get basic food commodities in their vicinity without walking days to the market at a fair price from a local cooperative they had trust in. From this achievement, APDA was able to take the methodology to other districts with comparable food insecurity and market inaccessible problems successfully now developing a network of 32 cooperatives all having agreement with APDA aiming to overcome respective local food insecurity.

The flexible funding provided under HOIFA made the success and impact of the project possible. APDA's market restoration project shows how local organizations can step in during a crisis and prove their worth using their own resources and when they receive fast and flexible support.

### Afar Pastoralist Development Association (APDA), Ethiopia

APDA is an indigenous non-governmental organization established and started operation in 1994 in Elida'ar. APDA works for the eradication of traditional practices that are harmful and against the rights and dignity of women and enabling Afar women to develop their full capacity. APDA envisions

to see Afar pastoralists have adequate opportunities to enjoy basic human rights and reach their full potential. APDA undertakes humanitarian work in times of crisis such as drought, flood, desert locust, and disease pandemic. The target groups of APDA are Afar pastoralists that do not have access to government services.



*Affected communities in the Afar region's Uwaa district receive food packages*

