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**Drought in the Horn of Africa: Background Note prepared by UNDP**

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*"The world asks, 'Didn't we save you in '84?' They ask,  
'Why Ethiopia, again? What is wrong with those people?'  
They are tired of saving us. But you know something?  
We are even more tired of being saved."<sup>1</sup>*

## **Introduction**

The background information on the drought in the Horn of Africa, particularly Ethiopia, is based on information gathered during two recent BCPR missions to Ethiopia looking at the issues of drought recovery. The paper provides:

- A summary of the drought conditions that are currently being experienced in Ethiopia and in the Horn of Africa;
- The achievements that have been made by government and partners since the drought of 2000 and further action required in Ethiopia; and
- A series of recommendations for IASC members.

The inter-agency response to the humanitarian crisis in Southern Africa recognised the need for interdependence between humanitarian and development programming as essential to address the problems of the region. This precedent must be repeated for the Horn of Africa, in order to ensure recovery.

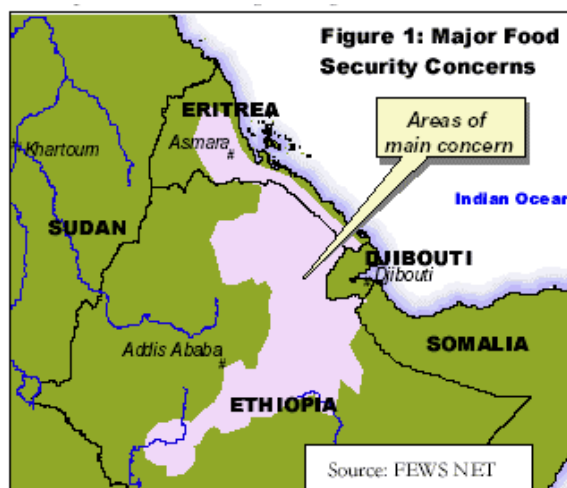
## **Drought in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa**

The current drought affects predominantly the northern sector of the Greater Horn of Africa region<sup>2</sup> and whilst other areas have faced food and crop shortages they relate more to conflict than drought. In the drought affected areas of Ethiopia and Eritrea, a late onset of the rains was followed by below normal and erratic rainfall during most of the growing season and overall crop performance is expected to be worse than in 1999/2000. Figure 1 highlights the areas of major food security concerns.

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<sup>1</sup> Getachew Tesfaye, head of fundraising for the Ethiopia's Disaster Preparedness Agency, in an interview with the Washington Post.

<sup>2</sup> The Greater Horn of Africa region includes Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Somalia, the Sudan and Uganda. Generally the Horn of Africa proper is limited to Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia.



The drought however builds on an increasing vulnerability. Over the last decade, the number of destitute, particularly in Ethiopia, has grown by an estimated 20 percent and the whole society, including the 'better-off' groups, has become considerably poorer. With assets and coping capacities so heavily eroded, the harvest failure has the potential to trigger a severe humanitarian crisis. Fortunately early warning systems have worked relatively well to provide adequate notice of the emergence of this crisis; numerous alerts have been produced and appeals by governments issued and responded to. However, Ethiopia remains on the verge of a crisis that will probably peak during the middle of 2003.

Whilst other parts of the Horn of Africa may not be affected by drought the region is one of the most food insecure regions in the world, where as a whole, more than 40% of people are undernourished, and in Eritrea and Somalia the proportion rises to 70%. The population of the Horn (160 million) has more than doubled since 1974 and is projected to increase by a further 40% by 2015.

Armed conflict, both within and between countries, is a contributing factor to vulnerability in the region. The Horn of Africa region is crisis prone and confronted by the need for peace building, conflict prevention, mine action, demobilization, disarmament and disaster reduction. Many of these issues must be dealt with nationally but they can also be addressed from a regional dimension working through existing mechanisms such as IGAD and the Nile Basin Initiative.

Clearly the 2002/2003 droughts were not just the result of climatic conditions but a number of complex issues. These include the emergence of tribal conflicts and clashes over basic resources, poor infrastructure, slow adaptation to the government's decentralization process in vulnerable areas, limited marketing options, the effects of all-time low cereal prices since 2000 and subsequent depressed production in the cash crop growing areas. The region faces very high levels of HIV/AIDS although it is not clear, at this stage, what the impact is on the drought nor what impact the drought will have on HIV/AIDS. In Ethiopia this has prompted humanitarian agencies and international partners to join with the Government to attempt the following:

- More openly discuss the underlying causes of food insecurity;
- Start to design and plan development orientated strategies and approaches to address these more complex underlying issues, and
- Continue to meet the needs of both the acute and the chronically food insecure.

### **Achievements in Ethiopia since 2000**

There is a general consensus that the past decades of food aid assistance to Ethiopia have not improved the economic status of chronically food insecure households for a variety of reasons. It would appear that the various schemes such as food for work, employment generation and employment based safety net (EBSN) programs have failed to meet both development and relief objectives. Year in and year out the chronically vulnerable require food assistance and both the government and the donors must plan and act accordingly to meet these needs. In addition they must plan and act to address the causes of this chronic food insecurity in order to break the cycle of dependency.

This need to address the underlying causes of food insecurity was recognized at a regional level following the 1999/2000 drought and resulted in the preparation and publication of a report by an Inter-

Agency Task Force established by the UN Secretary General on the UN Response to Long-Term Food Security, Agricultural Development and Related Aspects in the Horn of Africa. The report, *"The Elimination of Food Insecurity in the Horn of Africa"* set out a strategy and framework for action throughout the greater Horn of Africa.

Over the last two years the government, donors, UN system and NGOs have participated in a series of workshops, discussions and meetings to review the issues and approaches to food security, vulnerability and food aid in Ethiopia. Many of these discussions have focused on how to use food aid more effectively, how to ensure asset protection for the food insecure and how to promote sustainable livelihoods. This process has to some extent influenced the introduction of new policies, strategies and institutional arrangements to address rural development (November 2001)<sup>3</sup> and an updating of the Food Security Strategy (March 2002)<sup>4</sup>. Whilst these policies and strategies are sound their implementation has been far from effective. To address this issue more effectively the Government has established a Senior-Level Food Security Policy Steering Committee under the leadership of Deputy Prime Minister who has also been tasked with coordinating the Food Security Strategy at the federal level.

But much more is needed in terms of addressing programming issues (particularly implementation), structural and institutional change and creating a greater awareness of different options and approaches. In this respect some consensus has been achieved to take advantage of the current drought emergency and to take urgent action to plan and act together to address this chronic food insecurity. A paper was drafted in early 2003 setting out a process to ensure that government, donors, UN Agencies and NGOs work together to rapidly and more effectively address this critical issue. The paper built on the work already undertaken over the last few years and that had been crystallised in discussions and workshops during 2002 and in December 2002 in the launching of an Emergency Appeal alongside the Consultative Group Meeting. Further attention is now required in the following areas:

**Non-Food Assistance:** Non-food assistance is an integral part of an emergency response providing complementary and supportive interventions in health, nutrition, water, sanitation, agriculture, livestock, logistics, early warning, monitoring and capacity building. These need to be provided in a way that enables the strengthening of coping mechanisms and the protection of existing assets.

**Voluntary Resettlement:** With many drought prone areas unable to support an expanding population, resettlement, with the full consent of the people, becomes an appropriate option. Resettlement must be carefully planned and involve the full participation and consent of the communities. It should be associated with integrated development and be environmentally sound. Whilst resettlement has been undertaken on a limited small-scale basis, there is now a need to assess the effectiveness of resettlement to date and identify means of increasing the scale of the process.

**Transitory Asset Protection Systems (TAPS):** This approach aims to ensure that the chronically food insecure are assisted such that their assets are protected. It exploits the opportunity that *predictability* offers us in order to plan support to predictably needy populations on a multi-annual basis; to provide predictable, timely and sufficient resource flows to protect productive assets and livelihoods; and to exploit the multi-annual nature of these resource flows to draw relief, asset protection and development together into the same framework.

**Capacity Building Activities:** Food security initiatives urgently need to be supported and complemented by capacity building activities particularly at the Woreda level. This might focus on short and long-term training along with the provision of appropriate inputs at the local level.

**Marketing:** a Government Task Force is already dealing with some of the challenges relating to marketing and the marketing information system. This Task Force is currently looking at agriculture warehousing systems, community extension centres, inputs, etc. However, it is also recognised that other aspects will also need to be studied and addressed and improvements put into place.

**Expanding sustainable recovery approaches:** A range of more specific initiatives to address food security issues as part of a process using developmental approaches in a relief setting has been put forward. These include the "Employment Generation Schemes" (EGS), food for work, cash for work, etc. Instruments must be found to ensure that such schemes are effective and can be rapidly expanded.

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<sup>3</sup> Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia: Rural Development Policies, Strategies and Instruments, November 21, 2001, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

<sup>4</sup> Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia: Food Security Strategy, March 2002, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Given the huge number of people in need of urgent assistance the immediate priority in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa must be to mobilise sufficient resources to meet these emergency needs. However, the persistence and growth of food insecurity during the last decade, despite the massive relief transfers to the country, points to the fundamental limitations of this type of response. Unless the commitment and resources to tackle the underlying causes of chronic food insecurity can be mobilised, then similar emergencies will re-occur with increasing frequency and severity.

It was therefore important that UN agencies follow-up on the implementation of the Inter-agency Task Force report "*The Elimination of Food Insecurity in the Horn of Africa*", as approved by the ACC in October 2000. In late 2000 the World Bank had been designated as the lead agency to move the process forward in close association with IGAD. It would appear that this process has become stalled at the regional level and there is now an urgent need to re-invigorate this process both at the regional and national levels.

In Ethiopia there is an urgent need to address recovery issues, promote structural and institutional change and create a greater awareness of different options and approaches to food security. This will require discussion amongst key stakeholders in the area of drought recovery, food security, and rural and agriculture development.

IASC members are encouraged to actively participate and ensure that these discussions move forward at the national and regional level. In addition the IASC Working Group should work closely with the UNDG to ensure an effective interface and transition from the humanitarian response to recovery and to maximise the region's potential for recovery. UNDP has initiated a taskforce within the UNDG to address the development dimensions of the crisis in this region. We would welcome the participation of IASC members in this endeavour. The present emergency provides an excellent opportunity to resource actions that will lead to the elimination of food insecurity in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa.