



Overseas Development Institute

**THE CHANGING ROLE OF NGOS
IN THE PROVISION OF RELIEF
AND REHABILITATION
ASSISTANCE:**

CASE STUDY 3 -

**NORTHERN ETHIOPIA
AND ERITREA**

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WORKING PAPER 76

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CASE STUDY 3 – NORTHERN ETHIOPIA
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John Borton

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Preface

This case study is one of a series being prepared as part of a larger study on the changing role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the provision of relief and rehabilitation assistance. It is now widely recognised that NGOs play a much enhanced role in relief and rehabilitation operations compared to ten or fifteen years ago. However, the rate of growth of NGOs in this field of activity and the factors contributing to such growth have not previously been studied in a comprehensive manner. The primary objectives of the overall study, which is funded by the UK Overseas Development Administration, are therefore to:

- a) quantify the relief and rehabilitation resources handled by NGOs since 1979, so as to analyse both the extent to which the role of NGOs undertaken in the provision of such assistance has increased and the ways in which the functions undertaken by NGOs have changed;
- b) make a preliminary examination of the practical and policy implications of the increased role of NGOs in relief operations both for donor organisations that use NGOs as channels for the provision of relief and rehabilitation assistance and for the NGOs themselves.

Three of a series of case studies are to be published in the ODI Working Paper series. As well as the present study, the two others are the role of NGOs in the provision of relief and rehabilitation to Afghan refugees in Pakistan and within Mujahideen-controlled areas in Afghanistan during the period 1979 to 1992, and the provision of relief and rehabilitation to Cambodian refugees in Thailand and within Cambodia itself during the period 1979 to 1992.

In many relief and rehabilitation operations, the role and contribution of NGOs are poorly understood. Among the principal factors contributing to this situation are the large number of agencies involved, the frequent lack of centralised sources of information, the complexities of the different types of resource flows through the system and the relationships between the various organisations involved and, in some cases, the deliberate secrecy of agencies involved in activities that are either covert and/or threaten the safety of agency personnel. The purpose of the individual case studies, therefore, is to examine the role and contribution of NGOs in the provision of assistance in a selection of the largest relief operations to have taken place since 1979. The case studies focus on key aspects of NGO involvement in such operations, i.e. changes over time in the number concerned, the different characteristics, the range and scale of activities undertaken and their relationship with other organisations involved in the operation, in particular UN agencies, donor organisations, government agencies, and the Red Cross Movement. Given the

involvement of many different NGOs in relief operations, coordination is an important activity and so the studies also examine the coordination mechanisms which developed within the NGO community.

The case studies are not intended to be exhaustive studies of the role of NGOs in the selected relief operations. The highly disparate nature of the data sources and the lack of institutional memory of activities undertaken more than three or four years previously within many organisations involved in the provision of relief and rehabilitation assistance mean that exhaustive studies are difficult and time consuming. In those relief and rehabilitation operations which have been underway for several years, exhaustive studies may simply not be possible. Given the limited time available for the case studies (each involved only a two to three week visit to the countries involved), they can therefore only be regarded as provisional assessments of the role of NGOs in such operations. Neither are the studies intended to assess the impact and effectiveness of the assistance provided by NGOs. Such assessments or evaluations would require much more detailed investigation and involve seeking the views of a sample of the recipients of the assistance provided for either all the NGOs involved or at least a representative sample.

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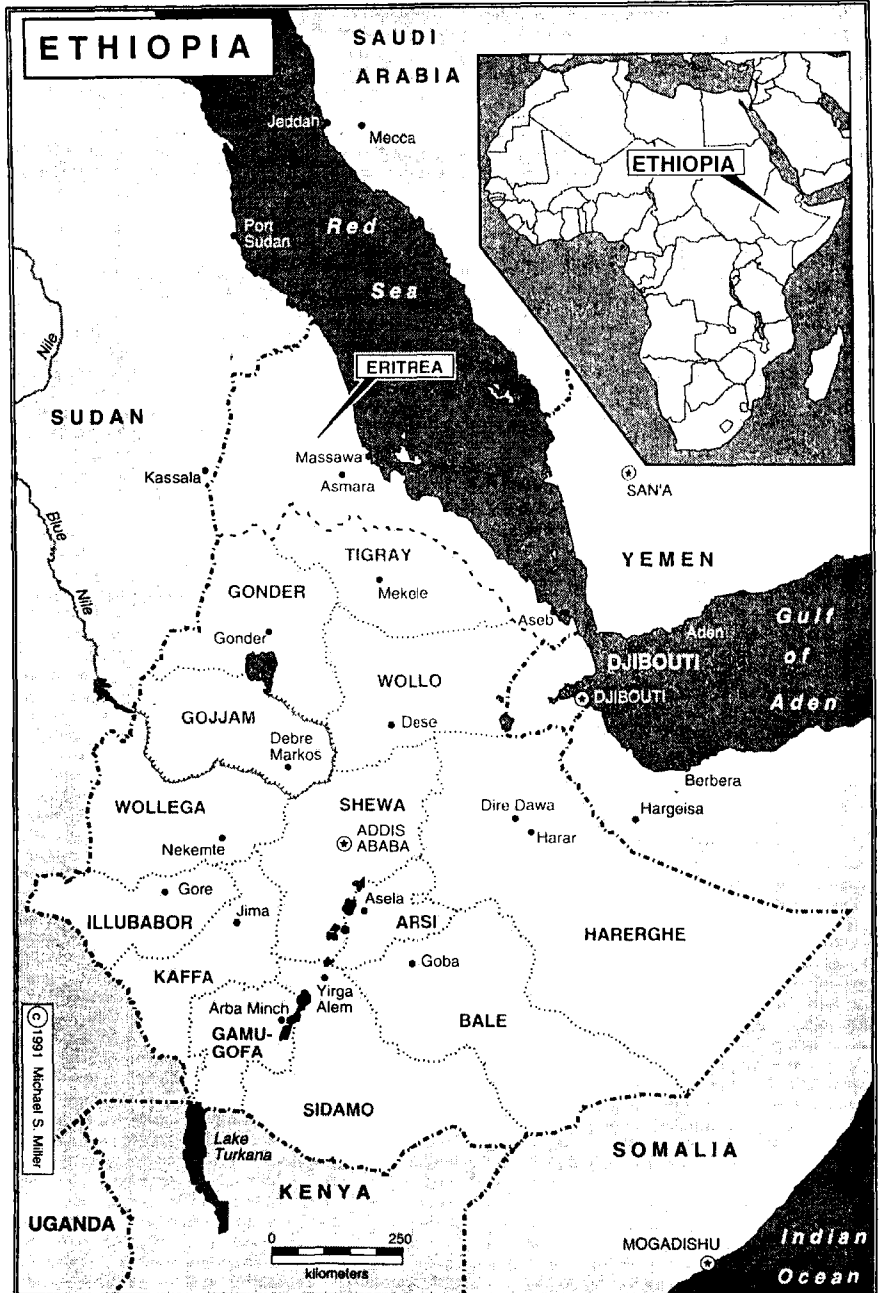
Acronyms

ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
AMC	Agricultural Marketing Corporation
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BFW	Brot für die Welt
CA	Christian Aid
CAFOD	Catholic Fund for Overseas Development
CARE	Cooperative for American Relief Everywhere
CBO	Cross-border Operation
CDA/E	Churches Drought Action Africa/Ethiopia
CEBEMO	Catholic Organisation for Joint Financing of Development Programmes
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
COPWE	Commission to organise the Party of the Working People of Ethiopia
CRDA	Christian Relief and Development Association
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
DCA	DanChurch Aid
DDW	Diakonisches Werk
DHA	UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs
DIA	Dutch Interchurch Aid
EC	European Community
ECA	UN's Economic Commission on Africa
ECS	Ethiopian Catholic Secretariat
EDU	Ethiopian Democratic Union
EECMY	Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus
EIAC	Eritrean Inter-Agency Agricultural Consortium
ELF	Eritrean Liberation Front
EOC	Ethiopian Orthodox Church
EPDM	Ethiopia People's Democratic Movement
EPLF	Eritrean People's Liberation Front
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
ERA	Eritrean Relief Association
ERCCS	Eritrean Red Cross and Red Crescent Society
ERD	Emergency Relief Desk
EZE	Protestant Association for Co-operation in Development, Germany
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FHI	Food for the Hungry International
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
GOE	Government of Ethiopia
ICCO	Inter-Church Coordination Committee for Development Projects
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
JRP	Joint Relief Partnership

JRS	Jesuit Relief Services
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
LWR	Lutheran World Relief
MLLT	Marxist-Leninist League of Tigray
MoH	Ministry of Health
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NCA	Norwegian Church Aid
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NIP	Nutrition Intervention Programmes
OFDA	US Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance
OLF	Oromo Liberation Front
ORA	Oromo Relief Association
PAs	Peasants' Associations
PMAC	Provisional Military Administrative Council
PVO	Private Voluntary Organisation
RRC	Relief and Rehabilitation Commission
REST	Relief Society of Tigray
SCC	Sudan Council of Churches
SCF	Save the Children Fund
SCR	Swedish Church Relief
SIM	Society of International Missions
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
TPLF	Tigrayan People's Liberation Front
TTAC	Tigray Transport and Agricultural Consortium
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDRO	Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator
UNEPGP	United Nations Emergency Preparedness and Prevention Group
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOEOA	UN Office for Emergency Operations in Africa
UNOEOE	UN Office for Emergency Operations in Ethiopia
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WCC	World Council of Churches
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation
WPE	Workers' Party of Ethiopia
WTOE	World Food Programme's Transport Operation in Ethiopia
WVI	World Vision International

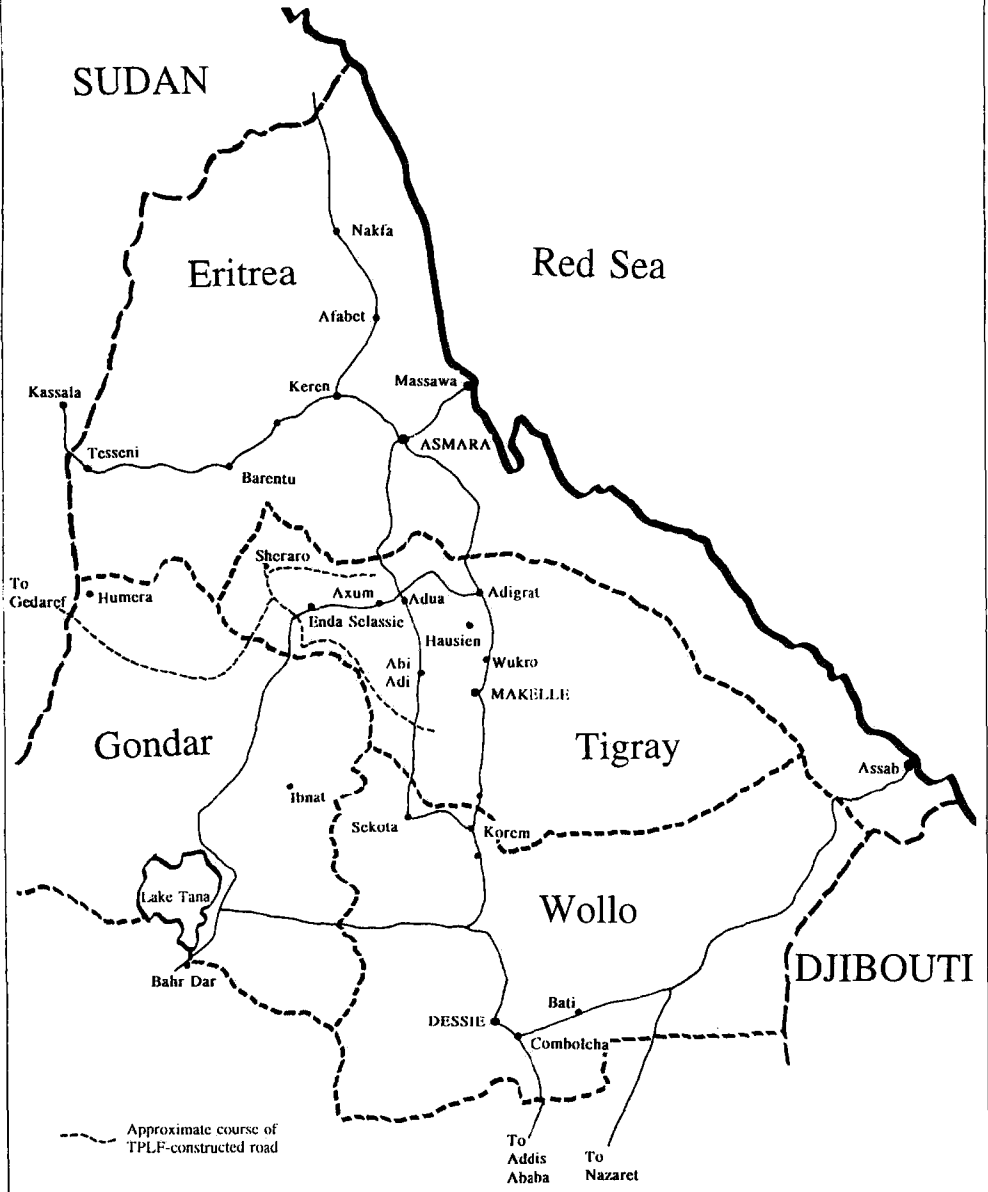
Map 1

Map of Ethiopia and Eritrea



Map 2

Map of Eritrea, Gondar, Tigray and Wollo



--- Approximate course of TPLF-constructed road

0 100 kms 200 kms

1. Introduction and Method

This case study examines the role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the provision of relief and rehabilitation assistance within Northern Ethiopia and Eritrea in areas under the control of both the regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam¹ and the liberation fronts, principally the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) and the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF). The period covered by the case study is from the early 1980s to 1991 when the forces of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) and EPLF finally overthrew Derg forces and took control of Addis Ababa and Asmara respectively. The imprecision of the beginning of the period is intentional as accurate data on the role of NGOs much before 1984 is not readily available and yet important elements of the story of the enhanced role of NGOs go back to the late 1970s or even earlier.

In terms of trends in the role of NGOs in the provision of relief and rehabilitation assistance during the last ten to fifteen years, the case study is of particular interest for several reasons. First, it covers the massive international famine relief efforts of 1984-5 which, to an unprecedented degree, relied upon NGOs as channels for the provision and distribution of relief assistance. Second, the war between the Liberation Fronts and the Derg and the need for relief assistance in areas controlled by the Fronts presented the international community with a conflict between responding to such needs and infringing national sovereignty. The way in which NGOs and subsequently donor organisations responded to such needs, whilst the UN was unable or unwilling to respond to such needs until the war had virtually ended, provides insights into a significant factor in the enhanced role of NGOs in relief operations during the 1980s and how that role may be affected in the post Cold War context of the 1990s. Third, the case provides interesting examples of coordination mechanisms developed by NGOs and how they have approached the ethical difficulties of providing relief in a highly political context where they were often witness to human rights abuses and subjected to manipulation.

The preparation of this case study involved a three week visit by the author in September 1992 to Addis Ababa and Asmara. During the visit, interviews were held with personnel of UN agencies, the ICRC, international and local NGOs, NGO coordinating bodies and donor organisations. Information collected during the visit was complemented with information obtained from the Head Offices of selected organisations and relevant published material.

¹ This study variously uses the terms 'Derg', 'Government of Ethiopia' and 'Mengistu regime' to describe the civil/military authority that constituted the internationally recognised government of Ethiopia during this period.

2. Background

The context in which relief and rehabilitation assistance was provided in Ethiopia and Eritrea during the period covered by this case study was extremely complex. Nevertheless, within this complexity, there were three principal elements: the nature of the Derg and its domestic and foreign policies; the conflicts in the north; and the occurrence of severe droughts in large areas of the country, particularly in the years 1983-4. The interplay of these principal elements led to the development of a situation to which the term 'complex emergency' is now commonly applied. The famine of 1984-5 occurred within this 'complex emergency'. A sizeable literature covering these principal elements now exists and the brief summary that follows cannot do justice to the full complexity of the overall context.

2.1 The Mengistu Regime and its Policies

The downfall of Haile Selassie and his imperial regime in 1974 was followed by a chaotic and violent revolutionary struggle within, as well as between, the different groups of power and influence in Ethiopian society, namely the armed forces, the intelligentsia, organised labour and the city mob or lumpenproletariat (Clapham, 1988). The Derg, which was the council formed as a parliament of the armed forces in the months preceding the deposition of the Emperor and which subsequently assumed the title of Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC), emerged as the most powerful group. Within the Derg, a Marxist-Leninist faction headed by Mengistu Haile Mariam had, by 1977, established its dominance. A vicious terror campaign reigned in Addis Ababa between rival factions during 1977 and 1978 but order, with the Derg and Mengistu firmly in control, was eventually reimposed by the end of 1978.

Measures designed to transform control over production and the institutions of the state from the feudal system of the imperial regime to a socialist system of collective ownership and centralised direction began in 1975. With a measure of stability being established by 1978, the regime embarked on a programme consolidating the earlier measures and introducing additional reforms. The Commission to organise the Party of the Working People of Ethiopia (COPWE) was formed in 1979 and 'represented a deliberate process of party formation from above' (Clapham, 1988). COPWE's leadership included civilians, though it remained dominated by the military, and was chaired by Mengistu. In September 1984, at the time of the celebrations of the tenth anniversary of the revolution, the Workers Party of Ethiopia (WPE) was launched with great fanfare. Effectively, the WPE represented a relaunch of COPWE with provision, along Soviet lines, for the election of the higher organs within the Party.

Rural Policies

In the rural areas, the most important of the early measures was land reform. The land reform proclamations of 1975 abolished all existing forms of tenure, restricted the size of family holdings, prohibited the employment of hired labour on land and directed that Peasants Associations (PAs) be established across the country with power to distribute land between families and set up agricultural producer cooperatives. By 1986, the number of PAs had exceeded 20,000, including 5.7 million households giving an average of 280 households in each PA (Clapham, 1988). Producer cooperatives pooled land, labour and other resources and the communal harvest was divided between member households according to the amount of labour they had expended on the land. To make membership attractive, cooperative members were offered inducements such as paying lower taxes and being provided with interest free loans and priority access to inputs and consumer goods (Webb et al., 1992). In Wollo, in 1984-5, cooperative members were exempted from the Resettlement Programme (see section 3.1) and this contributed to a surge in membership in that period. Though the standard of living of members was often higher than non-members, the indications are that the cooperatives were less productive than ordinary peasant farms (Clapham, 1988; Webb et al., 1992).

There were other policies which also had important impacts in rural areas and implications for food security. In 1976, the Agricultural Marketing Corporation (AMC) was established to buy agricultural produce principally for urban consumers, the army and government institutions and from 1978-9 onwards became the principal government agency regulating the domestic food trade. State farms and producer cooperatives were obliged to sell all their produce to the AMC and were rewarded by prices above those paid to peasant producers who were obliged to sell a portion of their produce to the AMC (often regardless of whether they had a surplus to sell) by grain purchase task forces which imposed quotas on Peasant Associations and thus on individual households. Prices offered to producers by the AMC were consistently lower than those obtained on the open market and effectively therefore represented a tax on producers and a subsidy to urban and state-related consumers (Clapham, 1988).

Two other rural policies which had profound impacts in the areas where they were implemented were the Resettlement Programme and the Villagisation Programme. The Resettlement Programme involved the movement of peasants from densely populated areas in the northern highland areas to sparsely populated lowland areas in the west and south west. Between late 1984 and early 1988, approximately 600,000 people were resettled. The Programme was highly controversial and raised difficult issues for NGOs. It is discussed in more detail in section 3.1. Villagisation involved the regrouping of scattered homesteads into centralised, planned villages. Potentially, the programme offered a means of providing services more cost effectively to rural populations and encouraging higher levels of cooperative

activity among the peasantry. It has to be said also that the programme facilitated central control over the peasantry and may have had security objectives as well as social objectives, though areas with major security problems such as Eritrea and Tigray were excluded. Villagisation had been espoused as one of the goals of the regime since early in the revolution but it did not become national policy until 1985,² when in response to earlier attacks by the Oromo Liberation Front in Hararge the local authorities launched a villagisation campaign which was subsequently adopted as a national policy (AfricaWatch, 1991). Despite the unpopularity of the programme and its apparent failure to improve access for the rural population to basic services such as water, by 1988, 8 million people (22% of the rural population) had relocated their houses into centralised, planned villages (Clapham, 1988). The programme was abandoned in March 1990 as part of the 'new economic policy'.

The package of reforms announced by President Mengistu in March 1990 represented a major shift in policy and reflected a realisation that had been growing in the late 1980s that many of the previous policies were not meeting their objectives and were often deeply unpopular. The regime's willingness to make such a change and the timing of the announcement is also likely to have been influenced by the course of the conflicts in the north - Massawa having fallen to the EPLF in February 1990. The key policy changes proposed included a move towards private tenure of land and trees for smallholders; the legalisation of labour hiring for private production; the removal of the controls on the movement of grain across provincial boundaries; the abolition of quotas requiring the sale of grain to the AMC at fixed prices; and permission for producer cooperatives to dissolve themselves (Webb et al., 1992).

Foreign Policies

The imperial regime had close links with Western countries. The Emperor had personal ties to the UK and it was an Anglo-Ethiopian army which had ousted the Italian forces during the Second World War. The USA had provided crucial support in the UN to Ethiopia's claim to Eritrea after the Second World War and became the country's principal supplier of arms during the 1960s and 1970s. These relationships were to be substantially changed by the revolution and the Ethiopia-Somalia War of 1977-8.

Since its independence in 1960, neighbouring Somalia had claimed that the Ogaden area of Ethiopia, with an ethnic Somali population but which had been lost to

² A localised villagisation campaign was undertaken in highland areas of Bale following the Somali War of 1977-8, partly for security reasons and partly as a means of resettling those displaced by the conflict (Clapham, 1988).

Ethiopia in the 1880s, should rightfully form part of Somalia. Ethiopian attempts to administer the area and raise taxes were met with resistance which took the form of sporadic attacks. Somalia's links with the USSR were greatly strengthened after the 1969 coup which brought General Mohammed Siad Barre to power, and the capacity of the Somali armed forces was rapidly expanded. The deposition of the Emperor, the developing Marxist-Leninist programme of the Derg and the development of links between members of the Derg and the USSR and the eastern bloc led to a cooling of relations between Ethiopia and the West, though the USA continued to supply arms until 1977 when President Carter took office (Korn, 1986). The falling away of Western support, the continuing revolutionary chaos in Addis Ababa, and the military success of the EPLF in Eritrea during 1977 (see below) was seen by the Barre regime as presenting an opportunity to reclaim the Ogaden by force. The Somalis launched an invasion in July 1977 which overran not only the Ogaden but also non-Somali inhabited areas of Hararghe, Bale and Sidamo. In the weeks that followed, the USSR dramatically switched its support from the Barre to the Mengistu regimes and airlifted massive quantities of arms to Ethiopia. With the support of Cuban troops, the invading Somali force was repelled by the Ethiopian forces in March 1978. Subsequently, links developed between the Barre regime and the US administration and the US began supplying arms to Somalia in 1982.

Initial reaction by the West to the revolution was cautious as it was not immediately clear what direction it might take, but with the ascendancy of the Mengistu faction within the Derg with a clear Marxist-Leninist programme, the arrival of the Carter Administration with a strong commitment to human rights, and the strength of the relationship between the Mengistu regime and the USSR as demonstrated by events in the Somali-Ethiopian War, many Western donors substantially cut or terminated their aid programmes to the country. In the case of the US State Department, room for manoeuvre was limited by the Hickenlooper amendment (to the 1961 Foreign Assistance Act) which required the President to terminate assistance to countries which failed to compensate US citizens for expropriated or nationalised assets. Though the value of the assets was comparatively small, the compensation issue proved thorny, and when combined with other aspects of the deterioration in US-Ethiopian relations resulted in the termination of the US aid programme in mid-1979. The US Ambassador was asked to leave in 1980 and US representation was thereafter at the level of a *chargé d'affaires*. In 1979, the British Government decided also that there should be no new UK bilateral aid to Ethiopia. In both cases, however, Ethiopia remained eligible to receive disaster relief assistance. Not all Western donor organisations followed suit. EC aid through the Lomé programme increased substantially following the revolution, as did Italian aid (Gill, 1986). Nevertheless, the revolution resulted in a significant deterioration in the relationship with key Western donors and the termination of several Western programmes of development assistance and this was to have the effect of reducing the number of aid personnel in areas that

were to be affected by the 1984-5 famine who could provide trusted assessments of the situation during the build up to the famine.

2.2 The Conflicts in the North

Eritrea

Eritrea was colonised by the Italians from the 1880s until the 1940s when Italian forces were defeated by a combined Anglo-Ethiopian force. The extent to which areas of Eritrea were integrated into Ethiopia before the colonisation, and therefore the strength of Haile Selassie's claim to the territory once the Italians had been ousted, is disputed by historians (AfricaWatch, 1991). During the period of British administration, attempts to decide the future of the territory were unsuccessful - the British finding it difficult to go against the wishes of the Emperor who pressed for integration. Broadly, the highland Christian population wanted some form of union with Ethiopia whereas the lowland Moslem population wanted independence. Unable to find a solution, they turned the problem over to the United Nations which appointed a Commission of Enquiry which was itself split over the issue. However, in December 1950, the General Assembly accepted the majority position of the Commission which was that Eritrea should have its own legislative, executive and judicial powers over domestic matters but be federated within Ethiopia. Crucial US support for this solution was obtained in return for an agreement to establish a military communications base at Kagnew near Asmara. The new constitution for the territory came into force in 1952 but tensions between the elected Assembly and the imperial regime quickly became apparent (Clapham, 1988). The Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) was formed in 1961 and began attacks on Ethiopian soldiers. In the face of concerted pressure and coercion by the imperial regime, the Eritrean Assembly voted to dissolve the Federation in 1962. Increased ELF activity was met with regular campaigns by Ethiopian troops and by 1974, over half of the country's troops were stationed in Eritrea (AfricaWatch, 1991).

The revolution presented an opportunity to reach a solution but the Derg failed to offer substantial autonomy to Eritrea. Forces of the ELF and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF)³ exploited the divisions in Addis Ababa to launch a successful series of attacks which, in 1975, left them in control of most of Eritrea and besieging Asmara. Following the defeat of the Somalis in the Ogaden, Mengistu's much expanded and re-armed forces were redeployed to the north and by mid-1979 the ELF had been greatly weakened and EPLF forces were restricted

³ The EPLF was formed in 1970 by a breakaway group from the ELF. Whereas the ELF's ideology had more in common with Islamic and Arab nationalism that of the EPLF was more explicitly Marxist-Leninist.

to an area around Nakfa close to the Sudanese border.⁴ However, the EPLF forces were able to regain their strength through exploiting their excellent defensive position and the developing antipathy by the US-supported Nimeri regime in Sudan towards the Mengistu regime.⁵ In 1982, the massive Red Star Campaign in which Mengistu played a prominent part failed to take Nakfa. For the next six years, the conflict was fought around a fairly stable front line running through Sahel Province to the east of Nakfa and involved regular campaigns by Derg forces and militias against EPLF defences with counter-attacks by the EPLF into Derg-held territory. Throughout, there were regular air attacks on EPLF positions and villages in EPLF-held areas.

In March 1988, the pattern was broken when EPLF forces captured the strategic government garrison in Afabet, 100 kilometres north of Asmara, with significant government losses of men and arms including 50 tanks. The defeat left the Derg forces in temporary disarray and a number of other towns including Barentu, Tesseni and Agordat soon fell as the troops drew back to regroup. Within two weeks of the Derg's defeat at Afabet a surprise peace agreement was announced between the Derg and the Somali Government which allowed troops tied up in the Ogaden to be redeployed to Eritrea to reinforce the garrisons in Keren, Massawa and Asmara. All expatriates except those working with UNICEF were expelled from Eritrea and Tigray in a move that was widely interpreted as preventing Westerners from witnessing the brutal counter-offensive. However, the EPLF was able to hold off these attacks and the territorial situation changed little until February 1990 when the EPLF launched a successful attack on the port of Massawa. This victory forced the development of the Southern Line Operation using food imported through Assab by the UN and relief agencies operating in Derg-held areas (see section 3.1) and initiated the siege of Asmara and its environs which ended only with the surrender of the garrison in Asmara in May 1991 at the same time as EPRDF forces entered Addis Ababa.

Tigray

The origins and course of the conflict in Tigray was substantially different from that in Eritrea. Incorporated into Ethiopia by the Emperor Menelik in the 1890s, Tigray was ruled until the 1974 revolution by a petty nobility manipulated by the Emperor. Under the leadership of local noblemen who formed the Ethiopian Democratic Union (EDU) resistance to the Derg developed, but the EDU was lost when much of its leadership took refuge in the Sudan. The resistance took on a

⁴ As a fighting force the ELF effectively ceased in 1982.

⁵ Though Sudan never provided military supplies, bases or training, the EPLF had free access to Sudanese territory and there was sharing of intelligence information (AfricaWatch, 1991).

more radical character as young educated Tigrayans joined the resistance in reaction to the Red Terror in Addis Ababa and the main towns in Tigray. The EPLF supported the formation of the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) which mixed Tigrayan nationalism with radical politics and by 1978 the TPLF had emerged as an effective fighting force. Whereas the overall goal of the EPLF was Eritrean independence, that of the TPLF was regional autonomy within a democratic Ethiopia.

Unlike the EPLF which fought to acquire and defend territory for much of its conflict with the Derg forces, the TPLF adopted a classic guerrilla strategy with its fighters moving among the population to attack Derg targets over a wide area. As a result of this strategy, the notion of 'TPLF-controlled' or 'TPLF-held' areas is problematic and was to lead to dispute throughout the 1980s over the estimation of the relief needs on the Derg and TPLF sides (see section 3.2).⁶ Up to 1988, when it captured several garrison towns, the TPLF was able to move freely under the cover of darkness in most rural areas of the province. From the mid-1980s until 1988, Derg control was largely confined to the towns and their immediate environs. Travel between these towns was usually made in armed convoy or by air. For instance, Makelle, the capital of Tigray, was cut off to overland transport for extensive periods during the 1984-5 famine and most of its food aid was delivered by an airlift operation (USAID, 1987). In the rural areas, the TPLF was able to set up alternative administrative systems to those run by the Derg based on the *tabias* (village) and *baitos* (*woreda*). Whilst the system appears to have covered rural areas in the west by the time of the famine in 1984-5, it is not clear how effective or extensive the system was in central and eastern parts of the Province.

In 1988, the EPLF victory at Afabet contributed to a weakening of the Derg forces positions in Tigray and from March to June 1988 the TPLF took control of several garrison towns in Tigray. The Derg responded by intensive air attacks on the towns including on civilians and relief agencies. Unwilling to take control of the towns on a permanent basis in view of their vulnerability to attack from the air, the TPLF withdrew and the towns were retaken by Derg forces between June and August 1988. However, in early 1989, a joint TPLF-EPDM offensive (see below) took the main towns in Tigray once again. For the first time, the capital Makelle came under TPLF control. Effectively, all of Tigray, except areas along the border with Wollo, came under the control of the TPLF. Derg forces were unable to mount a sufficiently strong counter-offensive to retake any of the towns.

⁶ It is probably helpful to use the term 'contested' to describe areas where the control of neither side was not well established and reserve the term 'control' for areas where the respective administrative systems were well established and functioned throughout the day and night.

Relations between the EPLF and the TPLF were variable during the period as a result of political and ideological differences, though at no point did this lead to armed conflict between them. A period of formal non-communication existed between them from mid-1985 to early 1988. The start of this period coincided with the TPLF's formation of the Marxist-Leninist League of Tigray (MLLT) with the objective of creating a party separate from the Front and the end of the period coinciding with coordinated attacks, and successes, in Eritrea and Tigray. The TPLF was allied to and supported the military activities of the Ethiopia People's Democratic Movement (EPDM) - a smaller force formed in 1981 which operated to the south of Tigray in Wollo and Gondar. In January 1989, the two forces merged to form the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) with the objective of ousting the Derg and creating a democratic state with greater regional autonomy.

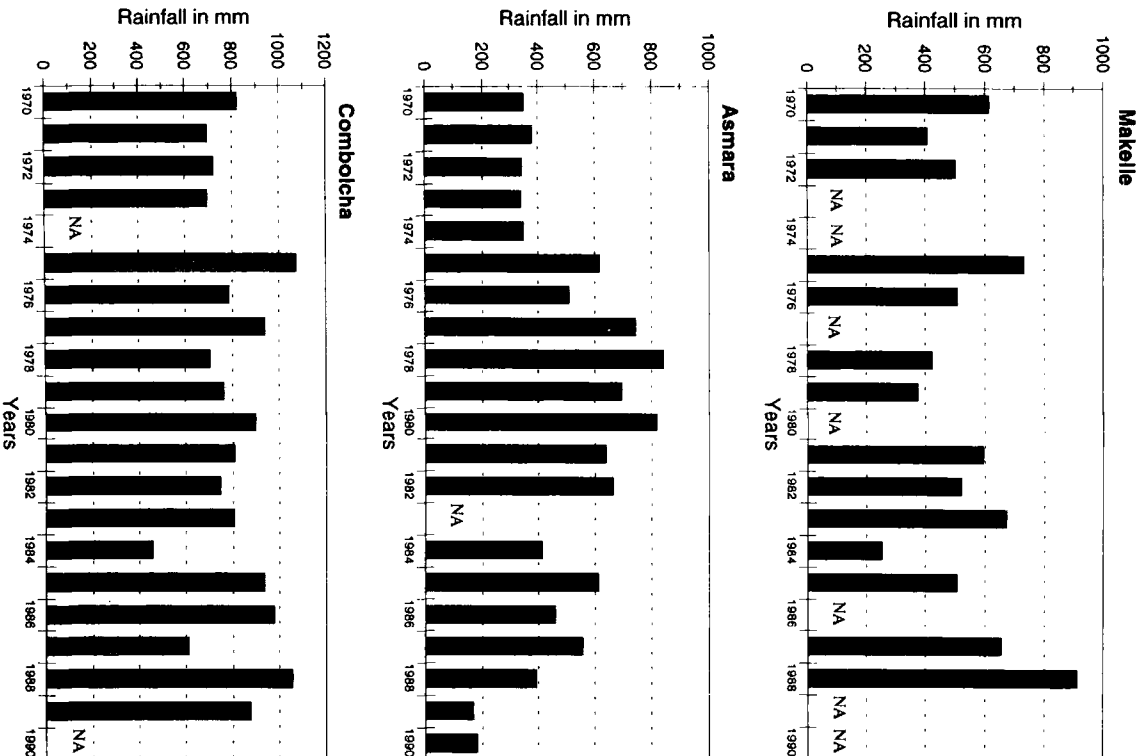
In August 1989, EPRDF forces advanced southwards into Shewa and after consolidating their gains during 1990 launched a series of successful offensives in early 1991 which resulted in their move into Addis Ababa at the end of May 1991.

2.3 The Incidence of Drought

Large areas of Ethiopia are drought-prone, experiencing low mean annual rainfall combined with high inter-annual variation. The provinces with the lowest rainfall and highest inter-annual variation over the period 1961-87 were Eritrea, Tigray and Hararghe (Webb et al., 1992). Unfortunately, it was not possible to obtain rainfall information averaged for the different provinces that extended up to 1990. Figure 1 therefore shows the annual rainfall for three individual stations - Asmara in Eritrea, Makelle in Tigray and Combolcha in Wollo for the period 1970-90. Unfortunately, the data set for Makelle is not continuous and that for Combolcha is not available for 1990.

All three sets reveal the severity of the drought in 1984, but the rains of 1983, widely referred to as being a poor year in the literature on the build up to the famine, are not revealed to be abnormally low for Makelle and Combolcha. A decline in 1987 is apparent for Combolcha but is not revealed in Asmara and Makelle. However, the severity of the shortfall in the rains in Asmara during 1988 and particularly for 1989 and 1990 is clearly shown by the graph. Care should be taken in reading too much into annual data for individual stations. Rainfall may have been poorly distributed spatially and temporally during the season, so rains which were genuinely poor for growing crops may be hidden within apparently satisfactory annual totals. Nevertheless, these graphs do suggest that drought may not have been as prevalent during the 1980s as it was often presented.

**Figure 1 Annual Rainfall in Makelle, Asmara and Combolcha
1970-90**



Source: FEWS/Washington, 1994.

2.4 The Complex Emergency of the 1980s

The three principal elements described above interacted with each other and with other factors⁷ during the 1980s to produce a complex situation which resulted in a significant deterioration in food security, massive population displacements and increased morbidity and mortality (including conflict-related casualties). Estimates of the number of people who died as a result are subject to very wide variations and remain the subject of dispute. Much attention has focused on the excess mortality caused by the 1984-5 famine and here figures as high as 2 million have been cited though a more realistic figure is probably between 400,000 and 500,000. Less attention has been given to estimation of deaths due directly to the various conflicts. For the 30 year period, from 1961 when the EPLF was formed to 1991 when the Mengistu regime fell, AfricaWatch (1991) estimates that between 1 and 1.5 million people died as a result of the famines of 1973-4 and 1984-5, the various conflicts (civilians and soldiers), and Derg policies such as the Resettlement Campaign. Of these deaths it would seem probable that 60-70% of them occurred during the 12 years covered by this study.

Given the complexity of the situation and the process of concatenation by which the various factors reinforced each other's impacts, attempts to estimate the relative contribution of the various factors would appear pointless. However, an aspect of the literature on the famine of 1984-5 has been dispute over the relative contribution of different factors. At the time of the famine, little attention was paid to the role of either the conflicts or the Derg's rural policies in contributing to the famine and it was widely portrayed as a product of the drought. It is now more widely recognised that the conflicts and the Derg's rural policies contributed substantially to the famine. For instance, the Derg's taxation policies and enforcement of the quotas for the AMC reduced food availability and the level of assets at the household level and made households more vulnerable to the effect of 'shocks' such as the drought and the conflict.⁸ Restrictions on commercial trade made markets which were already poorly integrated as a result of the difficult terrain of the highlands even more fragmented. Attacks on transport routes and vehicles disrupted the marketing systems further. In areas controlled by the Fronts, traders and markets were forced to operate under the cover of darkness and make

⁷ Inevitably other factors were involved in the mix of factors which led to such high mortality levels during the famine of 1984-5. For instance, the difficult terrain of the highlands meant that food markets were poorly integrated and that it was difficult and costly to provide relief to the substantial proportion of the population that lived away from the few all-weather roads.

⁸ Rahmato (1987) (cited in AfricaWatch, 1991) calculated that a typical peasant in Ambassel, Wollo Province, harvested 14.7 quintals of grain per year of which 5.8 were paid to the AMC.

much greater use of pack animals rather than wheeled transport. Derg-controlled towns had to be kept supplied by either armed convoys or airlifts. The need for able-bodied men to serve as soldiers or in the Derg's peasant militias reduced the availability of labour for farming. These are just a few of the insidious effects of the conflict and the policies; others are described in a detailed, but somewhat anecdotal and partisan account by AfricaWatch (1991).

3. A Summary of the Response by the International Community

Given the scale and complexity of the response to the situation by the international community and the changes over the twelve years covered by this case study a summary of the response is now provided prior to an examination of the role of NGOs and other agencies in that response. This summary section begins by presenting the overall statistics that are available and then describes the principal events and sub-periods in the response.

3.1 A Summary of the Response Through the Areas Controlled by the Derg

Inevitably, October 1984 with its screening, initially on the BBC and then around the world, of the film by Michael Buerk and Mohammed Amin of the situation in Korem, northern Wollo, marks a watershed in the response by the international community. Prior to that date the response was on a much smaller scale, whereas after that date the response was at a level unprecedented in Africa. The period from 1980 to October 1984 was characterised by a sequence of appeals for substantial volumes of emergency assistance by the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC) to the international community,⁹ missions by UN agencies which affirmed the scale of the needs described by RRC, a sceptical attitude towards the amounts requested by the donor community, and a response which covered only a fraction of these needs. From 1980-84 the total amount of food aid requested by the RRC was 2.46 million tonnes, but of this amount it received 440,000 tonnes, 18% of the amount requested (RRC, 1985a). In these requests the needs in the north were attributed to drought and the role of the conflict was effectively ignored, even though 1982 witnessed the massive Red Star Campaign in Eritrea.

During this period relief activities were undertaken principally by the RRC using its own resources and the modest amounts received from donor organisations and NGOs. For instance, between September 1982 and August 1983, Christian Relief and Development Association (CRDA) supplied supplementary foods, seeds, tools, clothes and soap worth birr 1.35 million and transported 8,700 tonnes of food on behalf of the RRC and Lutheran World Federation/Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (LWF/EECMY) at a cost of birr 0.74 million (CRDA, 1983).

⁹ For instance the 1980 request was for a total of 720,000 tonnes of grain together with other commodities for 5.2 million 'needy' people of which 2.8 million were described as drought victims and 2.4 million displaced either by the conflict with Somalia or the drought affecting southern and northern areas (RRC, 1985a).

World Vision loaned the RRC a Twin Otter aircraft for flying supplies to remote and inaccessible locations (RRC, 1985a). In December 1982 Save the Children Fund UK opened a feeding centre in Korem, northern Wollo.

The story of the development of the famine during 1983 and 1984 and the tardy response by the international community has been examined by numerous writers and it is not proposed to discuss this in detail here but rather to describe some of the principal elements in the story.

Though the RRC's requests for assistance were repeatedly scaled upwards during 1983 and 1984 and the severity of the situation was expressed with increasing desperation by them, the Derg did not attach a high priority to addressing the situation until after the Tenth Anniversary celebrations in September 1984. For instance, the main port of Assab was closed to food aid shipments between December 1983 and April 1984 to facilitate the importation of other bulk commodities such as cement and fertiliser and this resulted in the reconsigning of some food aid shipments for use in other countries (Borton et al., 1988). Travel outside the capital by foreigners was heavily restricted in the weeks before and during the Tenth Anniversary celebrations at the very time that the almost complete failure of the main *kiremt* (July to September) rains was turning an acute situation into a widespread famine. Substantial domestic financial and human resources were expended on the celebrations and staff of the RRC were obliged to participate in the preparations for the celebrations (Gill, 1986; Korn, 1986).

Assessments by UN agencies of the situation assumed an unusual significance during this period. The conflict and the Derg's restrictions on travel prevented visits to the worst affected areas by representatives of Western donor organisations. The fact that some donors, including the US and the UK, had terminated their development programmes in the country reduced their ability to corroborate the assessments by the RRC and the UN. The FAO/WFP Assessment Mission which visited the country in early 1984 (before the failure of the *kiremt* rains), took its pessimistic estimate of port handling capacity as setting a realistic target for food aid donations. Effectively this approach involved a substantial reduction of the RRC's already scaled down estimate of needs and may have implied a less urgent situation to donors.

Finally, the pro-Soviet, generally anti-Western nature of the regime meant that there were many in the West who were critical of, or at least unsympathetic towards the regime. The propaganda and misinformation put out by both the Derg and the Fronts fed into this context and resulted in episodes which had the effect of delaying a more generous response. The issue of food aid being diverted for use by the Derg's armed forces arose on several occasions during 1983-4 and led to the temporary freezing of additional food aid whilst enquiries were pursued. For instance, a poorly researched article which appeared in the UK *Sunday Times*

newspaper in March 1983¹⁰ alleged that Western food aid was being used by the armed forces and some was being re-exported to the USSR to help pay for arms imports. The article led to questions in the UK and EC parliaments and made it more difficult to justify increased levels of food aid. Similarly, at the end of 1983 the TPLF released a letter issued by the former Head of the RRC which indicated that WFP food aid was being diverted and at least one donor waited until October 1984 for the matter to be investigated and resolved by WFP before initiating additional food aid shipments (Borton et al., 1988).

Once the Tenth Anniversary celebrations had been completed by the end of September, the Derg began to acknowledge that famine was widespread in the north and began permitting foreigners, including film crews, to travel to the affected areas. Western donors began approving additional assistance but the amounts involved were still wholly inadequate in relation to the scale of the famine. By then the numbers of people in need of emergency assistance according to estimates prepared by the RRC and the FAO had increased to just under 8 million or around 18% of the total population and tens of thousands people had congregated around feeding shelters, in Eritrea, Tigray, Wollo and Gondar.

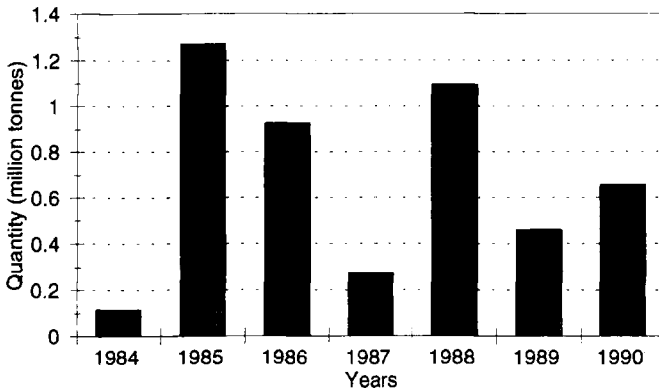
The screening of the Buerk/Amin film on 23 October completely transformed the situation and resulted in a massive increase in the scale of assistance from official and private sources around the world. The response that followed was unprecedented in its scale and diversity. Jansson et al. (1987) estimates that between December 1984 and the end of December 1985 donations valued at US\$ 1,253 million (approximately £1,000 million) were provided by the international community. Most of these consisted of food aid and associated logistical support - total food aid deliveries to Ethiopia were 1.27 million tonnes during 1985 (see Figure 2). No fewer than 60 organisations directly administered relief assistance and donations were received from 36 different governments and innumerable individuals and private organisations (USAID, 1987).

Apart from the approval of substantial amounts of food aid by donor organisations, key developments in the hectic days immediately following the screening of the Buerk/Amin film included the formation of the UN Office for Emergency Operations in Ethiopia (UNOEOE) with the objective of coordinating the international relief efforts (see section 4.2); the launching of the controversial Resettlement Programme by the Derg in November 1984 (see below); and the arrival and operation of a fleet of transport aircraft from other countries including several Western airforces.

¹⁰ 'Starving Babies' Food Sold for Soviet Arms', 27 March 1983, *Sunday Times*, London.

Figure 2

Food Aid Deliveries



Source: WFP, Addis Ababa

Most of the food aid entered the country at Assab but Massawa and Djibouti also played an important role. Assab supplied the primary warehouses at Dessie/Combolcha (from which deliveries were made to secondary stores and centres in Wollo, Gondar and Shewa Provinces), and Nazareth (which served the southern half of the country). Massawa supplied Eritrea and Tigray. Djibouti with its rail link to Dire Dawa and Addis supplied Hararge Province and complemented supplies from Assab in the central and southern areas. With the rapid increase in food aid donations, internal transport capacity quickly emerged as the principal constraint on the relief operation and the daily offtake rate from Assab became a key indicator of its effectiveness. Port offtake from Assab was a recurrent source of tension between the Derg and the donor community which saw the limited number of trucks allocated to the operation from the national fleet as proof that the Derg was not giving sufficient priority to the relief operation. Though the situation improved in 1985, the target offtake rate was only achieved sporadically and in late 1985 a large UN fleet of trucks was established - the WFP Transport Operation in Ethiopia (WTOE) - with support from the US and the funding charity Band Aid.

Air transport operations expanded rapidly after the beginning of November when 2 C-130 aircraft of the British Royal Air Force began operating out of Addis Ababa. By the end of 1984, 27 transport planes and 24 heavy helicopters had been provided by 7 donors. Additional aircraft arrived during 1985 including 4 chartered by the ICRC and during that year aircraft transported nearly 15% of the food distributed (Jansson, 1987). They were employed in a variety of ways: to increase the offtake from Assab, by shuttling between Assab and other centres; to airlift food to towns (with airfields) that were either difficult to reach by truck or cut off

by the conflict in the north (Makelle being the most important example); and to airdrop food (using low level free fall techniques) to remote communities distant from the nearest roads.

The situation did not immediately improve. With the increased likelihood of finding food in the shelters and feeding centres, the number of people migrating to the centres increased and peaked in April 1985 when the registered shelter population numbered 575,000 (see Table 1) and perhaps another 500,000 congregated in camps near the shelters.

Table 1 Registered Shelter Population by Province, 1985

	<i>February</i>	<i>April</i>	<i>June</i>	<i>August</i>	<i>October</i>
Eritrea	12,000	43,000	26,000	57,000	2,280
Gondar	-	98,000	108,000	86,800	4,000
Hararghe	-	20,000	18,000	18,000	11,450
Shewa	11,000	8,000	7,000	7,000	400
Sidamo	-	-	2,000	2,000	11,200
Tigray	81,500	240,275	129,000	117,770	6,490
Wollo	98,000	166,600	164,600	103,300	34,350
Total	202,500	575,275	455,450	391,870	70,170

Source: USAID (1987)

The conditions in these shelters and camps were often insanitary and the risk of infection very high. In the spring of 1985, the Government began a policy of evacuating camps and returning people to their homes. Over a weekend, in April, 36,000 people were forcibly evacuated from the camp at Ibnat in Gondar Province by aggressive local officials. This led to an international outcry and the Head of the UNOEOE was able to persuade President Mengistu to reopen the camp. The incident served as a lesson and subsequent camp evacuations avoided the use of force and involved careful planning and the provision of 'returnees' with food, seeds, tools and assurances that they would continue to receive rations in their villages until harvest time (Jansson, 1987).

The Resettlement Programme announced by the Derg in early November 1984 was intended to move a total of 1.5 million people from the densely populated, Northern Highland areas of Wollo, Tigray and parts of Shewa to the lower lying, less densely settled Provinces of Gojam, Wollega, Illubabor and Kefa. In the event, a total of 600,000 people were moved in three phases: November 1984 to May

1985; October 1985 to January 1986; and November 1987 to March 1988 (AfricaWatch, 1991). The idea of reducing population pressure in the Northern Highlands through organised resettlement to other areas of the country had been a feature of government policy since before the revolution but from 1975 the numbers involved grew rapidly so that, by 1982, 120,000 people had been resettled to 112 planned settlements (Clapham, 1988). The comprehensive joint FAO/Ministry of Agriculture study of the economy and environment of the Highlands argued in favour of a substantial resettlement programme of at least 150,000 people a year (FAO, 1985). However the scale and haste of the operation and the way the Derg presented it as a key component of the relief effort disturbed some Western donors, notably the USA, the UK and the FRG. The TPLF saw the programme as a form of counter-insurgency designed to reduce the population of the Province for political and military purposes (AfricaWatch, 1991).

During early 1985, reports began accumulating that coercion was being used during the registration and transportation of the settlers, that the conditions under which people were being moved by bus and transport aircraft were dangerous and that the preparation of the settlement sites and the support provided to the new settlers was wholly inadequate resulting in increased morbidity and mortality. In addition, there was clear evidence that the Programme was diverting scarce transport and other resources that would otherwise have been available for the food distribution programme in the north. For many agencies, these were ample reasons to avoid any involvement in the programme, though some did provide support at the new settlements for humanitarian and developmental reasons. Later in the year, the evidence of coercion increased. In December 1985, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF-F) went public with an account of a forced resettlement involving 600 people at Korem and made an unresearched estimate that up to 100,000 people had died as a result of the Programme. The agency was promptly expelled from the country. In the same month, a study based on interviews with refugees in Sudan, including settlers who had escaped from the settlement sites, lent support to claims of high death rates during transit and during the first months in the sites (Clay and Holcomb, 1985). Such reports were strongly disputed by others (e.g. Jansson, 1987). AfricaWatch (1991) estimates a minimum of 50,000 people died as a result of the Programme.

Another aspect of the relief effort was the US Government's 'Food for the North' initiative which resulted from negotiations begun in March 1985 with the Derg over increasing the supply of relief food into contested areas in Eritrea and Tigray. In Eritrea, the programme was implemented by the Ethiopian Catholic Secretariat (ECS) on behalf of the Catholic Relief Services (CRS). It began in August 1985 and, between then and the end of 1986, over 36,000 tonnes were distributed from some 30 sites and reached approximately 440,000 beneficiaries (USAID, 1987). In Tigray, the programme was implemented by World Vision in conjunction with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. It was intended to operate at five sites but only became operational at two (Enda Selassie and Axum/Adua). The death of two

World Vision employees at Alamata in an attack by the TPLF resulted in the agency withdrawing its staff from the Province. The inability of the programme at Enda Selassie to reach outside the Derg controlled area resulted in the closure of that operation. Distributions managed by the EOC continued only at the Axum/Adua site. Between October 1985 and the end of 1986, the programme distributed 15,000 tonnes of food. The Food for the North initiative was criticised by those who, seeing CRS/ECS programmes commencing in towns taken by Derg forces only a few days before, saw it as supporting the Derg's pacification campaign (e.g. Tucker, 1985 cited in AfricaWatch, 1991). However, such an interpretation could equally have been made of NGO-supported programmes run by the Relief Society of Tigray (REST) and the Eritrean Relief Association (ERA) which were extended into areas entering the control of the EPLF and TPLF (see section 5.2 for a fuller discussion of this issue).

The food security situation improved considerably in 1986 and the focus of attention shifted to rehabilitation programmes and longer term development programmes. By 1986, internal transport capacity had been substantially increased, the rains in late 1985 were generally good and the number of people needing relief assistance fell to around 6.5 million. Food aid deliveries were below the 1985 levels but remained at over 0.9 million tonnes, with most of this amount being used to provide monthly take-home rations for people living in their villages or on food-for-work programmes with rehabilitation goals such as terracing, road construction, irrigation work and tree-planting. Extensive seeds and tools programmes were implemented in late 1985 and during 1986. At the end of 1986, the UNOEOE ceased operations and its responsibilities were absorbed by the UNDP office under the newly created UN Emergency Preparedness and Prevention Group (UNEPPG). During 1987, food aid deliveries fell to just 270,000 tonnes.

In June/July 1987, rains in the north of the country were poor and the RRC issued two alerts in August and an appeal for 1.05 million tonnes of food for 5.2 million people distributed between Eritrea, Tigray, Wollo and Hararge. This assessment was largely supported by an FAO Crop Assessment Mission which reported in December 1987, though the mission was not able to travel outside the main towns in the north. Donors, fearful of a repeat of the 1984 situation, responded promptly and generously. By April 1988, the confirmed food pledges for distribution from the Government side exceeded the amount requested by the RRC and by the end of the year just under 1.1 million tonnes had been delivered to the country. Even before the additional shipments arrived, the RRC and NGOs were able to borrow from the Government of Ethiopia's food security reserve and begin early food distributions.

However, the intensification of the conflict in the north in late 1987 and throughout 1988 was to have a significant impact upon the relief operations. In October 1987, a convoy of 34 trucks including 23 carrying relief supplies was attacked and burnt

by the EPLF on the road south of Asmara.¹¹ As a result, the ICRC proposed an 'open roads' plan which would enable relief trucks on both sides freedom of movement during daytime but this was rejected by the Derg. In March 1988, the EPLF took the strategically important garrison town of Afabet, 100 kilometres north of Asmara. Other towns soon fell including Barentu, Tesseni and Agordat as the Derg forces fell back to regroup. In Tigray, between March and May 1988, the TPLF took Abi Adi and Enda Selassie in western Tigray and Derg forces temporarily fell back from many towns in the Province including Axum and Adua on the east-west road and Adigrat, Wukro and Maichew on the north-south road thereby completely cutting the main north-south relief routes into the drought affected area. In April, the Derg ordered all expatriates working with relief agencies, with the exception of UNICEF, to withdraw from Eritrea and Tigray. Two days later, a clearly marked ICRC food distribution centre which had remained in operation in Wukro after the withdrawal of the Derg forces was bombed during a distribution killing 100 civilians¹² (AfricaWatch, 1991). In May, the ICRC was effectively expelled from the country when the Derg instructed it to recall all delegates involved in relief work and transfer its property to other organisations.

Because of the conflict and the difficulties of overland transport, airlifts of relief supplies were established to supply populations in towns held by the Derg forces. A UN Emergency Transport Fund set up under UNDRO auspices in October 1987 and this funded 2 or 3 Hercules aircraft for much of the year. Airlifts organised by the UN were complemented by joint ICRC/JRP Airlift (from which the ICRC withdrew in mid-1988) funded by the EC and Caritas. At its peak, in March 1988, 8 large transport aircraft (C-130s and Antonov An 12s) were involved in the airlift operations making daily shuttles from Assab and Massawa/Asmara to Makelle and other airstrips in the north. The military successes of the EPLF and TPLF resulted in a reduction in the towns served by the airlifts, though in the case of Tigray the success of the counter-offensive by Derg forces in the June-August period resulted

¹¹ The EPLF subsequently justified the attack by saying that arms had been found hidden on some of the lorries. AfricaWatch (1991) refers to the 'small stickers on the doors [of the relief trucks] which were invisible from a distance' as helping to explain the attack. An alternative explanation is that it was an attempt to limit the effectiveness of the relief efforts from the government side at a time when the RRC and UN early warning reports were being given a high profile in the West. This view is supported by ICRC personnel who were working in the area at the time.

¹² There were numerous instances of air attacks on civilian targets during this period in 1988. In the worst case, up to 1,500 people attending a market in Hausien were killed (AfricaWatch, 1991). Whereas trade in villages controlled by the TPLF was carried out under cover of darkness, civilian and relief activities in the towns taken temporarily by the TPLF continued during daylight hours and were thus vulnerable to air attack.

in a resumption of the airlift to a number of towns later in the year. Approximately 70,000 tonnes was transported to the northern garrison towns during 1988.

In January 1989, the TPLF offensive resulted in the retaking of Enda Selassie in February and the capture of a large force of Government troops. The remaining Government forces rapidly fell back and in the last week of February withdrew from Makelle itself. Staff of the Ethiopian Catholic Secretariat (ECS) which had been running the food distribution and feeding centre in Makelle as part of the Joint Relief Partnership (JRP) remained in the town when the Government troops evacuated, as did staff involved in distribution centres run by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC). REST expanded the scale and coverage of its distributions supplied from the Sudan but the tonnages available were insufficient to cover all those in need in the 'liberated' areas (see below). In Addis Ababa, the member agencies of the JRP began discussions to explore the possibility of mounting a 'cross-line operation' to the ECS and EOC distribution centres within Tigray. This was a long drawn out process that was to take months of negotiation with the EPRDF and the Derg and pressure being brought to bear by the UN and a number of bilateral donors.

The 1989 rains were poor over much of the north and the FAO and WFP issued warnings in September and the RRC in November. Initially, it was thought that it was principally Eritrea that was worst affected as the UN was unable to make an assessment in Tigray. However, the UN was provided with copies of assessments carried out in Tigray on behalf of the NGOs supporting REST and it was acknowledged that Tigray was also seriously affected. The discussions over a possible JRP cross-line operation, involving the JRP receiving food in Massawa and transporting it through Eritrea to Tigray, were bearing fruit by the end of 1989 and in January 1990 agreement was reached with President Mengistu and the EPRDF. The operation was on the point of starting when the EPLF attacked and quickly captured Massawa. The Government then launched a series of air raids on the port, targeting the food stocks that had built up in preparation for the JRP operation in Tigray as well as for RRC and NGO operations in areas of Eritrea held by Derg forces. It is claimed that as much as 30,000 tonnes was destroyed (AfricaWatch, 1991).

The fall of Massawa and the start of the siege of Asmara had important implications for the routeing of food aid. All food aid destined for the JRP operation in Tigray had to be imported through Assab and transported via the Southern Line Operation to Dessie in Wollo. Supplies for the operation of other agencies working in Derg held areas of Wollo, Gondar and central and southern Provinces had to be imported along the same route or via Djibouti and then transported by road or rail. The JRP operation began in March 1990 and after a few weeks of hitches operated successfully until March 1991 when the fighting associated with the EPRDF southward offensive temporarily disrupted operations.

Between February 1990 and May 1991 (when the city surrendered to the EPLF), Asmara, with a civilian population of around 1 million, was besieged. From February 1990 until January 1991 (when relief supplies transported from Massawa through EPLF-held areas began reaching the city), food aid could only be supplied to the city by airlift. The UN was only able to obtain agreement for an airlift using two transport aircraft. With the food consigned to the ECS the airlift began in May 1990 and was to continue until March 1991 when an EPLF shell hit one of the aircraft on the ground and the airlift was suspended. However, the UN-ECS airlift was incapable of meeting more than a quarter of the food needs of the civilian population. Food shortages became severe and mortality levels increased.¹³

Despite the EPLF declaring the port of Massawa ready for operations in March 1990, the bombing of the port continued until June, preventing ships docking. Under pressure from Presidents Bush and Gorbachev at the Washington Summit in June, the Derg halted the bombing and WFP began negotiations to allow a ship to dock at Massawa. Negotiations were unable to achieve the agreement of all the parties and it was not until January 1991, four months before the fall of Asmara, that a WFP chartered ship successfully docked at Massawa. Half of its load was consigned to EPLF-held areas and half to the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC) and church relief programmes in the Asmara enclave. The ship continued the operation until May.

3.2 A Summary of the Response in Areas 'Controlled' by the Fronts

The principal route by which international relief assistance reached populations in areas of Eritrea and Tigray 'controlled' by the Fronts was through the relief arms of the EPLF and the TPLF. The relief arm of the EPLF was the Eritrean Relief Association (ERA) formed in 1975 and for the TPLF it was the Relief Society of Tigray (REST) which was formed in 1978. The principal component of the relief programmes implemented by ERA and REST was the distribution of food purchased in, or transported through, Sudan and thence via the Cross Border Operation (CBO) to local communities in the two Provinces. In the case of Tigray, the availability of surplus grains in the western lowlands led to the development of Internal Purchase Programmes within Tigray whereby food was purchased in these areas for use in the distribution programmes.

The ICRC operating from the Sudan provided relief assistance to REST and ERA and monitored the distributions. In the mid-1980s, the volume of assistance channelled through this route reached a peak of nearly 15,000 tonnes which was

¹³ In October 1990, the local commanders of the Derg forces allowed traders to bring food into the city from EPLF-held areas and this partially eased the situation (AfricaWatch, 1991).

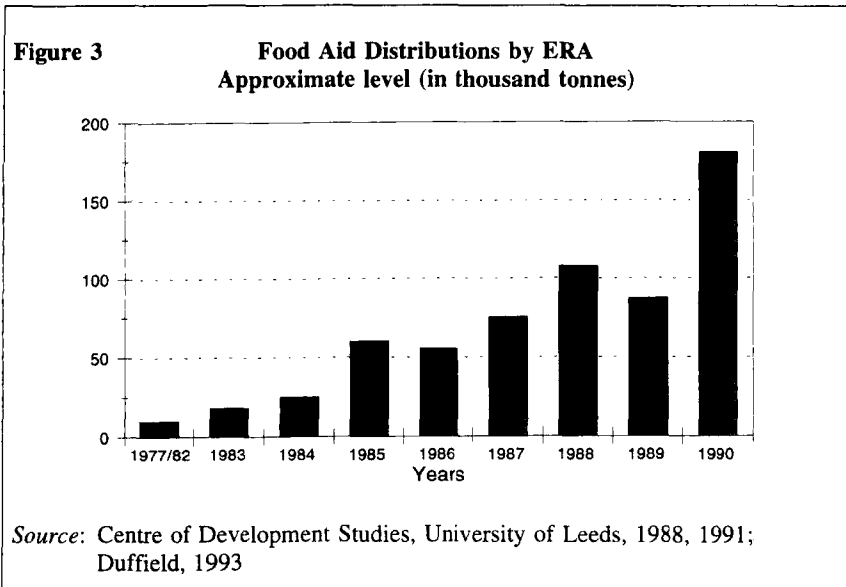
equivalent to about 20% of the amount distributed by ERA and REST (see section 4).

Relief assistance will also have reached the population in areas 'controlled' by the Fronts from distribution programmes based in areas under the control of the Derg. However, the relative significance of this route is virtually impossible to determine objectively and is likely to remain a contentious issue. The ambiguity over the meaning of the term 'control', particularly in Tigray where the military strategy of the TPLF was until 1988 more fluid than that pursued by the EPLF, presents serious problems to those attempting to assess the relative importance of supplies from the Derg side. In practice, there was a substantial overlap between the areas 'controlled' by the TPLF and by the Derg. Theoretically, in such overlapping areas it would have been possible for the communities to receive relief assistance from programmes implemented by NGOs, the ICRC, or perhaps even the RRC, operating from the Derg side, whilst also receiving supplies provided by REST.

Other problems which arise in determining the relative significance of food provided from the Derg side include: the lack of information on the distance travelled by the recipients of programmes based in Derg-held areas; the extent to which rural households from rural areas fully or partially controlled by the TPLF were free to, or felt able to, enter the towns; and the extent to which recipients returning to their villages after collecting their rations were harassed by soldiers or militia policing road-blocks around the towns. The published literature includes numerous references to: the prevention of entry to the towns by soldiers and the militia to those people thought to come from villages under TPLF control (e.g. Hendrie, 1990); the exclusion of those unable to prove *kabelle* membership or in possession of a valid identity card from RRC distribution programmes (e.g. Gill, 1986; Clay and Holcomb, 1985); the fear, from November 1984 onwards, of visiting the towns and being included in the Derg's Resettlement Programme (e.g. Clay and Holcomb, 1985); and the confiscation of rations from recipients returning to their villages by police and militia (e.g. Jansson, 1987; Gill, 1986; Hendrie, 1990; AfricaWatch, 1991). In contrast, however, the literature also contains claims that programmes based in Derg-held areas were able to reach large populations recognised to be living in areas controlled by the TPLF. Jansson (1987) cites the ICRC's Chief Delegate as confirming 'that at many of their distribution points, up to 90% of the recipients came from rebel-controlled areas of the interior'.

Attempts to use information on actual recipient numbers of both the cross-border programmes and the programmes operating from the Derg side as a means of assessing the relative importance of relief from the different sides have been attempted but are fraught with problems stemming from uncertainty over the total population. In 1985 for instance the RRC used an estimate of 2.41 million whilst REST argued that it was almost 5 million (Jansson, 1987; AfricaWatch, 1991). In part, this difference was due to the TPLF including parts of Gondar and Northern Wollo in its definition of Tigray (see Map 2).

Thus far no detailed studies of the development and operation of REST and ERA have been undertaken, though Duffield and Prendergast's (1993) recent account of the Emergency Relief Desk - a consortium of European and US NGOs providing humanitarian assistance to the Fronts - provides some important insights and a range of sources are available on particular events and issues during the period. Information on the scale of the relief distributions by ERA and REST is not readily available for all years but a sense of the growth of their programmes can be pieced together from different sources, though they often differ substantially and the results are offered below to convey a sense of their order of magnitude.

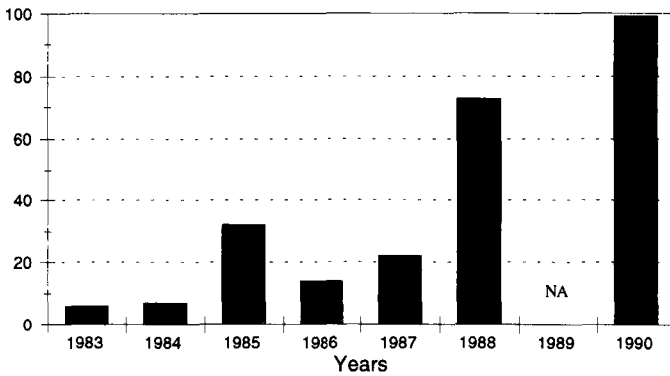


Though ERA's relief activities were larger and perhaps better managed than REST's in the early 1980s, the scale of ERA and REST's relief activities in the period before 1983-4 were comparatively modest, limited by the levels of food aid and relief resources available and by their trucking capacity.¹⁴ Since the start of the conflict in Eritrea, large numbers of Eritreans had sought refuge in Sudan, mostly in refugee camps in the Eastern Region around Kassala and during 1982, the year of the Red Star Campaign, the numbers increased to 440,000 (AfricaWatch, 1991). Though the lead up to the famine during 1983-4 saw an additional movement of Eritreans to Sudan, the scale of the population

¹⁴ In the case of Tigray, REST trucks had to follow a circuitous route from Kassala through southern Eritrea, though in mid-1985 a new, more direct route from Gedaref was opened.

Figure 4

Food Aid Distributions by REST
Approximate level (in thousand tonnes)



Sources: Peberdy, 1985; Borton, 1989; REST Reports, various years.

displacement was much greater in Tigray where the famine had a greater impact.

REST estimated that 1 million Tigrayans migrated from their villages during late 1984 and early 1985 and of these approximately 180,000 moved to the towns, 500,000 migrated internally to traditional surplus regions, 150,000 moved to REST distribution centres in western Tigray and 200,000 crossed the border into eastern Sudan (Hendrie, 1990).¹⁵ The 200,000 who migrated to refugee camps in Sudan did so between November 1984 and February 1985 in an operation planned and facilitated by the TPLF and REST. By September 1984, the TPLF was apparently anticipating high mortality rates and large-scale migrations to western Tigray. However, crop failures in western Tigray and the limited capacity of the CBO meant that the migrants could not remain in western Tigray but many would have had to continue over into camps in the Sudan. A system was set up for managing the migration with whole villages moving together¹⁶ accompanied by TPLF guides and the establishment of transit stops. Despite warnings being issued to the

¹⁵ That the registered shelter population in shelters in Tigray was 240,000 in April 1985 would seem to contradict the REST claim over the comparatively small numbers moving into the Derg-controlled towns, particularly when most accounts also suggest there was an unregistered camp population numbering perhaps 200,000 in the Province.

¹⁶ Old and infirm people who could not manage the trek, which in the case of some villages took up to four weeks, either remained in their villages or moved to the shelters and camps in the Derg-held towns (Hendrie, 1990).

international community, and specifically to UNHCR in Sudan about the numbers involved in the migration, UNHCR's contingency plans were wholly inadequate and it was some weeks before the agencies working in the camps were able to provide adequate levels of assistance. In the intervening weeks mortality rates in the camps were high (Clark, 1986).

As on the Derg side there was a dramatic increase in the level of assistance to the ERA and REST from late 1984 through 1985, with the majority of assistance being channelled to the organisations through ERD. The period was a difficult one for the CBO. Following an evaluation of ERD at the beginning of 1984, policy differences emerged between member agencies. The ensuing debate continued for over a year and matters were not finally resolved until ERD was formally re-established with a new structure in October 1985 (Duffield and Prendergast, 1993). During this period, there was a change of government in Sudan as a result of the April 1985 coup, the standoff between the TPLF and EPLF which began in mid-1985 and was to last until early 1988 resulted in the closure of the principal northern route into Tigray and disrupted REST's food transport systems until improvements were made to the more direct route, and finally REST's management capacity was so stretched by the combined effects of managing the migrations, the subsequent repatriations (in early 1985) and the increase in the volume of assistance that it almost collapsed (Duffield and Prendergast, 1993; Borton, 1989).

In addition, there was the constant uncertainty resulting from the political and diplomatic context in which Western governments supported the CBO. Many governments were extremely cautious in providing support to ERD and other agencies involved in the CBO. It has been suggested that the US Government used the threat of their providing substantial additional support to the CBO as a means of forcing concessions from the Derg on relief operations in Derg-controlled areas (AfricaWatch, 1991; Duffield and Prendergast, 1993) and this may help explain the offer made in early 1985 but which never actually materialised, of 75 trucks to REST by the US NGO MercyCorps (Borton, 1989). Such events must have impaired the effectiveness of the relief operation in the areas controlled by the TPLF.¹⁷

As in the Derg-controlled areas the levels of assistance to ERA and REST levelled off and fell back after the famine but increased dramatically again in 1988. By this time, REST's administrative capacity had improved and USAID and the EC had become less uncomfortable in providing support to ERA and REST. With the EPLF's military gains in 1988, the TPLF's temporary gains in 1988 and their taking control of virtually all the towns in Tigray in 1989, so donor organisations were obliged to treat ERA and REST as central rather than somehow peripheral

¹⁷ The lack of accurate information on the scale of assistance provided during this period is a reflection of the near collapse of the relevant administrative systems.

actors in the relief efforts. The TPLF's successes in 1989 removed, finally, the argument which had been used for years by the UN and many donor organisations that the small proportion of the population in areas under TPLF control justified a concentration on assistance efforts from the Derg side.

An important component of REST's relief activities was the Internal Purchase programme which involved the procurement of food from traditional areas of surplus production in western Tigray for use in REST's food distribution programmes within the Province. The Programme began in 1983 and stemmed from a combination of TPLF efforts to gain the support of the merchant class in Tigray and as a way of supplementing the supplies available through the CBO which were severely constrained by REST's limited trucking capacity. Though it initially involved the exchange of Sudanese pounds into Ethiopian birr (Smith, 1983) the programme subsequently switched to the exchange of US dollars for Ethiopian birr on the open money markets in Saudi Arabia at rates substantially more favourable than the official exchange rate for the birr.¹⁸ The birr were then taken into Tigray where the purchases were negotiated with the Merchant Associations in the western lowlands. ERD first began supporting the Internal Purchase programme in 1983 and Oxfam in 1984 (Borton, 1989). Information on the size of the Internal Purchase programme is not readily available for all years. In 1985, however, the programme involved the purchase of almost 19,000 tonnes, approximately half of all REST food distributions in that year, but the proportion fell back sharply during 1986-7 (Borton, 1989). Thereafter, the programme increased significantly as donors became willing to support it. 1990 represented the peak year of the programme, its scale being boosted by a \$6 million programme undertaken by the US Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA). This involved OFDA management of the exchange and purchase transactions but thereafter feeding into REST's distribution system. In that year, one third of all REST's food distributions were supplied from the internal purchases (Duffield and Prendergast, 1993).

¹⁸ The official exchange rate for US\$ to Ethiopian birr remained fixed at \$1:2.07 birr throughout the 1980s. In 1988, agencies were obtaining rates of around \$1:3.9 birr (Borton, 1989) and this increased to \$1:7.0 birr in 1990 (Bill Pearson, USAID, Addis Ababa, personal communication, October 1992).

4. The Respective Roles of the RRC, the UN, the Red Cross Movement and NGOs

In providing relief and rehabilitation assistance in Ethiopia, NGOs operated within a broader institutional context, an understanding of which is central to explanations of the roles performed by NGOs. This section therefore summarises the role of the RRC, the UN and the Red Cross Movement (i.e. the ICRC, the Ethiopian Red Cross Society and the League of Red Cross Societies) before considering the available data on their relative roles.

4.1 The Role of the RRC

The RRC was established in March 1974 during the final days of the Imperial Government following the 1973-4 famine. In 1985, it had a staff of some 12,000 divided between the Head Office in Addis Ababa, regional offices and local staff involved in food distributions and projects (Jansson, 1987). By any account the RRC played a central role in the relief efforts during the period. Its basic functions were to:

- i) identify food shortages in rural areas, estimate emergency food needs and solicit aid from donor organisations;
- ii) act as a focal point for all donations of emergency relief (food and non-food);
- iii) distribute assistance to affected areas and food to the Resettlement Programme sites;
- iv) prepare and undertake short-term rehabilitation projects;
- v) coordinate the relief and rehabilitation activities of other GOE agencies and NGOs (USAID, 1987).

The RRC's principal relief activities were general ration distributions and the operation of the shelters. The general ration distributions were organised differently in different areas but were usually based on Peasants' Associations which were responsible for preparing lists of those in need of assistance. The allocation between PAs was usually made at the *woreda* level by a committee chaired by a member of the Workers' Party of Ethiopia (Mitchell, 1986). All NGOs involved in relief work had to sign official agreements with the RRC which permitted them to work in particular areas or undertake particular responsibilities. The process by which these matters were agreed upon by the NGO and the RRC head office and local staff varied widely. However, once agreement had been reached the centralised organisation of the RRC made any changes difficult to achieve quickly (USAID, 1987). The RRC monitored the numbers of expatriates employed by the

various relief agencies and at different occasions tried to reduce the numbers. In terms of its handling of food aid transportation and distribution the RRC was generally considered to be efficient (e.g. USAID, 1987; Jansson, 1987), though many observers felt it became less effective in the late 1980s. The donor coordination role was largely performed by the UNOEOE (USAID, 1987).

4.2 The Role of the UN

The idea of establishing a special UN office for coordinating the relief operations in Ethiopia is credited to the then Executive Director of UNICEF (James Grant) and WFP (James Ingram) who jointly proposed the idea to the UN Secretary General (Xavier Perez de Cuellar) (Jansson, 1987). Normally the UNDP Resident Representative would, as the UN Resident Coordinator, have been expected to perform this role. However, during the 1980s the approach of appointing senior officials as representatives of the Secretary General on an *ad hoc* basis was employed in several emergency situations. Inevitably the decision to establish a special office and to appoint Kurt Jansson as its head, the speed with which it was taken and the resultant lack of consultation was resented by some agencies and individuals within the UN system. For instance, the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (UNDRO) which had been formed in 1971 to 'mobilise, direct and coordinate' the relief activities of the UN system was effectively sidelined and it could be argued that the decision to create the UNOEOE indicated that UNDRO's future was uncertain.¹⁹ Significantly, at the first special meeting in New York of donor countries the Head of the UNOEOE gained approval for Addis Ababa rather than Geneva or New York to serve as the focal point for the mobilisation of resources. This avoided competition between the New York-based and Geneva-based UN agencies (Jansson, 1987). As a result of this procedural step, donor representatives based in Addis Ababa were closely involved in the response and coordination efforts and this is likely to have increased the effectiveness of coordination. In December, a UN Office for Emergency Operations in Africa (UNOEOA) was formed under Bradford Morse, the Administrator of UNDP, with the objective of mobilising and coordinating the international response to the 20 or so African countries experiencing severe food security problems at that time. This office, which was run on a day to day basis under the supervision of Maurice Strong, provided a structure for UNOEOE to report to in New York.

Personnel for the UNOEOE were provided by or through other UN agencies. For instance WHO assigned a public health specialist, UNICEF an emergency officer and the emergency staff of WFP were placed under the direction of the Head of the

¹⁹ In April 1992, UNDRO was absorbed into the newly created UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA).

OEOE and effectively became *de facto* members of OEOE staff. UNICEF handled the administrative work of the office and acted as the paying agent for OEOE's budget. On average there were about eight professional staff based in Addis, seven field monitors based in different parts of the country and all were supported by three secretaries and seven drivers (Jansson, 1987). The field monitors reported regularly on the progress and problems of the relief efforts in their respective areas and this greatly strengthened the credibility of the Office and its ability to obtain solutions to the problems in conjunction with the RRC and other Departments and the donor and NGO community.

In Addis, the OEOE convened meetings, initially held monthly, of all donor country representatives which were attended by the RRC and NGOs. These were complemented by meetings of Western donor country ambassadors or *chargés d'affaires* chaired by the Italian Ambassador. The regular shipping bulletin prepared by WFP on the arrival of shipments and the stock situation at the ports and inland warehouses proved a key coordinating mechanism (Jansson, 1987). The Head of the OEOE was able to deal directly with senior ministers in the Derg and met regularly with President Mengistu. Such access was not available to most donor representatives and this enabled Mr Jansson to act as an intermediary between Western donors and the Derg. In this way, Mr Jansson was able to resolve crises which arose in the relief effort which could potentially have led to a faltering in the level of donor support. His intervention following the forced evacuation of Ibat camp proved crucial and resulted in the reopening of the camp and the removal of the official responsible (Jansson, 1987; USAID, 1987; Giorgis, 1989).

Throughout the period covered by this case study the UN recognised the Derg as being the sovereign government of Ethiopia and Eritrea and refused any direct contacts with the Fronts. On occasion contact was made but these were rare and dealt only with operational matters. For instance, in September 1985, the UNOEOE exchanged messages with the TPLF concerning the airdropping of supplies to the Derg-held town of Sekota by the British Royal Air Force. Communications were made via the UN office in Khartoum and used the British Embassy's secure communications facilities in Addis Ababa (Jansson, 1987). In late 1990, WFP was involved in direct negotiations with the EPLF concerning the process of reopening the port of Massawa to food aid shipments. It was only with the opening of the port in January 1991 and the arrangement that 50% of the food aid be consigned to the EPLF (with the other 50% consigned to agencies in the besieged Asmara) that the UN began providing relief assistance directly to agencies working in areas held by the Fronts (AfricaWatch, 1991).

Such a rigid, or absolute, approach to sovereignty was in keeping with the UN approach that existed from its formation in 1945 to the end of the Cold War period. It could be argued, however, that in the case of Ethiopia the UN was particularly rigid. For instance, UNICEF's mandate allows it to provide assistance in areas without the prior permission of the sovereign government or in areas where the

government is not recognised by the General Assembly. However, UNICEF did not become involved in supporting Cross-Border Operations as it did in comparable situations elsewhere. Assistant Secretary General Jansson also belittled the significance of the Fronts in terms of their influence in Eritrea and Tigray and the importance of the relief assistance provided through the Cross-Border Operation (Jansson 1987; AfricaWatch 1991). In the absence of detailed studies of internal UN documents in relation to the Cross-Border Operation, it is only possible to surmise the reasons why the UN's position should have been so rigid and persisted for so long, even after it became clear in 1988-9 that the future of the Mengistu regime was in grave doubt. Among the possible reasons are that, as home of the UN's Economic Commission on Africa (ECA) and the Organisation of African Unity, Addis Ababa was of unusual importance to the UN system and it could not afford to jeopardise its position in Ethiopia through support for the Cross-Border Operation. The expulsion of the UN Special Representative in Khartoum (Winston Prattely) at the end of 1986 as a result of his contacts with SPLA is likely to have influenced the attitude of the Resident UN Representatives in Ethiopia after 1986. Though the location of OEOE in Addis Ababa, as opposed to Geneva, may well have improved the coordination of assistance channelled through Derg-held areas, it may well have increased the obstacles to contact with and support for the population in areas 'controlled' by the Fronts.

Among the specialised UN agencies, WFP has played the major role in relief operations in Ethiopia.²⁰ Between 1984-90 it provided 13% of the total food aid deliveries to Ethiopia (excluding the CBO), the bulk of it being provided from the International Emergency Food Reserve for use by either the RRC or NGOs, but part of this amount will have been destined for WFP's regular programmes in the country such as the Food-for-Work programmes. In addition, WFP acted as shipping agent for a many of the food aid shipments by bilateral donor organisations. At the end of 1985, the WFP Transport Operation in Ethiopia (WTOE) began operation to improve the flow of relief food from the ports to the areas of distribution with an initial fleet of 250 long haul trucks of which 150 were provided by USAID and 100 by the UK funding agency Band Aid. Over the next four years, the fleet transported 950,000 tonnes of supplies with monthly rates ranging from 11,500 tonnes to almost 40,000 tonnes. Customers were been charged on a cost recovery basis. NGOs made most use of WTOE's services but transport was also provided for the RRC, the Ministry of Agriculture, UNHCR and WFP's Food-for Work Programmes. In late 1989, the fleet stood at 336 trucks (UNEPPG, 1989).

²⁰ UNICEF, UNHCR, UNDRO, WHO and FAO have also been involved in the provision of relief and rehabilitation assistance in Ethiopia. In the limited time available in Addis Ababa it did not prove possible to collect information on the value of their activities in the north of the country and so they are not discussed here.

4.3 The Role of the Red Cross Movement

The Red Cross Movement is composed of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the League (now International Federation) of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the numerous National Red Cross or Red Crescent Societies. The ICRC was formed in 1863 specifically to serve as a neutral intermediary in armed conflicts and disturbances providing protection and assistance to the victims, either on its own initiative or basing its action on the Geneva Conventions. The ICRC's involvement in Ethiopia dates back to the time of the Italian occupation of Eritrea in 1886 and the agency was involved in protection and assistance activities during subsequent conflicts. However, the Derg's relationship with the ICRC was cool, for instance it was rarely allowed to visit prisoners of war on the Derg side and it was not until 1983 that it was allowed to base its delegates permanently in the country.

In the north of the country the Government refused permission for the ICRC to provide assistance to victims of the conflict in areas beyond the control of Derg forces. To complement the programmes operating from the Derg side, the ICRC therefore established a system for providing relief assistance to areas under the control of the Fronts from Sudan where it already provided assistance to refugees and medical assistance to victims of the conflict through medical teams working in Kassala Hospital. However, the Fronts did not allow the ICRC to control the distribution of assistance in areas under their control. Unusually therefore for an agency which normally undertakes its own distributions in order to ensure impartiality, the ICRC was obliged to channel the assistance through the relief arms of the Fronts, though its delegates were allowed to monitor the distributions. Thus, in 1979, some 2,500 tonnes of food (almost all of which was provided by the EC) and small quantities of medicines and other items were forwarded to ERA and the Eritrean Red Cross and Red Crescent Society (ERCCS) the assistance body of the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) (ICRC Annual Report, 1979). With the worsening of the conflict in Tigray so a similar relationship began with the TPLF and REST, the first ICRC assistance being channelled through REST in 1981 (ICRC Annual Report, 1981).

In 1980, the ICRC and the Ethiopian Red Cross Society agreed the modalities for joint assistance operations which became known as the Joint Relief Operation. The scale of this operation began increasing in 1983. In this year, additional support to the operation began being provided by other national societies and donor organisations through the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. By mid-1985, the JRO was reaching about 720,000 beneficiaries and during that year provided approximately 30,000 tonnes of food and seed at 17 distribution points in Eritrea; 50,000 tonnes through 12 distribution points in Tigray and 19,000 tonnes through nine points in Wollo. The programme also operated in Gondar and Hararge Provinces. Therapeutic feeding for severely malnourished children was provided at nine centres in Tigray and two centres in Eritrea and admitted a total

Table 2 Relief Supplies Distributed by the ICRC in Ethiopia and to Ethiopians in Sudan, 1979-91

	<i>Relief in Ethiopia</i>		<i>Sudan (conflict in Eritrea and Tigray)</i>	
	<i>tonnes</i>	<i>Sw Fr</i>	<i>tonnes</i>	<i>Sw Fr</i>
1979	1,336	2.143	2,527	6.032
1980	1,106	2.127	-	-
1981	1,203	3.826	-	-
1982	3,045	5.306	-	-
1983	6,862	12.668	4,401	6.020
1984	18,893	24.869	5,645	5.825
1985	106,340	105.503	11,001	11.305
1986	51,615	44.459	14,772	15.646
1987	12,472	10.094	11,733	9.363
1988	29,991	18.210	32	.007
1989	76	.053	68	.609
1990	3	.001	235	.311
1991	23,604	24.480	0	0

Source: ICRC Annual Reports, 1979-91

NB: Assistance provided via Sudan to those affected by the conflict in Eritrea and Tigray includes assistance to refugees in Sudan and to Ethiopian prisoners of war held captive in Eritrea and Tigray. For the years 1980-82, the Annual Reports do not separately identify assistance provided in response to the conflict in Eritrea and Tigray from that provided by the ICRC in Sudan as a whole and so it is not shown here.

of 30,000 children and operated in most of these locations through 1985 with the last centre closing in early 1986. Beginning in mid-1984, the ICRC began airlifting supplies to inaccessible centres in the north (including Makelle) and during 1985 the airlift operation involved 3 or 4 cargo aircraft in almost continuous operations throughout the year and included airdropping of supplies at Mehoni in Tigray and Sekota in Wollo. Between May and October of that year, agricultural rehabilitation packs were distributed and included 4,800 tonnes of seed. By the end of 1985, ICRC numbered 1,700 with 64 expatriates and another 48 being provided on loan

through the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. At its peak, the ICRC vehicle fleet included 85 trucks and 60 trailers.

On the Sudanese border, the ICRC responded to the refugee influx of late 1984 providing assistance to refugees in Safawa and Tuklabab camps. The programme of providing assistance to ERA and the monitoring of ERA distributions expanded over this period. In Tigray, the scale of ICRC's involvement in TPLF 'controlled' areas increased substantially after March 1985 with the arrival of a fleet of 30 ICRC trucks which operated until early 1987 when they were put into store in Port Sudan.²¹ In that year, 8,400 tonnes of relief supplies was provided in TPLF controlled areas which when added to the 50,000 tonnes claimed by the ICRC through the JRO for that year amounts to a substantial proportion of the total distributions from both sides.

At the end of 1986, the Government attempted to restrict the ICRC's work in the country to that in relation to prisoners of war from the Ethiopia-Somalia conflict and force it to hand over responsibility for its protection and assistance work in the north to the Ethiopian Red Cross Society. This led to a suspension of all the food and medical assistance programmes in the country which continued until June 1987, though it was not until November 1987 that a solution acceptable to the Government, ICRC and National Society was reached. The poor rains of 1987 led the ICRC and the National Society to draw up plans for the distribution of 100,000 tonnes to 1 million beneficiaries in the north and to propose an 'open roads for survival' strategy which called upon all the parties to the conflict in the north not to hinder the transport of supplies to the affected areas. The plan worked *de facto* from the Government side until early 1988 when the deteriorating security situation and refusal to issue travel authorizations led to public expressions of concern by the ICRC, which were followed in April by the Government's order for all foreign relief organisations (except UNICEF) to withdraw from the north. Subsequently, the National Society withdrew from joint operations elsewhere in the country and after repeated representations to the Government the ICRC began arranging for a disengagement from the country and arranged a handover of its assets to a joint League/Ethiopian Red Cross operation. Negotiations continued during the remainder of 1988 and through much of 1989.

In areas under the control of the Fronts the improved situation at the beginning of 1987 led to the ICRC winding down its assistance operations. The poor rains did not lead to a resumption of these assistance operations as efforts under the 'Open

²¹ It is not clear whether these trucks simply complemented REST's own fleet or whether the arrival of the trucks led to ICRC implementing an autonomous programme using its own supplies and managing its own distributions.

Roads' strategy were focused upon reaching the affected areas using lower cost routes through Government controlled areas. This in turn resulted in a cooling in the ICRC's relationship with the Fronts.

The disengagement on the Government side and the cooling of relations with the Fronts halted the ICRC's relief activities in the north until early 1991. In mid-1990, in response to the increased casualties and the lack of skilled surgical staff in the north a joint ICRC/ERCS war-surgery programme was initiated in Asmara, Bahr Dar (in Gojam Province) and Dessie (in Wollo Province). As the famine in Asmara worsened the ICRC and ERCS began a food distribution and water supply programme in Asmara at the beginning of 1991 which was supplied by an ICRC airlift. With the capture of Asmara by the EPLF in May 1991 the ICRC team was asked to leave and it was not until a high level mission had visited Eritrea and met with leaders of the Provisional Government of Eritrea at the end of the year that ICRC was invited back into the country. The southward movement of EPRDF forces resulted in the capture of Bahr Dar in February and Dessie in early May. The ICRC surgical teams in these towns remained in place and continued to care for the wounded.

The EPRDF rapidly demobilised tens of thousands of Derg soldiers captured by the advance and after the capture of Addis Ababa most began to make their way south on foot in late May. The sudden movement overwhelmed the capacity of REST and the EPRDF to provide for the men and the ICRC was requested to assist. A large programme was launched with the ERCS at the beginning of June. Twenty transit camps were established on the roads leading south and the exhausted and destitute ex-servicemen were given medical treatment, food, water, blankets and clothing. A clearing camp was set up in Nazaret to which the ex-servicemen either walked or were transported by a fleet of buses from the transit camps further north. From Nazaret they were transported to their places of origin. By the end of 1991, over 240,000 had been taken back to their homes in an operation that utilised 21,500 tonnes of food and 2,000 tonnes of non-food relief (tents, blankets and clothing).

4.4 Measuring the Role of the RRC, UN, the Red Cross Movement and NGOs on the Government Side

Information which breaks down the value of assistance provided by agency type is often not available in relief operations. Even where it is great care is needed in interpreting the information as agencies often play complementary roles in the provision of assistance. For instance, WFP, a UN agency, may have been responsible for shipping food aid which was then transported to the affected areas by a combination of UN and Government trucks where it was then distributed by an NGO. To attribute the entire value of the assistance provided to the agency type which undertook the final distribution would be misleading and would be biased

against agencies which were not responsible for final distributions. Bearing these difficulties in mind two sets of data which provide an indication of the relative role of NGOs in the relief operations on the Government side will now be examined, one covers the channelling of food aid during the period 1985-7 and the other the channelling of non-food emergency assistance during 1988.

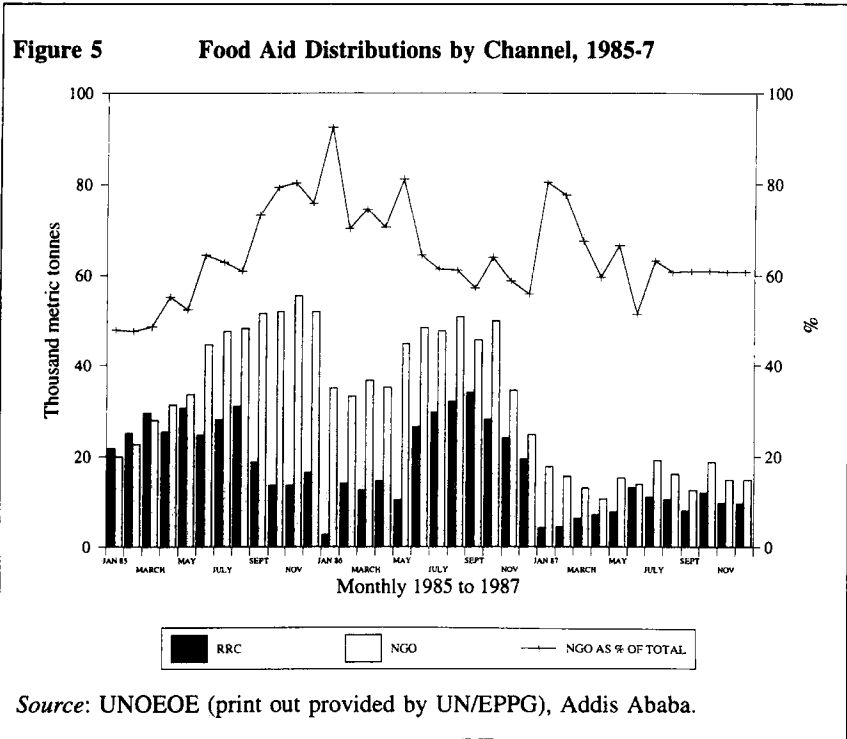


Figure 5 shows data collected by the UNOEOE on the tonnages of food aid distributed each month by the RRC and NGOs between January 1985 and December 1987. Food aid distributions by the ICRC/ERCS Joint Relief Operation are not included in the figure. During 1985, just under 100,000 tonnes of food aid was distributed by the JRO equivalent to just under 8% of the total distributions. The graph shows a steady upward trend in the proportion of the total distributed by NGOs from around 50% at the start of the period to over 80% towards the end of 1985, a return to just over 60% in the second half of 1986, and after another sharp increase in early 1987, levelling off at about 60% during the second half of 1987. It is unfortunate that information on the proportion during 1983-4 could not be obtained as it is thought that NGOs distributed only 20-30% of the, much smaller, tonnages of food aid distributed in these years.

Whilst NGOs imported food shipments using their own, privately raised, resources, the scale of such contributions was small in comparison to the food aid provided by bilateral and multilateral donors. Information contained in the USAID report (1987) on such privately funded shipments suggests that they accounted for 6% of total distributions during 1985-6. The vast majority of food aid was provided by bilateral donors and the EC - the US accounting for no less than 41% of all food aid delivered during 1985-6. EC (Community Actions) accounted for 19% and National Actions by EC member states accounted for 11%. Though WFP acted as shipping agent for many of the shipments by bilateral donors, only 5% of total deliveries during 1985-6 were from WFP's own programmes. Thus it was principally decisions by bilateral donors to channel their food aid through NGOs rather than the RRC that were responsible for the trend revealed in Figure 5.

Table 3 gives a sense of the extent to which donors used or avoided the RRC. Unfortunately the available data does not differentiate between NGOs and the Red Cross Movement for all donors so it cannot be assumed that what was not channelled through the RRC was necessarily channelled through NGOs.

Though none of the food aid provided by Belgium was channelled through the RRC the amount involved was modest. Of far greater importance was the channelling behaviour of the largest single donor - the USA. Of the 761,300 tonnes provided by the US Government during the years 1985-6 only one shipment of 50,000 tonnes was channelled through the RRC, this donation being agreed in November 1984 during the visit by USAID Administrator. Apart from a 10,000 tonne contribution to WFP, all other USAID shipments during 1985-6 were channelled through NGOs or the Red Cross Movement. The scale of the US food aid channelled through NGOs was substantially responsible for the trend displayed in Figure 5 during the first half of 1985. Of the 761,000 tonnes provided by USAID during 1985-6, the principal recipients were: Churches Drought Action - Africa (the consortium which subsequently became the Joint Relief Programme) which received 268,000 tonnes or 35% of the total; the Catholic Relief Services' own programmes which received 111,000 tonnes or 15% of the total; CARE 107,000 tonnes (14%); World Vision 82,000 tonnes (11%); ICRC and the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies 81,000 tonnes (11%); the RRC 50,000 tonnes (7%) and SCF-US 40,000 tonnes (5%) (USAID, 1987).

That the US should have avoided the RRC to the extent it did is not particularly surprising in view of its traditional reliance upon Private Voluntary Organisations (such as CARE and CRS), its poor relations with the Derg and its outspoken criticism of the Resettlement Programme. The Resettlement Programme and the possibility of food aid channelled through the RRC being used in support of the Programme, or enabling food aid provided from another source to be released for use in the Programme, also influenced other donors. For instance after mid-1985 the UK Overseas Development Administration avoided use of the RRC largely because of the accumulation of evidence of human rights abuses in the

Table 3
Ranking of Donors
on the Basis of Proportion of Total Food Aid
Channelled through RRC for all Donors
Providing more than 15,000 Tonnes during the Period 1985-6

	<i>Total tonnage 1985-7</i>	<i>Proportion through RRC (%)</i>
1. Belgium	15,057	0
2. USA	761,300	7
3. Germany (Federal Republic)	71,045	10
4. Australia	35,402	20
5. Italy	24,365	39
6. France	17,273	53
7. UK	46,914	54
8. Canada	131,394	57
9. Sweden	34,323	67
10. EC (Community Actions)	355,144	69
11. China	28,594	90
12. Zimbabwe	24,715	100
13. Bulgaria	18,012	100

Source: USAID, 1987

implementation of the Programme. In ODA's case another factor influencing their channelling decisions was that on four occasions Oxfam approached ODA for a contribution to ships already being loaded and for which distribution plans had been drawn up. This enabled ODA to effectively 'buy in' to Oxfam's own activities and thereby avoid several stages of the planning and procurement process (Borton et al., 1988).

The rapid increase in the volume of food aid channelled through NGOs in early 1985 and the proportion of the total food aid that this represented had several important implications. One was that it led directly to NGOs setting up their own truck fleets or expanding on their existing arrangements. Another was that it created major coordination problems and probably contributed to the undersupply of some of the worst affected areas during 1985. These and other implications are discussed in more detail in section 5.

The second set of data which enables an assessment of the relative role of NGOs, the Red Cross Movement, Government agencies and the UN is that relating to non-food emergency assistance provided in 1988 when there was a dramatic increase in the level of assistance provided by the international community in response to the poor rains of 1987. During that response the UNEPPG collated detailed information on donations by their purpose and the agencies through which it was channelled. Where possible the information reported by donors and NGOs was checked to avoid double counting. This rich source of information was classified by the author into four categories of agency type and eleven categories of activity type or sector.²² The results are shown in Table 4.

During 1988 a total of US\$209 million was provided in non-food emergency assistance. Two-thirds of this amount was for transport or transport related areas (airlift, logistics, ports, road transport, transport subsidy and warehousing). That such a large proportion of the non-food emergency assistance expenditures should effectively have been tied to the movement of food aid is remarkable. The combined expenditures on agriculture (predominantly seeds and tools programmes), health, and water and sanitation in that year was just US\$40.7 million, slightly over 19% of the total expenditures.

The analysis reveals that over half the total amount (51.4%) was channelled through NGOs, just under a quarter (24%) through UN agencies and the remainder by Government agencies and the Red Cross Movement. These results confirm the pattern of channelling established in 1985. The comparatively modest amount of funds channelled through the Red Cross Movement may be explained by the expulsion of expatriates from the north in April 1988 which impacted severely on the operations of the ICRC, which relies heavily upon expatriate delegates, and the subsequent deterioration in relations between the ICRC and the Ethiopian Red Cross Society and the Government which reduced the effectiveness of the JRO. Many NGO programmes, particularly that of the JRP and its member agencies were able to continue their operations using local staff with little or no reduction in their capacity.

In terms of the proportion of funds received by agency type within each category of activity NGOs were the principal recipients in the agriculture, airlift, logistics, transport subsidy and warehousing categories. The UN's role was most significant, but still slightly less than that of the NGOs', in the airlift category (as a result of the airlift organised by UNDRO), in the transport category (as a result of WFP's Transport Operation Ethiopia) and in the health and water and sanitation sectors (principally as a result of UNICEF's programmes in these fields). Government

²² Some corrections were made to the data where double counting by a donor and an NGO were apparent. Where two agency types were responsible for implementation the value of the donation was credited to them on a 50:50 basis.

Table 4 **1988 Non-Food Emergency Assistance**
by Channel as Reported by Donors
(in US\$ thousands)

<i>Sector</i>	<i>UN</i>	<i>Red Cross</i>	<i>Govt.</i>	<i>NGO</i>	<i>Total</i>
Agriculture	1,671 (7.8%)	3,335 (15.6%)	640 (3.0%)	15,719 (73.6%)	21,366
Airlift	18,559 (46.7%)	912 (2.3%)	0	20,219 (50.9%)	39,690
Health	5,294 (44.6%)	0	566 (4.8%)	6,017 (50.7%)	11,877
Logistics	320 (9.8%)	0	39 (1.2%)	2,910 (89.0%)	3,269
Other/mixed	5,363 (19.5%)	7,521 (27.3%)	101 (0.4%)	14,531 (52.8%)	27,516
Ports	0	0	7,457 (100%)	0	7,457
Relief/shelters	0	560 (18.5%)	1,380 (45.6%)	1,086 (35.9%)	3,026
Road transport	15,257 (30.5%)	5,966 (11.9%)	14,920 (29.8%)	13,923 (27.8%)	50,066
Transport subsidy	0	305 (1.0%)	121 (0.4%)	29,153 (98.6%)	29,579
Warehousing	0	689 (8.9%)	3,492 (4.5%)	3,567 (46.0%)	7,748
Water/sanitation	3,687 (49.6%)	0	3,361 (45.2%)	389 (5.2%)	7,438
Total	50,151 (24.0%)	19,289 (9.2%)	32,077 (15.4%)	107,514 (51.4%)	209,031

Source: Calculated from UNEPPG (1989)

agencies played an important role in the ports (where the Port Authority received all the funding in this category) and in road transport and relief/shelters (as a result of the activities of the RRC) and water and sanitation.

Which NGOs made the greatest contribution in resource terms? Figure 6 shows a ranking of NGOs registered with the RRC by the value of the total resources handled between June 1984 and June 1991.

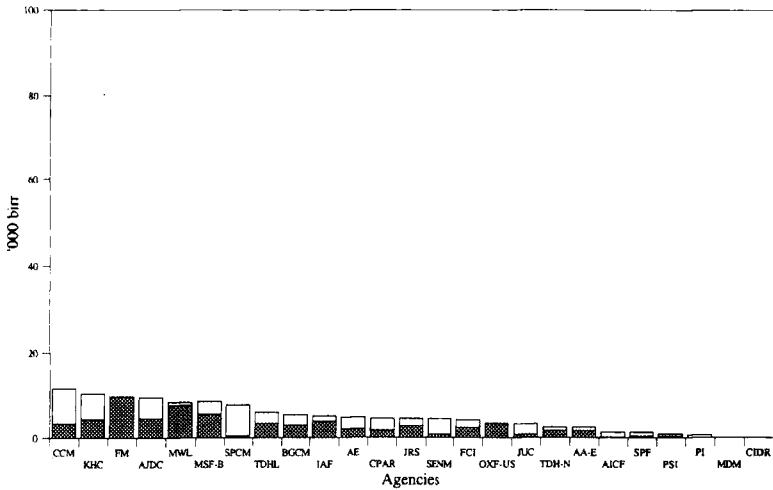
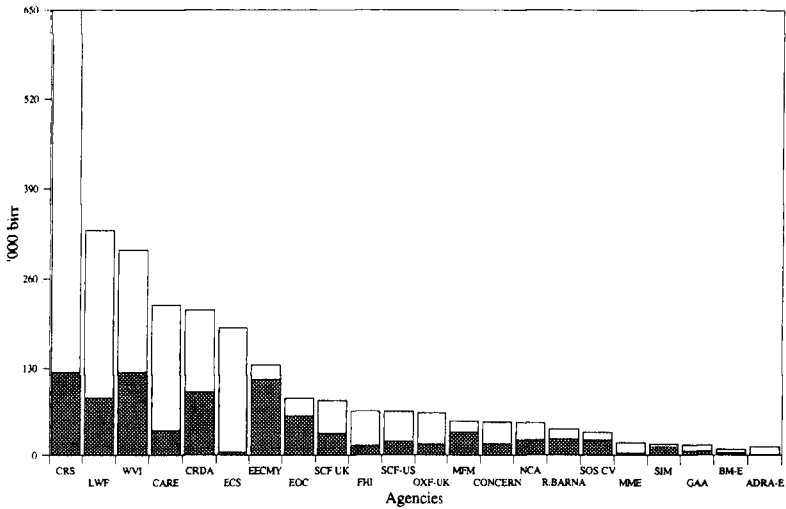
Several comments can be made about this figure. First the ranking is made on the basis of the value of total resources handled and the rankings are substantially influenced by the scale of the in-kind assistance, principally food aid, handled by the agency. CRS and LWF's role within the CDAA/E (subsequently JRP) as consignees for USAID and EC food aid respectively clearly boosts their ranking. Similarly ECS's membership of the JRP and its responsibility for supervising food aid distributions within its areas dramatically increases its position in the rankings. Three broad scales of NGO are suggested by the figure. The first group of 'large' NGOs includes Catholic Relief Services, Lutheran World Federation, World Vision International, CARE, Christian Relief Development Association, Ethiopian Catholic Secretariat and Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus. The second group of 10 'middle scale' NGOs consisting of Ethiopian Orthodox Church, The Save the Children Fund-UK, Freedom from Hunger International, SCF-US, Oxfam-UK, Menschen für Menschen, Concern, Norwegian Church Aid, Redd Barna and SOS Children's Village. The third group of 'small' NGOs contains those remaining.

4.5 The Role of NGOs in Areas Controlled by the Fronts

As would be expected the role of NGOs in providing emergency assistance to ERA and REST was very different from that of NGOs working on the Government side as both ERA and REST managed all relief distributions in the areas under the control of the EPLF and TPLF respectively and the role of NGOs was principally to provide material support to these activities. The origins of ERA and REST and the extent to which their formation formed a central component of the external policy of the Fronts has been well described by Duffield and Prendergast (1993). They identify the principal aim of the EPLF's²³ external policies during the 1970s and 1980s as being 'to reduce political isolation whilst avoiding the trap of becoming dependent upon one political backer or camp' (Duffield and Prendergast, 1993). Within this strategy it was recognised that relief assistance would play an important role in helping to sustain the population in areas under EPLF control, thereby enhancing popular support for the EPLF and also offering a way of

²³ As noted in section 3 the Eritrean Red Crescent Society served as the relief arm of the ELF until the effective demise of the ELF in 1982. The ERCS formed close links with the Sudan Council of Churches and received regular assistance during the late 1970s principally from the Swedish Church Relief with the assistance being channelled through the Eritrea Relief Desk within the SCC. Because the ERCS was not an important actor in the Cross-Border Operations after 1981, its origins and relationship to the ELF are not described here.

Figure 6 Ranking of NGOs by Total Resource Value Handled, June 1984 - June 1991



in cash
 in kind

Source: Derived from information provided by RRC, Addis Ababa.

involving the population in the EPLF's social and economic programmes, including community level democracy.²⁴ Broadly the same reasoning was followed by the TPLF in creating REST in 1978. Because of the importance of relief assistance in the relationship between the Fronts and the populations in the areas they effectively controlled and the Fronts' policy of fostering their alternative administrative systems (based on the village-level *baitos*), both Fronts pursued a policy of not allowing agencies other than ERA and REST to undertake independently managed relief distributions (Duffield and Prendergast, 1993).

Careful thought was given to the creation of structures that would increase the levels of assistance from the international community, how the need for such assistance should be presented and which countries and which groups within those countries should be targeted to provide such support. The public and non-governmental groups such as church based organisations in Western countries were identified as being a potentially important source of material support, regardless of the foreign policies of their governments.

The result was the formation of ERA in 1975 closely linked to the EPLF but with some autonomy; the use of Eritrean exile groups in the West to increase awareness of the situation in Eritrea and the need for relief assistance in EPLF controlled areas; and the establishment of links between ERA and the Sudan Council of Churches (SCC) and through the SCC with those agencies supporting the relief and development work of the SCC, such as the World Council of Churches, Brot für die Welt, Christian Aid and Norwegian Church Aid (Duffield and Prendergast 1993). By 1978, when REST was formed, ERA was receiving relief and rehabilitation assistance on a regular basis from several Western NGOs with Norwegian Church Aid probably being the most significant source of assistance. REST broadly adopted this pattern of relationships and began establishing Support Committees in key Western countries. In 1981, the Emergency Relief Desk was formed, principally by agreement between the SCC and NCA, to establish an ecumenical instrument for coordinated humanitarian aid to areas under the control of the Fronts (see section 6.2) Though REST was not involved in the discussions leading to ERD's establishment, by the end of 1981 it had become ERD's 'implementing agency' in Tigray.

Though ERD was the principal source of relief assistance for both ERA and REST during much of the 1980s, other NGOs that were not members of ERD dealt directly with ERA and REST. Many of these other agencies concentrated on rehabilitation and development activities in the health, education and water sectors. Many were members of other consortia formed specifically to provide support to

²⁴ Duffield and Prendergast (1993) talk of the 'organic' and 'mutually reinforcing' link between political support for the Fronts and their effectiveness in the provision of public welfare.

ERA or REST, notably the Eritrean Inter-Agency Agricultural Consortium (EIAC) and the Tigray Transport and Agricultural Consortium (TTAC), or existing denominational groupings, such as Caritas. Other NGOs such as Oxfam-UK and Oxfam-Belgique chose to operate outside these consortia, providing support to REST and ERA respectively. Oxfam-UK's support to REST's began with grants to the Rehabilitation Programme in 1982 and expanded rapidly during 1984-5. In 1984, the agency fielded a three-person team which undertook an assessment of the situation in TPLF 'controlled' areas (Bennet et al., 1984).

The picture of NGO support to ERA and REST is therefore a complex one. Though assistance channelled through the various consortia accounted for the bulk of assistance provided, other agencies, some of them providing substantial volumes of assistance, operated effectively on a bilateral basis, dealing directly with ERA and REST. Information on the volume and value of assistance handled by these other agencies is often unobtainable. Even for the consortia it is often not possible to differentiate between funding which originated from bilateral donor organisations and funding which was provided from the NGOs' own privately raised resources. Given the aversion that most bilateral donors had to providing assistance, even humanitarian assistance, to ERA and REST prior to 1984 it would seem probable that a substantial, perhaps major, part of the assistance provided in the early years of the Cross Border Operations consisted of NGOs' own privately raised funds.

The factors influencing the reluctance of bilateral donor organisations to providing assistance to ERA and REST differed between donor organisations and varied over time within the same organisation.

However, the two most powerful factors were:

- i) that in legal terms such assistance undermined the sovereignty of the internationally recognised Government of Ethiopia; and
- ii) that because the assistance would be distributed by agencies intimately linked to the Fronts its impartiality could not be guaranteed and it could easily be diverted for use by the EPLF and TPLF fighters.

Another factor was that the act of providing the assistance ran the risk of conferring some form of international recognition on the Fronts, or 'rebels' as they were generally referred to by foreign affairs personnel during the 1970s and early 1980s. Gradually arguments about the severity of the humanitarian need in the areas 'controlled' by the Fronts and the need to 'balance' humanitarian assistance provided on the Derg side began to prevail. The conditions under which assistance would be provided by bilateral donor organisations emerged during the early 1980s and for most donors were extant for the remainder of the decade. The principal elements were that aid should be: restricted to humanitarian assistance; channelled through known Western NGOs acting as intermediaries thereby providing a 'diplomatic distance' between the donors and the Fronts; and that it should be

treated confidentially in the hope that the Derg would either be unaware of such assistance or be prepared to turn a blind eye towards it as long as it was not publicised and its scale remained limited.²⁵

Some bilateral donor assistance was channelled through NGOs prior to 1984 but this is difficult to trace as it was often funding for cereal purchases either in Sudan or in western Tigray as part of REST's Internal Purchase Programme. Such sources of local supply effectively disappeared in 1984 as a result of the drought which severely affected food supplies in Sudan as well as in Eritrea and Tigray. During the period 1984-6 and 1988-91 food aid imported through Port Sudan was the principal source of food used in ERA and REST's distributions. The cost and reduced secrecy of such shipments meant that simultaneously the scale of assistance from bilateral donor organisations increased and became more apparent. In April 1984, USAID donated 5,000 tonnes of cereal food aid to ERD through Lutheran World Relief (LWR) and this led to greater efforts by ERD to increase support from European and Canadian donor organisations to 'balance' such substantial US support (Duffield and Prendergast, 1993). Dutch Interchurch Aid (DIA) succeeded in obtaining support for ERD from the EC Food Aid Division in 1984.²⁶ Shortly after this, the Food Aid Division also provided food aid to Oxfam- Belgique for distribution by ERA and to Oxfam-UK for distribution by REST. During 1984-5, Oxfam-UK provided food aid (much of it provided by the EC Food Aid Division) and other assistance valued at £6.6 million. In 1988, the agency again became one of the channels for EC food aid to Tigray and in 1988 alone handled 18,500 tonnes, equivalent to 25% of the total tonnages channelled through the CBO to REST (Borton, 1989). In mid-1984, the UK ODA approved funds for Christian Aid to undertake a local purchase in Sudan for distribution by ERA and REST and the following year funded a 5,000 tonne shipment by Christian Aid for distribution by ERA (Borton et al., 1988).

In terms of management responsibilities the role of NGOs acting as intermediaries between donor organisations and the Fronts was not very demanding. Food aid shipments would generally be consigned to the NGO which would then transport the food to a store near the border where ERA or REST trucks would then collect

²⁵ This led to various attribution practices designed to hide the cost of such assistance. Some donors included the costs within their aid allocations to Sudan, perhaps attributing them to 'refugees in Sudan'. Others included the costs within their allocations to Ethiopia but obscured the geographical location of their use by referring to 'northern Ethiopia'. As a result of such practices accurate information on the level of assistance from bilateral donors is difficult to obtain.

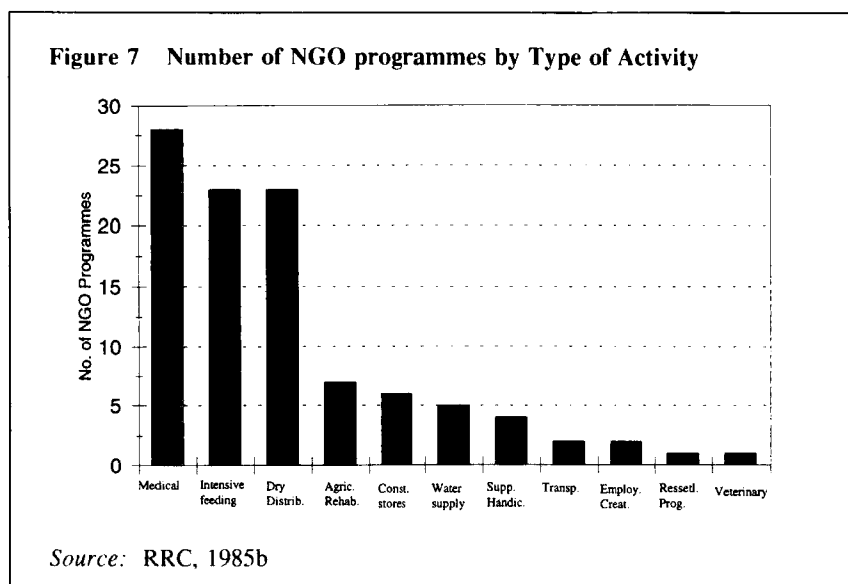
²⁶ Food Aid Division funds were not governed by the Lomé conventions and could therefore be used in areas without the permission of the sovereign government (Duffield and Prendergast, 1993).

it for onward distribution in Eritrea or Tigray. Often, however, the handover took place at Port Sudan, thereby relieving the NGO of responsibility for arranging transport to the border. Some donors required the NGOs to closely monitor the transport and distribution of particular shipments within Eritrea and Tigray as a way of checking on the veracity of the distribution reports submitted by ERA and REST. Such visits were often delayed or prevented by insecurity and the lack of authorization by the Fronts. However, many donors appear to have been satisfied with the 'systems monitoring' visits undertaken two or three times a year by ERD monitors.

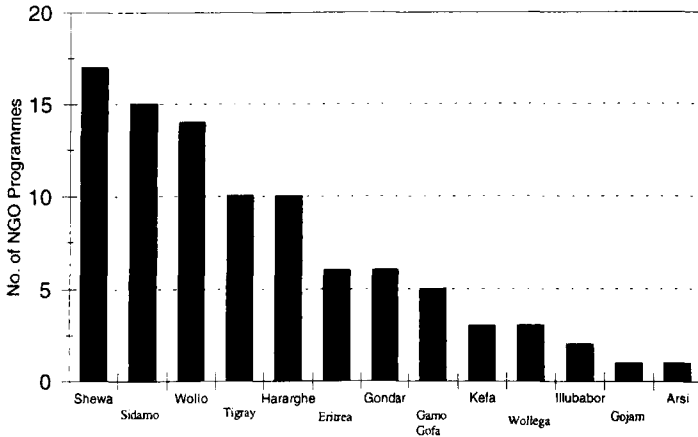
5. Activities Undertaken and Issues Faced by NGOs

5.1 Activities and Implications of the Use of NGOs as Channels

As would be expected in such a large and complex operation that relied heavily upon NGOs the range of activities undertaken by NGOs was extremely broad. Examination of an RRC survey of NGO programmes published in May 1985 (RRC, 1985b), at the height of the famine relief operations, reveals the following distribution between type of activity and province of the 43 NGOs included.



Though the results have to be treated with care as inconsistencies are apparent in the categories used to describe the types of activity, they are of interest in that they reveal a surprising concentration on the provision of medical care and a low involvement in the provision of water. Such an emphasis upon curative rather than preventive approaches to the health situation of large populations in camps was probably not cost effective in terms of the energy and resources of NGOs. In terms of the location of NGO activities the fact that Shewa (near to the capital) and Sidamo rank above Wollo, Tigray and Eritrea is also remarkable. The concentration in Sidamo may be explained in terms of the 'green famine' that occurred in early 1984 and consequent 'crowding' of NGOs into the area at a time when permission to work in the northern Provinces was limited (Goyder and Goyder, 1988). That the

Figure 8 Number of NGO programmes by Province

Source: RRC, 1985b

situation had not shifted more significantly in favour of the northern regions suggests either that it was still proving difficult to obtain permission to work in the north or that there was a significant time lag for some NGOs in relocating their activities.

An activity which is not revealed by the RRC survey is that of the provision of early warning information. Many NGOs were involved in efforts to alert the international community to the developing famine during 1983 and 1984. Because of their close involvement in the northern Provinces CRS and SCF in particular had been well placed to warn of the developing famine and lobby for increased relief assistance. For instance in the autumn of 1983 CRS's Regional Director for Africa appeared before the US's House Sub-Committee on African Affairs and graphically predicted subsequent events (Gill, 1986). Similarly, SCF lobbied throughout 1983 and 1984, including giving a presentation at a UK Foreign Office seminar in June 1984 that predicted that the 1984/5 famine would be worse than that of 1973/4. The Disasters Emergency Committee composed of the larger UK relief and development NGOs launched an Appeal in July 1984. Oxfam, which until August 1984 had relied on the FAO/WFP assessments, realised the severity of the situation and in September announced it was to make its largest ever grant towards a shipment of 10,000 tonnes of food aid intended to 'shame' donor organisations into responding more generously. Both Oxfam and SCF facilitated the visits by TV news crews to the country including that by Buerk and Amin in October 1984 (Gill, 1986; Goyder and Goyder, 1988; Harrison and Palmer, 1986).

The dramatic increase in the scale of assistance in late 1984 and early 1985, and the decision by many Western donors to channel the bulk of this assistance through NGOs had a number of implications, some of which will now be discussed.

It was inevitable that an operation as large and complex as that undertaken between late 1984 and 1986 would experience coordination problems. However, there is reason to believe that the channelling of such a large proportion of the food aid through NGOs exacerbated the coordination problems and contributed to the undersupply of some of the worst affected areas during 1985. For as long as the RRC controlled the allocation of a major share of the total emergency food aid entering the country it had the capacity, potentially at least, to 'fill the gaps' between populations served by NGO programmes. With donors responding to increased requests from individual NGOs to distribute food in particular areas and the proportion of food arriving in the ports was consigned for a particular NGO operating in a particular area, so the balance of allocative control shifted away from the RRC to NGOs and bilateral donors. As the proportion of food aid under the allocative control of the RRC declined so its ability to 'fill the gaps' was reduced. The key period appears to have been from June 1985 onwards when the RRC share of distributions fell below one-third of the total (see Figure 5). It was during this period that the RRC was accused in the Western media of 'withholding' food from distribution programmes in Wollo and Tigray as a way of forcing people in these Provinces to enter the Resettlement Programme. In a detailed response to one journalist writing for *The Times* of London the Head of UNOEOE placed the blame firmly on the RRC's lack of control over the bulk of the food aid entering the country.

Shortages of food for certain regions at given periods of time cannot be blamed mainly on the RRC since a major part of the food is being distributed by the international voluntary organisations which have control over the grain consigned to them by donors. There is complete consensus here among representatives of donor countries and voluntary organisations that the RRC is doing its utmost to distribute whatever grain has been consigned to it. There is certainly no unwillingness to distribute food but there are problems of management and transport of which you should be aware (Jansson et al., 1987, p.71).

A related problem in Wollo was that many of the NGOs working in the Province initially concentrated on intensive and supplementary feeding programmes, traditionally the sort of food distribution programmes most favoured by NGOs, on the assumption that the RRC would be providing the general ration (Mitchell, 1986). The RRC's inability to provide a general ration on a continuous basis or at the required level severely reduced the effectiveness of the intensive and supplementary rations because it increased both the numbers of malnourished and the chances that those graduated out of intensive and supplementary programmes would, after a few weeks, have to be readmitted (Mitchell, 1986). Gradually NGOs

Table 5 **Examples of Some of the General Rations
Distributed in Ethiopia, 1985**

<i>Distributing organisation</i>	<i>Ration size</i>	<i>Kcals per person per day</i>
RRC	Per individual per month:	
	<6 years: 3kg corn soya milk	380
	7-15 years: 7.5kg wheat grain	875
	>15 years: 15kg wheat grain	1,750
CDAA/E	Per family (5) per month:	
	45 kg bulgur wheat	1,325
	4 kg dried skimmed milk powder (DSM) 3.6 kg oil	
World Vision	Per individual per month:	
	15 kg wheat flour or grain 1 litre oil	1,780
ICRC	Per person per month:	
	12 kg wheat flour	2,026
	2 kg beans 1.2 kg oil	
Ethiopian Red Cross	Per person per month:	
	15 kg wheat flour	1,793
	1 litre butter oil 1 kg sugar	
SCF-US	Per person per month:	
	15 kg wheat flour	2,484
	4 kg soya fortified sorghum grits (SFSG)	
	2 kg dried skimmed milk power (DSM) 1 litre oil	

Source: From Mitchell (1986), adapted from Young (1986)

Table 6 **Relief Truck Fleets**

<i>Fleet by NGO</i>	<i>Long-haul trucks (10 - 35 mt)</i>	<i>Short-haul trucks (3 - 9 mt)</i>	<i>Total</i>
ADRA	2	5	7
CARE	38	0	38
CRS	12	12	24
CRS 'Kenya Lease'	54	0	54
CRDA	31	21	52
Concern	6	5	11
Ethiopian Catholic Secretariat	38	4	42
FHI	0	4	4
German Agro Action	3	0	3
ICRC	50	28	78
LICROSS/Ethiopian Red Cross	21	8	29
Lutheran World Federation	10	17	27
Norwegian Church Aid	5	6	11
Philadelphia Church	2	3	5
OXFAM/Save the Children UK	15	6	21
Redd Barna	18	7	25
SAVE/USA	20	20	40
24-hour TV	0	2	2
World University Services Canada	21	9	30
WVI	108	6	114
NGO total	454	163	617
RRC	331	668	999
WTOE	250	0	250
Grand total	1,035	831	1,866

Source: OEOE cited in USAID (1987)

in Wollo established and expanded their general ration distributions to cover for the RRC's shortfall.

The experience of Wollo during 1985 points to problems caused by the shift in the food aid provided by donors from the RRC to NGOs. Such 'transitional' problems and their potential for reducing the effectiveness of the response do not appear to have been considered in advance by donor organisations when deciding to channel their assistance through NGOs. The problem of food shipments being consigned by donor organisations to individual NGOs and the resultant reduction in the flexibility within the operation is one that has arisen in other relief operations and leads to periodic calls for the creation of centrally managed 'food pools', for instance as occurred in Sudan in 1991/2.

Another coordination problem created by the shift to NGOs was that of the lack of standardisation between their programmes. Table 5 shows the variation between some of the general rations distributed in Ethiopia during 1985.

Finally, the shift to NGOs and their increased involvement in general ration distributions resulted in their being drawn into direct involvement in transport operations. Whilst the large US PVOs such as CARE and CRS were familiar with the operation of sizeable truck fleets this was not so for most other NGOs. During 1985 agencies such as SCF, Oxfam, Redd Barna, LWF and ECS were drawn into establishing and managing truck fleets. By the end of 1985, even after the establishment of the WTOE, NGOs accounted for 44% of the long haul truck capacity devoted to relief and 20% of the short haul capacity (see Table 6).

5.2 Ethical Dilemmas and Policy Issues

By virtue of operating in or near to a conflict zone and in a country well known for its abuse of human rights, NGOs, whether on the Government-side or through their support for the CBO, faced numerous ethical dilemmas. Those operating on the Government side have been accused *inter alia* of not speaking out either on the human rights abuses involved in the Resettlement Programme (MSF-France excepted) or on the substantial contribution of Derg policies and the conflict to the development of famine. Agencies participating in the Food for the North Initiative have been criticised for effectively supporting the Derg's military pacification programmes (AfricaWatch, 1991).²⁷ Within the agencies working on the

²⁷ Such criticism is notable for its partiality as it chooses to ignore the comparable role of food aid provided through the CBO being supplied to populations in areas recently captured by the Fronts. The criticism cannot be applied to the US Government, for at the same time that USAID was providing the food aid for use by

(continued...)

Government side there were sharp differences between those that refused to participate in the Resettlement Programme and those, such as Concern, which felt they had to become involved if only on humanitarian grounds in the light of the suffering of the newly arrived settlers (Jansson, 1987) (see Box 1). NGOs supporting the CBO were variously accused of naivety in their support for ERA and REST and for failing to speak out about the kidnapping and killing of relief workers based in the Derg held towns and attacks on relief convoys by the Fronts.

All of these accusations have some validity, though it is not intended here to take sides and criticise particular agencies. All agencies operated in a context in which information was often difficult to obtain or unreliable and it would be wrong to judge the behaviour of particular agencies with the benefit of hindsight. Where the evidence of human rights abuses or the misuse of relief assistance was strong, agencies often chose not to raise the issues in public for fear of jeopardising their programmes and thus the welfare of the populations they were serving, or attempting to serve, and even of the overall relief effort. For instance some agencies operating on the Government side feared that if the Western public's awareness of the role of conflict in causing the 1984-5 famine was increased then it might well reduce the level of interest and thus resources made available for the relief efforts (Duffield and Prendergast, 1993).

The decision whether or not to 'speak out' is likely to have been influenced by the scale of the agency's programme and the nature of its involvement in the relief effort. For instance, MSF-France's programme during 1985 was limited to medical care and intensive feeding in and around Korem and it could therefore be seen to be more able to speak out about the human rights abuses witnessed by its personnel than agencies with more substantial programmes. Distinguishing between what appears as noble concern for the welfare of the beneficiaries and the institutional interests of the agency can be problematic. For many agencies their involvement in the relief operations in Ethiopia was largely responsible for the rapid growth of their income, profile and numbers of staff employed. In choosing not to speak out agencies may well have been influenced by a fear of jeopardising not only the interests of their beneficiaries but also their own interests as agencies. The fear of expulsion was a genuine one among the operational agencies which were directly involved in providing assistance to the affected population. Agencies which were non-operational, particularly those without offices in Ethiopia, were much freer to engage in public advocacy, though they were less likely to have access to detailed information from trusted sources and would have to have taken account of the potential repercussions of such advocacy on their 'partner' agencies. Both Christian

²⁷ (...continued)

World Vision and CRS in the Food for the North Initiative it was also providing substantial support for the CBO.

Box 1 Concern's Involvement at the Resettlement Sites

Around mid-1985 Concern decided to become involved in assisting the people who had been resettled in Wollega, initially at a site at Jarso and subsequently at another site called Ketto. This was a difficult decision for the agency to reach but it was felt that the people who had been moved were destitute and in a strange place with minimal facilities, and needed assistance as much as those in the famine affected areas from which they had come. The Jarso project document was signed with the RRC in October 1985 and Concern began operations in November. The Ketto project was signed in May 1986 and operations began in August. Funding for both projects came initially from Band Aid and subsequently from the Canadian Government (CIDA), through Oxfam-Quebec. Between the period when the two projects started and 1989 the combined expenditure was approximately £3.8 million equivalent to about half the cash expenditures of Concern-Ethiopia during the period. Towards the end of 1986 Concern commissioned an international team to carry out an evaluation of the two programmes. They concluded that Concern's intervention had been justified because it had:

- contributed to the relief of the immediate problem of the settlers and to improving their health status;
- helped the settlers at Jarso to reach quantitative self sufficiency in food within two growing seasons;
- helped to open up the two settlements to visitors and dispel some of the inaccurate information concerning them;
- clarified some important issues to be discussed and resolved between the Government and NGOs, as and when NGO assistance to the settlements was increased.

Source: Compiled from Grindle et al., 1989

Aid and CAFOD, which provided material and financial assistance to partner agencies on both sides of the conflict, engaged in public advocacy (Silkin and Hughes, 1992).

A broader issue concerning the role of NGOs on both sides of the conflict is the degree to which their assistance could be considered to have been neutral. ERD saw its mandate as being 'neutral' (Duffield and Prendergast, 1993), and USAID (1987) cites an advantage of NGOs during 1985-6 as being 'their political neutrality', by which is meant the ability of NGOs to work in areas that the RRC was unable or unwilling to operate. The use of such terms in relation to assistance that was effectively being provided on either side of a conflict is somewhat bizarre for it was readily apparent that the resources provided through the relief efforts

represented a form of support to either side of the conflict. There were many more forms such support could take than just food for use by the soldiers. Though the diversion of food aid for use by the Derg forces was a recurrent concern of Western journalists and governments throughout the period, the amounts involved cannot have been substantial or such diversions would have shown up with greater frequency in the monitoring that was undertaken. Food aid was provided to the militia on the Derg side and will have assisted the Derg, though this was defended by the Head of the UNOEOE (Jansson, 1987). It would be naive to think that assistance provided by the CBO was never used by EPLF and TPLF fighters, though again the amounts involved are likely to have been small or they would have been detected by the monitoring that was carried out by ERD and other NGOs.

Of much greater significance was the role of relief assistance in sustaining the support, or at least acquiescence, of the population in the areas under the control of the Fronts and the Derg. As noted in section 4.5, the EPLF and subsequently the TPLF had an express policy of developing links with Western NGOs so that they would provide assistance that would enable the Fronts, through their relief army, to provide welfare support to populations in their areas of 'control' and thereby sustain and enhance their popular support. Had the levels of assistance provided through the CBO not increased substantially following the territorial gains of 1988 and 1989 it is arguable that the Fronts would have found it difficult to sustain the support of the population in the newly acquired areas. On the Derg side the welfare of the rural population appears to have been accorded lower priority, but the benefits of being able to ensure the supply of food aid will have sustained a certain level of support or acquiescence among the population.

Another way in which relief assistance will have benefitted the Fronts and the Derg is by releasing resources that would otherwise have been allocated to the relief effort for use in other activities. The importance of such 'fungibility' is difficult to assess because the levels of support that would have been provided in the absence of foreign relief assistance cannot be known. Nevertheless, it must have been significant. According to Jansson (1987), the total value of assistance provided between December 1984 and December 1985 was US\$1,253 million. This compares with a GDP of Ethiopia in 1985 of US\$4,230 million (World Bank, 1987). Resource flows of such a scale must have substantially increased the opportunities for the Derg to raise additional revenue through such mechanisms as petrol tax and import duties.

In the light of the varied forms of support which relief assistance could provide to the parties to the conflict, any notion of assistance provided to one side only being 'neutral' were at best misplaced and at worst naive. Duffield and Prendergast (1993) refer to the 'ideological sleight of hand' required by ERD to regard itself as a neutral humanitarian consortium whilst working only on one side of the conflict and collaborating with relief associations established by the Fronts. Though many non-operational NGOs provided support to partner agencies on both sides of

the conflict, NCA and Oxfam-UK appear to have been the only two operational agencies to have maintained programmes in Government-controlled areas whilst providing substantial support to the CBO. In both cases the Government appears to have been aware of their involvement in the CBO from an early stage (e.g. Duffield and Prendergast, 1993) but did not expel them. That more operational NGOs on the Government side did not establish programmes of support to the CBO which would have enabled them to claim that their approach was at least impartial is remarkable.²⁸ Why this should have been the case is not clear. It has been claimed that the secretive nature of the CBO made it unattractive to agencies and that working on the Government side enabled agencies to exploit the public relations and fund-raising benefits (e.g. AfricaWatch, 1991). The polarisation between those NGOs working on the Government side and those supporting the CBO is commented upon by Duffield and Prendergast (1993). The views adopted by either side on some of the issues discussed above often appeared overly partial and self-righteous. The poor communication between the two 'camps' acted against the development of shared understandings of the situation and how the NGO community as a whole might respond more effectively. Had such a shared understanding emerged the NGO community would have had greater claim to impartiality and neutrality.

The story of ICRC's involvement in the provision of relief assistance during the period is a mixed one. It was able to provide assistance through the CBO but the scale of these operations was limited and the Fronts heavily circumscribed the role and autonomy of the ICRC's activities. On the Government side it was able to provide substantial volumes of assistance in conjunction with the ERCS. It would appear that much of this assistance was able to permeate into areas that, at least during the hours of darkness, were 'controlled' by the Fronts. However, there were prolonged periods when the agency was prevented from providing relief assistance. In the light of the substantial role of NGOs in the provision of relief assistance through the CBO and on the Government side, the question arises whether the treatment of the ICRC by the Fronts and the Government was affected by the knowledge that NGOs, with a less rigid attitude towards impartiality than the ICRC, could be relied upon to continue providing assistance in the absence of the ICRC. Without a detailed knowledge of discussions between the ICRC and the Fronts it is not possible to give a clear answer to this question. However, the views of those ICRC personnel interviewed during the course of this study suggest that the availability of substantial assistance through NGOs in zones of conflict tended to undermine both the role of the ICRC and the respect for the Geneva Convention by parties to conflicts.

²⁸ AfricaWatch (1991) claims that CARE was approached by USAID to become involved in the CBO in 1984 but declined.

6. NGO Consortia and Coordination Mechanisms

6.1 The Christian Relief and Development Association²⁹

CRDA originated in a forum known as the 'Christian Relief Committee' which was formed in mid-1973 following the Imperial Government's belated acknowledgement of the famine then underway in Wollo and Tigray and its request to local churches and missions to help in the response. Following the request 20 representatives of churches and missions, including the Catholic Secretariat and the Evangelical Church Makene Yesus, held their own meeting and agreed to hold regular meetings to pool information and coordinate their relief activities. Other agencies, including a number of secular agencies such as Concern, SCF-UK and Oxfam subsequently joined the Committee. To fill gaps in the resources of member organisations contact was made with overseas funding agencies and the funds received allocated on the basis of decisions by the Committee. With the growth of membership, particularly after the showing of Jonathon Dimbleby's documentary film 'Unknown Famine' in September 1973, and the need to expedite the allocation process, an Executive Committee and full-time Coordinator were appointed in December 1973.

During 1974, the Committee began to support members' rehabilitation activities and the geographical area of the Committee's coordination and support activities was widened to include the relief and rehabilitation activities of member agencies in other areas of Ethiopia such as Eritrea, Hararge, Sidamo and Illubabor. In September 1974, the Committee was officially registered under the new name 'Christian Relief and Development Association' (CRDA) and a Memorandum of Association drawn up which declared CRDA's purpose to be 'to promote and encourage relief and development activities in Ethiopia'. In March 1975, a special agreement was signed with the RRC, which had been established the previous August, which defined the relationship of CRDA to the Government's relief and rehabilitation activities. Many of the significant features of CRDA's subsequent development were laid during the life of the Christian Relief Committee particularly during its first 3-4 months. Key features of this framework were the regular sharing of information, the creation of a Secretariat, the ability to receive funds and material assistance from non-members and the creation of a mechanism to allocate such funds between members.

²⁹ The information contained in this section was obtained from CRDA bi-annual reports, annual reports on relief and rehabilitation activities and from interviews with Brother O'Keeffe (Executive Director), Hagos Araya (Assistant Executive Director) and Liz Stone (Information Officer) in November 1992.

CRDA describes its primary role as being to 'coordinate the activities of its members for the purposes of joint decision-making and action; to supplement members' resources with financial and material assistance from donor partners; and to provide common services to its members' (CRDA 1992).

The coordination function is undertaken by providing mechanisms for the exchange of information and by exercising control over significant material and financial resources which can be allocated to members' programmes. The principal forum for information exchange during the large scale relief and rehabilitation operations of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, not only for the NGO community but also between the NGOs and the UN agencies and donor organisations, were CRDA's monthly General Meetings. These are open to anyone and it is normal for representatives of the RRC, UN agencies, and interested foreign embassies and the media to attend.³⁰ During the General Meetings information is exchanged on the situation in different area and developments relevant to the relief, rehabilitation and development activities of members. After the General Meeting member agency representatives remain for a closed Members' Meeting to conduct CRDA business. This may involve discussion of issues arising from the open session and planning CRDA's response to them possibly by coordinating actions by member agencies operating in particular areas of need and identifying ways in which CRDA might support them. Ad hoc committees have also been set up by CRDA to coordinate action in response to particular emergencies. In recent years these have included the Meningitis Task Group in 1989 and the Committee on Transport Requirements in the Northern Regions and the Emergency Task Group, both of which met throughout the 1987-8 relief operations. In addition to the committee structure, CRDA organises workshops on particular subjects to encourage the sharing of experience and ideas. Workshop reports are prepared and disseminated to members. For the Health, Development and Children's Programmes the Workshops are held on a quarterly basis.³¹

The practice of receiving material and financial assistance from donor partners and using them to supplement the resources directly available to members has been an

³⁰ During 1987, the Government restricted attendance at the meetings to members and certain UN officials as it believed that certain media reports which were critical of the Government had originated at General Assembly meetings (Duell and Dutcher, 1987).

³¹ A selection of Workshop reports over the last few years include: 'Fighting Aids Together'; 'Small Scale Income Generation - Does it Really Pay'; 'Environmental Impact Assessment'; 'Monitoring and Evaluation of Rural Water Projects'; 'Special Needs of Children in Disasters'; 'Integrated Basic Health Services: Collaboration in the Health Services by the MoH, RRC, UNICEF and CRDA Members'; and 'Lessons Learned' (from the 1984-5 Relief Operation).

important function since CRDA's creation and substantially empowers its coordination role. The assistance may either be actively requested by CRDA in the knowledge of a particular resource need among its member agencies or it may be offered to CRDA by donors wishing to support NGO activities and trust CRDA to serve as a 'clearing house' for their assistance. Whilst some of this may be resourced from the privately raised funds of non-operational partner agencies, a substantial proportion represents resources requested from bilateral donor organisations on CRDA's behalf by the partner organisations. Whilst foreign governments may consign material aid directly to CRDA without channelling it through northern NGO partners, it is rare for CRDA to receive financial assistance directly from bilateral donor organisations.³² Non-operational funding partners which have provided substantial support to CRDA's activities over the years include Christian Aid, CAFOD and Band Aid in the UK, Church World Service and USA for Africa in the USA, ICCO and CEBEMO in the Netherlands, Brot für die Welt and EZE in Germany, DanChurchAid in Denmark and Cardinal Leger and Peace and Development in Canada. This pattern of support reflects the traditional association of CRDA with church-affiliated organisations in the North.

The value of financial and material relief and rehabilitation assistance channelled through CRDA to member agencies has been substantial (see Table 7). In 1986, for instance, the material assistance provided (food aid, tents, shelter material, medicines etc.) was valued at US\$9.4 million and US\$520,000 was provided in financial assistance for CRDA's relief activities. Much of the amount shown for relief during 1988 is accounted for by a donation of 25,000 tonnes of wheat from the EC which was allocated between the programmes of 27 member agencies working in 10 regions of the country. In 1985, member agencies agreed that the CRDA Secretariat should provide a central procurement service purchasing seeds, tools and oxen for the recovery efforts and this resulted in a programme which provided 6,000 tonnes of seed. It was agreed that this should be considerably expanded during 1986. Seeds requirements of member agencies were collated in October 1985 and distributions began in February 1986. In all 16,700 tonnes of seeds and 437,000 tools were distributed that year in all 12 provinces of Ethiopia.

CRDA is also an important provider of transport services to its member agencies, particularly the smaller agencies that are unable or unwilling to set up and operate their own truck fleets. In 1982-3, CRDA transported 8,700 tonnes of RRC grain from Addis Ababa to programmes run by member agencies in Eritrea, Wollo and Tigray as a way of assisting the RRC with the severe transport shortage it was facing at that time (CRDA, 1983). The truck fleet grew rapidly during 1985 and stood at 54 trucks in 1986 (USAID, 1987) and to 66 by 1992. In 1989, CRDA

³² One of the exceptions is that of the US Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) grant to CRDA which is held by the US Embassy in Addis and can be released on approval of funding proposals submitted by CRDA.

Table 7 **Value of Relief and Rehabilitation Assistance
Provided by CRDA (1986-8)**
(cash and in-kind allocations measured in US\$ million)

	<i>Relief</i>	<i>Rehabilitation</i>
1986	10.3	10.3
1987	6.2	4.1
1988	24.0	7.7

Source: CRDA Relief and Rehabilitation Reports 1986-8, Addis Ababa.

contributed 22 trucks from its fleet to the JRP Southern Line Operation north of Dessie. The vehicle workshop set up to maintain this fleet also services vehicles belonging to member and other agencies on a cost recovery basis and in 1992 this service was a net earner of funds for CRDA.

Membership of CRDA is open to any church or voluntary agency in Ethiopia engaged in promoting relief and development activities. Applicant agencies have to have a signed agreement with the Government and have been working in the country for six months. When it was registered in 1975, CRDA had 22 member agencies. By 1988, the number had increased to 53. In 1989, Associate Membership was introduced for all new members. Associate members are able to receive assistance from CRDA and use the range of services available but they cannot vote or hold office for the first three years of membership. The category of associate membership was introduced partly as a response to the number of small, new agencies being set up, whose activities were often limited to the provision of assistance and care to orphans and children. Since the fall of the Mengistu regime in 1991 the Relief Society of Tigray (REST) and the Oromo Relief Association (ORA) have become associate members of CRDA. In 1992, CRDA had 61 member agencies and 23 associate members (see Appendix).

Analysis of the 1988 Directory of member agencies indicates that just over half (28 out of 53) of the member agencies were secular whilst the remainder were church-affiliated. The Directory also contains information on the year in which member agencies were established in Ethiopia and this has been plotted in Figure 9. This reveals the long history of NGOs in Ethiopia - particularly the indigenous church based agencies and foreign missions and church affiliated agencies. Thus 21 of the 53 member agencies in 1988 were established prior to the 1973-4 famine and 3 (the Society of International Missions, St Matthew's Church and the Kale Heywet Church Development Programme) were established during the 1920s.

Secretariat.³³ The role of the Sub-Committees is to review requests for financial and material support submitted by member agencies in relation to particular areas of activity. Prior to 1989 there were three Sub-Committees for Material Aid, Relief, Rehabilitation and Development and in that year a fourth was added, the Sub-Committee on Children's Programmes. The Material Aid Sub-Committee allocates the substantial quantities of food, medicines and shelter materials which are donated to CRDA by partner agencies and occasionally by bilateral donor organisations. The Material Aid Sub-Committee is made up solely of Secretariat Personnel. Requests involving comparatively modest resource allocations can be approved by the Sub-Committees. For requests of greater value members of the Executive Committee are co-opted to evaluate the proposals. All decisions taken by the Sub-Committees are ratified by the full monthly Membership Meeting.

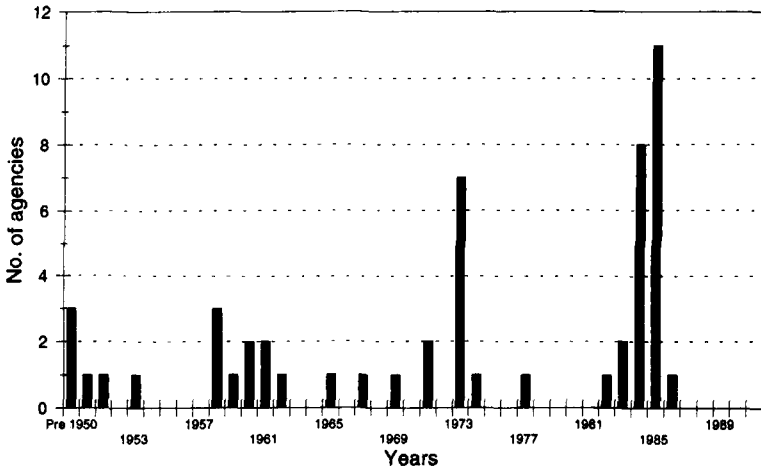
Members are required to make an annual contribution towards CRDA's overhead costs. Contribution levels in 1992 were 5,000 Birr for members and 2,500 Birr for associate members. Some members contribute above this requirement. This source of funding only covers a proportion of the overhead costs. The remainder of the overhead costs together with the funding of CRDA's various services and projects is met by contributions from international non-operational funding partners. CRDA does not have a foreign exchange account as a matter of policy. As a result it has developed mechanisms in conjunction with its main funding partners whereby CRDA request them to use their contribution to CRDA funds to procure and transport materials and equipment needed by CRDA and its member agencies which cannot be obtained locally. For instance ICCO may be requested to use its contribution by tendering for suppliers in the Netherlands to send plastic sheeting and medical supplies to CRDA. For some of the partner agencies the mechanism has become more sophisticated. For instance CAFOD may be requested to procure £15,000 of stationery supplies and the Birr equivalent of the CRDA foreign exchange saving is credited to CAFOD as its contribution to the CRDA micro-project fund.

In 1982, CRDA fielded a team of four nurses to run an intensive feeding programme at Ibrat. As the situation worsened during 1983 and 1984 so CRDA increased the number such teams and at the peak of the relief operations in early 1985 was directly involved in the operational of 17 feeding centres and shelters. This move into a directly operational role was questioned by member agencies who felt CRDA was putting too much of its energies into its own projects at the expense of its support to member agencies. In addition larger member agencies felt

³³ The financial authority of the Executive Committee and the various Sub-Committees has varied over time. During 1986 for instance the secretariat staff could authorise allocations up to a level of 30,000 Birr, allocations between 30,000 and 70,000 Birr could be approved by 3 members of the Executive Committee. Allocations above 70,000 Birr required the approval of the full Executive Committee.

Figure 9

Year in Which Member Agencies Were Established in Ethiopia



The impact of the famine relief programmes of 1973-4 and 1984-5 on the number of NGOs commencing work in the country is clearly visible.

The principal elements of CRDA's structure are the Secretariat, the General and Members' Meetings, the Executive Committee and Sub-Committees. The Secretariat had a total staff of 240 in 1992 of which 40 were based in the Head Office. As noted above the General and Members' Meetings are held monthly with the General Meetings serving an important information sharing role and being followed by closed Members' Meetings. The Members' Meetings represent the supreme governing body of CRDA and all decisions reached by the Executive Committee and the Sub-Committees are subject to approval by the Members' Meetings. The Executive Committee comprises 12 members elected from the official delegates to the Membership Meetings. The Executive Committee meets every two weeks to formulate policy and approve projects costing more than 100,000 Birr (approximately US\$50,000) which have previously been screened by the

that it was inappropriate for CRDA to undertake such directly operational activities which overlapped with their own and effectively competed with them for scarce donor resources. By 1986, CRDA had withdrawn from such operations and thereafter confined itself to its present range of activities. Duell and Dutcher (1987) see this episode and differences over the growth of CRDA's vehicle fleet as being a dispute between the interests of large agencies and small agencies over the proper role of a consortium.

6.2 The Emergency Relief Desk

The Emergency Relief Desk³⁴ was formed in 1981 by an agreement between the Sudan Council of Churches (SCC) and Norwegian Church Aid (NCA). Both had been providing assistance to Eritrea though to different organisations. The bulk of SCC's assistance which was funded by the Swedish Church Relief (SCR) was provided to the ERCS whilst NCA's relationship was principally with ERA. The objective was to establish an ecumenical instrument for coordinated humanitarian aid to areas under the control of the Fronts. Essentially SCC's was to provide a legal base in the Sudan for the ERD activities, whilst NCA's principal contribution was to provide an office, and from late 1982, the executive management of the ERD.

Other church affiliated agencies which had been providing support to ERA and REST were then approached to provide additional support for ERD's activities, though they did not begin to meet on a formal basis until 1984. Apart from SCC, NCA and the SCR this initial grouping consisted of Danchurch Aid (DCA), Dutch Interchurch Aid (DIA), Diakonisches Werk/Brot für die Welt (DDW/BFW), Christian Aid (CA), Lutheran World Relief (LWR) and Inter-Church Coordination Committee for Development Projects (ICCO). Apart from SCC all were affiliated to Protestant churches and LWR was the only American agency, all the others being Europe-based.

Given the denominational basis of this initial group it might have been expected that the World Council of Churches and the Lutheran World Federation would also have participated. However, the WCC did not want to be seen by African governments to be supporting the separatist agenda of the Eritreans and LWF was concerned that any involvement in the CBO would lead to reprisals by the Government against its sister church in Ethiopia - the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus.

³⁴ Unless otherwise stated all the information on the ERD is drawn from the study by Duffield and Prendergast (1993) to whom the author would like to express his thanks for their permission to use this material.

Duffield and Prendergast (1993) describe the ERD's role in the following terms:

Essentially, ERD was established as a logistical and monitoring organisation to receive requests from the Implementing Agencies [i.e. ERA, REST and ORA³⁵] for assistance, to verify needs through field visits, pass on requests to member agencies, when necessary arrange procurement in Sudan, clear shipments, keep regular accounts, receive distribution reports, provide members with information on developments in Eritrea and Tigray, and so on.

Between ERD's formation and mid-1983, the principal source of funding was NCA and SCR. However with the demise of the ELF and the halting of ERD support to the ERCS in late 1981, SCR's contributions declined sharply. By mid-1983 the worsening situation in Eritrea and Tigray was creating pressures for change in ERD and these in turn were exposing differences between the various agencies over such issues as the staffing level of ERD, member representation, the broadening of ERD's mandate to include rehabilitation and development assistance, the broadening of ERD's membership, and ERD's policy in relation to publicity and advocacy. An evaluation of ERD was carried by representatives of SCC, NCA, SCR, LWR and the World Council of Churches and the report submitted at the beginning of 1984. The report stimulated a debate that lasted throughout 1984 and much of 1985. Paradoxically this was a period of upheaval, not only in terms of the famine and the international community's response and the massive increase in the scale of ERD's operations, but also in terms of the political situation in Sudan where the Nimeri regime was overthrown in a coup in April 1985. Finally in October 1985 it was agreed to reestablish ERD with NCA as the Coordinating (i.e. lead) Agency, all of the initial group of NGOs being included on ERD's Board, and the formation of an Executive Committee composed of a representative from NCA, SCC and two other member agencies. Effectively SCC which had been providing a legal basis for ERD, became an ordinary member and this weakened ERD's legal basis in Sudan.

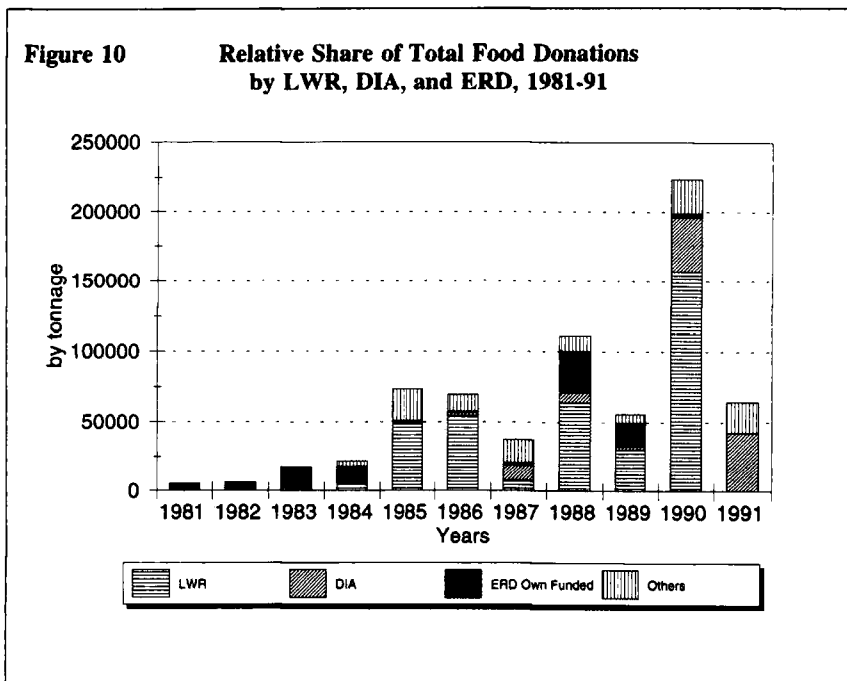
In 1986 the newly elected Government in Sudan announced its intention to control the activities of the NGO community which had grown dramatically during the relief operations of 1985-6. The principal mechanism of control was to be a registration process for all NGOs during 1988-9. The new Executive Secretary of ERD saw this as an opportunity to establish ERD as an autonomous, separately registered agency but this was resisted by the Executive Committee. It was eventually agreed by the members and with the Sudanese Government that ERD should become part of NCA's Sudan Programme with the status of the Board

³⁵ The Oromo Relief Association was established in 1979 as the relief association of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). Much of its assistance was provided to Oromo refugees in Sudan at Yabus near Demazin and the OLF did not develop the type of public welfare programmes as exemplified by the EPLF and TPLF.

changing to that of Advisory Group. The merger was effected in mid-1989 and resulted in the resignation of the Executive Secretary and subsequently several senior staff. Once again the timing of these difficulties was unfortunate, 1989 being the year of the TPLF taking control of virtually all of Tigray and February 1990 seeing the EPLF capture of Massawa and the start of the siege of Asmara. In 1990 ERA, REST and ORA were admitted as full members of the Advisory Group.

Duffield and Prendergast (1993) characterise the merger in the following terms:

In many respects, this merger represented the end of the ERD as a clandestine cross-border operation made necessary by the limitations of sovereignty. By 1989, its activities were public knowledge and the changing fortunes of the war would see ERD members begin to play an increasingly public role. The CBO had become so routinised that it could now be acknowledged as the responsibility of a single agency.



Following the EPLF victory in Asmara and the fall of the Derg in May 1991, ERD closed its Port Sudan office and transferred its main office from Khartoum to Asmara. With the end of the war many member agencies indicated their wish to

return to more traditional forms of NGO activity and re-establish traditional bilateral links with partner agencies and the government in Eritrea and Ethiopia. ERD was formally wound up in June 1993.

During its 11 year existence ERD delivered some 685,000 tonnes of food to areas controlled by the Fronts (see Table 8) of which 61% went to Eritrea, 37% to Tigray and 2% to Oromo areas. By far the largest contributions to these food deliveries came from LWR, the principal conduit for USAID assistance to the CBO which accounted for 54% of the total deliveries. DIA, the principal conduit for EC assistance to ERD, accounted for 16% of the total deliveries (much of this representing redirections following the capture of Massawa by the EPLF) and ERD's own contributions for 13% (see Figure 10). In addition, ERD and its members made a substantial contribution to REST and ERA's Internal Purchase Programme providing a total of US\$14.3 million to REST between 1983 and 1991 and US\$4.3 million to ERA during 1988-9, providing roughly 50,000 tonnes of food.

6.3 The Joint Relief Partnership

The Joint Relief Partnership was formed in late 1984 under the name of Churches Drought Action Africa/Ethiopia (CDAA/E), and in December 1985 this was changed to JRP. The principal agencies within JRP have been Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Lutheran World Federation (LWF), the Ethiopian Catholic Secretariat (ECS) and the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) and were later joined by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC). During 1985 and 1986 the JRP was responsible for distributing 428,000 tonnes of food (Solberg, 1991, p.177) which represented 22% of all relief food distributions channelled through Government controlled areas. At the height of those operations JRP reached 1.6 million beneficiaries through 80 feeding/distribution centres (USAID, 1987). During the response to the 1987-8 drought the JRP reached 1 million beneficiaries according to UN/EPPG reports. During 1990-1 after months of negotiations with the Government and TPLF the JRP ran a 'cross-line' operation into areas of northern Wollo and Tigray under the control of the TPLF/EPDM forces using food supplied by the Southern Line Operation from Assab. This operation reached a maximum of 1.2 million beneficiaries and between April 1990 and June 1991 distributed 153,000 tonnes of food.

The CDAA/E had its origins in an invitation made in February 1984 by LWF's Department of World Service in Geneva to CRS, the World Council of Churches and Caritas Internationalis to 'join together in seeking relief for the drought stricken

Table 8**ERD Food Donations to
Eritrea, Tigray and Oromo Areas, 1981-91***Total food deliveries (in metric tonnes)*

<i>Year</i>	<i>Eritrea</i>	<i>Tigray</i>	<i>Oromo</i>	<i>Total</i>
1981	4,662	162	0	4,824
1982	4,250	1,705	125	6,080
1983	12,589	4,636	217	17,442
1984	16,382	4,817	582	21,781
1985	55,944	16,900	190	73,034
1986	57,986	9,207	1,953	69,146
1987	26,124	8,646	2,320	37,090
1988	55,258	54,617	1,287	111,162
1989	28,515	24,478	2,541	55,534
1990	111,804	107,721	4,517	224,042
1991	40,699	21,317	2,450	64,466
Total	414,213	254,206	16,182	684,601

continent of Africa' (Solberg, 1991).³⁶ The result was the formation of a grouping called Churches' Drought Action for Africa (CDAA), the formation of a coordinating committee based in Geneva and the issuing of a joint Appeal in March 1984 for \$100 million to be channelled to local churches. Such collaboration between Protestant and Catholic agencies was not new, for instance during the Nigerian Civil War from 1968-70 Protestant and Catholic agencies had formed a consortium called Joint Church Action to airlift food into the Biafran Enclave.

Within Ethiopia operational links between CRS and the EECMY/LWF developed during mid-1984 as CRS was forced to borrow from EECMY/LWF's stocks to maintain its (limited) feeding programmes. By late September CRS staff in Ethiopia realised that a massive relief operation was imminent (the USAID Administrator made his 'hungry child knows no politics' announcement to PVOs on 19

³⁶ Most of the material covering the origins of CDAA and the development of the CDAA/JRP up to mid-1986 is summarised from Solberg's detailed and readable account.

September) and initiated discussions with potential partners in a collaborative effort. The initial group consisted of CRS, the Ethiopian Catholic Secretariat (ECS), the EECMY/LWF, CRDA and World Vision. The outline plan was for each agency to take responsibility for particular areas of the country where they had a strong presence and for CRS and LWF to take responsibility for procuring and receiving food aid from USAID and the EC respectively.

World Vision's involvement was the cause of some concern among some national church members of LWF and within the Catholic churches stemming from the perception that World Vision employed aggressive evangelical and fund-raising techniques. A press release by World Vision on 26 October prematurely announced the formation of the group and that World Vision, without the knowledge of the other agencies had secretly negotiated an agreement with the RRC for foreign air access to inaccessible areas. This behaviour confirmed the scepticism about World Vision's involvement and the other agencies agreed to restrict membership to the 'traditional partnership' thereby excluding World Vision. Subsequently CRDA withdrew from the group feeling it would be inappropriate for CRDA to remain as World Vision was a member of CRDA. The name given to the new consortium at the end of October was Church Drought Action Africa/Ethiopia (CDAA/E).

Between October and the end of January 1985 staff of the partner agencies worked together devising an operational plan and formalising the structure. 225,000 tonnes of food was requested from USAID on the consortium's behalf by CRS in November and a request for 60,000 tonnes was submitted to the EC by LWF. Distributions under the CDAA/E framework formally commenced in February, initially drawing on USAID food consigned to CRS's own emergency programme, but from April onwards using the food requested from USAID in November. Formal agreements between the partner agencies were signed at the beginning of February. In January 1985 it was agreed that the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC), a member of the World Council of Churches, should be included within the CDAA/E framework. However the EOC did not become a full partner in the consortium until March 1987.

The structure and roles adopted by the partner agencies were that ECS took responsibility for supervising CDAA/E operations in Eritrea, Tigray, Gamo Gofa and Kefa; CRS in Gondar, Hararge and Bale; and EECMY/LWF in Wollo, Shewa, Wollega, Illubabor and Sidamo. When the EOC became involved in the consortium it focused on selected distribution centres in Wollo, Tigray and Gondar. Within the areas of their responsibility member agencies were free to pass on the food to other agencies for use in their own emergency programmes once they had become affiliated to the CDAA/E and had agreed to the terms and conditions prescribed by USAID for the use of PL-480 Title II commodities. By mid-1985, 29 agencies had become affiliated to the CDAA/E. These included NCA, Concern, Jesuit Relief Services (JRS), the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) and the Society of International Missions (SIM).

In designing the consortium, care was taken to preserve the individual identities of the member agencies and their ongoing rehabilitation and development programmes. For instance LWF continued with its rehabilitation project in Eritrea begun in 1983 for fishermen around Massawa and the Dhalak islands. It also undertook relief activities in Eritrea in conjunction with EECMY within the CDAA/E framework. The relief activities came under the supervision of the ECS which was responsible for CDAA/E activities in the Province. As well as maintaining support to its existing programmes such as the provision of food to 70 orphanages around the country and support to the Missionaries of Charity, CRS also ran its own emergency programmes in Tigray, Eritrea, Sidamo and Shewa and in Eritrea undertook joint distributions with the ECS as part of the US Food for the North Initiative. In all CRS distributed 40,500 tonnes of USAID-supplied commodities in Eritrea, Tigray, Wollo, Sidamo and Shewa during 1985 which were administered separately from the CDAA/E.

A standard distribution method was adopted by the CDAA/E members, though the extent to which this was adopted by the affiliated agencies is unclear from the available literature. The distribution method was based upon that used in CRS's Nutrition Intervention Programmes (NIP) elsewhere in Africa and was targeted on families with children under the age of five. On admittance to the programme the children were weighed and measured and those found to be less than 80% of the international agreed weight-for-height standard were admitted to an on-site feeding programme. If the children under five did not fall below this standard they were provided with a monthly take-home 'family ration'.³⁷ Individuals judged to be destitute also received rations. To ensure the other members were familiar with the distribution method a manual was prepared by CRS and staff from other member agencies and training programmes were run for staff involved in distributing food under the CDAA/E framework. The JRP continued to use this distribution method more or less unchanged for several more years.

The development of the JRP cross-line operation in 1990 is of interest though the information available is limited. Communication between the TPLF and the ECS and CRS developed after the TPLF captured Makelle in early 1989. The ECS had been running a food distribution programme in the town for much of the 1980s and the staff remained in Makelle when it was captured. The point at which the idea of a cross-line operation to complement REST's CBO is not clear, but by late 1989 discussions with the TPLF and the Government for a programme using food imported through Massawa were bearing fruit. Quite why the Government should have altered its policy on cross-line operations at this juncture is not clear as REST had more to gain from it having substantially increased the population within its area of control and thus responsibility. Pressure from donor organisations for a

³⁷ The take-home ration consisted of 45.36 kg cereal, 4kg non-fat dried milk and 3.6 kg vegetable oil.

cross-line operation which would be cheaper than additional support to the CBO may have been a factor in encouraging the Government to participate in the lengthy process of negotiations. The capture of Massawa in February and the bombing of the port by the airforce forced the use of Assab as the port of entry and the establishment of the Southern Line Operation. The first convoy crossed into TPLF/EPDM areas in March 1990. As agreed during the negotiations special flags and stickers for the trucks were produced to clearly identify the trucks as JRP. Between then and the end of the year the programme distributed 26,500 tonnes in North Wollo and 70,750 tonnes in Tigray. Between January and June 1991 16,160 tonnes was distributed in North Wollo and 39,245 tonnes in Tigray (JRP, 1992).³⁸ According to information compiled by the UNEPPG the JRP distributed 33% of the total food aid distributions in Tigray during the first half of 1991, the CBO accounting for 53% and the Internal Purchase Programme for 14%.

6.4 The Tigray Transport and Agriculture Consortium

The idea of assisting REST increase its transport capacity was raised at a meeting of a group of UK NGOs including Oxfam, War on Want, Christian Aid and CAFOD in July 1983. The context for the discussion was the recognition that REST's lack of trucks represented a serious bottleneck to REST's relief efforts and in addition there was a need to coordinate the provision of rehabilitation assistance to Tigray. That ERD's mandate was confined to the provision of food aid, excluding transport and agricultural rehabilitation, was therefore an important factor in creation of a separate consortium. Towards the end of 1983 the TTAC was formed with War on Want as the lead agency. A clear separation between War on Want funds and those of the consortium was not maintained. In 1988 as a result of financial problems within War on Want the members of the consortium decided to remove the lead agency status from War on Want. Christian Aid and CAFOD jointly assumed the lead agency role on a temporary basis. In 1989 NOVIB assumed the role which it maintained until 1992 when the Secretariat assumed financial management responsibility and relocated from The Hague to Addis Ababa.

Membership of the TTAC remained roughly the same throughout the TTAC's existence, though some agencies left and were added at different stages. In 1991 the member agencies and their nationalities were CAFOD (UK), Christian Aid (UK), NOVIB (Netherlands), Norwegian People's Aid (Norway), Methodist Relief and Development Fund (UK), Oxfam-Canada, Oxfam-UK, REST (Ethiopia), Scottish Catholic International Aid (UK), Swiss Interchurch Aid (Switzerland),

³⁸ According to the JRP Bi-Annual Report for 1990-91 the monthly ration distributed consisted of 12.5 kg of cereals, 1 kg of supplementary food and 0.9 kg of vegetable oil. It is not clear when the JRP changed from the NIP standard family ration used in previous years.

Trócaire (Ireland). The early involvement of REST as a member differentiated TTAC's relationship with its principal 'partner' from that of ERD which maintained a certain distance from REST - only admitting REST and ERA as members in 1990. Members contributed annually towards the costs of the secretariat.

Information on the total value of assistance provided by the TTAC during its ten year existence is not readily available. A planning document prepared in 1992 (TTAC, 1992) summarises the consortium's achievements in the transport sector during the previous nine years as follows:

- i) *Provision of vehicles and spare parts:* Funds for the purchase of 302 lorries and 65 trailers have been provided. Spare parts were provided initially at 5% of the value of the vehicle provided but subsequently increased to 15% of value.
- ii) *Garage and workshop equipment:* Initial support was directed to improving the existing REST garage at Gedaref in eastern Sudan. Funds were then made available for the construction and equipping of a large modern garage complex comprising workshop, machine shop, fuel depot, stores, and offices. Construction was completed in June 1987 resulting in the increased efficiency of the REST fleet during the substantial increase in the volume of assistance channelled through the CBO during 1988. Other workshop equipment was also provided, including a full mobile workshop unit in 1990.
- iii) *Road construction equipment, labour costs and maintenance facilities:* As part of the CBO activities a total of 1,000 kilometres of roads were constructed in Tigray. Principally these roads linked Sefawa in eastern Sudan with Mai Humer in western Tigray and then on to the Highlands with one road branching south to Yetchilla and another north to Chilla. TTAC support to this construction programme and to road maintenance activities included: food and cash as payment to the skilled and unskilled labourers; the purchase of tractors, excavators and other equipment; fuel and running costs for the machinery.
- iv) *Training and consultancy advice:* In 1986/7 the TTAC funded two trainers specialising in logistics and garage management who worked in Gedaref for 6 months. In 1989/90 a 9 month machine shop course was provided at the Technical Training Centre in Makelle. In addition technical assistance was provided through a number of consultancy visits to Tigray and Sudan which as well providing advice also served as a means of monitoring programme implementation and providing reports to donors.

Assistance provided to the agriculture sector included support for terracing and agricultural extension programmes. The terracing programmes began in late 1985

and involved the provision of tools, training materials, measuring equipment and food and funds for use in food-for-work and cash-for-work activities. The Agricultural Extension Programme ran from 1988 onwards and involved the establishment of Seed Banks and a Bull-Servicing programme. In 1991 the programmes were consolidated with an Integrated Agricultural Programme and forestry and rural roads components were added. In 1991 the General Assembly approved an organisational support programme involving the provision of training and assistance with a new headquarters building for REST in Makelle.³⁹

³⁹ This information is drawn from the Coordinator's Report accompanying the TTAC Audited Accounts for 1991.

7. Conclusions

This case study has demonstrated that in a relief operation that was itself unprecedented in its scale, NGOs played a major role in the provision of relief and rehabilitation assistance in both the areas of northern Ethiopia and Eritrea that were 'controlled' by the Government and in areas 'controlled' by the EPLF and TPLF. On both sides of the conflict NGOs were propelled into an unusually prominent role as a result of political and diplomatic exigencies. On the Government side key bilateral donor organisations, particularly the US which was responsible for the provision of approximately 40% of the emergency food aid during the period, channelled most if not all their food aid through NGOs. For some donor organisations NGOs were used in preference to the RRC which was distrusted as a channel because of its involvement in the controversial Resettlement Programme. In areas 'controlled' by the Fronts NGOs were targeted by the Fronts as potential supporters of their welfare and relief programmes. The scale of this support increased substantially from 1984 onwards when Western donor organisations became persuaded of the humanitarian need in the areas that could not be reached from Government 'controlled' areas. Such donors were reluctant to be seen supporting the Fronts because of the direct contravention of Ethiopian sovereignty involved in providing assistance to areas under the control of insurgent movements, and therefore used NGOs as an intermediary between themselves and ERA and REST. Such low profile, even covert, humanitarian assistance may be seen as an early form of humanitarian intervention overriding national sovereignty and the forerunner of military interventions in support of humanitarian objectives in northern Iraq in 1991 and in Somalia the following year.

On the Government side NGOs appear to have been directly involved in the distribution of 60-70% of emergency food aid after 1984 and perhaps slightly over half of the non-food emergency assistance. Attempting to quantify the role of NGOs in relation to the areas controlled by the Fronts is more problematic as in these areas all relief distributions were undertaken by ERA and REST and the role of NGOs was often to simply transport food aid from Port Sudan to the border and undertake occasional monitoring visits into Eritrea and Tigray. Nevertheless, NGOs can claim to have 'handled' or been directly involved in the provision of a proportion probably exceeding 90% of all relief assistance distributed by ERA and REST.

The propulsion of NGOs into such a prominent role had important implications both for the relief operation and for NGOs themselves. From a situation in late 1984 where most emergency food aid was distributed by a single, centralised government agency, by the second half of 1985 the situation had been transformed to one where the most emergency food aid was being distributed by scores of

NGOs, often using food aid consigned directly to them by donor organisations. This transition occurred in a chaotic period when the scale of operations was overwhelming or at least straining the capacity of the agencies involved. Furthermore, the transition also required NGOs to move rapidly from their traditional concentration on intensive feeding and the provision of medical care to the provision of general rations which had previously been the clear responsibility of the RRC. During this complex and dynamic process Wollo, one of the areas most affected by the famine of 1984-5, was undersupplied. In short the transition process from the dominance of the RRC to the dominance of NGOs appears to have been largely responsible for impairing the effectiveness of the relief operation in a crucial area at a crucial time.

As implied above many NGOs were obliged to add responsibility for general ration distributions that were beyond their previous experience to their traditional smaller scale, less transport intensive activities of medical care and intensive feeding. In the context of the shortage of transport which lasted from late 1984 until the end of 1985 when the WTOE started operation the addition of responsibility for general ration distribution forced several NGOs to establish their own transport fleets. Such fleets represented a substantial capital investment and commitment.

The context in which NGOs operated in northern Ethiopia and Eritrea during the period was exceptionally demanding. Though frequently presented to the world as a drought emergency (including by NGOs who feared that the Western public's support for the relief effort would diminish if they were made aware of the other causes), the 1984-5 famine was the product of a complex emergency produced by the interplay of the rural policies of the Derg, the conflict with the Liberation Fronts in Eritrea and Tigray and drought. Information in this context was often unreliable or simply unavailable. Human rights abuses were widespread. The ability of relief assistance to encourage the support or at least acquiescence of the population in an area was recognised by the Derg and the Fronts and this made access to and the manipulation of relief assistance an important, arguably central, feature of the conflict.

Measured in terms of the volume of assistance provided, NGOs achieved much and undoubtedly contributed to the saving of thousands of lives and the preservation of many thousands more livelihoods. However, it could be argued that, despite their commitment to the interests of the affected populations, NGOs as a group did not rise to meet the challenge of the demands. Though church-affiliated non-operational NGOs provided assistance to and through partner agencies working on both sides of the conflict, very few of the operational agencies attempted to work on both sides and cannot therefore claim to have been neutral or impartial. The NGO community effectively divided itself into the Government side 'camp' and the CBO 'camp'. Communication between the two was limited and the positions adopted by the two camps towards each other for much of the period were often critical and self-righteous. Towards the end of the 1980s, however, the substantial involvement

of church-affiliated NGOs on both sides did lead to a greater sharing of information and the opening of channels which led to the Joint Relief Partnership's cross-line operation of 1990-91. These channels were also used to encourage peace negotiations.

Though some of the UN agencies based in Khartoum did have occasional contact with the Fronts on specific operational matters, the UN in Ethiopia, in particular the UNOEOE and its successor the UNEPPG, resolutely avoided contact with the Fronts and their relief arms. This stance was maintained until late 1990 when WFP began negotiations with the EPLF and the Government over the docking of a WFP chartered ship in Massawa. Thus for 5 or 6 years after at least two members of the Security Council had begun providing humanitarian assistance to areas 'controlled' by the Fronts and for long after it was apparent that the Fronts had effective control over substantial parts of the country the UN displayed a rigid respect for the sovereignty of the Government of Ethiopia. Its refusal to become involved in the CBO or to push for cross-line operations forced donors to rely entirely on NGOs and to a lesser extent the ICRC as the channels for their humanitarian assistance. Such respect for national sovereignty may have reflected the way in which the UN was shackled throughout the Cold War but in the Ethiopia case the UN appears to have been less imaginative in its approach to the humanitarian needs of internal conflicts than it was for instance in neighbouring South Sudan. Why this should have been so is not clear.

The ICRC, the traditional provider of humanitarian assistance in conflicts, made a significant contribution to the relief needs in northern Ethiopia and Eritrea during the period providing over 250,000 tonnes of food aid and relief supplies between 1979 and 1991. Approximately 80% of this material assistance was provided from distribution points in Government 'controlled' areas of the country, though a substantial proportion of this is likely to have reached into areas that were either contested or areas that were effectively under the control of the Fronts. Despite an early recognition of the need for assistance in areas 'controlled' by the EPLF and later the TPLF, the scale of the ICRC's activities was hampered by the Front's desire for all relief distributions to be undertaken through its community-based structures and their consequent refusal for the ICRC to operate its programmes independently of REST and ERA. It is possible that the prominent role of NGOs in the provision of relief assistance on both sides of the conflict, particularly NGOs with less rigid attitudes towards impartiality than the ICRC, weakened the ICRC's position in relation to the Fronts and the Government and therefore limited its overall role.

Several large and in many respects highly effective NGO consortia and coordination bodies operated during the period. On the Government side NGOs had the benefit of the CRDA which had its origins in the 1973-4 famine and provided not only a forum for the sharing of information but was able to access substantial material and cash assistance for use by member agencies and provide them with

valuable transport and procurement services. CRDA's access to and control over the allocation of resources provided by donor agencies and non-operational partner NGOs substantially empowered its coordination role. The JRP represented a particularly fruitful collaboration between international and Ethiopian church-affiliated agencies with the former providing *inter alia* access to very large tonnages of US and EC food aid and the latter providing legitimacy and extensive local networks. Such collaboration between LWF, the WCC and CRS and the Caritas network was not new, previous examples including JCA in Biafra in the late 1970s, but the consortium arrangement that developed in Ethiopia and Eritrea in late 1984 and early 1985 was especially effective. In 1989 it was able to exploit the channels afforded by the extensive international network of church-affiliated agencies, several of which were heavily involved in the CBO, to negotiate the first official cross-line operation to be implemented in Ethiopia during the period. The position of the Catholic, Evangelical and Orthodox churches must have been significantly empowered by their membership of the consortium. Whether this is in the long term interests of the substantial population of Eritrea and Ethiopia which is not Christian remains to be seen.

Three NGO consortia were established during the period for coordinating the mobilisation, provision and monitoring (but significantly not the distribution) of relief and rehabilitation assistance to the areas 'controlled' by the Fronts. The largest was ERD, a consortium of Protestant affiliated agencies which during the 11 years of its existence provided almost 750,000 tonnes of food aid (including food purchased through the Internal Purchase Programmes) to ERA and REST. The others were TTAC and EIAC which provided substantial transport and rehabilitation assistance to REST and ERA respectively, covering areas of activity and assistance that lay outside ERD's rather narrow mandate. Though a substantial number of agencies were members of these consortia, many agencies either remained outside the consortia or maintained bilateral links with ERA and REST whilst also supporting the activities of the consortia. Such a mix of relationships was encouraged by the Fronts which wanted to avoid monopolistic structures, and as a consequence limited and perhaps weakened the position of the consortia in their dealings with the Fronts.

With the overthrow of the Derg in 1991 and Eritrea's final attainment of Independence in 1993 the conditions which propelled NGOs into such a prominent role have substantially altered. The new Governments are keen to develop their bilateral relations with donor agencies and for their part NGOs have been abandoning the consortia approaches developed during the 1980s and are reverting to more conventional relationships with the Governments, donors and each other. These developments imply a role for NGOs substantially reduced from that during the 1980s. However given the role of NGOs in the provision of relief and rehabilitation assistance during the 1980s and the current strength of the NGO community in Ethiopia and Eritrea it is highly likely that NGOs will continue to make a substantial and unique contribution in the two countries.

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Appendix

Christian Relief and Development Association Membership in 1992

Member Organisations

ActionAid - Ethiopia
 Action Internationale Contre la Faim (AICF)
 Adventist Development and Relief Agency
 Africare
 Africa Rural Development of Ethiopia
 American Joint Distribution Committee
 Baptist General Conference Mission
 Baptist Mission of Ethiopia
 Biruh Tesfa Children's Village & School
 Canadian Physicians for Aid and Relief (CPAR)
 CARE-Ethiopia
 Catholic Relief Services (CRS)
 Christoffel Blinden Mission (CBM)
 Church of Christ
 Concern
 Emmanuel Baptist Church
 Ethiopian Catholic Secretariat
 Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus
 Ethiopian Gemini Trust
 Ethiopian National Association of the Blind
 Ethiopian Orthodox Church/DICAD
 Faith Mission
 Feed the Children International Ministries
 Finnish Mission
 Food for the Hungry International
 German Agro Action
 Handicap International in Ethiopia
 Hope Enterprises
 HOPE International Development Agency
 Inter Aide France
 Japan International Volunteer Centre (JVC)
 Jerusalem Memorial of Ethiopian Believers
 Jesuit Relief Service
 Kale Heywet Church Development Programme
 Kindernothilfe (Help for Children in Need)

Lay Volunteers International Association
 L'Espérance Children's Aid
 Lutheran World Federation/WS
 Médecins du Monde
 Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)/Belgium
 Mennonite Mission in Ethiopia
 Norwegian Church Aid
 Oxfam/UK
 Patmos International
 Pestalozzi Children's Foundation (SKIP)
 Redd Barna/Ethiopia
 Ryder Cheshire Foundation for the Relief of Suffering
 Save the Children Federation/USA
 Save the Children Fund/UK
 Secours Populaire Français
 Selam Children's Village
 Self Help
 Society of International Missionaries
 SOS Children's Village in Ethiopia
 St. Matthew's Church
 Swedish Philadelphia Church Mission
 Swedish Save the Children (Redd Barnen)
 Swiss Evangelical Nile Mission
 Terre des Hommes-Lausanne
 Terre des Hommes-Netherlands
 World Vision International/Ethiopia

Associate Member Organisations

African Village Academy
 African Development Aid Association
 Centre Internationale de Développement et de Recherche (CIDR)
 DAY
 Emmanuel Home for Destitute Children and Vocational Training
 Ethiopian Relief Organization (ERO)
 Family Development Project (FADEP)
 FARM-Africa
 GOAL-Ethiopia
 Good Shepherd Family Care Service
 Kind Hearts' Children's Village
 Moses Children's Home
 Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF/France)

Nazret Children's Center & Integrated Community Development (NACID)
Oxfam/America
Oromo Relief Association (ORA)
Relief Society of Tigray (REST)
Signum Vitae
SOS Enfants Ethiopie
SOS-Sahel International/UK
Truck Aid
Water Aid
Vision of Hope

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