



## **SITUATION REPORT FOR ETHIOPIA April 1999**

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*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**

- ❑ Following another call from the UN Security Council for a cease-fire between Ethiopia and Eritrea and the immediate implementation of the OAU Framework Agreement, UN Special Envoy Ambassador Mohamed Sahnoun returns to the region in a new effort to seek a peaceful settlement of the crisis;
- ❑ The confirmation of more than two hundred cases of meningitis in northern Ethiopia has led to fears that the country may be facing a possible epidemic, threatening an estimated 11 million people;
- ❑ Faced with signs that the short rains have generally failed in northern Ethiopia this year, the Federal Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission brought forward its *belg* season assessment by several weeks, allowing the possibility of a revised relief appeal should significant new needs be identified;
- ❑ Following reports of the emergence of Armyworms in parts of Southern Ethiopia, localised infestations have been reported mid-May from 5 out of 9 zones in the Somali region, including Liban in the south and Shinile on the Ethiopia-Djibouti border;
- ❑ At the launching of "Dawn of Hope", Ethiopia's first national association for carriers of the HIV-AIDS virus, it was said that an estimated three million Ethiopians have been exposed to the disease, with over 600,000 children made orphans and one third of Ethiopia's hospital beds used by carriers of the virus.

### **Ethiopia – Eritrea Dispute**

It was announced in New York that UN Special Envoy, Ambassador Mohamed Sahnoun would be returning to the Horn of Africa toward the end of April in a new attempt to help the Organisation of African Unity broker a peace deal between Ethiopia and Eritrea. The mission was given the full backing of the UN Security Council which, on April 13, repeated its call for an immediate cessation of hostilities and implementation of the OAU Framework Agreement. Council President Alain Dejammet of France told reporters that council members were also looking into the possibility of sending military observers to help monitor any agreement that might be reached, the operational arrangements of which would be worked out in detail with the OAU.

In an interview with Voice of America radio, Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi said Ethiopia would be willing to enter into a cease-fire agreement if Eritrea gave a formal undertaking to pull its remaining troops out of Ethiopian territory<sup>1</sup>. Meles said the withdrawal would have to be within a specified period and implemented as part of the overall OAU peace deal. The statement was interpreted by some observers as indicative of a new willingness to come to a negotiated settlement with Eritrea.

A few days later, on April 17, Ethiopia launched a series of air attacks into Eritrea against what were described by the office of the official spokesperson as "strategic military targets". The attacks, the first in several weeks, included a bombardment of the main Eritrean military training centre at Sawa in the south

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<sup>1</sup> The 3<sup>rd</sup> article of the OAU Framework Agreement "as a mark of goodwill and consideration" calls for the withdrawal of Eritrean troops from "Badme Town and its environs". Addis Ababa interprets this as requiring Eritrea to withdraw from all disputed territory its troops occupied along the border last year, but Asmara maintains that the deal requires only a retreat from the immediate Badme area -- already a de facto reality -- before military disengagement by both sides.

western province of Gash Barka. Contrary to some expectations, the attacks did not presage a new offensive on the contested border, which remained quiet throughout the month.

On April 21, the US State Department announced that non-essential government employees were again free to return to Ethiopia, but those who were in Eritrea must wait at least another month before returning there. The non-essential staff, working for the US embassies in the two capitals and for the Peace Corps and the US Agency for International Development (USAID), were told to leave the two countries in February when fighting between Ethiopia and Eritrea resumed. About 100 Americans, including family members, left Ethiopia as a result of the advisory.

After a brief stop-over in Paris, where he met with Burkina Faso President and current OAU Chairman Blaise Compaore, UN Special Envoy Ambassador Mohamed Sahnoun arrived in Asmara on April 24 at the beginning of his second peace mission to the region. He met with Eritrean President Isaias Afewerki and other senior government officials during his two day stay. On leaving Asmara for Ethiopia, Sahnoun told reporters he was hopeful about resolving the conflict, but gave no details. In Addis Ababa, Sahnoun met with Prime Minister Meles Zenawi and Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin. According to a statement released by the official spokesperson's office, Meles reiterated Ethiopia's position - the government of Eritrea needs to officially declare that it will withdraw its troops from all Ethiopian land and agree to set a short time frame in which the withdrawal will be implemented. For his part, Sahnoun told the prime minister that he would continue with his efforts. From Addis Ababa, Sahnoun flew to Ouagadougou where he briefed President Blaise Compaore on the outcome of his discussions in Ethiopia and Eritrea. Sahnoun later told reporters that renewed confrontation between the two countries was possible. "The region lives in a situation of neither war nor peace." But he added that a cease-fire was "possible if the international community is putting pressure on the two parties."

## General Events and Developments

***Finchaa sugar factory inaugurated:*** On April 24, President Negasso Gidada inaugurated the 1.8 billion Birr Finchaa Sugar Factory in East Wollega Zone, 350 km west of Addis Ababa. The factory is expected to increase the country's total sugar output by 45 percent and will have an annual capacity to produce 85,000 metric tonnes of sugar and 8 million litres of ethanol. The fund for the construction of the sugar factory was obtained from the African Development Bank, the African Development Fund and the governments of Ethiopia, Sweden, Australia and Spain. The U.S. Trade and Development Agency also gave half a million dollars for training programmes. President Negasso Gidada said that the factory utilised the Finchaa river, which was why it took some twenty-two years for the detailed study and construction work of the factory to be finalised. The Finchaa River is a tributary of the Nile and he said some foreign powers were not comfortable with Ethiopia's efforts to harness its water resources. 4,000 people are employed at the new factory which is the fourth of its kind in the country. (*Ethiopian herald, April 25; Press digest, April 29*)

***Nile River Conference:*** The nine riparian states of the Nile have held a two day conference in Addis Ababa to discuss future co-operation in the equitable utilisation of the river's resources. The conference is the seventh ordinary session of the Nile council of ministers conference and this was the first session to be held in Addis Ababa since the forum was established in 1992. Opening the conference, Ethiopian Justice Minister Woredewold Woldie said Ethiopia had made its position clear as regards the equitable utilisation of the resources of the Nile for effective and sustainable development of all concerned. "We are all on equal footing to resolve all contentious issues regarding this," he said. At a press briefing, Shiferaw Jarso, Minister of Water Resources said that due to the absence of an agreement with the countries sharing the Nile waters, Ethiopia has not gained any special benefits from its resources. Shiferaw was elected as chairman of the conference before it went into closed door sessions for the duration of its deliberations. The annual meetings are expected to culminate in a final framework for co-operation by the year 2002 for the sustainable and equitable utilisation of the Nile water resources by the riparian states. The ten Nile basin countries are Egypt, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Burundi, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Sudan and Eritrea. (*Seven Day Update, 3 May; PANA, 12 May*)

***Kidnapped aid worker freed:*** An armed opposition group based in eastern Ethiopia has said it had released a French aid worker captured one month ago and urged French diplomats to collect him from the Ogaden region. The Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) active in the Somali-speaking areas of eastern Ethiopia, said it had "pardoned" and freed Eric Couly of Action Contre la Faim despite his

“misdeeds”. Addressing a press conference in Nairobi the ONLF political secretary, Abdi Sirad Dollal charged that Courly was at the time of his capture, “transporting food, medicines and logistics to the Ethiopian troops.” (*AFP, May 4*)

**UNICEF Ethiopia:** The UN Children’s Fund, UNICEF, has allocated a sum of US \$50 million for Ethiopia for the next three years, a senior official of the organisation said. Dr. Abdel Mejid Hussein, UNICEF’s Deputy Director for International Emergency Programmes, and former Ethiopian Minister for Transport and Telecommunications, said the money will be used for undertaking health, educational and water supply development activities. Noting that this is the largest sum ever allocated in Africa, Dr. Abdel Mejid said that Ethiopia comes next to India and Bangladesh in obtaining the largest share of UNICEF assistance out of the 153 countries in which UNICEF operates. (*AP, May 4; Ethiopian Herald, May 4*)

**Russian trade delegation in Addis Ababa:** A Russian trade delegation arrived in Ethiopia at the end of April for a four-day working visit. The delegation, led by Deputy Trade Minister Vladimir Pakhomov included both government officials and business leaders that met and held talks with senior government officials and members of the Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce. They delivered a message from Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov to Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. The visit ended with the governments of Ethiopia and Russia signing minutes to further streamline their economic and technical co-operation. The minutes are expected to improve Ethiopian - Russian bilateral relations and help the two countries to avoid intermediaries in the exchange of goods between them. (*Ethiopian Herald, April 27*)

**Establishment of Human Rights Commission and Office of Ombudsman:** The Legal Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives has presented a draft document on the establishment of a Human Rights Commission and Office of the Ombudsman. The document, produced in Amharic, Tigrigna, Oromiffa and the Somali languages was distributed to the public at all levels from April 27 – May 3. It is being promoted for public discussion and debate in order to widen public participation in the definition of the principles, practice, structure, mandate, leadership and status of the two human rights watchdogs. Chairman of the Legal Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives, Abdel Aziz Abdi said the exercise would include community elders, legal government officials, legislators, scholars and representatives of NGOs and civic organisations. Following the debates, a law establishing an Ombudsman and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission is to be drafted and tabled before Parliament later this year. The two institutions, according to Abdul Aziz, are expected to be functional in the first quarter of the next Ethiopian fiscal year. The Government of Canada has donated 1.5 million birr to facilitate the public discussions on the document. (*Seven Day Update, April 26, May 3; Ethiopian Herald April 17, 18 & 27*)

**New cargo vessel for Ethiopian Shipping Lines:** Ethiopian Shipping Lines has bought a new cargo vessel at a cost of US \$6.825 million. The new liner named “Tekezze” after the northern Ethiopian river will boost ESL’s capacity by 20 percent. With a capacity of 18,145 tons “Tekezze” is the biggest of ESL’s semi-container liners. The newly-acquired vessel is a self-sustained ship with its own crane capable of loading and unloading cargo weighing up to 70 tons. This makes “Tekezze” especially suitable to present Ethiopian import activity that has lately seen an increase in single heavy cargoes. (*Addis Tribune, April 29; Seven Days Update, April 26*)

**Meningitis threat:** A number of recently confirmed cases of meningitis in northern Ethiopia has raised fears that the country is facing a possible epidemic. According to WHO, a Ministry of Health team confirmed 268 cases of meningococcal meningitis type C in and around the town of Kobo in North Welo Zone of the Amhara region in April. The MoH team despatched to the area has been working to strengthen the diagnostic and treatment capabilities of the local authorities and the outbreak is now said to be under control. In Sudan, over the past five months a total of nearly 10,000 cases have been reported in 18 states of the country, out of which 753 have died. Sudan and the western regions of Ethiopia are considered to be part of the Sub-Saharan “meningitis belt” where epidemics are known to occur every few years. The current epidemic season is expected to end in June when the main rains begin, however, a further upsurge in meningitis cases could occur later in the year when drier weather returns to the region. The last major outbreak in Ethiopia occurred in 1989/90 when the epidemic spread beyond the traditionally vulnerable areas of the west to affect communities in the central Rift Valley and as far south as Arba Minch, causing more than 17,000 deaths. The Ministry of Health currently estimates as many as 11 million people may be at risk in the country and has requested assistance from the World Health Organisation and others to mobilise 4 million doses of vaccine ahead of a mass immunisation campaign. (*WHO, Ministry of Health and other sources*)



## **Agriculture and weather**

### **Needs assessments**

Faced with growing concern regarding the poor short (*belg*) rains this year and a deteriorating food security situation in northern Ethiopia, the Early Warning Department of the DPPC decided to bring forward by several weeks this year's *belg* season assessment. Six teams, led by DPPC and comprising representatives from the UN, donors and NGOs, visited a number of the important *belg*-growing areas of the country, including Welo where there has been evidence of distress migration taking place in recent weeks. With the return of the teams to Addis Ababa in the past week, the DPPC has begun the work of compiling and analysing the data collected. The findings are expected to be used as the basis for a new consolidated appeal which could be released to donors as early as the end of May.

### **Weather patterns**

The months of April and May mark an important period in the farming cycle in highland areas of Ethiopia. In Welo, Shewa, Haraghe, Arsi and Bale, rains at this time are important for the further development of short-cycle *belg* crops which locally comprise more than 40 percent of total annual production (nationally, the *belg* accounts for around 5 percent of total annual production). As well as having a potentially serious impact on *belg* production, poor rains at this time (in terms of quantity and distribution) can also seriously delay land preparation and planting for long-cycle main season, *meher* crops. Without sufficient rain in May, farmers may be forced to plant short-cycle crops for the main season, which are lower yielding.

As forecast by the National Meteorological Services Agency (NMSA), weather systems over Ethiopia weakened during the first part of April bringing a general withdrawal of the *belg* rains. In the first dekad of April, with the exception of the south-west and a few areas of the central and eastern highlands, there was little or no rainfall over the country. As a result most areas exhibited below to much below normal rainfall. The second dekad of the month saw some increase in rainfall activity over much of the country. As a result, southern areas of the Southern Region, Gambella, some parts of Somali, most parts of Oromiya, parts of Tigray, the south-west of Benishangul Gumuz, and isolated areas of Amhara and Afar received more than 75 percent of the long term average for the period. Other areas received less than 75 percent of the long term average. The moist weather systems strengthened further during the third dekad, with most areas over the western half of the country, Somali and eastern Afar receiving normal to above normal rainfall for the time of year. Other areas, however, including most of the main cropping areas of the central and northern highlands, continued to receive less than normal rains.

Following an unseasonably dry April, as predicted by NMSA, the *belg* rains resumed during the early part of May and while there have been dry breaks, coverage in the areas where main season crops will be planted appears to have been fairly good with showers reported from as far north as Humera on the Eritrean border.

### **Armyworms**

Following reports of African Armyworm (the armyworm is the larval stage of the night flying moth, *Spodoptera exempta*) outbreaks in Tanzania and Rwanda, in late April it was confirmed that Armyworms had also been seen in North and South Omo in southern Ethiopia. The Ministry of Agriculture reacted quickly and has since reported to FAO that the situation is not currently serious and supplies of pesticide are adequate to deal with the problem. Armyworms are a migratory pest normally associated with moist weather conditions. Historically, infestations spread through East Africa and northwards to the Horn of Africa from the wet coastal regions of Kenya and Tanzania where the Armyworm exists in a normally solitary state. Under the right conditions, successive generations of moths can be carried many hundreds of kilometers by the prevailing winds to infest grass and crop lands. The last major outbreak in Ethiopia was in 1996, causing major crop damage in the Jigjiga zone of the Somali region, Haraghe and Tigray.

In mid-May, information from Jigjiga indicated possible sightings of Armyworms in 5 out of the 9 administrative zones in the Somali region, including Liban in the south and Shinile on the Ethiopia-Djibouti border. Sightings have also been made in nearby Haraghe. MoA is investigating the reports and if

confirmed, will mobilise resources to prevent the possible spread of the pest to highland cultivating areas in central and northern Ethiopia.

## Field Reports

### East Hararghe

The UNDP Emergencies Unit for Ethiopia fielded a mission to the north-eastern Oromiya zones of East Hararghe and West Hararghe in mid-April. One of the mission objective's was to follow up on the food security situation in parts of East Hararghe, particularly in Fedis wereda. In October 1998, a EUE field mission to this same area considered the food security situation to be "very serious" resulting from three consecutive bad seasons with major crop losses since 1997. Toward the end of 1998, the East Hararghe Zonal Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Bureau, in collaboration with international NGOs responded to the crisis by organising relief food distributions, food-for-work activities (EGS) and seed distributions to the most needy areas and populations. Most of the destitute Oromos who had migrated in search of assistance were brought back to their respective home areas and food distributions took place until the beginning of February. Then the relief programme faced bottlenecks due to transport problems and insufficient provision of grain. Further exacerbating the situation, in the worst affected areas the much awaited *belg* rains were far below average.

Beginning in April, with the anticipation of another harvest failure and after two consecutive months without relief food, people began to leave their homes for the second time. In search of food and daily labour they headed north towards the few urban centres of the Zone. Towns such as Harar again faced significant influxes of destitute Oromos, mainly coming from the worst affected wereda of Fedis. DPPB currently puts the number of needy people in East Hararghe Zone at over half a million, requiring approximately 50,000 metric tonnes of relief food for a period of three to nine months. Beggars and other destitute people roaming Harar town are periodically picked up and driven back to their home areas by truck. Governmental authorities, international NGOs and other humanitarian institutions alike generally agree that the serious food security situation seen last year in the weredas of Fedis, Babile, Gursum, Girawa and Gola Odana has been further aggravated by insufficient *belg* rains and problems in the distribution of relief assistance.

### North Welo

An early *belg* report for North Welo/Wag Hamra recently produced by Save the Children Fund (UK) points to signs of increasing stress as householders attempt to cope with current food deficits. According to the report, the 1999 *belg* rains have completely failed in North Welo and Wag Hamra. Faced with just a few days of rain in January, very few farmers report planting any crops. The complete lack of rainfall was seen as particularly alarming in the highland "*dega*" (above 2,500 metres msl) areas which are *belg* dependent and for those areas that had a poor 1998 *meher* harvest due to excessive rainfall late in the season. These include Bugna, Gidan and Dehana weredas.

The SCF report says in an effort to deal with the current situation, households are adopting a number of coping strategies such as out-migration in search of labour opportunities, increased firewood sales, and purchasing of cheaper foods. Additionally, households have faced a rise in cereal prices and a lack of demand for livestock. Both of these factors have resulted in a significant decline in the terms of trade.

In Wag Hamra, SCF indicate an improvement in the mean WFL of children under five years was witnessed following the *meher* harvest last year. Since then, however, nutrition surveys have shown a decline with a level of 89.2 percent currently reported, which is below the DPPC cut-off for emergency intervention. In western parts of North Welo, a similar pattern has been seen and although the current figure is just above the emergency cut-off level, with no harvest expected for at least another 6 months, the downward trend in nutrition is expected to continue. In eastern areas of North Welo, levels of nutrition were reported as satisfactory following a reasonable *meher* harvest. The situation will need to be monitored closely, however, given the absence of any *belg* harvest this year. With a current mean WFL of 90.5 percent, Gidan wereda was highlighted as an area of concern.

The report concludes by saying that although the severity of the problem varies throughout the areas surveyed, it was clear that unless immediate interventions take place in the areas of concern, the situation is likely to deteriorate rapidly.

## Food aid and logistics

### Relief Operations

Working with the DPPC and national NGO partners, the UN World Food Programme has begun moving emergency food aid to help some 640,000 drought-stricken pastoralists in the Somali region of Ethiopia, Drawing on stocks held by the national Emergency Food Security Reserve (EFSR), the agency began the mobilisation of 8,000 metric tonnes of food aid during April, about 5,000 metric tonnes of which was taken from a European Union shipment to the EFSR delivered to Ethiopia in March via the Somaliland port of Berbera.

According to a WFP report quoted by the UN Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN) in Nairobi, the WFP emergency operation for 272,000 Ethiopian civilians displaced by the conflict with Eritrea remains "seriously under-resourced". Only 12,660 metric tonnes have been received to date (a contribution from USAID) leaving a shortfall of 32,711 metric tonnes of mixed commodities. The agency is appealing for further donor contributions to assist the war-displaced. After some delays arising from a shortage of transport, the delivery of food supplies to the distribution sites in Tigray was scheduled to commence the second week of May. Initial supplies are being obtained as loans from EFSR stocks held in Mekele.

### Food Aid Pledges

WFP report that the level of food aid pledges this year remains worryingly low, a situation made worse by the fact that out of a total of 212,500 metric tonnes so far pledged against 1999 food aid requirements, only 25,200 metric tonnes (or 12 percent) has so far been physically delivered. There has been only one new pledge in the past month, 25,000 metric tonnes from USAID which is intended to partially offset a consignment of relief food stranded in the port of Assab since May last year when the conflict with Eritrea broke out. The table below gives the latest status of pledges:

**Table I: Pledges against 1999 Food Aid Requirements - Cereals & Pulses**

	Relief	Regular	EFSR	TOTAL
<u>1999 pledges</u>				
USA	25,000	11,558	-	36,558
EC	50,000	-	50,000	100,000
WFP	40,251	31,918	-	72,169
Canada	-	3,000	-	3,000
Denmark	-	800	-	800
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>115,251</b>	<b>47,276</b>	<b>50,000</b>	<b>212,527</b>
Deliveries as of 11/05/99	10,000	15,218	-	25,218

Source: WFP Food Aid Status Report (May 11, 1999)

### Port operations and Logistics

There was just one shipment of 13,000 tons of food aid to the port of Djibouti in April. The consignment was part of a mixed Canadian shipment destined to a number of NGOs. Conversely, a total of nearly 88,000 metric tonnes of commercial fertiliser arrived, dominating port operations during the month and resulting in some reported shortages of trucking capacity.

Compared to recent months, the WFP trucking fleet was relatively inactive and, lacking sufficient cargo, for a seven day period the fleet was released. The fleet, however, successfully moved 8,000 metric tonnes for the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), assisted Oxfam in the transport of 1,176 metric tonnes destined for REST in Tigray and cleared a balance of 1,975 metric tonnes from a WFP shipment delivered in late March.

Meanwhile, the expected dispatch of a USAID shipment destined for REST was delayed while the proper fumigation of the infested cargo was done at the port.

For the period, April 12 to May 10, the average daily dispatch from Djibouti to various locations in Ethiopia was 556 metric tonnes, considerably down on previous months and a reflection on the reduced level of shipments to the port. May is also expected to be a relatively quiet month with only a single shipment of 12,400 metric tonnes of relief wheat for WFP currently scheduled to arrive. Deliveries will pick-up again in June when food aid totalling 40,000 metric tonnes is scheduled to arrive.

### **Emergency Food Security Reserve**

The status of the Emergency Food Security Reserve remains very good with physical stocks of 125,000 metric tonnes currently available for withdrawal. With a number of repayments due for delivery in the next couple of months, subject to further loans being made, these stocks are expected to rise to around 180,000 metric tonnes by the end of July.

Linked to this, after some delays due to tendering problems, the 1999 local purchase programme is now getting underway with the EU and EuronAid expected to purchase some 60,000 metric tonnes of Sorghum, Maize and Wheat over the coming two months or so (shown under EC Relief and EFSR columns in Table I). Tenders amounting to a combined balance of approximately 25,000 metric tonnes were not approved under the current round and are under consideration for possible re-issuing later in the year. Purchase contracts were not signed for these tenders as prices quoted exceeded the import parity price by more than the percentage limit considered to be acceptable. Having risen significantly in recent weeks, the retail price for Maize (not yet cleaned, graded or re-bagged) is currently reported to be around Ethiopian Birr 1,600 per tonne (US \$200/tonne).

The quantity to be purchased by the EU consists of part of 24,000 metric tonnes of grains pledged by the Union to the EFSR in 1997 to bring the reserve size to its medium term target level of 307,000 metric tonnes. The EuronAid tender is a purchase to repay loans made by various NGOs who had borrowed grains from the reserve under the guarantee of EuronAid.

### **National Non-food Emergency Contingency Stock**

In December 1997, the DPPC issued proposals for the establishment of a National Non-Food Emergency Contingency Stock (NNFECS) comprising a modest stock of pre-positioned shelter materials, feeding kits and households utensils, water storage and distribution equipment, search and rescue items, logistics equipment and limited team support supplies. The stocks are intended to be used to meet the initial needs of a (notional) 60,000 people displaced by an acute crisis (such as a flood emergency) until such time that other resources can be mobilised. It was proposed that the current emergency stocks held in-country by OXFAM (UKI) and Save the Children Fund (UK) would form the core of the new national stocks.

The NNFECS was formally established within the administration of the Emergency Food Security Reserve in February 1999. The technical and executive committees necessary for the operation and management of the contingency stock were convened and the first two meetings of the Technical Committee held in March and April under the chairmanship of the EFSRA General Manager. At these two meetings, the Technical Committee reviewed arrangements for the location and management of the stocks and agreed to develop a procedural manual governing the release and replenishment of supplies and equipment. The Committee also discussed arrangements to secure a temporary warehouse in Nazereth for maintaining the stocks, standardisation of items to be kept in stock, the identification and transfer of items which are already available with OXFAM/SCF-UK and training of storekeepers to handle the equipment and supplies. The new emergency stocks are expected to be fully operational by the end of 1999.

### **Health Issues: special report – HIV/AIDS**

At a meeting of African Ministers of Finance and Ministers of Economic Development and Planning, held in Addis Ababa on 7 May, the Executive Director of UNAIDS Dr. Peter Piot called for leadership in the continent in the fight against AIDS and openness about the disease and how it is spread. In explaining why



AIDS is at the heart of the development agenda for Africa, he advised ministers to get personally involved in the fight against AIDS, by speaking out strongly and publicly about the threat of AIDS. He said that current estimates show that a billion dollars or more needs to be devoted to AIDS programmes in Africa if the epidemic was to be curtailed.

In Ethiopia, the first AIDS cases were reported in hospitals in 1986. The HIV/AIDS epidemic has increasingly spread among Ethiopians with time and government statistics cite one person out of every 100 was HIV infected in 1989, 3 persons out of every 100 in 1993 and 5 out of 100 in 1996. In 1996 the National HIV/AIDS Control Programme had registered a cumulative total of 21,000 reported AIDS cases. It is acknowledged, however that there is gross under reporting. It is estimated that the cumulative number of AIDS cases was actually 350,000 by December 1997. By the end of 1997, an estimated 2.5 million Ethiopians were living with HIV. Caring for all these patients constitutes a huge burden on the health care expenditure if not directly, indirectly by the expenditure and loss of contribution at the family and community levels. If effective measures are not undertaken to control the epidemic, one out of every two hospital beds will be occupied by AIDS patients by the year 2001, increasing the burden and expenditure on AIDS at every level of government. HIV infection lowers the individual's immunity and this converts latent Tuberculosis (TB) to active TB infection. Also, HIV infected individuals can acquire new TB infections from other infected people. Tuberculosis is now the leading opportunistic infection in all countries in Africa. If the current trend is allowed to continue in Ethiopia, HIV/AIDS will contribute 60 percent of all new TB infections by 2009.

During 1998, important progress was made in the response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Ethiopia. Foremost was the endorsement of the National HIV/AIDS Policy by the Council of Ministers, while the elaboration of HIV/AIDS multi-sectoral regional and federal strategic plans for the period 1998 – 2002 have been major steps forward. Finally, a Strategic Framework has been developed, defining national priorities in responding to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and providing co-ordination mechanisms, management arrangements, monitoring and evaluation plans.

Established in 1995, a UN "Theme Group" on HIV/AIDS in Ethiopia has been actively supporting the national response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Led by the UN Resident Co-ordinator, the members of the theme group include: UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, UNESCO, WHO, World Bank and representatives from government (Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs). The secretariat for the Theme Group is UNAIDS, a global multi-agency initiative that has had a presence in Ethiopia since 1997. Its main aim is to facilitate a complementary and consistent approach by the UN in support of Ethiopia's expanded response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

A number of NGOs have been active in creating AIDS awareness in Ethiopia and changing behaviour and attitudes towards it. As part of its Social Marketing Programme, since 1990, DKT has been conducting extensive behavioural and attitudinal research with a view to increasing condom and oral contraceptive use in Ethiopia and is making high quality affordable condoms and pills widely accessible, in particular to persons with the greatest need and at the greatest risk. DKT has established an extensive distribution and sales network which covers all of Ethiopia. In 1997, more than 28 million condoms were sold through this marketing and distribution system. Similarly, the national NGO, Integrated Service for AIDS Prevention and Support in partnership with Save Your Generation Association have implemented a number of AIDS awareness creation programmes targeting long distance bus drivers their assistants and cashiers. Pro-Pride, an NGO based in Addis Ababa has also played a pivotal role in sensitising the residents of Addis Ababa city by displaying posters on taxis, buses motorcycles and bicycles.

On May 8, 1999, Ethiopia's first national association of people living with HIV /AIDS was launched. The inauguration of "Dawn of Hope" was attended by the President of Ethiopia, Negasso Gidada, Sheik Abudurahman Hussein, Chairman of the Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council, the Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Abune Paulos, and Dr. Peter Piot, Executive Director of UNAIDS. The launch marked the first time in Ethiopia that those who have been infected with the HIV virus have organised themselves with the purpose of sending out a message to the larger society. At the launching ceremony, Zewdu Getachew, founder of Dawn of Hope, said that an estimated three million Ethiopians were exposed to the disease, with over 600,000 children made orphans and one third of Ethiopia's hospital beds used by carriers of the virus. The organisation aims to be a source of hope for Ethiopians who live with HIV/AIDS, providing affection, compassion and relief from depression for those who are associated with it.

In 1999, Ethiopia faces the challenge of broadly publicising its National HIV/AIDS Policy to foster the participation of individuals, families, communities and the whole nation in efforts to combat AIDS. The UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS will continue to support the government's effort in disseminating the HIV/AIDS policy. It is strongly believed that partnership between national and international players in planning and implementing effective HIV/AIDS prevention and control strategies is the key to successfully reversing the trends of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Ethiopia.

## **Refugees in Ethiopia: Special Report – Environmental Impact Mitigation**

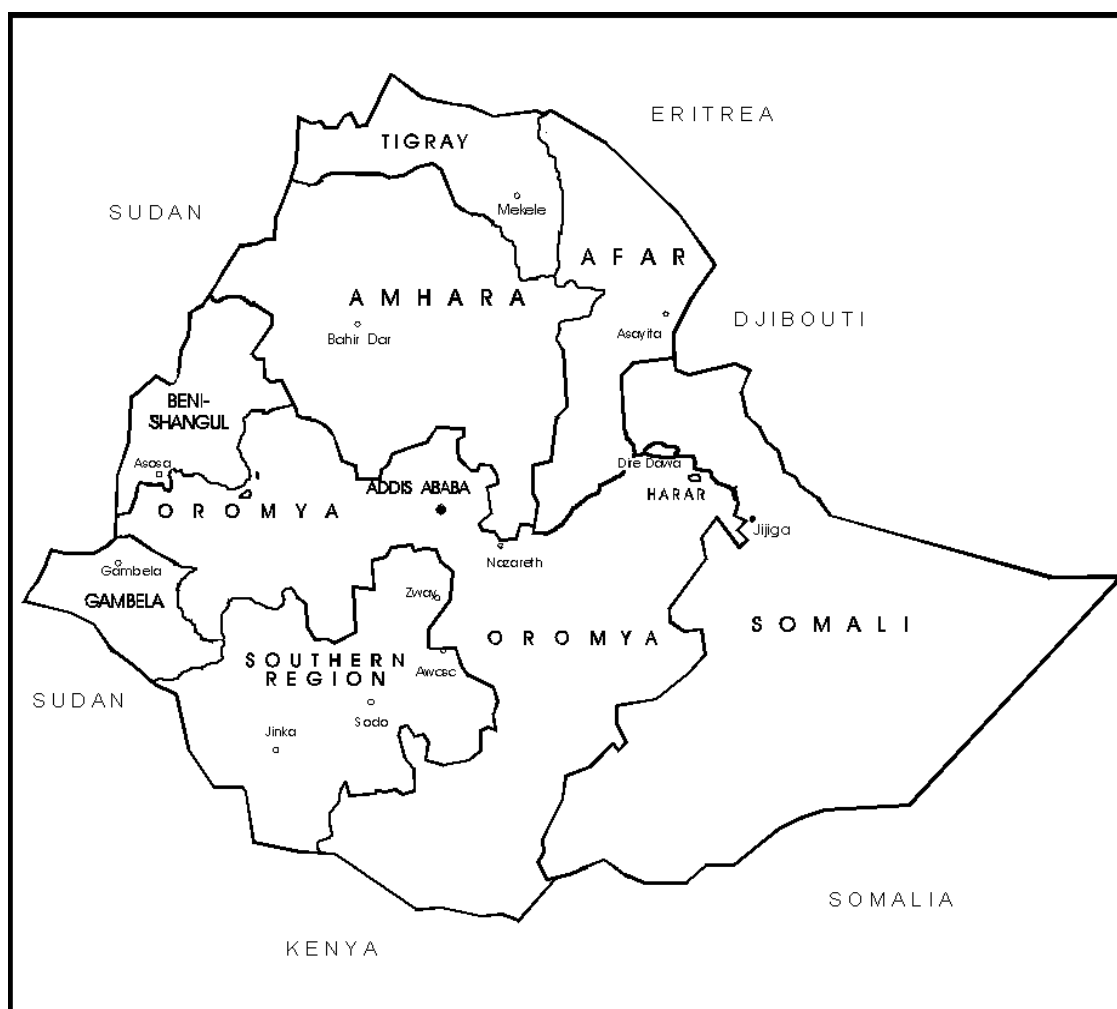
The current refugee population in Ethiopia stands at some 272,162 of which 195,173 are Somali refugees located in eight refugee camps in the Somali Region and 60,750 are Sudanese refugees receiving UNHCR assistance in four settlements, three in Gambella and one in Benishangul Gumuz. UNHCR has recently released a report; "Overview of Environmental activities in Ethiopia – 1998". The report highlights the seriousness of the environmental damage associated with the refugee settlements in the country and reviews UNHCR's efforts to address the problem. During 1998, tangible results have been achieved especially in the Somali Region where only limited environmental activities had been implemented since the arrival of the refugees in 1988.

In order to prevent and mitigate the environmental problems caused by the establishment of refugee camps in Ethiopia, UNHCR and its implementing partners launched a multi-component programme in 1998 with the support of donors such as the Japanese Government and the European Commission. The programme included activities such as the establishment of nurseries, tree planting, erosion control measures, production and dissemination of fuel saving stoves, environmental education programmes (formal and non-formal) and environmental impact assessments. These activities have been planned as part of a multi-year programme having short, medium and long term benefits. The major components of the programme during 1998 were:

- Implementation of reforestation programme in the east;
- Support for reforestation in the west;
- Design environmental educational modules;
- Promote the dissemination of energy-saving technologies and practices;
- Undertake an environmental Impact Assessment in refugee settlements in the west;
- Implement a pilot erosion control project in the east;
- Create a GIS database to help monitor environmental impact;
- Complete a land use plan for refugee settlements in the west, and
- Organise environmental training workshops.

These activities were planned on the basis of studies and analysis of the socio-economic and cultural background of the refugees as well as the local communities hosting them. The preliminary research assessed the available natural and economic resources in terms of climate, forest, soil and water, crops, livestock feed and non-farming activities in the primary study areas of Sherkole, Fungido, Bonga and Dimma in the west. The aim of the preliminary study was to draw conclusions and formulate mechanisms that would enable the refugees in these settlements to meet partial food self-sufficiency at a household level through sustainable resource use and management. UNHCR also commissioned the Ethiopian Mapping Authority to implement a pilot project to analyse the extent of environmental changes in refugee settlements in western Ethiopia using satellite imagery and related geographic information system. The results of the UNHCR study will be used to design a global plan of action for environmental protection in Ethiopia for implementation through the regional administrations.

# Administrative Map of Ethiopia



## DISCLAIMER

The designations employed and the presentation of material in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever of the UN concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

## SOURCES:

UNDP-EUE field reports; CRDA Newsletter; Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (DPPC); European Union; FAO; USAID -FEWS; National Meteorological Services Agency (NMSA); UNICEF; UNHCR; WFP; WHO. Also media sources: The Ethiopian Herald; AFP; Walta Information Centre; ENA.

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