



SITUATION REPORT FOR ETHIOPIA December 1999 - January 2000

Consolidated UN report prepared by the Information Section of the UN Emergencies Unit for Ethiopia from information and reports provided by specialised UN agencies, media sources, the Ethiopian Government and NGOs.

Highlights

- ❑ The findings of the annual FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission, which took place from 6 November to 31 December are released, with forecasts of a main season harvest out-turn of 10.72 million metric tonnes, some 6 percent down on performance in 1998 but 22 percent better than the poor year of 1997;
- ❑ The Government of Ethiopia through the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission releases its relief appeal for 2000 detailing the humanitarian needs of 7.7 million people affected by crop and rain failures and some 350,000 people who remain displaced as a result of the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea;
- ❑ The UN Country Team, in support of the Government of Ethiopia appeal, presents to donors its Relief Action Plan and Appeal for 2000 outlining planned food assistance for victims of natural disasters and war amounting to just under 300,000 metric tons and priority interventions in the health, water, shelter and education sectors totalling US \$12.1 million. In conjunction with the UNHCR Global Appeal issued in Geneva in December 1999, donor contributions of 62,000 metric tons of food aid and \$22.6 million in non-food assistance is also being sought by UNHCR for the nearly 250,000 refugees who remain in Ethiopia;
- ❑ The National Meteorological Services Agency announce their projections for the upcoming *belg* season with warnings that the rains are likely to commence towards the end of February, rather later than normal, and thereafter could again be erratic in both distribution and amount;
- ❑ With low carry-over stocks from 1999, physical reserves in the Emergency Food Security Reserve at a record low level and very few food shipments scheduled to arrive in the next few weeks, fears are growing that a critical food-gap might emerge towards the end of the first quarter of 2000 with the possibility that some disruption of relief distributions may occur

News and Developments

Ethiopia gives response on "technical arrangements": Ethiopia has given the OAU its formal response to proposed arrangements for implementing the OAU Framework Agreement intended to end the Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict. The Ethiopian Spokesperson confirmed that the response was submitted to President Bouteflika of Algeria, the present Chairman of the OAU, in Algiers by the Ethiopian Minister of Foreign Affairs Seyoum Mesfin on Saturday, January 22. There was no comment with regard to the content. At the end of December the OAU submitted written documents to the Ethiopian government intended to clarify the modalities for implementing the Framework Agreement. The Ethiopian Government has expressed its dissatisfaction with the proposed arrangements, claiming among other issues that loopholes in the plan could allow Eritrea to avoid fully withdrawing to its pre-war positions - the "status quo ante" on which Ethiopia insists - before border demarcation takes place. (*IRIN and AFP*)

Formal start of election campaign announced The National Electoral Board has announced that eligible candidates for the House of People's Representatives and state councils in the national elections, due on 14 May, can formally begin their campaigns. The electoral board said political hopefuls who had obtained candidacy ID cards had the right to introduce themselves and their objectives "by organising public meetings, distributing leaflets, through advertisements and through other campaigning in a democratic manner," Radio Ethiopia reported. All candidates had the right to make use of the state mass media without charge, and "pertinent bodies" should allow candidates to

use appropriate venues for campaigning, it added. However, the law prohibited campaigning in military camps, mosques, churches and academic institutions, as well as in government and public institutions during working hours, the report added. At a discussion organized by the Ethiopia Mass Media Training Institute, Dawit Yohannes, speaker of the House of People's Representatives, urged the government-owned media to provide equal opportunities to all candidates to express their views and opinions. In covering the election campaign, panellists at the discussion also urged journalists to be ethical and remain loyal to their profession and non-partisan while reporting the truth on the ground. The private "Addis Tribune" newspaper reported that the Ethiopia-Eritrean war presently dominates the election agenda, with the economy, employment, social services, corruption, equal opportunity and national divisions also among the issues. (IRIN, Walta Information Centre and Addis Tribune)

Agricultural Situation and Weather Report

December is typically the peak month for harvesting main season cereal crops in the central and western highlands. Due to the late commencement of the growing season in 1999, in some areas the harvest was delayed by a few weeks and so in many areas farmers were still actively engaged in gathering their crops well into January. With little or no rainfall reported for most parts of the country in December and January, in general the weather was favourable for the harvest and post-harvest activities such as threshing and the cleaning and bagging of grain. However, the very low minimum temperatures recorded in some areas of central, eastern and north-eastern and southern highlands of Ethiopia could have a negative impact on the normal physiological development of perennial crops such as coffee, enset (false banana) and fruit trees.

On February 10, the National Meteorological Services Agency convened a special meeting to provide reports on the *bega* (dry period) season (October 1999 - January 2000) and to present its projections for the upcoming *belg* (short rains) season. The workshop was attended by more than 25 participants invited from various Government Offices, NGOs, UN Agencies and donors operating in the country.

Bega season: according to NMSA experts, apart from the extension of the main rains in October 1999 in western and north western areas, most parts of the country experienced below normal precipitation both in amount and the number of rainy days. South Tigray, Somali and Afar regions and Borena Zone all received much below normal rainfall during the period. Most parts of the country were also dry in January with only a little rain recorded in Gore, Arsi, Bale and Moyale areas of Borena Zone. NMSA reported that the extension of the rains in October had a negative impact in some western and south western parts of Ethiopia where the moist conditions were not favourable for late maturing crops and slightly disrupted harvesting and post harvesting activities.

Belg season forecast: The upcoming *belg* season was described by NMSA experts as having worrying similarities to the 1999 season. This is due to the extended effect of the 'La Niña' phenomenon (when the eastern Pacific Ocean experiences an upwelling of cool water - opposite of the *El Niño*) which is expected to continue until the end of May this year. NMSA are therefore forecasting erratic rainfall, with uneven occurrence in timing and distribution. The onset of the rains is also expected to be delayed until the end of February/beginning of March while the amount of rains is likely to be below normal. March is projected to be wet and normal while April is likely to exhibit below normal rainfall. Following this, there is a 60 percent chance that May 2000 will enjoy normal to above normal rainfall. However, according to the experts, there is a 40 percent chance that the north-east part of Ethiopia may receive below normal rainfall. At the same time the SNNPR and south and south-east of the country are expected to experience a 45 percent probability of below normal rainfall in the coming *belg*.

The implications of a poor *belg* season of this year may be very significant indeed. For example, in areas like North Omo Zone, Konso, Derashe and Burji special weredas where *belg* production contributes 30-70 percent of the annual harvest (mainly maize and sorghum) a delayed onset of the rains, followed by poor distribution and coverage will seriously impact the already fragile production system. In other parts, land preparation and planting will be delayed, and intercropping and relay cropping activities disrupted. In Konso and its environs sorghum ratooning also depends on the performance of the previous year's stalks of the plant. In these areas failure of *belg* means failure of *meher* crops, in particular, the sorghum harvest.

Other areas vulnerable to a poor *belg* season will be the southern and south-eastern lowland pastoral areas, which normally experience their long rains at this time. Following the extended dry season due to the poor short rains in October - December last year, it will be critically important that the coming rainy season is sufficient to replenish water supplies and allow an improvement in grazing. Any disruption of the rains could spell further livestock mortality and increasing hardship for herders and their families especially in areas such as the central Ogaden and Borena.

Relief Food Pledges and Logistics

Although about 50,000 MT of food aid was received through Djibouti port in January, the outlook for February is bleak with only 1,000 MT of blended food expected to arrive. March, with roughly 50,000 MT of food aid due, is slightly better but given the normal slippage that occurs between tentative schedules and actual arrivals even this amount may be optimistic. Although the pipeline begins to improve in April with roughly 100,000 MT expected, it will still take some weeks for these shipments to actually get down to the distribution sites. The Emergency Food Security Reserve (EFSR) is also very low and, after the most recent borrowings have been deducted, stocks are only about 40,000 MT, well below the "normal" minimum for the Reserve of about 70,000 MT. With carry-over stocks also very low this year, Ethiopia faces a critical food gap between now and sometime in late April as about 250,000 MT of food is required to meet relief distributions planned for the February, March and April period. Although it may be possible to fill some of this gap through local purchase programs, local purchase is a slow process and substantial amounts of food may not be available through this mechanism until well into the second quarter of the year. Another alternative currently being investigated by WFP is the possibility of diverting a shipment or shipments to Ethiopia.

In addition to the problem of the "food gap", which will require both urgent and imaginative solutions on the part of government and donors, current pledges for the year 2000 remain extremely low. A European Union "advance pledge" of 50,000 MT is almost finalized and there are also roughly 16,000 MT from Euronaid scheduled for arrival in March. The Netherlands (5,000 MT) and United Kingdom (3,000 MT) have also made pledges and the WFP "bridging appeal" (roughly 32,000 MT) is almost fully resourced. These pledges, however, are still a long way from the 250,000 MT needed to cover the requirement for next three months and far short of the almost 900,000 MT requested by the DPPC to cover the food needs of the victims of natural disasters and the displaced for 2000. In order to avoid any interruptions in the pipeline or the kind of problems in food supply that developed in June/July last year, donors are urged to make pledges as early as possible.

Special Reports

FAO/WFP Crop Production and Food Needs Assessment Mission

The FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission for 1999 was conducted in two parts. The first part, looking at both the chronic and current vulnerability of people to food insecurity, was conducted by the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission with the participation of WFP, other UN agencies, donors and a number of NGOs from early November through to the end of December. The analysis provided by some 20 teams led to a quantification of the amounts of food aid required for 2000, the figures for which were incorporated into the DPPC relief appeal launched on January 21. The second element, the crop production assessment, was conducted by FAO with the assistance of the Ministry of Agriculture during the period 18 to 30 November with the aim of finalizing the main season cereal and pulse production estimates for 1998 and to prepare production forecasts for 1999. This article summarizes the findings of the FAO mission, the full report of which was released on January 26.

The six FAO/MoA crop assessment teams visited all parts of the country except Gambella and Benishangul-Gumuz. They consulted with regional bureaux and all the MoA zonal offices to obtain post-harvest figures for 1998 and pre-harvest estimates for 1999. The teams then inspected crops in different parts of each zone and engaged in discussions with farmers and traders. Satellite images were also used to indicate rainfall and growth patterns in 1999 compared with previous years.

Comparing the aggregated post-harvest production data for 1998 with last year's mission report indicated that forecasts were 2.6 percent higher for the *meher* season. Actual production (cereals and pulses) was 11.39 million tonnes for the 1998 *meher*. The 1999 season, the mission forecast a harvest of 10.72 million tonnes, some 6 percent below last year's outturn but 22 percent higher than the poor year of 1997 and 9 percent lower than the record production of 1996. Compared with 1998, most of the reduction in production has come from a lower planted area (down by 4 percent), although the mean yield of all cereals and pulses has also fallen, by 2 percent. The most important factors affecting areas planted and yields this year were the poor *belg* rains, the late start of the *meher* rains and, in the west, the late start to the rains for long-cycle crops.

The dry *belg* season in much of the country left livestock in poor condition. As a result, the availability and performance of plough oxen were significantly reduced and land preparation suffered. The delayed main rains led to late cultivation and planting of *meher* crops and, in some areas, long-cycle crops (especially sorghum) could not be planted and farmers had to switch to short-cycle, potentially lower yielding crops and to small grains. The late start to the main season rains, coupled with poorer land preparation, resulted in exceptionally high weed infestations with consequent losses of yield. However, once the rains started the season was relatively favourable in most areas, except the north. The surplus producing areas, in particular, seem to have done well, whilst the chronically deficit areas in the north, east and south are well below average.

The reduction in production this year compared to 1998 is most severe in Tigray (35 percent decline) but the southern region is also forecast to be down, by 12 percent. Amhara region is 5 percent down and Oromiya down by 1 percent. With the *meher* harvest now nearing completion the prices of most cereals have fallen, particularly for maize, which has reached US \$75 per tonne in some of the western surplus producing areas. Sorghum remains expensive at approximately US \$150 per tonne as its harvest starts later than maize, and wheat prices are generally easing downwards.

With FAO anticipating a below-average *belg* crop for 2000 (due to continued shortages of oxen and possibly of seed), the mission estimates the national food import requirement to be 764,000 tonnes - significantly above last year's level. This high level of anticipated imports had been exacerbated by the depletion of assets over recent years. People's options for coping are considerably diminished, including decreases in traditional income-earning opportunities and reduced agricultural output. Based on its assessment, the mission indicates that around 200,000 tonnes of food aid could be procured locally from surplus-producing areas of the country.

Government launches relief appeal for 2000

On January 21 the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission launched its appeal for emergency assistance in 2000. In previous years the appeal was launched before the end of December but this year it was decided to delay the launching by some weeks to allow for a more exhaustive needs assessment that could incorporate information on conditions during the main harvest period and also include pastoral areas, which in the past have been subject to a separate assessment process. The appeal for 2000, therefore, gives a more comprehensive picture of the relief needs that are expected to emerge during the year. The DPPC intends to continually review needs in the light of changing conditions in the country. It is expected that an update to the appeal will be issued in June once the performance of the *belg* rains is known and other updates may be issued should the situation change dramatically.

The requirements outlined in the appeal are the result of a number of detailed assessments undertaken with the assistance and participation of the UN, donor representatives and NGOs at the end of 1999. These included the extensive assessment of relief food assistance requirements in areas impacted by poor rains and acute food shortages undertaken by 20 inter-agency teams that visited every part of the country during November and December. The needs of the displaced in Tigray and Afar have been separately determined with the assistance of the regional authorities.

Looking back over relief operations in 1999, the DPPC noted that donors pledged just under 485,000 metric tonnes of relief food to Ethiopia (434,350 MT for the drought affected and 50,351 MT for the displaced) against a total estimated requirement for the year of 775,548 MT (WFP record a slight lower figure - see Table I below). Of the total pledged, by the end of the year 456,315 MT had been

either delivered or borrowed from the Emergency Food Security Reserve for immediate distribution. Added to this was food amounting to 59,690 MT that had been carried-forward from 1998. Total relief food made available during 1999 was therefore 516,005 MT. While relief operations early in the year were constrained by the limited availability of food, during the second half of the year the donor response picked-up markedly and the Government was able to increase the coverage of relief assistance significantly.

Table I: Pledges against 1999 Food Aid Requirements- Cereals & Pulses (MT)

Donor	Relief	Regular	Monetization	EFSR	TOTAL
USA	118,738	25,530	44,500		188,768
EC	94,629			50,000	144,629
WFP	188,377	65,550			253,927
Gov. of Ethiopia	25,000				25,000
Netherlands	10,000				10,000
UK	9,000				9,000
Norway	4,143	850			4,993
Canada	3,378	8,987			12,365
Denmark	8,912	2,280			11,192
France			10,000		10,000
Italy			13,173		13,173
Spain	716				716
TOTAL	462,893	103,197	67,673	50,000	683,763
Delivered as of 31 December 1999	219,386	80,785	67,673	0	367,844

Source: WFP Food Aid Status Report December 31, 1999

The analysis of food prospects for 2000 took into account the findings of the DPPC-led assessment missions that by the end of December had visited all crop-growing and pastoral areas of the country and the findings of the FAO crop assessment mission. With 1999 main season production expected to be significantly lower than in recent years and some pastoral areas suffering the effects of a third consecutive year of poor rains, the DPPC estimated that some 7,732,335 people would need relief food assistance during the course of the coming year. In addition, close to 350,000 people displaced as a result of the conflict with Eritrea and who are unable to cultivate their land or otherwise pursue their normal lives would need continuing assistance. In total, the DPPC estimates that 8,082,172 people will require food assistance amounting to 898,936 metric tonnes. An additional 2,589,401 mainly drought-affected people will need to be closely monitored in the light of the performance of the upcoming *belg* rains. Table II (over page) gives a complete regional breakdown of the figures.

After taking into account carry-over stocks and pledges to the Bridging Appeal made in November 1999 (estimated to be around 77,100 MT), the net food assistance required for the drought-affected and war-displaced is estimated at 821,835 metric tonnes for the year.

In addition to outlining the relief food requirements, the appeal also highlighted various non-food assistance requirements. For victims of natural disaster, the DPPC gave priority to interventions in the water supply sector, health care and veterinary services. Targeting some 2 million drought affected pastoralists in Bale, Borena, South Omo and different zones of the Somali region, the DPPC is asking for just under US \$4.6 million for water tankering operations and the construction and rehabilitation of water sources. A further US \$2.6 million is requested for the purchase of 216 emergency health kits and just under US \$9.5 million for the purchase of veterinary medicines.

The DPPC also paid attention to various areas where additional institutional and capacity building support will be required in the area of disaster prevention and preparedness. For the coming year the emphasis will be placed on maintaining the Emergency Food Security Reserve (pesticides, plastic sheeting and equipment), the establishment of the new National Non-Food Contingency Stock (funding for supplies) and Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Fund (funding), the construction of an additional 200 Relief Food Outlets each of 300 MT capacity (to be completed within three years), the creation of a Nutrition Coordination Unit within the DPPC, and the deployment of additional

vehicles for field monitoring and support. The total cost of these various interventions was estimated at nearly US \$20 million.

A proposal was also presented for the establishment of a dedicated water tankering fleet to strengthen strategic preparedness at the national level. The fleet, proposed as comprising 20 truck-mounted tankers, would be used to distribute water in the chronically drought-affected lowlands of the Somali Region, Afar, Borena and South Omo, as well as provide a service to flood-prone areas such as along the Baro, Awash and Wabi Shebelle rivers. The tankers would be used to supplement the limited tankering capacity currently available to the DPPC and a small number of NGOs. The cost of establishing the fleet, including spare parts for two years was estimated at US \$2.25 million.

Table II: Food Requirement for victims of National Disaster and the Displaced in 2000

Region	Population Needing Assistance			Food Requirement (MT)
	Drought affected	Displaced	Total	
Tigray	1,047,400	315,936	1,363,336	195,425
Afar	272,704	33,901	306,605	13,841
Amhara	2,534,915		2,534,915	292,947
Oromiya	1,598,246		1,598,246	159,608
Somali	1,321,000		1,321,000	130,395
Benishangul	4,201		4,201	315
SNNPR	852,740		852,740	83,991
Gambella	46,600		46,600	3,840
Harari	7,070		7,070	318
Dire Dawa	47,459		47,459	2,136
TOTAL	7,732,335	349,837	8,082,172	898,936

Source: DPPC Annual Appeal, January 21, 1999

In 1999, a range of relief items and materials were requested by the DPPC to meet the relocation, shelter, health and basic household needs of war-displaced civilians in Tigray and Afar. Of the 349,837 people displaced by the conflict (315,936 in Tigray and 33,901 in Afar) around 80 percent are thought to have benefited from this assistance. Some of the needs were met by the government through the allocation of funds raised from public and private sources, an effort that has raised so far more than Birr 219 million (approx. US \$27 million). A number of donors, however, also contributed towards the programme including the US Office for Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) and the European Commission (ECHO). A total of 75,000 metric tonnes of food assistance from donors was also requested of which approximately 48,000 MT was received, accounting for 64 percent of the amount required. The food pipeline for the displaced remained precarious throughout the year, suffering severe disruption in September and October due to a shortage of pledges and delays in delivery.

With no immediate end to the conflict in sight and following two lost farming seasons, the DPPC anticipate the displaced will require relief support for at least a further 12 months. While the government will continue to allocate resources to meet some of the needs, the DPPC are requesting from donors additional food assistance amounting to 62,136 metric tonnes and non-food assistance valued at Birr 147.4 million (approximately US \$ 18.1 million). The stated aim is to help mitigate the effects of prolonged displacement and strengthen local services among the hosting communities until such time the displaced are able to return home and resume productive lives.

Although no significant additional displacement is expected in 2000, there is an urgent need to ensure an adequate availability of food, to address significant unmet shelter needs especially for the increasing number of people now living in temporary camps, to expand the provision of improved water supplies and sanitation services and improve access to health services. With an estimated 44,000 school age children among the displaced, education is also a priority for the government and

there are plans to assist 27,000 of the neediest students through the provision of stationary materials, blankets, bed-sheets and uniforms. Supplies will also be procured for the setting-up and equipping of an additional fifty tented temporary classrooms in Tigray.

UN Country Team Launches Appeal for 2000

In support of the Government of Ethiopia's relief appeal, on January 28, the UN Country Team in Addis Ababa issued a US \$190 million appeal to provide over 8 million Ethiopians and some 250,000 refugees in Ethiopia with relief assistance. Included in the appeal were requests for assistance for 7,732,335 victims of natural disaster, 349,837 internally displaced persons and the requirements for Sudanese, Somali and other refugees in Ethiopia already included in the UNHCR Global Appeal launched in Geneva in December 1999. The appeal lists a number of priority interventions in food assistance, health, water, sanitation, nutrition, education, special protection needs and agriculture to be undertaken this year. Copies of the appeal document can be downloaded from the UN Emergencies Unit for Ethiopia's web site at: www.telecom.net.et/~undp-eue/

At the formal launching of the appeal, held at the UN Conference Center in Addis Ababa, the UN Country Team emphasized that current conditions in Ethiopia give great cause for concern. In 1999, a major humanitarian emergency was averted through rapid response from donors and flexible programming of resources by the Government and its partners. The fact that a major tragedy was avoided, however, should not lull one into a false sense of security. In many respects, the relief operation in 1999 only succeeded in meeting some of the most acute needs. If adequate assistance is slow in arriving, the crisis will not only return, but will be much larger in magnitude and severity and certainly more costly and difficult to mitigate.

For **victims of natural disaster** the UN World Food Programme, in support of the DPPC appeal of 21 January, will be requesting approval for an emergency operation covering over 250,000 metric tons of food aid to assist 2.3 million people for the period April – December 2000. UNICEF and WHO are appealing for US \$1.5 million to cover emergency health interventions, including programmes for malaria control, Expanded Program for Immunization (EPI) and nutrition. UNICEF is also appealing for US \$2.3 million to address some of the most urgent water supply needs, including priority water tankering and rehabilitation of water points, US \$1.6 million for support to education facilities in the most severely drought affected areas and US \$61,300 for special relief assistance and monitoring. In order to assist the most severely drought affected farmers, FAO is appealing for US \$2.8 million to cover emergency seed distributions, irrigation pumps and beehives. The food component of the appeal for victims of natural disasters, including the value of the food, transportation and other costs, amounts to US \$98.9 million while the total value of the non-food component is US \$8.4 million.

In order to assist the 349,837 Ethiopians **displaced in Tigray and Afar regions** by the conflict with Eritrea, the UN Country Team is appealing for both food and non-food assistance. WFP is requesting approval for 46,452 metric tons of food to assist 272,000 internally displaced people in Tigray between April and December. WHO, UNFPA and UNICEF are requesting US \$1.21 million for emergency health assistance including support to EPI programmes, malaria control, disease surveillance, health education/training, emergency health kits and HIV/AIDS materials. In order to address the most urgent water and sanitation needs, UNICEF is appealing for US \$591,000 for the expansion access of safe water supplies for the displaced. Other important components of UNICEF's appeal for assistance to the displaced include US \$810,500 for the construction of temporary schools and provision of school supplies, US \$897,000 in relief assistance and shelter materials, US \$99,500 for a landmine awareness programme and US \$68,800 to cover the special protection needs of the most vulnerable segments of the displaced population. The total value of the food component, including food costs and transportation is US \$23.85 million while the non-food component is estimated at just under US \$3.7 million.

The **refugee** component of the UN Country Team appeal summarizes the Ethiopia section of the UNHCR Global Appeal for 2000 issued to donors in Geneva in December 1999. The appeal covers the urgent care and maintenance needs of almost 250,000 refugees currently registered in Ethiopia as well as the WFP appeal for refugee food assistance. UNHCR is seeking donor assistance amounting to just under US \$22.6 million to cover protection, general care and maintenance, voluntary repatriation and reintegration activities as well as environmental activities and operational

support to cooperating partners. The WFP portion of the refugee appeal covers food and logistic costs for the care and maintenance programme as well as the food component of the repatriation packages to be given to the 60,000 Somali refugees expected to return home during the year. The total food requirement is 61,833 metric tons valued at US \$33.29 million.

Field Reports

Humanitarian situation improving in Konso and North Omo

Following recent international media attention focusing on drought conditions in southern Ethiopia, in January the UN Emergencies Unit undertook a brief visit to the North Omo Zone of the Southern People's region and Konso Special Wereda to undertake a review of the current situation. Following the arrival of additional relief assistance late in 1999, in general the team found the situation to have improved significantly over the past three months and certainly when compared to the situation in Konso in June and July last year when the needs were critical and malnutrition among children had reached alarming proportions. While many of the poorer families in Konso are very vulnerable, provided weather conditions remain favourable through the coming main agricultural season the recent positive trend should continue. In parts of North Omo Zone, people remain in a precarious condition following the poor short rains in 1999 and a damaging infestation of sweet potato butterfly.

In Konso Special Wereda, NGOs such as Farm Africa, Mekane Yesus and MSF-Holland have been active in the area for some time and are currently providing humanitarian assistance in collaboration with the wereda Disaster Management Committee. Food-for-work and employment-generation-scheme (EGS) activities are well organised and targeted at the worst affected communities. More food relief is expected to be delivered to Konso from the European Union, channelled through Farm Africa. In some areas it was observed that farmers' granaries contain some grain stock which was harvested in November last year. But it appears unlikely that their current food stocks will carry them through to the next harvest. Konso received considerable attention after the humanitarian crisis in the area became widely known last June. But neighbouring weredas such as Burji and Derashe received little attention. Following a request to provide relief assistance, in early February MSF-Holland undertook a rapid assessment in Derashe but found no evidence of serious malnutrition. The situation remains precarious however, and MSF recommend close monitoring of the situation in the area over the coming months.

Following some rain showers in January farmers in Konso were observed preparing their fields hoping that more rain might follow. But the rains have been very unreliable in previous years, disturbing the agricultural calendar in a way that many farmers now prepare and plant their fields whenever there is some rain, unless they lack planting material. The national harvest assessment team who visited the area in November last year, recommended the distribution of planting material, particularly sorghum and maize seeds for the coming planting season. Farm Africa confirmed that they are in the process of purchasing and delivering planting material to Konso, which will be distributed as soon as possible.

In North Omo Zone the general situation is also improving, at least in those weredas visited by the UN-EUE mission – Kamba, Humbo, Damote-Woyide and Kindo-Koyisha – which were among the hardest hit by last year's drought. In Kindo-Koyisha wereda, SOS-Sahel is carrying out a variety of EGS activities that provide the beneficiaries and their families with additional food income. SOS-Sahel is in the process of securing additional funding to continue their EGS programmes. In weredas like Kamba, where no international NGO is giving humanitarian relief support, special attention is vital and should include the distribution of planting materials and a certain amount of relief food before roads become inaccessible.

In North Omo Zone, the October/November rains are essential for land preparation and planting of root crops such as sweet potatoes which are vital for meeting the "food gap" that occurs every year before the main harvest. Unfortunately, in 1999 these short rains failed or were inadequate, a situation which was further exacerbated by an infestation of sweet potato butterfly. The failure of the short *sapia* rains in North Omo Zone together with a high potential for further outbreaks of sweet potato butterfly necessitate the careful monitoring of the food security situation in this area.

High level mission visits drought-affected areas of south and south-eastern Ethiopia

To provide key donors with a first-hand overview of the present drought situation in pastoral areas, at the end of January the DPPC organized a two day high-level mission to southern and south-eastern lowlands regions of the country. Led by the DPPC Commissioner Simon Michale, also joining the mission were the British and German ambassadors, senior officials of the Netherlands, United States and Swedish embassies, USAID and the European Commission, UNICEF and WFP.

Over a two day period the group flew by military helicopter visiting West Imi (Fik zone, Somali region), Denan and Gode towns (Gode zone, Somali region), Yabelo (Borena zone, Oromiya region), and Konso (South Omo zone, SNNPR) where meetings were held with local officials and aid workers.

The group was generally struck by the apparent severity of drought in all areas: malnutrition in West Imi, lack of water in Denan and death of livestock, the on-going crisis in Gode (visited by a UN team in December), the impact of diminishing water supply in Yabelo and the persistent effects of poor food security in Konso. In addition to the self-evident prevalence of poor nutrition, many of these communities are reliant on extremely poor quality water, compounding the prevailing short supply. While reliable data was not available, anecdotal evidence strongly suggests widespread ill-health and death. Health facilities are seriously under-supplied and equipped, EPI does not exist for most children.

The mission helped to underline the urgency of a rapid response, a process the UN – WFP and UNICEF in particular – have been involved with in these areas since December. It underscored the importance of sound coordination, prioritized delivery and streamlined implementation of assistance. In this regard, the DPPC have recently established a special working group with representation of UN, donors, NGOs and line ministries to identify priority interventions in the pastoral areas and to help promote a coordinated response to needs. In pastoral communities it is generally recognized that food aid alone is not the answer and may even be economically damaging in the longer term. The structural and chronic nature of the many problems faced by pastoral communities is also well recognized and, in this respect, the need to prioritize assistance in the provision of water for animals as well as humans, veterinary services, market support, health and education is expected to be given due prominence in discussions with government and donors alike.

Refugees and Returnees

Priorities for 2000 - Sudanese Refugees

The southern Sudanese refugees are located in four different sites in western Ethiopia *viz.*, Bonga, Dimma, Funyido and Shirkole. The refugees at Bonga are almost entirely Uduk while the refugees at Funyido and Dimma are predominantly Nuer (around 87%) followed by Anuak. The majority of the refugees in Shirkole are Maban (55%) followed by Uduk (16%) the other minority tribes are Nuer, Funj and Dinkas. The majority of the refugees are between 18 to 59 years of age. Almost all the Uduk refugees in Bonga and Shirkole are farmers. The rest of the refugees in all the three camps are agro-pastoralists. There are also a few refugees with special skills, such as teachers, social workers, health assistants, artists, carpenters, and masons.

For the year 2000, efforts will continue to be made by UNHCR to persuade the authorities to make available additional land for diverse agricultural activities in order to improve the refugees' capacity for food production. Hand-in-hand with the agricultural activities, emphasis will be largely given to the rehabilitation and protection of the natural environment in and around the refugee camps that are affected by the refugees and nationals.

Priorities for 2000 - Somali Refugees

Although no specific base line survey has been conducted, it is believed that the majority of the Somali refugee population is of rural origin with a mainly pastoral economic base. The refugees have well established, clan-based traditions on which are based very effective organisational structures (in the form of refugee committees) for the management of their political, economic, social and cultural

affairs. The refugee women have also formed their own committees which, if properly approached and utilised, can be instrumental in the effective planning and implementation of the care and maintenance assistance programme as well as the voluntary repatriation operation.

With regard to the search for a durable solution in terms voluntary repatriation, substantive progress has been made with the Somali caseload. In 1999, a total of 22,990 Somalis were assisted to repatriate. So far, since the inception of the voluntary repatriation in 1997, over 82,000 persons have been assisted by UNHCR to return to North West Somalia ("Somaliland"). While the repatriation operation has been intermittently disrupted for various reasons, the current figures remain encouraging. The achievement of this particular programme objective goes hand in hand with that of the dispersal and reintegration into their villages of origin, of Ethiopian nationals as well as Ethiopian returnees from Somalia who have all settled in the refugee camps. It is expected that with the dispersal of nationals, and the phased closures and consolidation of the remaining camps, the total number of refugees in eastern Ethiopia will be reduced significantly.

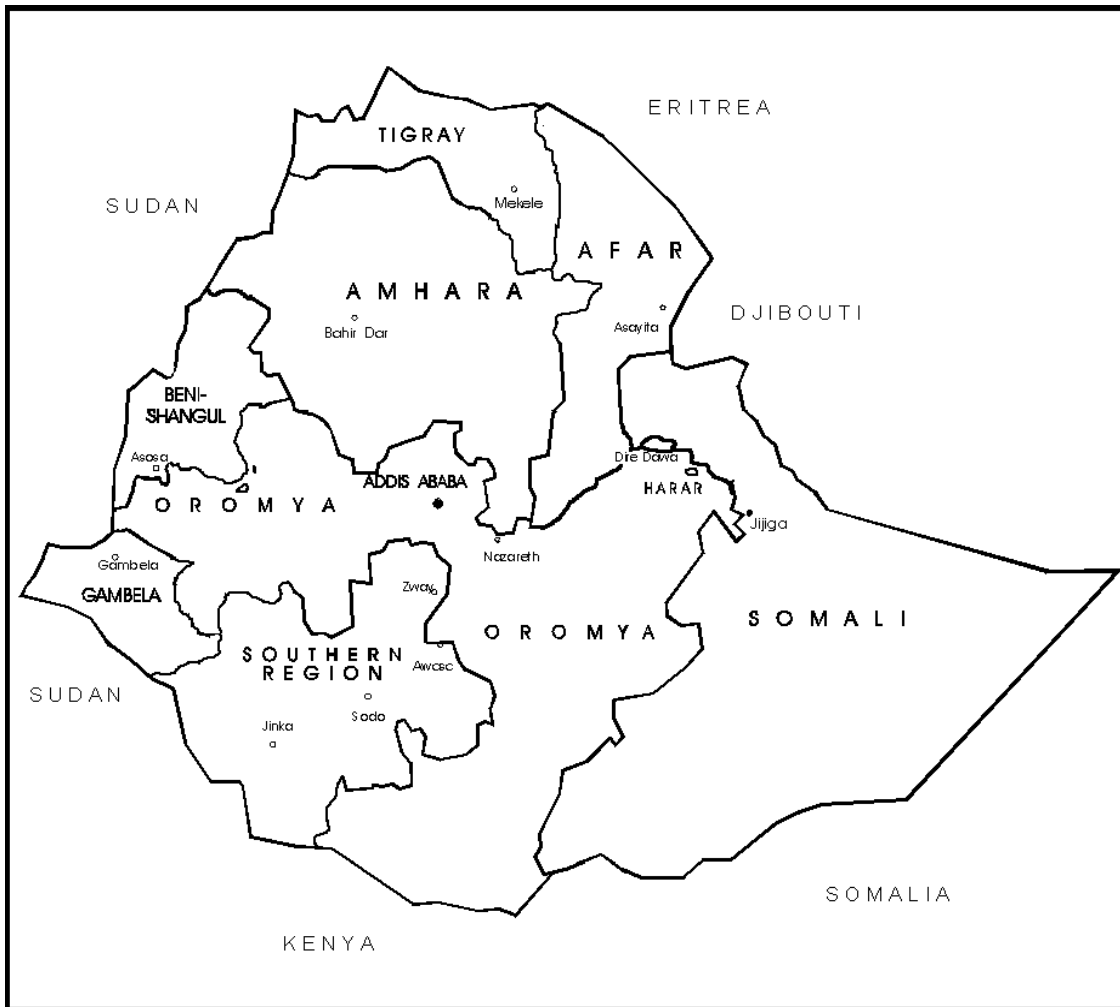
In the year 2000 UNHCR plans to repatriate some 60,000 Somalis to North West Somalia. The refugees will each receive a cash allowance to enable them to feed themselves while in-transit and WFP will supply a repatriation food package. Temporary shelters will be constructed in Ethiopia for screening and registration purposes and to provide interim housing for refugees pending their return to their communities of region. Then they will be transported to various areas in North West Somalia. UNHCR will give social attention to the most vulnerable refugees.

The refugees have no direct access to employment apart from the very few who employed by UNHCR and its implementing partners. They have no access to land other than the small plots they are given for erecting their tukuls (shelters). A limited number, especially women, have become self-employed in petty trade and commerce benefiting from a revolving fund made available by UNHCR through its implementing partners.

Refugee Statistics as at 31 December 1999

<u>West</u> (Sudanese)		<u>East</u> (Somalis)	
Bonga	13,570	Hartisheik (A & B)	17,473
Fugnido	30,658	Aisha	13,938
Dimma	9,226	Kebribeyah	11,622
Shirkole	16,819	Teferiber	29,101
Sub-total	70,273	Derwenaji	25,136
		Camaboker	26,590
<u>South</u> (Kenyans/Somalis)		Rabasso	14,811
Moyale	4,780	Daror	33,950
		Sub-total	172,621
<u>Addis Ababa</u> (various)	466	<u>Afar</u> (Djiboutians)	1,099
	GRAND TOTAL		249,239

Administrative Map of Ethiopia



SOURCES:

UNCT; UN-OCHA Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN-East Africa); Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (DPPC); National Meteorological Services Agency (NMSA); EFSRA Newsletter; UNICEF; UNHCR; WFP; UN-EUE mission reports; MSF Holland. Also media sources: Walta Information Centre; Addis Tribune; AFP.

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