Feed the Future Ethiopia Resilience in Pastoral Areas (RiPA)

Q4 FY20 (July 1 – September 30, 2020)

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## Project Overview/Summary

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<td>Mercy Corps</td>
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<td>Cooperative Agreement Number:</td>
<td>72066320CA00002</td>
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<td>Name of Subcontractors/Sub-recipient:</td>
<td>CARE</td>
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<td>Major Counterpart Organizations</td>
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<td>Geographic Coverage (Region)</td>
<td>Afar, Oromia and Somali Regions, Ethiopia</td>
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### Acronyms

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<td>ATA</td>
<td>Agricultural Transformation Agency</td>
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<td>BoLANRD</td>
<td>Bureau of Livestock, Agriculture and Natural Resource Development</td>
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<td>CAHWs</td>
<td>Community Animal Health Workers</td>
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<td>CLA</td>
<td>Collaborating, Learning and Adapting</td>
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<td>DIP</td>
<td>Detailed Implementation Plan</td>
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<td>DPFSPCO</td>
<td>Disaster Prevention and Food Security Program Coordination Office</td>
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<td>DRM</td>
<td>Disaster Risk Management</td>
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<td>EMDIDI</td>
<td>Ethiopian Meat and Dairy Industry Development Institute</td>
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<td>HH</td>
<td>Household</td>
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<td>LGA</td>
<td>Land Governance Activity</td>
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<td>LLRP</td>
<td>Lowland Livelihoods Resilience Project</td>
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<td>MC</td>
<td>Mercy Corps</td>
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<td>MFI</td>
<td>Micro Finance Institutions</td>
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<td>MM</td>
<td>MicroMentor</td>
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<td>MoA</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental Organization</td>
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<td>NRM</td>
<td>Natural Resources Management</td>
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<td>PPP</td>
<td>Public Private Partnership</td>
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<td>PRM</td>
<td>Participatory Rangeland Management</td>
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<td>PSNP</td>
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<td>SBCC</td>
<td>Social and Behavior Change Communication</td>
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I. Executive Summary

The Resilience in Pastoral Areas (RiPA) project addresses the resilience capacities of households, markets and governance institutions across the Somali, Afar and Oromia regions, collectively contributing to enhanced food security and inclusive economic growth for over 129,129 households, while estimating that at least 50% of these households, or 64,565 HHs, benefit from a comprehensive set of interventions – at least three separate activities. Mercy Corps, working in partnership with CARE, will implement an integrated program to address underlying causes of vulnerability to shocks and stresses.

This quarterly report covers the period of July 1- September 30, 2020. Of ongoing concern for project implementation is the uncertain and at times evolving COVID-19 pandemic and flooding (particularly in Afar). Though the national State of Emergency in Ethiopia was lifted by the GoE in September 2020, the COVID-19 cases are still an increasing problem in all project implementation areas. As a result, the RiPA project has redirected its FY1 DIP plan to COVID-19 and Flood responses. In addition, continued desert locust infestation in certain woredas has meant that RiPA operations will continue to be paused in those areas. Activities most affected by these shocks this quarter were the finalization of regional agreements as well as the roll-out of important initial capacity building trainings for government staff.

During the reporting period, key Component 1 activities undertaken include a Disaster Risk Management (DRM) assessment of government and community DRM systems using secondary data, a Participatory Rangeland Management Systems functionality assessment in Afar, and strengthening communication and collaboration with RiPA South and other USAID investments, such as the LGA, to work together in comprehensive Resilience programming.

Under Component 2, the major activities included the signing of the Master Service Agreement with four financial service providers, and the selection and verification of 225 enterprises in six woredas of Somali and Oromia regions to receive a stimulus package. Similarly, as part of the flood response in Afar, preliminary activities were undertaken to provide financial support for 94 severely affected enterprises in six woredas. In addition, the Micro Mentor (MM) methodology transfer training took place in the quarter under review, in preparation of the Somali language MM platform launch planned for November 2020.

Key highlights under Component 3 include stimulation of shoats’ offtake in Somali Region, vet voucher initiatives to respond to Afar flood in collaboration with Private Veterinary Pharmacies (PVPs), follow on meetings with ATA focused on exploring collaboration opportunities, exploring the possibility of restarting Livestock Market Information (LMIS) in collaboration with Ministry of Trade and Industry (MOTI) and finalization of three Intervention Concept Notes to guide field level activity implementation.

Finally, under Component 4, the main COVID-19 response activities included translation and reproduction of the Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) materials, production and distribution of 49 handwashing stations for health centres, provision soap for handwashing stations and awareness raising activities in three woredas in Afar. The RiPA team partnered with the Afar Regional Health Bureau to produce a radio and TV spot raising awareness on COVID-19.
II. Updates from the Quarter

A. Overall Updates

Summary of Activities and Key Results and Achievements

The project achieved the following over the course of the reporting period:

- In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the RiPA team provided 3,490 Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) materials, 49 automated handwashing stations, and 294 liters of liquid soap for 39 government institutions in all seven woredas in Afar.
- Transmitted COVID-19 control and prevention messages using vehicle mounted megaphones in four woredas in Afar-Zone1.
- Provided support to regional Disaster Prevention and Food Security Program Coordination Office (DPFSPCO) in conducting multi-stakeholder flood impact assessment.
- Supported Bureau of Livestock, Agriculture and Natural Resource Development (BoLANRD) in transporting 6,750 bales of fodder from Dubti fodder bank to six flood-affected RiPA woredas, reaching 800 households.
- Supported DPFSPCO in transporting food and non-food items from regional store to two flood displaced woredas, Aysaita and Afambo; expected to reach 2,328 households (9,312 people) displaced by flood.
- Disaster Risk Management (DRM) team continued actively engaging on various task force meetings on COVID-19, flood responses and desert locust.
- Signed Master Service Agreement with four financial service providers to implement stimulus package activities for enterprise support.
- Developed Standard Operating Procedures to implement stimulus package cash transfer activities.
- Developed two Intervention Concept Notes, one for the COVID-19 response and the other for the Afar flood response, focusing on the implementation of a stimulus package cash transfer for enterprises.
- Verified 48 selected enterprises across six woredas, following which a baseline tool was developed.
- Mercy Corps Ethiopia and MicroMentor (MM) signed an MoU to rollout the Somali language MM platform for better business outcomes for approximately 27,500 entrepreneurs and 6,800 mentors; the “methodology transfer” training was successfully conducted.
- Mercy Corps and Jamiione signed an MoU to implement digital services with Village Saving and Loan Associations (VSLAs) across RiPA and broader MC operational areas.
- Produced face cloths and Tippy taps, engaging women and youth enterprises.
- Kicked off joint Jijiga Export Slaughter House (JESH) assessment.
- Completed shoats’ offtake in Somali region, resulting in 1,273 households selling 5,700 shoats to 15 RiPA supported livestock traders, benefiting an estimated 6,365 people; traders also bought an additional 6,132 shoats beyond the agreed targets without an extra subsidy.
- Conducted a behavioral rapid livestock market assessment for livestock actors focusing on how their seal-the-deal handshaking practices predispose them to spreading and or contracting COVID-19; the findings were adopted and used to design tailor made SBCC materials.
• Partnered with the Afar Regional Health Bureau (RHB) and produced a radio and TV spot raising awareness about COVID-19.
• Component 4 redirection activities for both COVID-19 and Afar flood response were designed and significantly contributed to output 4.2 of the main RIPA activities.
• Finalized assessment response analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on peace and social cohesion in Somali Region; the findings revealed that COVID-19 has no direct triggering effect on violent conflicts. However, the spread of the pandemic and government measures taken to contain the pandemic has a wide range of socio-economic impacts.
• Conducted assessment of impact of COVID-19 on peace and social cohesion in four woredas in Afar; findings indicated a decline in social events, paralyzed markets, declined purchasing power, and impacts to the social fabric of sharing resources and information (Daggu).
• Developed radio messages on peace and social cohesion based on the findings of the rapid assessment of COVID-19.
• Developed conflict sensitivity and Do No Harm training materials; conducted two training sessions with Mercy Corps’ internal Technical Support Unit (TSU) for 23 (six female) staff.

Coordination and Management
• Conducted regular update and review session every Monday for better collaboration and effective use of resources.
• The Component 1 team facilitated a virtual induction session for the Afar field team on all components of the project and reviewed the project’s year 2 plan.
• Hired DRM/NRM specialist and Gender specialist for the Somali and Oromia Regions.
• The Gender Advisor completed the Rapid Gender Analysis (RGA) online course CARE US organized from June-September, 2020 and received certification.
• Conducted a detailed presentation on C3 for field and Addis-based program staff to deepen program understanding.
• Diverse feedback from the regions on proposed regional agreements required coordinated efforts to effectively respond to regional bureaus and finalize the agreements for signature.
• Component 4 team actively engaged in the Ethiopian Civil Society Coalition for Scaling-up Nutrition (ECSC-SUN) coordination platform; actively coordinated all the COVID-19 and flood response activities with the Afar, Somali and Oromia Regional health bureaus; and attended the Nutrition, Health and WASH Cluster meetings at federal and regional levels.
• Held meetings with Peace and Development Center (PDC), a local NGO with overlapping operating areas, to identify areas of collaboration; PDC shared conflict context analysis conducted in Fafen Zone, Somali and E&W Hararghe Zones of Oromia region.

Analysis of Progress and Achievements
During the reporting period, several achievements were realized through the redirection activities in Somali region and Afar regions to respond to both the COVID-19 pandemic and the floods. The shoats’ offtake activity effectively served to stimulate the stagnated livestock market in Somali Region, exceeding targets beyond the subsidy. Market linkage creation for livestock traders with export abattoirs is proving successful, and preliminary activities have also been conducted to provide vet vouchers to displaced livestock holders. In addition, following the finalization of the assessments on the impact of COVID-19 on peace and social cohesion in Afar and Somali, the key findings were used to develop radio messages for dissemination in the next quarter based, with an expected coverage of 14,000 target communities.
Progress was also made in climate information dissemination. This was achieved through several activities, including the Participatory Scenario Planning (PSP) approach, enhancing national and regional level coordination through active participation in risk management platforms and task forces meetings, supporting regional DRM actors to improve DRM preparedness and response, and addressing flood as well as COVID-19 contingency and responses.

Collaboration, Learning, Adaptation
RIPA has prepared and submitted its FY2 Detailed Implementation Plan (DIP) and finalized the project’s Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Plan, both of which are now approved. Revisions to the MEL plan included providing a breakdown of targets by zones and woredas, as requested by the regions to finalize the regional agreements. Further, preparations are underway to conduct Round 1 of RiPA’s Recurrent Monitoring Survey (Baseline) including the development and approval of an SOW. The survey is scheduled to begin in late January 2021.

In collaboration with the country MEL team, the RiPA team adapted Mercy Corps’ Concept Note Management System (CNMS) for RiPA. The CNMS is an internal, automated system used to plan, approve, and operationalize RiPA’s activities and interventions. To date, several Concept Notes have been developed, some of which are now being implemented. In addition, the Open Data Kit (ODK) data collection method was designed and used for digitalizing woreda profile data. In line with this, the team developed a number of data collection and analysis tools, as well as make regular use of the Kobo Toolbox for data collection and analysis. Finally, the CLA-MEL team continued its close collaboration with RiPA South, further strengthening linkages through harmonizing indicators and tools.

B. Component Updates

Component 1: Improved Disaster Risk Management (DRM) Systems and Capacity

**Objective 1.1: Improved DRM capacity of regional / woreda government offices**

**RiPA Redirection Activities**

RiPA sought to raise awareness about COVID-19 by spreading messages via vehicle mounted megaphones in Zone 1 woredas (Ayssaita, Afambo, Dubti and Mile). These messages, which emphasized the key symptoms, transmission pathways, and prevention methods, reached thousands of people in IDP sites and marketplaces. The RiPA team also adapted and produced 3,490 SBCC materials, 49 automated handwashing stations with 294 litres of liquid soap for 39 health facilities, markets, educational institutions and government offices in Dubti, Mile, Chifra, Gewane, Amibara woredas and Samara-Logia Town Administration.

COVID-19 materials distribution in Dubti woreda and Mile Barbara May Maternity Hospital (Left to Right)
Following floods in the Afar region on August 8, 2020 affecting almost all of RiPA intervention woredas, the regional BoLANRND made an official request for transportation of fodder from the Dubti fodder bank to flood-affected woredas. The RiPA C1 team responded to this call, supporting transportation of fodder to six woredas of Mile, Aysaita, Afambo, Dubti, Gewanie, and Amibara. A total of 800 households (3,200 people) and 1,260 livestock affected by the flood in the six woredas are expected to be fed for a month through the distribution of 6,750 bales. In addition, in response to DPFSPCO request for transportation of food and non-food items, the RiPA team facilitated transportation of food and non-food items from a regional store to two flood displaced woredas, Aysaita and Afambo. This activity aims to reach 2,328 households (9,312 people) displaced by floods. RiPA also supported the multi-stakeholder rapid flood impact assessment, both financially and technically.

The DRM team conducted desk reviews to assess the capacity of Afar regional state’s DRM system, identifying the key strengths, gaps and weaknesses in DRM institutions’ structures and performance capacity. The findings will inform future capacity building of the DRM system and structures. The team also reviewed the woreda risk profiles of Afar, Oromia and Somali regions. Results indicated that all 32 woredas in Afar have risk profiles prepared in 2013, most of them with contingency and mitigation plans. In Somali and Oromia, on the other hand, only four of 15 RIPA woredas have risk profiles, all of which are outdated except for Afdem woreda’s 2018 risk profile. Finally, the RiPA Afar field team continued participating on the regular government led bi-weekly DRM task force (TF) meetings organized by the RDPFSPCO.

Objective 1.2: Community disaster planning and action improved to build resilience capacities with the ability to react to shocks and stresses in a way that does not undermine well-being

The DRM team could not conduct the Community Vulnerability and Capacity Analysis (CVCA) as planned due to the outbreak of COVID-19. However, the team did perform a desk review of a CVCA conducted by the PRIME project in 2013, with the view to understand local contexts and changes observed since then. The findings showed that drought and erratic rainfall was reported as the most common significant hazards. Flood and conflict were identified as major hazards in the Somali region, while heat stress was considered as a hazard for the Afar region only. However, recent trends in the Afar region show that this is changing, with flooding and conflict becoming major hazards. Thus, the DRM Advisor is taking CARE Academy ToT on CVCA and subsequently plans to deliver training for project staff and government experts on conducting CVCA in year two, using the version 2 of the new Gendered CVCA tool, which includes crosscutting issues such as gender, ecosystem and governance.

Objective 1.5 Improved Natural Resource Health

As part of the PRM scale up and institutionalization of PRM systems in new RiPA woredas, the team conducted a detailed PRM-NRM assessment based on learnings generated from a woreda-level PRM implemented by the PRIME project. The objective of this assessment was to examine the existing NRM governance arrangements, land tenure, and the role of Customary Institutions in natural resources management. An assessment report of the Afar region has been finalized. The team also developed PRM guidelines contextualized to the current situation and ensured its translation into the Afari language, in close collaboration with the Afar regional DRM Bureau. Subsequently, a PRM-NRM ToT will be provided to government staff and cascaded to the
woreda level. Similar assessments will also be conducted in RiPA woredas in the Somali and Oromia regions.

**Component 2: Diversified and Sustainable Economic Opportunities for People Transitioning out of Pastoralism, particularly Women and Youth**

**Redirection (R) 2.1: Stimulus package through cash transfer for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (COVID-19 response)**

Mercy Corps conducted a Rapid Market Assessment to analyze the impact of COVID-19 on these enterprises. Results indicate that 95% of surveyed enterprises reported reduction in profits as a result of the crisis, which is being driven in particular by a decline in demand (reported by 43% of enterprises) and the increase in transportation costs (36%). Additionally, 30% of enterprises have been affected by challenges in accessing key production inputs. For enterprises engaged in food processing and livestock trade, this decline in performance will have a knock-on effect on farmers and livestock producers who depend on them as buyers. Out of enterprises with loans from financial institutions, 25% have stopped repaying the loan due to the crisis, which triangulates with the findings from the financial service provider (FSP) survey. Finally, 24% of enterprises have been forced to lay-off workers, resulting in 75 job losses among those surveyed. These numbers may increase in the coming months, as only 11% of business owners reported having the capacity to maintain their current payroll for more than six months if the crisis continues. In response, RI PA designed a redirection activity to provide a one-time stimulus package to enterprises that are highly affected by COVID-19. Accordingly, the project completed selection and verification of 225 micro- and small businesses across six woredas of Oromia (Babile, Gursum) and Somali region (Babile, Gursum, Erer and Shinelle).

In order to deliver the stimulus package cash transfer, Mercy Corps developed a Master Service Agreement (MSA) with financial service providers that will serve for two years, allowing the team to provide the specific COVID-19 response one-time stimulus package delivery and other responses in the future, should they arise. After a competitive RFA process, Mercy Corps selected Somali Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs), Oromia Credit and Savings Share Company (OCSSCO), Afar MFI and Cooperative Bank of Oromia as final partners in the MSA. A task order was then developed, and agreement was signed with OCSSCO and Somali Micro Finance Institutes to transfer the funds to the selected micro- and small Enterprises, provide training on financial literacy, support preparation of business plans, and implement mandatory savings.

**Standard Operating Procedures**

RI PA developed Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to conduct cash transfer activities. The SOP has eight major sections:

1. Financial service provider selection
2. Transfer type, amount, frequency and disbursement mechanism
3. Identification, registering and selection of program participants
4. Participant management
5. Distribution preparation
6. The distribution process
7. Post-distribution monitoring
8. Reconciliation and payment of transfer service provider
The sections are made up of 83 thorough and detailed steps. The steps will be revised and updated following implementation of each cash transfer activity with the view to refining the process.

**Enterprise Verification**

Verification of the 48 enterprises selected to receive the transfers was conducted across the six woredas from September 21-25. More than 95% of the businesses have only been established for less than two years, and over 97% are engaged in the service sector. The intervention is designed to support a sustained relationship between the businesses and the financial service provider, so that the businesses continue to realize savings and access and use diverse financial services/products and tailor made business development services (BDS), as demand for such services was one of the major findings of the rapid market assessment.

Following verification, a baseline tool was developed to document the initial status of the enterprises to follow-up and conduct quarterly performance monitoring throughout the project implementation period.

**Redirection (R) 2.2: Afar Flood Response Stimulus package for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises**

In Afar, overflow of the Awash River and subsequent flash flooding has affected and displaced many people. According to the latest rapid multi-sectoral assessment report that the Afar regional government released, a total of 67,885 people have been affected, and from these, 40,731 peoples have been displaced across 11 woredas. Not only have the floods caused displacement of communities, a total of 9,339 livestock have also died in six woredas. The affected areas are Awsi Resu districts (*Dubti, Aysaita, Afambo, Garani and Mile*), Gabi Rasu districts (*Awash Fentale, Dulesa, Gewane and Gela’alu*) Fanti Rasu (*Teru*), and Kilbati Rasu (*Dalol*).

As with the COVID-19 response, RiPA’s flood response aims to help businesses resume operations by providing a stimulus package, which is equivalent to the loan provided to Micro and Small Enterprises (SMEs) by MFIs through financial service providers. Accordingly, the team has selected 94 micro and small enterprises in collaboration with government stakeholders. The stimulus package will be implement by Afar MFI. The latter will also provide financial literacy training, support in business plan development, and provide continuous mentoring and coaching and encourage the selected MSEs to save regularly.

**Objective 2.1: Improved business enabling environment and ability for entrepreneurial TOPs to create successful businesses and employment opportunities**

Mercy Corps Ethiopia and MM have signed an MoU to rollout the Somali language MM platform. The partnership aims to build a mentoring community committed to better business outcomes for approximately 27,500 entrepreneurs and 6,800 mentors in the Somali Region, over a period of three years.
The MicroMentor team recently completed a training on “methodology transfer” for both RiPA and the Strengthened Socio-Economic Development and Better Employment Opportunities for Refugees and Host Communities (STEDE) program. To leverage the wider Somali speaking community, the rollout of Somali language MM platform also engaged MC’s Somalia and Kenya teams, who were also part of the training. The online training was organized over a period of four weeks (September 14 - October 5, 2020) in eight sessions, allowing the local team to efficiently manage the different program components and coordinate among the user communities. In addition, the process of the platform translation from English to Somali language has started through a local translator. Translation is expected to be completed in November 2020.

**Objective 2.2: Increase the number of viable, less-climate dependent economic opportunities to those transitioning out of pastoralism with a focus on women and youth**

RiPA has identified two milk processing firms and two soap/detergent factories with which to conduct further market assessments and explore potential partnerships. Discussions are ongoing with one of the biggest Camel and Cow milk processing firms “Eastern Dairy” located in Dire Dawa. In addition, a quick assessment of the status of dairy firms in Oromia and Somali RiPA implementation woredas was conducted.

![Meeting with Eastern Dairy in Mercy Corps office and their Prime product “Camelot” pasteurized camel milk](image)

**Objective 2.3: Improved access to finance for pastoral households and TOPs - with a focus on women and youth**

The main activity conducted during this quarter was the revision of the MoU between MC and Jamiione, initially drafted in early 2020. The MOU has now been finalized and signed by both parties.

**Integrated Implementation with other Components and/or Projects**

*Face cloth and Tippy tap production integration with C4*

C2 & C4 collaborated for an integrated response through engagement of local youth and women for the production of face cloths and hand washing stations (tippy taps) in Dire Dawa and Jigjiga. As production has been successfully completed, the next action will be to facilitate provision of these items to the targeted audiences, including health workers, MFI agents, and livestock traders. Producer groups will take the lead in distribution and provision of the items jointly with regional health bureaus. Through financial support injected from C4, a total of 1,250 face cloth and 132 handwashing stations were produced.
**Joint JESH Assessment**

The Jijiga Export Slaughter House (JESH) was supported by the PRIME program but is currently not operational. As such, the RiPA C2 and C3 teams are collaborating with Mercy Corps’ Regional Livestock Strategy initiative to conduct an assessment to understand the challenges and threats facing JESH. A consultant group has been selected to lead the study, which will begin in November 2020. Thus far, an initial hypothesis has been developed and shared for review.

**Stakeholder Interaction**

C2 held a discussion with the Job Creation Commission (JCC Innovations team) to identify potential collaboration areas. The following three high level intervention areas were identified as areas of collaboration: Expansion of public employment services to regions, improvement of business enabling environment and energy services such as Solar-pay-as-you-go activity with Belcash.

**Component 3: Intensified and Sustained Pastoral and Agro-Pastoral Production and Marketing**

The two re-direction activities planned during the reporting period were 1) to respond to the impact of COVID-19 on the livestock market through the stimulation of shoat offtake in the Somali region; and 2) to respond to the Afar flood shock on livestock though the provision of vet vouchers in collaboration with PVPs to those displaced livestock producer households.

The rapid assessment conducted to assess the impact of COVID-9 in the Somali region highlighted the need for livestock market stimulating interventions in the region. Accordingly, RiPA C3 re-directed $70,000 to stimulate stagnated selected livestock market through the provision of a smart subsidy to livestock traders to buy in added uncertainty and costs due to actions taken to respond to the pandemic. Fifteen livestock traders (three of them women) were selected who managed to offtake 5,700 sheep/goats from four prioritized markets (Kebrabay, Degahbour, Biki and Denbel) within 40 days. Each trader was given a 380 sheep/goat offtake quota. Within 40 days, the traders managed 100% of their quota and an additional 6,132 shoats as a result of motivations created from the small subsidy, representing 208% of target. The doubling of offtake without subsidy is indicative of the potential for the market to grow, provided that small supports and linkages are created. In line with this, four livestock trader representatives were linked with four export abattoirs, and some have already begun to supply animals. As a result of this intervention 1,273 pastoral household heads (representing 6,365 household members) sold their shoats to program targeted traders at better prices as compared with the before intervention market prices.

During the quarter, a large number of RIPA targeted communities in Afar were affected by floods. Component 3 is redirecting $30,000 to support 3,000 pastoral households through the

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**Improvement in Market Prices**

Based on a one-time before and during/after market price comparison of different category goats and sheep from four targeted markets, an average 10% price increase was noted as compared with the before intervention period. This might be attributed to various contributing factors, but traders affirmed that the stimulating offtake intervention contributed to the improvement of market prices in the targeted markets. A $70,000 market subsidy targeted for 5,700 shoats ended up stimulating the markets through the offtake of additional 6,132 shoats by program targeted livestock traders during the contract period.
provision of vet vouchers to address animal health concerns due to the increased likelihood of disease outbreak. Six PVPs that showed interest in providing vet input services to targeted communities through voucher schemes were selected, and 15,000 vouchers (6,000 each with 100 Birr value and 9,000 each with 50 Birr value) were printed. Household targeting is ongoing. Each pastoral household head will receive a maximum of 350 Birr worth of vet inputs and/or service vouchers to access inputs.

**Objective 3.1. Increased production and productivity of Livestock and Crop system in the Pastoral and Agro-Pastoral area**

During the quarter, the SOW for conducting a crop market systems assessment in Somali in collaboration with the STEDE program was finalized. In addition, the SOW for the deferred comprehensive market systems assessment to understand the context to support both Component 2 & 3 activities was updated to recruit consultants for the assessment.

Intervention Concept Notes guiding the animal feed resource development activity was developed and field teams began to develop regional context-based Activity Concept Notes (ACN). Moreover, Terms of Reference (TOR) to hire a consultant to develop regional context-specific feed strategy implementation guidelines was also developed. Following the finalization of the ICN for guiding Animal Health Intervention, field staff started ACN development based on their respective regional contexts.

The Afar flood response redirection activity is well aligned with standard RiPA activities, hence efforts are underway to link the six PVPs working on the voucher schemes with at least three Community Animal Health Workers (CAHWs) each in their respective market catchment areas. Ongoing collaborations with RiPA South engaged the Ethiopian Veterinarian Association (EVA) on how to positively influence the government partners to approve the Veterinary Rationalization Road Map, which is expected to support the Public Private Partnership (PPP) model in the delivery of animal health services in areas where the HEARD\(^1\) program overlaps with RiPA. It was agreed that EVA will take the lead in pushing the road map issues forward and to discuss further areas of collaboration with the project.

In alignment with Mercy Corps’ regional livestock strategy development, preparation is underway to hire a consultant to conduct a deep dive assessment to identify gaps and mentorship areas for agro-processing enterprises that were previously supported by PRIME, such as JESH. Stakeholder engagement meetings were also conducted with MOTI, emphasizing the importance of speeding up the process to move LMIS databases/server\(^2\) from the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) and identifying key areas of capacity development, in collaboration with RiPA South.

Aligning with the re-direction activity, Business to Business linkage meetings was organized for four livestock trader representatives with four export abattoirs in Modjio and Bishoftu. The traders have in person meetings with Modjo, Organ, Luna and Abyssinya Export Abattoirs. This activity implementation will potentially benefit vulnerable groups by creating access to markets for livestock. In addition, the project facilitated meetings between livestock traders and Ethiopian Meat and Dairy Institute (EMDIDI) officials. Agreements were reached with government

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\(^1\) One focus area of the HEARD program is to pilot the Private Public Partnership model on animal health service delivery

\(^2\) LMIS was previously managed under MOA, but based on current restructuring it is being moved to MOTI
partners to organize follow on discussion platforms in Jigjiga for federal and regional level government partners, export abattoir representatives, livestock traders and community representatives.

Ongoing stakeholder interactions include with the following:

- MOTI - discussing future areas of collaboration in the livestock and livestock product marking areas, and operationalization of Livestock Market Information System (LMIS);
- EMDIDI - conversation with the participation of livestock traders to identify key areas that require emphasis to strengthen trader linkages with export abattoirs;
- MOA - Quarantine Import Export and Inspection Directorate follow-up on agreed items;
- ATA team - exploring opportunities for collaboration during the implementation of ATA 10 year emerging region (i.e. pastoral areas) plan, and exploring opportunities to scale out digital agriculture supporting interventions to RiPA target areas;
- ICARDAl/LRI - explore their experience on community based small ruminant breeding activities;
- RiPA South Component 3 team leads - discuss jointly supporting the restart of LMIS and Veterinary Rationalization Road Map.

Component 4: Improved and Sustained Nutrition and Hygiene Practices

Objective 4.1: Improved nutrition status of targeted households

Consumption of diversified diets by pastoral and agro pastoral households is one of the major objectives for C4. In this quarter, the team began the secondary data literature review on food availability. This will be refined in the next quarter in preparation for the formal Knowledge Attitude and Practice (KAP) survey which will assess household consumption patterns.

The RiPA team held strategic discussions with the Global Nutrition Advisor on crafting a tailor-made RiPA nutrition and adolescent health strategy. The idea development is still in process, but research on understanding more about adolescent health and nutrition will be conducted in the upcoming quarters. The assessment findings will be used to develop a Nutrition and adolescent strategy for the RiPA project. The strategy will be developed based on the “nutrition in the life cycle approach” including being more intentional and sensitive in targeting adolescent mothers through various nutrition RiPA project activities.

Objective 4.2: Strengthened sanitation and hygiene outcomes of targeted households

General Population COVID-19 Awareness raising

Most C4 redirected COVID-19 response activities focused on awareness raising and improving hygiene practices. The RiPA team coordinated with the Afar and Somali region to translate the EPHI/John Hopkins developed SBCC materials for conducting COVID-19 awareness. Both regions endorsed these RiPA-translated materials for use by other partners who are also conducting awareness raising on COVID-19. In Afar, the project reproduced 3,490 posters, 14 roll up banners and 20 normal wall banners. The procurement of 11,660 SBCC materials for Somali and 1,440 for Oromia region is being finalized; they will be distributed next quarter.

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3 ICARDA: International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas
The project also procured and distributed 49 handwashing stations for health centres and 294 liters of liquid handwashing soap for handwashing stations for Dubti, Chifra, Mille, Gewane, Aysaita, Gewane and Amibara woredas of Afar Region.

Business Stimulation for COVID-19 Response
In collaboration with C2, for Somali and Oromia regions, the team supported small women- and youth-owned enterprise business by engaging them to supply facecloths and hand washing stations and manage the detergent procurement and distribution processes. COVID-19 had paralyzed functionality of most businesses and this model not only boosted businesses but prevented employee retrenchment or termination including providing positive viable business options for youths while limiting time spent on other non-productive engagements like “chewing khat.”

Production of a TV and Radio Spot for Afar
TV and Radio spots in Afari language were produced and pre-tested in three RIPA implementation woredas (Aysaita, Afambo and Dubti). A total of 21 people (12 women and 9 men) participated in the pre-testing exercise as respondents. The TV and Radio Spot key messages focused on COVID-19 prevention, include promoting handwashing with soap, promoting social distancing, discouraging “hand kissing when greeting,” and encouraging the use of face masks in the context of pastoral and agro-pastoral communities. The regional health bureau communications director approved the production and provided endorsement letters. The TV and Radio Spots will broadcast next quarter with the support of the regional health and communication bureau.

Improvement of Menstrual Hygiene
In the next quarter, through the dignity kits which are under procurement process, the RIPA project intends to address menstrual hygiene for adolescent girls and pregnant and lactating women (PLW). At least 2,500 individuals will be targeted in Amibara and Gewane woredas.

Objective 4.3: Institutionalization of nutrition specific and sensitive interventions into government systems
Through the RIPA project, Mercy Corps is a regional convener of the ECSC-SUN for Somali region and a Core Member of the Communications and Advocacy technical working group. The team has been actively involved in the two coordination platforms throughout the quarter.

C. Crisis Modifier
The project made efforts to activate the Crisis Modifier for the Afar Flood Response, but the process was not successful. Although the Afar region requested flood response support from the RIPA project, USAID determined that as the floods were not a sudden disaster but rather a
known occurrence that the government should have planned for in advance through other
disaster prevention mechanisms. Coupled with this, the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic also
strained the response capacity of many donors, leaving limited resources available for such new
emergencies. As such, the RIPA project redirected some funds from the main RIPA budget to
respond to the flood affected communities in RIPA’s operational areas. Seven flood redirection
interventions across the four components were designed and approved by USAID.

The government, through BoFED, expressed displeasure with RiPA’s inability to activate the
Crisis Modifier for both COVID-19 and Afar flood response. Mercy Corps shared these concerns
with USAID through the AOR, and discussions are ongoing as to how to handle such future
requests, especially considering government expectations that the Crisis Modifier funds are
readily available. Mercy Corps plans to formally respond to Afar BoFED and explain the
mechanisms of activating the CM and the approvals required to do so.

D. Cross-Cutting Themes

Gender and Youth

Objective 1.7 Improved Gender disparities in drought and conflict response

A Rapid Gender Analysis for COVID-19 impact has been completed and the report shared.
However, revised information and a cross-cutting intervention plan is required for the following
quarter as cases appear to be increasing. The second RGA was conducted for the Afar flood in
August 2020 to identify different needs, risk bearing capacities and coping strategies of women,
men, boys and girls in RiPA project intervention areas. It further aimed to understand the gender
roles and relations and how they may change as a result of a crisis.

In C2, the gender specialist in Afar involved in the enterprise selection and criteria setting
committee and ensured the selection of women-owned enterprises for cash based transfer
program (CTP). Female Headed Households are prioritized in C4 activities, and the purchase and
distribution of suitable hygiene and dignity kits for adolescent girls will be conducted in flood
affected areas. Similar cross cutting considerations are made for component 3 to prioritize
Female Headed Households for fodder and vet drug distribution.

Meanwhile, the Social Analysis and Action (SAA) implementation strategy has been developed
for RiPA which is an important guide that shows the respective component entry points and
engagement plan for field level SAA community discussion and staff and government
stakeholders’ capacity building and reflection.

Peacebuilding

Output 1.6: Conflict resolution mechanisms strengthened

Assessment response analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on peace and social cohesion in Fafen
and Siti Zones of Somali Region is finalized; the findings revealed that COVID-19 has no direct
triggering effect on violent conflicts. However, the spread of the pandemic and government
measures taken to contain it has had a wide range of socio-economic impacts. These include:

- Declines in trade and economic activities, demand for livestock and agricultural products
  and increases in cost of living;
- Limited interactions during social occasions in communities; impacts mutual support and
  cooperation and social harmony; and
• Stigmatization of daily laborers and cross-border traders.

An assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on peace and social cohesion was also conducted in four woredas in Afar. Findings indicated a decline in social events, paralyzed markets affecting people engaged in small businesses and pastoralists who depend on the sale of animals, decreased purchasing power, and impacts on the traditional system of sharing and dispatching information known as Daggu.

Consequently, a TOR to engage local community radio station in the dissemination of messages on peace and social cohesion have been developed. The messages themselves have also been developed, based on the findings of the rapid assessment of COVID-19. RiPA partnered and contracted the Somali Regional State Mass Media Agency for broadcasting these messages, and monitoring tools were also developed.

Conflict sensitivity and Do No Harm training materials were developed and two sessions of training were conducted with Mercy Corps Technical Support Unit for 23 (6 female) RiPA staff.

**Highlights Requiring USAID Attention/Involvement**

As described above, the Government of Ethiopia has expressed concern about the inability of the RiPA program to activate the Crisis Modifier to respond to COVID-19 and the Afar floods. RiPA intends to clarify the process for activating the CM with the government, but the program appreciates USAID’s continued engagement on the process for handling future CM activation requests.

**Challenges, Issues, Risk Management**

- Delay in implementation of RiPA project plans as a result of inevitable shift to COVID-19 and flood responses;
- RiPA implementation woredas highly affected by Desert Locust, Floods and COVID-19 hazards due to a shortage of budget and resources, irrespective of the existing DRM plans;
- Activating the Crisis Modifier proved challenging, limiting its efficacy in immediate response to recent shocks; failure to trigger the Crisis Modifier (CM) for both COVID-19 and Afar Floods response also resulted in the government questioning the modality of CM funds.
- The agreement signing at the regional level is taking longer than expected, due to the diverse feedback provided by each region. This impacted smooth implementation of project activities, as signed regional agreements are a prerequisite of implementation.
- Floods in Afar shifted the priority of focus to response and recovery activities and the regular development activity of finalizing the preliminary technical training and Business Development Service provider assessment was placed on hold.
- High expectations of woreda level government personnel and officials towards the stimulus package intervention, and a misplaced focus on only micro retail and service businesses to receive only one-time financial support with less consideration of future sustainability and strategic support that the financial institutions and the project will provide.
- Prior relationships have proved instrumental. If not for a collaborative spirit to respond to multiple crises and previous relationships through the PRIME project, operationalizing the COVID-19 response activities (stimulus package) would have been difficult to implement.
- Slow response from partners on agreed action points after virtual discussions.
COVID-19 limited staff movement and program activities that required group gatherings.
Regional Health Bureaus in all three RIPA implementation regions shifted priorities to COVID-19, delaying any activities that were not COVID-19 focused.
Floods in Afar made some roads, especially in Gewane and Amibara, inaccessible, thereby delaying activity implementation.
Unreliable internet connection and electricity as well security related challenges in the project implementation areas proved difficult.

**Lessons Learned**
The key DRM lesson learned pertain to more fully understanding the opportunities for supporting the collaboration of multiple development actors, as a clear pathway to strengthening the humanitarian-development nexus and increasing development impact. Further, there is a need to identify processes of systems building that will enable RIPA to attain the goal of deeper collective impact.

As much as cross component integration is ideal for activity implementation, there needs to be strong field team presence at the ground level from all components to actually implement integrated activities in real time. For example, for C2-C4 integration activity for the production of tippy tap and handwashing stations, as C4 teams were not yet in place, it took more time than expected to come up with a more comprehensive real time implementation at the ground level.

Finally, through the C2 and C4 business stimulation as part of responding to COVID-19, the RIPA team learned that even while delivering emergency activities, it is possible to use the development lens and not paralyze the market.

**III. Cumulative List of Reports/Studies/Documents on Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC)**
- Rapid market assessment
- Rapid Gender Analysis

**IV. Plans for Next Quarter**
**Component 1: Improved Disaster Risk Management Systems and Capacity Plans**
and expected outputs for the next quarter
- Finalize RIPA COVID-19 redirection activities;
- Finalize flood response activities and continue supporting government recovery efforts;
- Improve DRM system and capacity plans;
- Improve communication and dissemination of early warning information at the community level;
- Conduct PSP monitoring.
Component 2: Diversified and Sustainable Economic Opportunities for People Transitioning out of Pastoralism

- Conducting integrated market assessment with C3 and summarizing high level findings; for partner identification and sharing to external stallholders;
- Conduct MicroMentor Somali language platform official launch;
- VSLA digitization through JamiiOne rollout through RiPA field team training;
- Identify potential technical training provider and private sector actor for potential partnership, at least one in each of the three regions; and
- Continue partnership with Afar Microfinance to rollout mobile and agent banking to expand access and use of financial services/products to remote and least served pastoral households and enterprises deliver improved and demand driven service and/or products.

Component 3: Intensified and Sustained Pastoral and Agro-Pastoral Production and Marketing

A significant number of planned activities for this quarter are carried over from the previous quarter plan:
- Finalize the implementation of Afar flood response planned redirection activity of vet inputs supply to affected community through vet inputs vouchers;
- Finalize long delayed Livestock/Crop market assessment;
- Complete the development of Feed strategy implementation guideline/manuals development;
- Develop context specific animal feed development ACN and start its preliminary phases of implementation;
- Develop context specific animal health service delivery supporting ACN and start its implementation;
- Develop ICN to support Agi-inputs supply system and make efforts on its implementation start-up; and
- In collaboration with EMDIDI, organize discussion platform focused on livestock trade in Somali region.

Component 4: Improved and Sustained Nutrition and Hygiene Practices

- Develop SOW to conduct a KAP survey for nutrition and WASH and initiate tool development and data collection process
- Develop tools and plan for Barrier Analyses surveys that will be conducted in Q2 of Year 2. Refine the tools based on findings from the KAP survey.
- Coordinate with Ripa south to design and harmonize customized Performance Indicator Reference Sheets (PIRS) for Nutrition and WASH Activities
- Finalize Woreda health profiles
- Finalize the COVID-19 redirection activities; COVID-19 SBCC material design, production and distribution
- Installation of handwashing stations in Health Centres, Livestock markets and public markets through Micro Finance Enterprises (MFI) agents
- Monitoring of COVID-19 and Afar flood response including conducting Post Distribution Monitoring and After Action Review
- Broadcasting the Afar Radio and TV spots for COVID-19 awareness
- Finalize the tailor made Livestock markets and COVID-19 SBCC materials
- Finalize the Afar Intervention 1 flood response activities on hygiene and dignity kit distribution
- Attend a 3-day communication and advocacy training facilitated by the ECSC-SUN

**Peacebuilding:**

*Output 1.6 Conflict resolution mechanisms strengthened*
- Develop Conflict Assessment tool
- Conduct Conflict Mapping for Afar, Oromia and Somali Regions
- Strengthen the existing Early Warning system
- Conduct Market Assessment with C2 and C3
- Strengthen coordination, collaboration and learning mechanisms with conflict and governance stakeholders through technical working groups
- Develop message dissemination for peace and social cohesion for Afar cluster

**Expected challenges for Next Quarter**
- The occurrence of desert locust in RiPA operational areas is another major threat affecting the agro-pastoral areas. Regional governments are already requesting support in a response.