



SITUATION REPORT FOR ETHIOPIA December 1998 & January 1999

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

- ❑ Diplomatic moves to achieve a peaceful settlement to the dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea continue with the endorsement in December by the OAU Central Organ for Conflict Management of an eleven-point "Framework Agreement", and a further visit to the region in January by U.S. special envoy Anthony Lake;
- ❑ Rising tensions along the northern border with Eritrea have led to the precautionary evacuation of civilians living in towns and villages considered to be at risk should hostilities between the two countries resume. In the Western Zone of Tigray, relief camps have been established for the first time;
- ❑ Poor rains in 1998 and a collapse of the livestock export market have combined to create conditions of considerable hardship for farmers and pastoralists alike in the Somali National Regional State of Ethiopia. An assessment by the federal government issued in December indicating 220,000 people in need of assistance is now viewed by the regional authorities as under-estimating needs;
- ❑ With food aid dispatch figures averaging over 1,000 tons per day in January, Djibouti port operations continue with little sign of the congestion and delays predicted earlier in 1998. However, with around 120,000 tons of fertilizer and 140,000 tons of food aid expected in the coming weeks, the port will remain under pressure.

Ethiopia – Eritrea Dispute

General Developments

On the ground, the last few weeks of 1998 were marked by the precautionary evacuation of further civilians living close to the border with Eritrea as the tempo of sporadic shellings and low-level skirmishing increased. According to reports, the towns of Humera and Shiraro are now largely empty of civilians and the population of Rama much reduced. In all urban areas, however, there was considerable movement back and forth as people returned to collect belongings and household effects and to oversee their business interests. People in more remote rural areas within the border zone appeared less willing to move in December, indicating that they were less at risk of military action and more able to move quickly out of harms way if their villages are threatened. With the capacity of local communities to host the evacuees having reached saturation point, special encampments are now being established in the western and central zones of Tigray. On January 25, the Government announced it had ordered the closure of all schools in the northern border zone for fear of further attacks.

Diplomatic efforts to resolve the dispute have continued with the issue featuring prominently on the agenda at the meeting of the OAU Central Organ for Conflict Prevention, Preparedness and Management held in Ouagadougou at the level of heads of states on December 17 and 18. The meeting considered the report of the High-Level Delegation, comprising the Presidents of Burkina Faso (who is also the current chairman of the OAU), Zimbabwe and Djibouti, and the eleven point Framework Agreement proposed to Eritrea and Ethiopia earlier in November. The meeting heard presentations from the Ethiopian and Eritrean delegations which were headed by Prime Minister Meles Zenawi and President Isaias Afewerki, respectively. Both presentations were largely based on earlier submissions made by the two sides, with the Ethiopian government having issued a lengthy Aide Memoir highlighting what it saw as evidence of Eritrea's aggressive intent concerning its neighbours. The paper also accuses Eritrea of insulting and humiliating those who were attempting to broker a settlement and treating the OAU with disdain. Eritrea, on the other

hand, expressed a number of reservations regarding the peace proposal and submitted some 31 points requiring clarification in a paper given to OAU Secretary-General during an unannounced visit to Asmara on December 12. After commending the two sides for their restraint and after taking note of their respective positions, the Central Organ endorsed the eleven-point Framework Agreement in full and without amendment as an "appropriate mechanism for the resolution of the dispute". The Central Organ then requested the OAU High Level Delegation to remain seized with the dispute and called on Ethiopian and Eritrea to continue to co-operate with the High-Level Delegation with a view to creating the necessary conditions for a speedy implementation of the Framework Agreement.

Following the Ouagadougou meeting, Eritrean Foreign Minister Haile Woldensae told diplomats in Asmara that there were three main elements of the Framework Agreement that his government found contentious: (1) on the issue of troop redeployments it was felt that with a formal cease-fire in place and military observers on the ground, demarcation could be done expeditiously and without the redeployment of troops; (2) on the issue of administration Eritrea felt that as this could not be viewed as separate from that of sovereignty, the whole issue of administration should be excised from the proposal; and, (3) on the issue of human rights, "inasmuch as the proposal had only referred to human rights violations on the part of Ethiopia", Woldensae said that the proposal must include a reference to the expulsion of citizens and specifically state that the "illegally-expelled" Eritrean citizens should be compensated. Woldensae said that the remaining nine points of the Framework Agreement had been accepted by the Eritrean government. From the Ethiopian side, Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin addressed a meeting of diplomats in Addis Ababa on January 5 and called for more international pressure on Eritrea to accept the OAU Framework Agreement, claiming the country's response to date had been "devoid of any seriousness". Seyoum went on to say that the crisis had reached a critical turning point, with diplomatic efforts to resolve the situation peacefully "stymied by Eritrean obduracy and intransigence". Seyoum called on the international community to do more to bring "effective and meaningful" pressure to bear upon Eritrea.

Maintaining a certain momentum to the peace efforts, U.S. special envoy Anthony Lake made his fourth visit to the region from January 12 to 19. He met with leaders on both sides but, as before, the nature of his discussions were not disclosed. Shortly after his return to Washington, however, a statement was issued from the White House expressing concern over the build-up of tension along the common border and calling upon both Eritrea and Ethiopia to exercise restraint and to cooperate fully with the OAU proposals. This was followed shortly after by a statement from the UN Security Council which similarly called for restraint and the rapid implementation of the OAU Framework Agreement. These statements added to a flurry of other diplomatic pronouncements from Italy, Canada, Great Britain, the European Union and others all of which essentially backed the OAU proposals as the best mechanism for achieving a peaceful settlement to the dispute. On January 22, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan announced that Ambassador Mohamed Sahnoun would travel to the region as his special envoy following consultations with all parties. On Friday January 29, the U.N. Security Council issued a resolution (1226) expressing its grave concern over the risk of armed conflict between the two countries. The resolution fully backed the OAU peace process and welcomed the acceptance by Ethiopia of the Framework Agreement. The Council also gave its full backing to Sahnoun's mission, since scheduled for February 1-6.

Humanitarian Developments

According to regional and federal government estimates, following the first round of hostilities in May and June 1998, around 177,000 people from the northern border area were forced to flee their homes and seek safety further south. By and large, these people were absorbed into host communities away from the immediate danger area and no significant relief camps were established. In the wake of rising tensions and sporadic shelling of border positions, from late October onwards the government authorities have been implementing the orderly evacuation of the border zone. This has created a new flow of displaced people, swelling the numbers in existing host communities such as Adigrat and Enda Sellasie but also creating for the first time a number of temporary shelters, mainly in the western zone of Tigray. Due to these precautionary evacuations, according to the contingency plan of the Tigray regional authorities released in late December the total number of displaced persons in need of assistance has risen to around 315,000. In addition, the Tigray authorities report some 40,000 Ethiopians returned from Eritrea who are eligible to receive assistance under the government's previously announced "relief-rehabilitation" package and a further 268,000 people who remain close to the border and who are considered to be "at risk" should full-scale war breakout. The UN Contingency Plan, finalised in October 1998, takes as a notional planning figure a

possible half a million people in need of humanitarian assistance in the border areas of Tigray and Afar regions should the conflict flare-up again.

Various UN missions have been deployed in December and January to monitor developments on the ground. Up to mid-January, access has been no problem with travel possible even to border towns being evacuated as a precautionary measure by the authorities. Visits have included the Western Zone of Tigray where a number of makeshift camps have been established to accommodate evacuees from the Humera area. Unlike the first wave of displaced people who had to flee at short notice virtually empty handed, the more recent evacuees were able to bring along their essential household assets. This makes them less vulnerable, especially in terms of their basic - non-food - needs. Moreover, local authorities acknowledge that in surplus producing areas in the north-western corner of the region a significant numbers of these evacuees are relatively wealthy and therefore self-sufficient for the time being. The largest group of evacuees in the west are presently located at Ba'eker, some 45 kilometers south of Humera. Here, as of mid-December, some 13,000 evacuees had arrived according to the local authorities, creating almost overnight a bustling community where before there had been a quiet village of just 500 to 600 people. In some areas of the town, overcrowding was becoming evident with temporary grass and stick shelters built in close proximity to each other and creating a potential fire hazard. In nearby May Kedra, the original population of some 9,000 had been swollen by a further 5,000 evacuees but many of these were reported as relatively affluent. Bereket and Dansha, by contrast, had only a few evacuees even though Dansha had been identified as evacuation site by the regional authorities in their contingency plan released in December. In all locations visited, the need to improve water supplies was viewed as a priority, followed by better health services and the provision of shelter materials. Médecins sans Frontières-Holland are active in the area providing support to the water and sanitation sector.

In the central zone of Tigray, there persists some confusion regarding the actual number of civilians currently displaced with various inconsistencies between figures reported locally and at the zonal and regional levels. One source of the confusion may be the tendency of some authorities to include a certain element of anticipation in their reporting while observations on the ground can be made difficult due to the continuing movement to and from towns and villages close to the border area. The town of Rama, north of Adua, being one such example. Here as of mid-December, the town appeared moderately busy with a number of shops and hotels still open for business. While officially some 50,000 had evacuated from the town and surrounding wereda, according to the local authorities the actual number was much less than this as most rural people had indicated a preference to stay where they were for the time being. For Rama itself, some people were apparently commuting in daily to look after their property in the town.

Food distributions to the displaced are running smoothly under the efficient management of the regional Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Bureau (WFP food) and Relief Society of Tigray (USAID food). However, relief stocks are expected to become exhausted in the next few weeks if not replenished soon. The UN World Food Programme have since submitted a proposal for the supply of nine months food aid to some 272,000 displaced people which is expected to be approved by their Rome headquarters in early February, while USAID are also considering the possibility of continuing their emergency assistance.

While there have been no indications of additional displaced people in Afar region over and above the 24,000 reported earlier, the federal Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission has advised that a contingency plan is nearing completion for the region. This is expected to cover anticipated humanitarian needs should hostilities between the two countries resume.

The effort to raise contributions from the Ethiopian public here and abroad has continued throughout recent months. As of December, the National Coordinating Committee, for which the federal DPPC is the secretariat, reported income of around 98 million Ethiopian Birr (approximately, US \$13 million). Roughly half of this amount has been used to assist the reported 40,000 or so Ethiopians who have returned from Eritrea since the beginning of the dispute in May last year. The money has been used to cover transport costs and to give a resettlement grant to each person/family. The balance of the funds have been earmarked for other priority interventions identified by the federal and regional governments.

General Events and Developments

Lack of information hampers effective family planning: According to a recent study completed by the Ministry of Health, family planning is an important aspect of the health sector that has not been given sufficient attention in Ethiopia, especially in rural areas. The low level of education and poorly developed infrastructure in rural areas, coupled with conservative cultural attitudes, are among the reasons why organisations working in this field, including a number of NGOs, tend to focus their activities in the urban centres. With 86 percent of the population living in rural areas, more needs to be done to support the greater dissemination of family planning information and extension of services throughout the country. In the world as a whole, over half a million women die as a result of complications associated with pregnancy and child-birth each year. According to the report, creating favourable conditions for those with low incomes to become radio users, encouraging private radio stations to broadcast appropriate advice, allocating more budgetary resources for maternal health services, providing appropriate training to health professionals and improving rural communications and infrastructure are some of the ways in which the issue can be addressed in Ethiopia. (*The Monitor*, December 1)

New road helps integration of Southern People's Region: The newly opened road linking the southern towns of Soddo and Chida is an important step towards improving the economic and political integration of the Southern People's Regional State. Previously, there was no direct communication by road between the regional capital Awassa and the Bench Maji zone to the west near the Sudanese border. Travellers were required to travel via Addis Ababa and Jimma, a journey of more than 800 kilometers. The new road, which is 166 kilometers long and includes an 80 metre Bailey bridge across the Omo river and five other bridges, has been under construction since 1994 has cost 255 million Birr (US \$35 million). The distance between Awassa and the zonal capital of Mizan is now only 400 kilometers. (*Ethiopian Herald*, December 1)

Second round immunisation campaign completed: In the second round of the national immunisation campaign over 8 million children under the age of five were vaccinated for Polio and Measles over a three-day period in early December. The campaign is part of the national five-year programme for health which gives priority to the immunisation of children and is supported by the World Health Organisation, UNICEF and Rotary International. Assistance provided by UNICEF includes the provision of logistic support, training of health workers and programme managers, and social mobilisation – support that will continue, according to the UNICEF Deputy Country Representative, Rodney Phillips, "...until Polio is eradicated and Vitamin A deficiency and measles no longer threaten children's lives in Ethiopia". (*Ethiopian Herald*, December 4)

Immigration chief arrested: The head of Ethiopia's Immigration and Nationalities Department and two subordinates have been arrested on charges of corruption. According to reports, he was "caught red-handed while receiving bribes from Ethiopian nationals with Swedish passports. He was said to have threatened to revoke the investment permits of such persons and have them deported. The investment code entitles people of Ethiopian origin who have acquired another nationality to the same rights as Ethiopian nationals. (*The Reporter*, December 7; *AFP*, December 9)

Primary school enrolment to double: Education Minister Guenet Zewde has announced that Ethiopia plans to raise primary school enrolment from 3.1 million to seven million in the next five years and to increase school attendance by girls. Girls currently make up 36 percent of primary school students but as part of the five-year US \$1.8 billion education investment programme the aim is to raise this to 45 percent by the year 2001 through the construction of new schools in rural areas and training more teachers. Ethiopia's present school age population is estimated to be 12.9 million. (*Reuters*, December 16)

Norway signs fertiliser aid package: The Norwegian Government has signed an agreement providing Ethiopia with a US \$4.29 million grant for fertiliser procurement. Meanwhile, the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation has obtained funds amounting to approximately US \$1.8 million from the Government of Italy for a programme intended to improve food security in Ethiopia. (*Ethiopian Herald*, December 18)

Italy to finance obelisk's return: The Italian Senate has voted to spend a billion Lira (more than US \$600,000) to send back to Ethiopia an obelisk brought to Rome to mark the victory of Mussolini's troops over the country in 1935. The fascist dictator ordered the 160 ton Axum obelisk to be put up in front of the then Ministry for African Colonies (now headquarters of the FAO) building in the centre of Rome in 1937. Italy will transport the 24-metre obelisk in pieces back to its original site at Axum in the northern Ethiopian highlands. Ethiopia has offered a piece of modern sculpture to take the place of the monument in Rome. (*AP*, December 19)

New figures on investment: According to the Economist Intelligence Unit as part of its campaign to promote investment opportunities in the country, the Ethiopian Investment Authority (EIA) has issued updated figures on overall investment project approvals and implementation rates. Since 1992, there have been significant lags between authorisation and implementation. In the six years to April 1998, the EIA registered a total of 4,237 individual new investment projects with a total projected capital of about US \$5 billion. However, only 588 of these projects are actually operational, with total capital employed put at US \$670 million, giving an implementation rate of 14 percent. The further liberalisation of the investment code promised last December has now been completed, but prospective foreign investors are unlikely to commit new funds until the current difficulties with Eritrea are resolved. Meanwhile, the financial reforms are expected to resolve disagreements between Ethiopia's economic policymakers and the IMF, as well as resolve differences in policy attitudes between the IMF and other major donors towards Ethiopia's economic reform programme. With new loans announced amounting to US \$700 million, Ethiopia became the World Bank's largest Sub-Saharan African client during 1998. (*Economist Intelligence Unit, December 22 & 23*)

Asrat Woldeyes released: Ethiopian All-Amhara People's Organisation (AAPO) leader Professor Asrat Woldeyes has been released from jail and allowed to go to the United States for medical treatment. Asrat, 73, had been in detention since 1994, charged with inciting Amhara people in Gojjam and the Debre Birhan area to rise up and wage an armed struggle against the Ethiopian government. According to sources, he wrote a personal letter to Prime Minister Meles Zenawi appealing to be allowed to seek medical attention in the United States, as he was seriously ill. Asrat has been in intensive care at the Black Lion hospital in Addis Ababa, where for years he was professor of surgery. (*Reuters, December 27; AFP, December 27*)

UN employee abducted: While on mission to assess possible relief needs in the Somali region of Ethiopia, on January 27 an international staff member of the UN World Food Programme was abducted by unidentified gunmen. An extensive search was mounted by the UN together with the regional authorities around the town of Jigjiga where the incident took place. The staff member was later released unharmed in the central Somalia town of Galkayo. (*AFP, January 28, AP, January 30*)

Special report – emerging crisis in the Somali region

Farmers and pastoralists in southern areas of Somalia and adjacent parts of Ethiopia have suffered a string of problems in the last two years. Extensive flooding along the Shebelle and Juba rivers in late 1997 displaced tens of thousands of people and led to environmental conditions that encouraged the spread of Rift Valley Fever (RVF) among the livestock population. In 1998, the main *gu* rains in May/June were less than expected, and were followed by a poor *deyr* season in October/November. Subsequently, the food security of farmers in southern Somalia has been threatened by a failure of the main harvest and there have been early signs of people moving in search of relief assistance.

As in Somalia itself, the Somali-speaking people of south-eastern Ethiopia have also been facing a period of considerable hardship. An economic situation already made difficult by the Saudi Arabian ban on livestock imports because of fears of RVF has been further exacerbated by poor rains in 1998. Being less than normal and poorly distributed, these rains failed to fully replenish surface water resources in the important northern "*Haud*" grazing lands adjacent to Somaliland and were not sufficient to regenerate pastures in many other areas. The normally productive black-cotton soil farming areas around the regional capital of Jigjiga had a very poor harvest in December. In other places, the lack of rain and overstocking have combined to place considerable pressure on both pasture and water resources in zones such as Gashaamo, Degahabur, Warder, Kebridehar, Gode and Liban. Making matters worse, similar drought conditions across the border in Somaliland and areas further to the south have led to an influx of people and their animals, which have placed even greater strain on local resources in places such as Gashaamo and Warder. Following an assessment in October last year, the federal DPPC indicated in its December appeal that around 220,000 people in the region would need food assistance this year, according to a more recent assessment by the regional authorities, the number of people facing serious hardship could have increased dramatically.

Concerned by the signs of stress, Save the Children Fund (UK), the Ogaden Welfare Society and the regional Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Bureau conducted a rapid nutritional and economic survey of communities in the Warder, Korahe (Kebridehar) and Gode zones of the region. Their findings indicated worrying levels of malnutrition among children in the sample groups (the mean weight for length in all three

locations being below the 90 percent cut-off for emergency assistance as defined by the DPPC) as well as evidence that with a virtual collapse of the local livestock market, animals prices have fallen dramatically leading to a very poor terms of trade between animals and cereals. In the Warder area, the *deyr* rains were more favourable leading to a local improvement in pasture but this has attracted a significant number of people and their animals from across the border in neighbouring Somalia. The additional population pressure placed considerable strain on local resources and grazing and surface water supplies are said to be nearing exhaustion.

More recently, Save the Children Federation (USA) conducted a nutritional survey in the Dolo wereda of Liban Zone where some 1,732 children under the age of five years were assessed in Dolo town itself, Suftu, Bokomayo, and Bur-Amino. The survey, which was undertaken as part of a follow-up to a US-Government supported emergency programme in the area which began in the aftermath of the late 1997 floods, was intended to verify the baseline malnutrition rate in the area. The results indicated a global malnutrition rate of 22.7 percent which was close to the rate found March 1998 prior to the start of the SCF emergency feeding programme. The figures, which were 6 percent higher than when the supplementary feeding programme was terminated in September 1998, were considered to be very worrying and indicative of a deteriorating food security situation in the district.

Across the border in neighbouring "Somaliland", the authorities in Hargeisa have been equally concerned by the impact of the poor rains in recent months. Here a failure of the main harvest at the end of last year has combined with poor grazing and the loss of livestock markets because of the Saudi ban on imports to create a situation that threatens the livelihoods of many rural people but especially pastoralists. There have been signs of a general movement of impoverished people from drought-affected areas to the urban centres in search of assistance. In early January the authorities deployed a number of teams throughout the country to determine the extent and nature of the problem and issued subsequently a "Drought Emergency Appeal". While the condition of animals and availability of pasture was found to be generally satisfactory, the most serious problem faced in many areas was that of a shortage of water. The collapse of the livestock market due to the Saudi Arabian import ban was also creating serious economic problems for many pastoralists and appeared to be the main factor leading to overstocking and higher than normal pressure on available pasture and water resources. The trade ban had led to the collapse of many livestock markets and the terms of trade had become increasingly unfavourable with the price of three goats or sheep of export quality being equivalent to that of two fifty kilo bags of sugar or rice in Buroa market (one to one being roughly the "normal" rate of exchange). Faced with a stagnant livestock market and poor water availability, for many Somalilanders, the only option open has been to migrate with their herds across the border into the more mountainous areas of the Somali region of Ethiopia.

In Ethiopia, the long dry season (*Jillal*), which normally extends from December through to April, is expected to be especially severe this year. To monitor the situation and support federal and regional government assessments of likely relief needs, the United Nations Country Team is undertaking a series of visits to the region and is liaising closely with NGOs and government agencies operating in the affected areas to determine options for appropriate interventions. Though prospects for an early lifting of the Saudi ban on livestock imports looks bleak, diplomatic action to secure such a decision would appear to offer the region the best hope in both the short and long term.

Agriculture and weather

December saw the successful completion of the main, *meher* harvest under optimum dry weather conditions in most central and northern highland areas of the country. While favourable for farming areas, dry weather during the month was expected to have a negative impact on the availability of pasture and drinking water particularly over southern and south-eastern lowland areas of Ethiopia that normally receive rain at this time of the year. In these areas, rainfall for the month was abnormally low.

The dry period continued until the end of December and first few days of January when a slight increase in rainfall activity was observed over most parts of northern, southern and western Ethiopia. In some areas, isolated heavy rainfall was recorded, including falls of between 32 and 62 mm in one day for Kombolcha, Debre Markos, Adua, Majete and Holetta. Normal to above normal rainfall was also recorded during the first dekad of January for Gambella and western parts of Oromiya, Tigray, Afar and Amhara regions. The moist conditions persisted through the second dekad of the month, with above average rainfall recorded for

southern areas of the country, including Borena where drought conditions had been observed emerging. Rainfall over the Somali region, however, has remained below average and with southern and south-eastern areas now entering the normal long dry season, drought conditions are expected to worsen until the rains resume in April/May.

Food aid and logistics

Food aid pledges and shipments

The final status of 1998 food aid pledges and shipments is given in Table I below.

Table I: Pledges against 1998 Food Aid Requirements - Cereals & Pulses

	Relief	Regular	Monetisation	EFSR	TOTAL
<u>1998 pledges</u>					
USA	139,736	23,130	-	-	162,866
EC	44,350	31,994	-	50,000	126,344
WFP	60,000	37,891	-	-	97,891
Sweden	31,000	-	-	-	31,000
Germany	3,718	19,488	-	-	23,206
UK	18,792	-	-	-	18,792
Canada	1,000	11,765	-	-	12,765
Denmark	740	900	-	-	1,950
Ethiopia	20,000	-	-	-	20,000
Greece	-	-	4,000	-	4,000
Norway	1,950	-	-	-	1,950
Netherlands	10,000	300	-	-	10,300
TOTAL	331,286	125,468	4,000	50,000	510,754
Deliveries (31/12/98)	226,104	60,338	4,000	0	290,442

Source: WFP (31 December 1998)

In addition to the deliveries shown in the table, of a total of 197,888 tons of pledges carried-over from 1997 and earlier years to 1998, a total of 152,835 tons were delivered during the year, leaving a still-outstanding balance of 46,337 tons carried-forward to 1999. This includes more than 37,850 tons outstanding from the European Union, 1,122 tons from WFP, 3,365 tons from Germany and a 4,000 tons pledge from the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). Including the balance of 1998 undelivered pledges, total carry-over pledges for all commodities but excluding refugee/returnee programmes as of 31 December amounted to just over 225,000 tons.

According to the UN World Food Programme, three vessels carrying food aid cargo arrived during the first half of January discharging a total of just under 40,000 tons of wheat and other commodities for the regular and emergency programmes up to January 26. According to the current shipping schedule for Djibouti, a further 90,000 tons of food aid is expected to be discharged by the end of February, together with up to 80,000 tons of fertiliser. The shipment of up to 50,000 tons of commercial wheat has now been tentatively put back to March.

Port operations

According to the latest reports from the UN World Food Programme, the operation to transport food aid supplies through the Djibouti corridor using a combination of trucks and the railway is running smoothly. This is despite the temporary shortage of trucks during the Christmas and Ramadan holiday periods when a number of drivers did not work. WFP currently operate a total of 160 trucks in a dedicated fleet operating in the Djibouti corridor. In addition, the Ethio-Djibouti railway is operating under a contract with WFP for the delivery of some 3,000 tons/month to Dire Dawa and 1,000 tons/month to Nazereth. As before, the direct delivery of cargo from the discharging vessel has been supplemented by deliveries from the vessel to temporary transit warehouses either in the port area or in the town. This method has helped to maximise the discharge rate of vessels at berth.

From January 11 to 25, food aid totalling just under 16,000 tons was transported with an average daily dispatch of 1,065 tons. Since the commencement of the second phase of WFP's Djibouti corridor Food Aid Transport System (FATS), from October 30, 1998 to January 25, 1999, a total of 92,106 tons of cargo has been transported. Despite the lack of berths able to handle bulk cargo (2 and one half), and contrary to expectations, there has been very little congestion in Djibouti port and delays in the discharge of vessels have been minimal.

Towards the end of January, a special committee of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) visited Addis Ababa to examine claims that Eritrea had misappropriated cargo in Assab and Massawa ports bound for Ethiopia worth US \$127.3 million. The committee, comprising representatives of Malawi, Uganda and Zambia, held meetings with importers, aid agencies and the business community to verify the details of the cargo stranded in the two ports when hostilities broke out in May last year. At the time when access to the port of Assab became blocked (around May 23), more than 70,000 tons of food aid was still awaiting transport up country, the bulk being a USAID emergency consignment.

Emergency Food Security Reserve

In the last quarter of 1998, the EFSR issued loans amounting to around 46,500 tons to three NGOs and the federal DPPC. This was considerably down from the previous quarter when a total of just under 113,000 tons was loaned out. It is thought that anticipation of a good *meher* harvest in late 1998 may have been a contributing factor to the fall in demand. While outgoing loans were substantially down, loan repayments increased considerably during the last quarter of 1998. Altogether, 77,300 tons were paid back to the reserve from various NGOs and the federal DPPC.

With currently 123,000 tons in its various regional warehouses, physical stock holdings by the EFSR are at a satisfactory level. Of this amount, some 13,000 tons were under withdrawal as of the last week of January but this is expected to be more than made up by a repayment of 20,000 of maize presently under delivery to the EFSR's Mekelle warehouses by Euronaid. Taking into account a EU shipment of 15,000 tons expected to arrive in the Somaliland port of Berbera in February and repayments by WFP and others, the EFSR management anticipate physical stock holdings will rise shortly to around 200,000 tons.

Refugees and returnees

An exercise to verify and revalidate registration and ration cards was undertaken by UNHCR and the federal Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA) in the western camps of Bonga and Shirkole in December 1998. The exercise, which resulted in a slight downward revision in numbers, is reflected in the statistics quoted in the section below.

Though the voluntary repatriation programme for Somali refugees has been suspended since November 1998 at the request of the Somaliland authorities in Hargeisa, UNHCR remain hopeful that the operation will resume early in 1999. From the beginning of the pilot programme in February 1997 to the suspension of the main programme in November last year, a total of just over 59,000 refugees had been officially repatriated to Somaliland. Though this figure reflects the number of ration cards surrendered as part of the programme, rather than actual number of people who have physically returned home, it is nonetheless indicative of solid progress towards the eventual closure of these long standing relief camps in eastern Ethiopia. Of the refugees who have so far returned under the auspices of the voluntary programme, according to the authorities in Somaliland a large proportion have opted to move to the environs of Hargeisa, where many have added to the growing number of urban poor.

Refugee Statistics (as of 31 December 1998)

<u>West</u> (Sudanese)		<u>East</u> (Somalis)		<u>South-east</u> (Somalis)	
Bonga	12,614	Hartisheik (A & B)	31,389	Dolo Odo	5,000
Fugnido	24,233	Aisha	15,290	Dolo Bay	1,200
Dimma	7,881	Kebribeyah	11,620	Suflu	1,800
Shirkole	13,874	Teferiber	30,435	Sub-total	8,000
Sub-total	58,602	Derwenaji	27,006		
		Camaboker	28,590		
		Rabasso	16,814	<u>North-east</u> (Djiboutians)	
<u>South</u> (Kenyans)		Daror	33,985	Afar Region	3,000
Moyale/Dokisso	4,940	Sub-total	195,129		

Addis Ababa

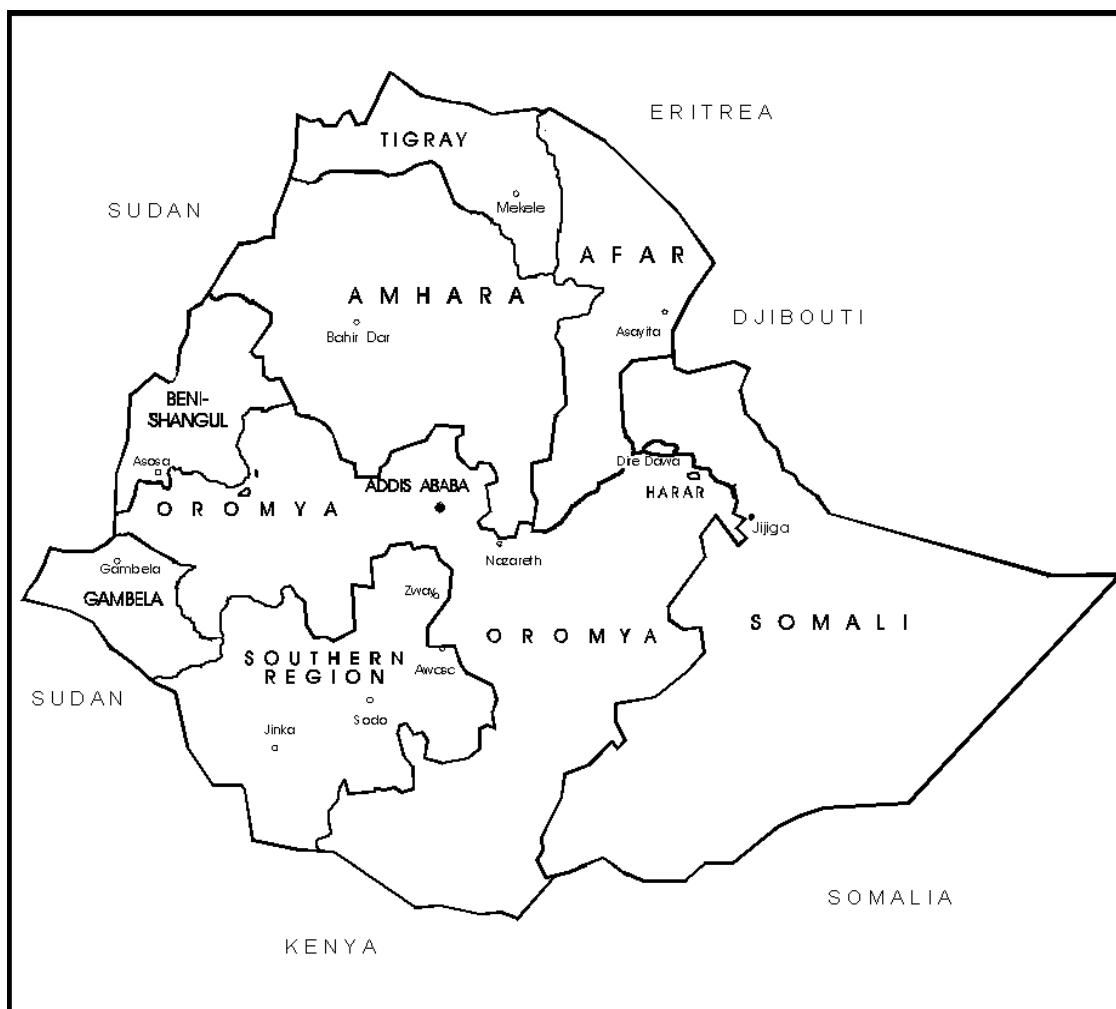
Urban refugees

484

GRAND TOTAL

270,155

Administrative Map of Ethiopia



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SOURCES:

UNDP-EUE field reports; CARE; Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (DPPC); European Union; FAO; FEWS; National Meteorological Services Agency (NMSA); Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA); SCF (UK); UNICEF; UNHCR; WHO. Also media sources: The Ethiopian Herald; AFP; Walta Information Centre; ENA.

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UNDP-EUE
PO Box 5580,
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Tel.: (251) (1) 51-10-28/29
Fax: (251) (1) 51-12-92
e-mail: undp-eue@telecom.net.et