

**Towards a History of Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in
Ethiopia since the 1960s**

by

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Key to Transliteration

I. Seven Sounds of the Ethiopian Alphabet are represented as follows:

1 st order	በ	Bä
2 nd order	ቡ	Bu
3 rd order	ቢ	Bi
4 th order	ባ	Ba
5 th order	ቤ	Bé
6 th order	ብ	Be
7 th order	ቦ	Bo

II. As to the sixth form in the above list, it must be emphasized that the “I” will be suffixed to the letter **if and only if** the letter is vocalized or stressed. Otherwise it will not be required at all

Example: ምግብ = Migib

 ቅምጥ = Qimit

III. Palatalized Sounds are represented as follows:

ሸ	=	Šä
ቸ	=	Čä
ኸ	=	Ñä
ዠ	=	Zhä
ጸ	=	Jä

IV. Gluttalized Sounds are represented as follow:

ቀ	=	Qä
ጠ	=	Ṭä
ጨ	=	Čä
ፀ	=	Şä

V. Gemination should always be indicated by doubling

Example: Kābbādā Tāsāmma

VI. General Examples

ጭጭት = Ćacūt

በዝባሻ = Bāzbazh

ፀዳለ = Šādalä

ቁጥር = Quṭir

ጅራፍ = Jiraf

እንድርያስ = Indryas

ቃኘው = Qaññäw

ሸሽት = Šišit

Glossary of Amharic Terms

<i>Addis Zämäin</i>	new era
<i>Ato</i>	title equivalent to Mr.
<i>Ballabat</i>	landlords, local hereditary ruler
<i>Berr</i>	Ethiopian Currency
<i>Däjjazmač</i>	commander of the gate. A rank of the nobility next to ras
<i>Derg</i>	literally committee. It is used in reference to the military government that ruled Ethiopia between 12 September 1974 and 28 may 1991
<i>Wäyzäro</i>	title of a married woman

Abstract

Ethiopia is one of the poorest countries in the world. Since the mid-twentieth century, it has been recurrently hit by severe droughts and famines. Attempts have been made since the 1960s by successive governments to tackle the problem of poverty and famine among the rural population which unfortunately did not yield a substantial breakthrough. The efforts of the government to ameliorate the conditions of Ethiopians were supported by non-state development actors, of which Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are currently the most visible part.

Concentrating on selected cases of national and international NGOs, this study examines the role played by NGOs in the fight against rural poverty since the 1960s and the changing circumstances in which they operated. More specifically, it explores how NGOs managed their difficult relationships with state actors and with each other with a view to advancing their cause. Thus, this study investigates the contradictions and collaborations NGOs have had with successive governments, international funding agencies, and project participants. In doing so, the varying interests as well as the activities of the different parties that have affected the discourses and outcomes of NGO's involvement in development activities are examined. These aspects are investigated in such a way that the broad spectrum of interests and parties involved in local and national development becomes clearly identifiable. These interests and the extent to which these parties acted to satisfy these interests witnessed change over time. Moreover, there has been an interplay between the past and the present in that the activities of NGOs in the 1980s has shaped the attitude of officials of the incumbent government. To comprehend the nature of relations that NGOs have established with the Ethiopian government since the early 1990s, it is important to study the context in which NGOs interacted with the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), then a rebel organization. To that end, this study has adopted a historical approach that draws attention to the internal dynamics of NGOs in Ethiopia and to the changing contexts in which they operated. This work would, thus, assist a variety of development actors including NGOs not only to consider current and future activities but also to reflect on their relationships in the past so that they may deal with each other more competently for a better result in achieving developmental goals.

Chapter One

Background to the Study

1.1. Problem Statement

Today it appears odd to think of “development” in the developing world without due regard to Non Governmental Organizations (from now on NGOs)¹. This prominence of NGOs has triggered a debate on the capability of NGOs to manage “development”. Many Western governments, multilateral organizations, church institutions, and other interested groups presently advance the view that NGOs are effective and efficient in meeting “development” goals, and are thus credible actors². These groups have in recent decades attributed to NGOs many virtues; it is widely held that in dealing with “development” problems, NGOs have the advantage of being independent, small scale, participatory and non-bureaucratic. In 1983, the President of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) summed up the positive attitudes that many Western governments and private institutions hold toward NGOs in the following way:

NGOs...have some very practical, as well as visionary virtues: they are human, personal and unbureaucratic; they are low in cost and high in dedication; they are flexible, fast and innovative; they can work effectively in fields and places where governments cannot operate; they have the knack for building partnerships and for getting aid to the grassroots, to those who need it most³.

The above list of organisations and their representatives have added to this list of attributed virtues by arguing that NGOs are likely to identify local needs and constraints much better than local governmental organizations⁴.

Favorable views of NGOs and their activities are subject to serious questions. To begin with, some of the qualities attributed to NGOs could be interpreted as weaknesses. Shaldon Annis argued that “small scale” could mean “insignificant”, “politically independent” could imply that NGOs were “powerless” or “disconnected” and “low cost” could mean that they were “underfinanced or poor quality”⁵. Moreover, some studies conducted on the performance of NGOs have shown that NGOs

¹ Tegegne Teka, *International Non-Governmental Organizations in Rural Development in Ethiopia: Rhetoric and Practice* (Peter Land, Frankfurt am Mein, Germany, 2000), P. 13

² Tegegne Teka, *International...*, P. 232

³ *Ibid*, P. 15

⁴ *Ibid*, P. 15

⁵ Shaldon Annis cited in John Farington et al (eds), *Reluctant Partners? Non-Governmental Organizations, the State and Sustainable Agricultural Development* (London, Routledge and Overseas Development Institute, 1993), P. 23

are not as effective as their supporters have argued. A study conducted on NGOs and innovation in Gambia concluded that although NGOs may be internally structured in such a way as to facilitate innovation, in fact they have performed more poorly with regard to innovation than their popular image would suggest⁶. Some scholars like Dieter Neubert argue that NGOs have remained ineffective as they lack a societal base and hence they depend heavily on foreign donors for their resources. This dependency on foreign donors weakens NGOs' bargaining position, making them dependent in terms of their agenda and increasing their vulnerability to manipulation by the same foreign donors⁷. In agreement with Neubert, Meyer has argued that NGOs operating in developing countries should be viewed either as independent entrepreneurial economic entities that produce international public goods or opportunistic pretenders⁸.

Certainly in poor countries like Ethiopia where the chance to mobilise resources locally has remained limited, the majority of NGOs depend on foreign donors for support. This has caused a number of pro-NGO scholars to be concerned that NGOs are, in fact, abandoning the poor people on whose behalf they operate. In a major contribution published in 1997, Hulme and Edwards asked "Are NGOs losing the special relationship with the poor, with radical ideas, and with alternatives to the orthodoxies of the rich and powerful, that they have claimed in the past"⁹.

However, NGO leaders or at least some of them may have the conviction to be true to their founding principles. As a response, donors may inevitably be bound to hold varying degrees of understanding of the need for NGOs to build and expand their own organizational integrity¹⁰. Moreover, donors often lack the consensus between them that would be necessary to impose a monolithic view¹¹. Donors consider also the reactions of states that NGOs relate to. The state was in retreat in many African countries by the end of the 1970s. These circumstances started making the actual and potential role of NGOs to be more visible¹². This, however, does not imply that NGOs were granted space to operate to realise their visions. Governments insist that the function of NGOs is to carry

⁶ Daniel Sahleyesus, *Non Governmental Organization in Ethiopia: Examining Relation between Local and International Groups* (Ontario, the Edwn Mellen Press, 2005), PP. 1-2

⁷ Dieter Neubert cited in Daniel Sahleyesus, *Non Governmental...*, P. 2

⁸ Carrie Meyer cited in Daniel Sahleyesus, *Non Governmental...*, P. P.2

⁹ David Hulme and Michael Edward quoted in Jim Igoe and Tim Kelsall, "Introduction: Between a Rock and a Hard Place" in Jim Igoe and Tim Kelsall (eds), *Between a Rock and a Hard Place: African NGOs, Donors and the State* (USA: Carolina Academic Press, 2005), P. 16

¹⁰ Daniel Sahleyesus, *Non Governmental Organization...*, P. 2

¹¹ Robert Pinkney, *NGOs, Africa and the Global Order* (Macmillar Publications Ltd, UK, 2009), P. 61

¹² Jim Igoe and Tim Kelsall, "Introduction: Between a Rock and a Hard Place" in Jim Igoe and Tim Kelsall (eds), *Between a Rock and a Hard Place: African NGOs, Donors and the State* (USA: Carolina Academic Press, 2005), P. 17

out state development policy. Therefore, NGOs should be directly “accountable” to African states. For a long time, most African governments were successful in coopting NGOs. This is related to global power politics and the ideologies and interests that sustained it. For much of the the Cold War years, the policies of Western countries were informed by the need to either weaken or frustrate the alignment of African governments with the Socialist Camp. As the policy did not intend to reduce the power of states, African leaders had the chance to exercise various degree of state power, often oppressive in nature against the civil society¹³.

NGO leaders saw that global politics has shifted since the late 1980s and that this has held important opportunities for improving conditions in their communities. Thus, they started to negotiate their space with governments through the intermediary of foreign donors. This marked a major difference from the nature of relationship that NGOs had developed prior to the early 1990s. In Ethiopia where this research was done, for instance, NGOs generally adhered to official governments’ policies during the imperial (1960s-1974) and the military (1974-1991) periods. This was the course that many NGOs in Africa took for a variety of reasons. NGOs seek access to the state to influence its policies as well as to avoid conflict or secure protection. As Fowler noted in his study of Kenyan NGOs “...it appears that more can be achieved by appearing to support, respect and improve prevailing systems, rather than openly agitating against them”¹⁴

NGO leaders may also work in line with government policies recognising the existence of asymmetrical power relation. Under this circumstance, NGO leaders may endorse the same state they want to reform. Concerning this, Morris Suzuki noted that “NGOs may pursue change, but they can maintain existing social and political systems”¹⁵. This attests to the existence of two courses that NGOs could take. These courses are what Michael Edward called “development imperatives” and “organisational imperatives”. “Developmental imperatives” refer to the degree to which NGOs analyse social concerns, articulate and pursue visions of their own and act accordingly to “empower” the public for independent action. Conversely, “organizational imperatives” are

¹³ Tony Vaux, *The Selfish Altruist: Relief Work in Famine and war* (USA and UK, Earthscan, 2001), P.48

¹⁴ Alan Fowler, “Non-Governmental Organisations and the Promotion of Democracy in Kenya” (Doctoral Dissertation, Sussex, 1994), 293

¹⁵ Morris Suzuki quoted in David Lewis and Naznee Kanji, *Non Governmental Organizations and Development* (Routledge Publishers, London and Nework, 2009), P.4

those whereby the leaderships of NGOs aspire for organizational survival and growth, income, publicity, prestige, and profile, and act for the attainment of these objectives¹⁶.

“Developmental imperatives” and “organizational imperatives” may not necessarily contradict each other. In some circumstances, they even support each other in that while vision requires organization, the latter requires vision to give it direction, meaning and purpose. NGOs have articulated and re-articulated development visions since the rise of their visibility in the 1960s. The global arena continues to provide NGOs with diverse models of development in line with what are considered to be the main social concerns in certain operational areas. NGOs pick models that suit them accordingly. An NGOs’ articulation of certain visions does not mean to say that they will act accordingly; further, a range of factors may cause NGOs to act in ways that come to influence their vision as originally articulated. These vision-altering factors had to do with changing broad socio-economic and political contexts as well as internal dynamics of NGOs themselves. Individuals at least initially holding key positions within NGOs responded to this changing contexts because they may well be driven not only by developmental visions but also by a number of organizational imperatives, which may come to pose serious questions as to whether such NGOs are visionary – or acting in accordance with their own stated visions – or not. In the context of this research, the accountability and transparency of NGOs has been so questioned. In 1996, *Addis Zemen*, a government-owned Ethiopian newspaper, reported on a perceived lack of transparency in the financial management of NGOs in the country¹⁷. Also, informants who worked for NGOs and interviewed for this study criticize what they describe as undesirable conduct of NGOs. For instance, an informant interviewed for this study narrated his own experience in the following way:

When we come to NGOs...everything has been built upon individuals’ interest. There are conditions created by unethical practices such as nepotism. Sometimes, they produce rigid laws and regulations. They issue their own laws apart from what the law of the Ethiopian Charity and Society Proclamation says. This does not create good working relations. That is the only reason for me to resign from my job¹⁸.

Graham Hancock, author of the influential book *Lords of Poverty*, tells similar stories about corruption within NGOs. He mentions that in 1985, Christian Aid, a British NGO working in Ethiopia, was accused of not having sent a single cent to Ethiopia out of \$18 million raised for

¹⁶ Mikael Edwards, “How NGOs Made a Difference? From Manchester to Birmingham with an Elephant in the Room” in Bebbington, A. J., Hickey, J and Mitlin, D. (eds), *Can NGOs make a Difference? The Challenges of Development Alternative* (London, ZED Books, 2008), P. 48, P. 48

¹⁷ “Ethiopian NGOs” *Addis Zemen*, Teqmt 25, 1996 (November 5, 2003), P.2

¹⁸ Informant, Ato Fekadu Bezuneh

famine relief by the UN and the US State Department¹⁹. It is also worth noting that, according to a 2004 survey, many of the ordinary citizens of Ethiopia chiefly associate NGOs with the personal benefit of the individuals that work for them, such as good salaries and luxury cars, much more than with the good services they might provide²⁰.

Corruption and malpractice stem from a crisis of accountability that refers to “...the process through which an organisation makes a commitment to respond to and balance the needs of its diverse stakeholders in its decision making processes and activities, and delivers against this commitment”²¹. Accountability framework incorporates accountability for what? Accountability for whom? Accountability how? As Ebrahim argued, the practice of NGO accountability put accent on “upward” and “external” accountability to donors and governments while “downward” accountability to poor people remain poor. He also argues that NGOs and donors have mainly concentrated on short term “functional” accountability responses instead of longer term “strategic” processes necessary for lasting social and political change²². Ebrahim’s arguments run the risk of simplifying efforts underway within NGOs to account themselves to and reflect aspirations of their constituencies since the mid 1990s. NGOs in Ethiopia, for instance, imposed in 1999 self regulation by signing a “Code of Conduct” with a view to improving their performance and accountability²³. The signing of the “Code of Conduct” was a deliberate act to deprive the government of the long-standing excuse to intervene in the internal affairs of NGOs. That deliberate act together with the influence of donors that forced the government to allow a degree of public space shifted NGOs to be advocate of change. However, in 2009 the government issued the Ethiopian Charity and Society Proclamation that, according to NGOs, restricts their active engagement in advocacy rather than makes them answerable to their stakeholders²⁴. The action of the Ethiopian government to restrict NGOs may be linked with state centralism rooted in the political history of the country. However, state has been unable to offer services to citizens and this has opened space in which NGO operated. Moreover, the triumph of the neo-liberal order worldwide caused NGOs to become active

¹⁹ Graham Hancock, *Lords of Poverty: The Power, Prestige, and Corruption of the International Aid Business* (London, 1989), P.6

²⁰ Horn Consultant, “Constituency Building: Diagnostic Survey of Ethiopian NGOs Prepared for Oxfam GB and CRDA” (Addis Ababa, November 2003), P.35

²¹ Hammer M et al, 2008 Global Accountability Report (One World Trust, London, 2008), P. 10

²² Ebrahim A cited in Solomon Belete. “NGO Accountability: The Case of “Charities” in Ethiopia” (MA thesis. Kimmage Development Study Center, Deblin: Development Studies, 2011), P. 22

²³ CRDA, “Minutes of the Executive Committee” (June 30th, 1998)

²⁴ Solomon Belete. “NGO Accountability: The Case of “Charities” in Ethiopia” (MA thesis. Kimmage Development Study Center, Deblin: Development Studies, 2011), P. 22

participants in policy-making. NGO leaders who saw the global and national systems shifting from the early 1990s started to negotiate their space with governments. NGOs have thus operated in plural organisational contexts, and the interactions with donors, governments, and project participants offered NGOs challenges and opportunities. This research has positioned NGOs in Ethiopia within a more political or historical setting and explained how they relate to state, donors, project participants. However, due to methodological infeasibility, this research has selected Agri-Service Ethiopia (ASE), Oxfam GB (Oxfam) and the Consortium of Christian Relief and Development Association (CCRDA) and addresses their shifting fortune that stem from multi-dimensional relationships with the Ethiopian governments, their donors and project participants. In order to address the research problem and contribute to scholarly debate, the following basic research questions have been developed:

- ✓ What were the origins of the selected NGOs' visions of "development", and to what extent have these visions been influenced by or negotiated with dominant actors such as the state and donors?
- ✓ How have changing historical contexts, including regime change, shaped the selected NGOs' space of action?
- ✓ What are the landmark events in the history of the expansion and contraction of ASE, Oxfam GB and CCRDA?
- ✓ To what extent have the NGOs' leadership responded to internal and external stimuli by adapting the structure of their organizations?
- ✓ What has been the impact of the selected NGOs on the social groups they have worked for, mediated by outside influences and negotiations?

1.2. Research Methodology

1.2.1. NGOs as a methodological challenge

In the second half of the twentieth century, the number of NGOs operating in Ethiopia, as in other African countries, grew exponentially. During the Ethiopian famine of 1973–1974 and throughout the 1970s, about twenty-five NGOs were operative in the country²⁵, and this number doubled in response to the outbreak of the Ethiopian famine of the 1980s²⁶. By the mid-1990s, the number of registered NGOs in Ethiopia reached 350²⁷. Recent statistics show that the Ethiopian Charity and

²⁵ Desalegn Rahmato, "Civil Society Organizations in Ethiopia" in Bahru Zewde and Siegfried Pauswang (eds), *Ethiopia: The Challenges of Democracy from Below* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikaninstitutet and Addis Ababa: Forum for Social Studies, 2002), P. 106

²⁶ ASE, "ASE's 30th Anniversary", *Agri-Drum* (Addis Ababa, February 2000), P.8

²⁷ Desalegn Rahmato, "Civil Society...", P. 106

Society Agency, an official coordinating body, registered 2776 humanitarian and development NGOs currently in operation²⁸.

NGOs are too diverse to be considered as a homogenous set of organisations as they uphold varied ideologies and represent different interest groups²⁹. In Ethiopia, the origins and ideologies of those NGOs present may usefully be categorised as either national or international; secular or religious³⁰.

The diversity of NGOs poses profound methodological challenges to their study. Diverse attributes of NGOs might influence their activities and the failure to consider this might limit out understanding about NGOs. A historical approach could overcome the methodological challenge that diversity poses. A historical approach recognises diverse attributes and draws attention to the influences of these diverse attributes on decisions that NGO leaders passed in response to changing contexts. NGOs have operated in changing contexts and, in the process, will have experienced changes themselves, as they continue to pursue their stated aims. As a result, throughout their activism, NGOs may be characterised as much by continuity as change, and these changes and continuities constitute a distinctive phenomenon. To put it in context, Ethiopia has passed through profound socio-economic and political changes since the 1960s, born out of regime changes. The country has witnessed three ideologically different forms of governments come and go since the 1960s. Some of the key moments during this time that shaped NGOs in Ethiopia were the “development” rhetoric and practice that has started since the 1960s, the social revolution that erupted in 1974, the famine of the 1970s and 1980s, the “New Economic Policy” of 1990, the prevalence of relative liberalism that followed regime change in May 1991 and the Parliamentary elections of 2005 and the violence that followed them.

Certainly, not all NGOs operative have experienced the same span of events as the NGOs present each began their activities at different times to one another, depending on the date of their establishment (especially national NGOs) and / or their initial entry (international NGOs) into the country. NGOs that started to operate in the 1960s and early 1970s have taken a strong interest to engage with other actors and to draw meanings out of their intentions, interpretations and strategies. They have then acted accordingly, based on their own meanings. It is thus clear that drawing

²⁸ The Ethiopian Charity and Society Agency, “All CHSs Report: Ordered by Registration Number” (Addis Ababa, nd)

²⁹ Tegegne Teka, Tegegne Teka, *International...*, P. 5

³⁰ ASE, “ASE’s 30th...”, P.8-9

attention to and investigating intentions, interpretations and strategies of actors of which NGOs are a part is key research strategy to understand NGOs and their activities. This is because, as Daniel Sahleyesus stated, the orientation and intentions of actors may play a much more decisive role than they do in organizations whose dynamics are primarily determined by the logic of the market as in the business sector or the logic of hierarchy as in the state³¹.

1.2.2. Sample size and selection criteria

There are only a limited number of studies on NGOs in Ethiopia, and most of them focus on the activities of the organisations. In doing so, they focus on a wide number of NGOs within a particular sector³². This makes it so difficult to study individual NGOs in detail that certain aspects of NGO behavior such as internal decision-making is left out. Moreover, many of the studies relied heavily on interview method. Although it is important to address some aspects of NGOs, interview method alone would not sufficiently address key issues related to NGOs. This is particularly true with regard to historical studies. There has been serious staff turnover within NGOs, making the interview method insufficient. This signifies the need to access and analyse a variety of primary and secondary documents stored in the archives of NGOs themselves, governmental organisations that have had the mandate to supervise NGOs and academic institutes.

This research has selected only a handful of NGOs for analytical purpose as it is methodological infeasible to consider all NGOs operative in the country. The profiles of NGOs in Ethiopia were reviewed to select relevant subjects for addressing the research questions. To this end, various sources of preliminary data on NGOs' profiles were referred to, including the directories of NGOs compiled by CCRDA in 1988 and 2011³³. Similarly, a recent list, with profiles, of NGOs compiled by the Ethiopian Charity and Society Agency was also referred to³⁴. The researcher also brought his own previous research experience into NGOs to bear as an aid to understanding the profiles in context.

The data sources were considered within the framework of the list of criteria that had been developed earlier in order to select NGOs as subjects. The first criterion was each NGO's central

³¹ Daniel Sahleyesus, *Non Governmental Organization...*, P. 2

³² Dessalegn, Rahmato, "Civil Society Organizations in Ethiopia" in Bahru Zewde and Siegfried Pausewang (eds), *Ethiopia: The Challenges of Democracy from Below* (Uppsala, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2003), P. 106

³³ CRDA, "Christian Relief and Development Directory of Members" (January 1988); CCRDA, "Members' Directory" (2011)

³⁴ The Ethiopian Charity and Society Agency, "All CHS Report..."

activity. Most of the NGOs in Ethiopia offered humanitarian assistance in time of crisis from the late nineteenth century; their orientation towards long term “development” only began in the 1990s³⁵. Generally, these NGOs distanced themselves from getting involved in major events that occurred in the country. Conversely, some NGOs that emerged in the 1960s and early 1970s showed a great deal of interest in “development” in that they had their visions and developed strategies to translate them into action. Inevitably, these NGOs had varying degree of convergence and divergence of views and relationships with those of the state and donors. In investigating these views and relationships in a plural context, this research therefore found their orientation towards “development” to be more suitable as a major criterion by which to select and consider NGOs as subjects.

Diversity in terms of origin (foreign or national) and orientation (ecumenical, secular or a combination of both) was also considered as a major criterion. Due regard to diversity is essential in order to investigate the range of dynamics that have informed the ideas and actions of NGOs.

The availability of relevant sources, the access granted the researcher to particular NGOs through personal contacts, and the willingness of NGOs’ officials and employees to cooperate with the researcher were also factors considered in selecting case studies.

The researcher selected a range of as many as ten NGOs, of different origin, to approach in advance. The then NGOs that the researcher initially considered are shown in Table 1 below. The table also shows those NGOs that were finally included in the study, and gives the reasons why others were not.

³⁵ CRDA, “30th Years of Service: Marching Together for a Better Future” (Addis Ababa, 2003), P.5

Table 1 Sampling of research subjects considered and selected

No	NGO Category	NGOs Consulted for willingness	Country of Origin	The beginning of Intervention in Ethiopia	Remark
1	International Secular	Oxfam Great Britain	UK	1964	Selected
		Welthungerhilfe (“German Agro Action”)	Germany	1972	Ignored the request to cooperate
		Lay Volunteers International Association	Italy	1972	
		Menschen für Menschen (“People for People”)	Austria	1981	
2	Lutheran World Federation	Sweden-Switzerland	1965		The data was found to be insufficient to support the main argument and it is ignored
		World Vision International	USA	1972	Ignored the request to cooperate
3	National-secular	Agri-Service Ethiopia	Ethiopia	1969	Selected
		Organisation for Rehabilitation and Development in Amhara	Ethiopia	1984	Ignored the request to cooperate
		Relief Society of Tigray	Ethiopia	1977	Ignored the request to cooperate
4	Consortium mingling a set of dynamics	Consortium of Christian Relief and Development Association	Ethiopia	1973	Selected

Seven of the ten NGOs (see the table above) turned down the request for cooperation. Conversely, the officials of the three NGOs that did become the subjects of this research were extremely willing to cooperate and assisted the researcher whenever needed. Officials of ASE, CCRDA granted research permits as soon as they were approached. Oxfam granted the research permit later than ASE and CCRDA. The reason for this was that the person who granted the permit wanted an assurance that the research did not have an objective other than the academic one.

Happily, the preliminary data collected in the early stages of the first fieldwork confirmed that these three NGOs, in fact, fulfilled the criteria developed for the study. The data generated from the three NGOs showed that all three were oriented towards long term development. Towards the end of 1997, Oxfam looked back at its own activities in relation to that of its British counterpart, Save the Children Fund (SCF). In its own assessment, Oxfam stated that “SCF are great at emergencies and poor at development in Ethiopia. We are better in some ways the other ways round”³⁶. Likewise, the “development” orientation of ASE had been attested to by a number of independent observers. In a letter addressed in 1990 to Nederlandse Organisatie voor Internationale Bijstand (NOVIB), a Holland-based NGO that funded ASE, a certain consultant discussed the activities of ASE in the following way:

ASE is clearly almost the only agency in Ethiopia which is operating development work without having a relief element to their programmes...Although some agencies are operating what they describe as development programme[s], they are in fact either simply doing relief, as in food for work, or doing very small single sector programmes like Oxfam with water in Boditi area³⁷.

Though it had its origins in the famine that occurred in Ethiopia in 1973, CCRDA first de-emphasised and then abandoned the mandate of relief operation and shifted to assisting NGO members to improve the lives of the poor³⁸.

Not only their mutual orientation towards “development” but also the volume of available sources, and the ease with which the researcher was able to gain access to these sources made ASE, CCRDA and Oxfam to be the subjects of this study.

After the matter of subjects for case study was settled, the next task was to identify interview partners from NGOs and competent governmental organisations. Locating certain individuals for

³⁶ “Fax Memo” from Harriet Dodd to John Rowley (December 19, 1997)

³⁷ “ASE: “Some comments” (1990), P.1

³⁸ Informants, *Ato Mitiku Abebe*

interview was often a difficult task due to staff turnover. Staff turnover was so rapid in these NGOs that some of the individuals who had been interviewed had resigned by the time the researcher returned to perform the second bout of fieldwork. However, some individuals working at NGOs and government offices *were* successfully identified and interviewed. The number of respondents and their organisations are shown in the tables below:

Table 2 Category A Informants (Insiders of the concerned NGOs)

No	Category	NGOs	Data collection Methods	Number of Respondents	Remark
1	International Secular	Oxfam	Interview	3	Composition include top management body and middle rank professionals who worked at the Head quarter and programme offices
2	National Secular	ASE	Interview	7	
3	Consortium	CCRDA	Interview	7	

Table 3 Category B Informants (outside the concerned NGOs)

No	Respondent Category	Data collection Methods	Number of Respondents	Remark
1	NGOs employees outside of the selected NGOs	Interview	3	They discussed general issues that influence NGOs
2	Government Bodies	Interview	2	They took the perspective of the government on NGOs
		Focus Group Discussion	3	
		Observation	By the researcher	

1.2.3. Sources

The study relied on a wide range of sources to answer the research questions. These sources included different kinds of archives, the written and oral reminiscences and reflections of individuals, and documentary films and photos.

1.2.4. Data collection

In investigating the above-mentioned sources, various methods of data collection were employed. These were archive research; consultation of primary and secondary materials, interviews, focus group discussion, informal talk and observation. Excepting focus group discussion, these methods were employed during both periods of fieldwork that the researcher carried out in Ethiopia. The first fieldwork lasted two and half months, from the first week of October 2012 to mid-December 2012. The intention was to make an assessment of the actual situation in the field. During this period, the researcher identified the case studies and familiarised himself with key informants. Moreover, some preliminary oral and written sources were reviewed. The second fieldwork lasted five and half months, from early July 2013 to mid-December 2013. Most of the data on which the main arguments of this study depend were collected during the second fieldwork.

1.2.4.1. Archival research and its challenges

Relevant archival materials existed in greater volume than the researcher had initially thought. NGOs themselves, competent governmental organisations and academic institutions have kept such archives. During fieldwork, the researcher was able to visit and review archival collections kept by ASE, CCRDA, Oxfam and the Lutheran World Federation in Addis Ababa in Ethiopia. The researcher also visited and reviewed archives at the National Library and Archive Agency of the Ministry of Culture and Sport, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and at the Library and Archives of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies of Addis Ababa University.

Though they contain valuable sources, the archives of the NGOs were not found to have been kept in a proper, orderly condition. The archives were found to be scattered here and there, rather, and the NGOs did not have anything like a comprehensive record of their contents. Access to archives was not initially easy, as NGO officials were reluctant to allow an “outsider” access to files whose contents they did not know themselves. This was particularly true for the archives of Oxfam and CCRDA. Moreover, there were no responsible employees assigned to take care of the files. Due to this, the researcher was told initially to pick the information he wanted from the sources locked in the rooms. Later, the development of personal relationships with those individuals temporarily assigned to the task facilitated access to archives. By the end, the researcher reached the stage where he held the key of the archival rooms himself, and so could enter them whenever he wanted. NGO officials wanted to censor the content of the data. In one case, the sources were censored by

a man in charge and the researcher was refused permission to take out historical photos for publication. The reason given was that the persons pictured in the photos might accuse the organisation of allowing the researcher to publish their photos without their consent. Gradually, however, the man in charge stopped checking the contents of the materials, as he found all the reading tiresome.

The problems encountered at the archives of various governmental offices were quite different from those at the NGOs'. The first problem arose from a lack of proper coordination of the NGOs in the country, as the responsibility to manage NGOs and coordinate their activities has shifted from one government office to another. Indeed, a senior official in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs opined to the researcher that "NGOs are the most mismanaged sector in the country"³⁹. As a result, the researcher had to seek out various government offices that were, or had been, responsible for various aspects of coordinating NGOs. The first of these was the former Ministry of Interior, which had held the mandate to register NGOs. As the Ministry has not existed since the ministerial reorganisation of the mid-1990s, however, its archives are held by the National Library and Archive Agency. Unfortunately, the Agency did not finalise cataloguing the files before handing them over, thus the archives are not currently available to researchers. The Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC) took over the mandate to coordinate NGO activities in 1974. Its archive had previously been accessible to researchers, however in 2005/2006 the main archive centre was demolished following the restructuring of the RRC into Disaster Risk Management and the Food Security Sector. The archives are now locked in a room and gaining access to them was impossible. Repeated requests to access them were turned down. Likewise, the Ministry of Justice took over the mandate to register NGOs in 1996 until the establishment of the Ethiopian Charity and Society Agency (ECSA) in 2009, as per Proclamation No. 621, at which point the Ministry handed over all the files to the Agency. The Agency has begun the process of cataloguing the files, however it has not yet developed any regulations with regard to access to the files or how they may or may not be used for research purposes. It was surprising to hear, from officials of the Agency, that each NGO concerned must be asked for permission by the researchers in order to access their Agency files. Thanks to the kind cooperation of certain officials and employees of the Agency, only files related to the case studies were presented to the researcher. However, many of these files turned out to be

³⁹ Ato Wolde Hawariat Gebre Selassie

identical to those maintained by the NGOs themselves, which the researcher had already consulted. Moreover, it was absolutely forbidden to copy any of the files.

In order to offset the problems encountered with regard to government archives, the researcher extended his fieldwork in the archives of NGOs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the library and archives of the National Library and Archive Agency, and the Institute of Ethiopian Studies of Addis Ababa University, collecting voluminous data in so doing. The review of these documents has generated data on diverse issues. The data from NGOs' Memorandum of Associations and By-laws together with data from reminiscences and publications on the backgrounds of NGOs and their founders set the basis for reconstructing the origins of the NGOs and their changing visions. Reports and speeches recorded in the form of minutes were also reviewed, and data related to the organisational structure, management and history of the NGOs was collected. Minutes kept by the NGOs themselves were reviewed carefully to better understand the internal set-up of NGOs, their relations with donors and the state and with project participants. Letters and reports were also reviewed with a view to understanding the way NGOs have been perceived by the three successive forms of government in Ethiopia. Data on the nature of the relationships between NGOs and local communities was collected from need assessment reports, strategic plans, field reports, minutes and research works carried out by NGOs themselves. Also, field reports were reviewed for information on the progress of projects and programme implementation, and the responses of the local people to the projects or programmes.

1.2.4.2. Interviews

The context in which the fieldworks were carried out influenced the type and nature of interview method. An important contextual factor is that the Ethiopian Charity and Society Proclamation No 621, 2009 put a strain on relations between the Ethiopian government and NGOs. As a result, a number of informants delivered a great deal of data on the consequence of the proclamation on the NGO sector. Informants that discussed the proclamation from the position of the government, however, gave a different interpretation. They rather emphasised the importance of the proclamation in dealing with NGOs who, by their assessment, had been driven by external neo-liberal forces. Some informants also discussed the specific context in which the law was put in place. This last point was what interview partners from NGOs wanted to discuss in most depth, however, they were held back from delivering as much data as they would otherwise have liked to for fear of the prevailing political circumstances. Informants that narrated the perspectives of NGOs

spoke at length of what they described as the very humble lives the founders and early leaders of NGOs had led, as well as the ideals driving them. These data, together with the data collected through review of written primary and secondary archival materials, came to form the basis by which an attempt to reconstruct the factors driving the founders was undertaken.

However, informants were Ethiopians with limited knowledge about the experiences of the founders outside of Ethiopia. Informants also talked a lot about the “success” they have registered in carrying out “development”.

1.2.4.3. Focus Group Discussions

Forums where informants would discuss issues related to the research were organised. Based on these, a focus group discussion was organised and held in Addis Ababa, in which officials from the public relations office of the ECSA participated. They delivered data on the genesis of the 2009 proclamation, by which the Agency was established, and the overall perspective of the government with regard to the accountability and operational transparency of NGOs. This data collection technique therefore initially appeared promising, and attempts were made to organise similar forums in which NGO employees would participate, whether exclusively or together with government officials. However, this did not work out for two main reasons. Firstly, as a result of the general uncertainty and lack of trust that prevailed between NGOs and the government, NGO employees were not willing to discuss their positions in the presence of government officials. Secondly, as in the case of personal interviews, above, NGO employees found it difficult to allot any time for these group discussions.

1.2.4.4. Informal Talks

An important issue that emerged during the course of personal interview with informants, especially those from NGOs, was that they would not discuss certain issues, as much as they may have wanted to, for fear that such discussion might lead to actual violence. It was surprising to discover that they feared not only government repression, but also their own employers, who, they felt might terminate their contract if they were to say something critical about their organisations. In light of such concerns, the researcher opted to follow up with interview partners and focus group participants informally, in settings where they felt safe to talk further. Data was thus generated on both conflicts within NGOs, and government-NGO relations.

1.2.4.5. Forms of Observation

The researcher spent eight months in total undertaking the two fieldworks, observing many issues of relevance to the study. In the early phase of the fieldworks, each of the archivists assigned to assist the researcher assumed that the period of archive work would be brief, thus instructing the researcher to take notes and promptly return materials. The researcher, however, anticipated that much more time would be needed to complete this phase of the research. Sourcing and processing materials was also time-consuming, and the archivists themselves noted the difficulties involved in locating relevant sources. After the sources were found, the next step was to photocopy them, but even this required negotiation with those officials responsible. Gaining permission to copy and scan sources was dependent on the discretion and cooperation of particular individuals. So, for example, while CCRDA staff worked according to the principle that researchers were free to use the data as long as it was to be used for academic purposes only, and the fact that there was a commercial copy shop within the CCRDA compound meant that scanning and copying of the documents started easily enough, soon a person who was in charge of managing documents announced rather arbitrarily that “many” documents had now copied, and there should be a limit to it. In the course of the negotiation that followed, the researcher realised that their intervention was driven by an underlying motivation, exemplifying the typically high regard in which current employees and leaders of NGOs seem to hold to the founders of the NGO they work for. This person, for instance, stated that she and the entire staff of CCRDA were grateful for the “achievements” of the founders of the organisation, and that the archival “treasures” they had left behind were testimonies to these “achievements”. Accordingly, these testimonies were to be protected, and it was feared that moving them might cause damage. This conviction was strongest within ASE, whose leadership and employees seem truly fascinated by the dedication with which the founders had built up the organisation, and the ideals which, they argued, still inform their own current actions.

Eventually, after senior officials and friends intervened, the archivist of CCRDA withdrew her objection. The researcher’s personal friendship with officials and employees of ASE was an aid to gaining access to ASE archival materials, including historical documents and photos that long-serving individuals of the organisations had collected themselves, which they copied for the researcher with their own, ASE photocopy machine. Perhaps most importantly, permission for copying and scanning archival sources outside of the organisation was granted. As with ASE and

CCRDA, staff and officials of Oxfam are generally proud of what Oxfam has done. As a result, they welcomed this research, and, after the relevant archival materials were identified, the researcher asked for permission to copy them. All the materials were copied and returned to the organisation on time.

The archivists of governmental organisations were quite inflexible. Use of the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Archive and Library Agency and Institute of Ethiopian Studies is subject to heavy restrictions. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has a regulation stating that while researchers may review its archives and take notes of their own, they are not allowed to copy them. The same is true with the Archive and Library of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies. The situation at the National Archive and Library Agency was better than at those two organisations, allowing researchers to copy up to ten pages per each of their folders. The problem with this was that the files in a folder sometimes discuss a sequence of events related to the same issue, thus running for far more than ten pages.

1.2.5. Data Analysis

The data collected were analysed qualitatively. The analysis is made in a way that emphasise contexts in which NGOs have operated. Detailed descriptions of contexts drawn from the sources are put in a chronological framework to show changes and continuity of the topic under discussion.

1.3. Theoretical Perspective

The 1990s saw a growth of writing about development NGOs in developing countries. Many conferences have also been convened as a result of the new spotlight focused on NGOs⁴⁰.

Much of this work tended to present a fairly positive picture of the work NGOs were doing, and was often written by people directly involved with, or sympathetic to, the world of NGOs⁴¹. Many of the studies attempted to address same research questions such as what type of support, what type of project and what type of organization will achieve particular development objectives⁴². This implies that NGOs have been associated more with development practice than

⁴⁰ Eve Sandberg, "Introduction" in Eve Sandberg (ed), *The Changing Politics of Non Governmental Organizations and African States* (Westport, Connecticut, London, 1994), P. 1

⁴¹ David Lewis and Naznee Kanji, *Non Governmental...*, P.47

⁴² *Ibid*, P. 53

with development theory⁴³. Neubert called this the “limitation of perspectives in development policy”⁴⁴. As Neubert pointed out further “The problem of the current research on NGOs is the orientation towards implementation theory and questions of effectiveness and efficiency”⁴⁵.

In an effort to have broader perspective, it is essential to view NGOs in relation to the state, donors and project participants. In Ethiopia where this research was conducted, there has been a century long interaction between NGOs on the one hand and the state, donors and project participants on the other hand. These interactions need to be understood with reference to the broad trends in the evolution of thinking about development. NGOs and a variety of actors have shared development vision. Many NGOs in Ethiopia have aspired for the alleviation of poverty. Others have envisaged a situation where communities enjoy the full spectrum of human rights. These visions are not too distant from those of various forms of government in Ethiopia during this period, although official discourses on human rights are only a recent phenomenon. However, there have always been clear differences between governmental actors and NGOs with regard to their strategic preferences on how to achieve “development”.

The actor-oriented perspective formulated by Norman Long offered useful analytical principles to understand the interface between NGOs and a variety of actors over a range of issues such as resources, meaning, institutional legitimacy and control. On the basis of data obtained from some African and Latin American countries, Norman Long asserted that all forms of intervention necessarily enter the existing life worlds of the individuals and social groups concerned, and in this way these are mediated and transformed by these same actors and structures⁴⁶.

NGO intervention models, policy measures or rhetoric are locked in an arena in which they establish a multi-level relationship with a variety of actors. On the one side, NGOs deal with Western donors, on whom they depend for support; on the other they must deal with government officials who feel threatened by their activities and who may be competing with them for legitimacy and/or funding. Jim Igoe and Tim Kelsall have described the difficult situation of NGOs in Africa as being that of “between a rock and hard place”⁴⁷.

⁴³ Ibid, P. 47

⁴⁴ Ibid, P. 53

⁴⁵ Neubert, Dieter. “A Development...”, P.53

⁴⁶ Norman Long, *Development Sociology: Actor Perspectives* (London: Routledge Chapman & Hall, 2001), P. 13

⁴⁷ Jim Igoe and Tim Kelsall, “Introduction...”, P. 9

Actor-oriented theory offers useful concepts as to whether NGOs process information and devise strategies in dealing with local actors and outside institutions and personnel or they just submit to the interest of dominant actors. One of these concepts is agency. Agency attributes to the individual actor “knowledgeability” and “capability” to attempt to solve problems, learn how to intervene in the flow of social events around them, and, to a degree, monitor their own actions, observing how others react to their behaviours and taking note of the various contingent circumstances⁴⁸.

Many NGOs in Africa, whether headquartered abroad or within Africa, have significant allies and resources for influencing African citizens and bargaining with African states. Their economic clout alone makes NGOs important actors in African States⁴⁹. However, the agency of NGOs hardly exists in a vacuum; its presence/absence is measured in the characters of other actors. As such, the agency of NGOs is created, transferred and lost depending on the contexts in which they operate⁵⁰

1.4. The social, economic and political context of Ethiopia

Ethiopia is a country located in the Horn of Africa with an area of 1,127,127 sq.km⁵¹. With nearly 100 million inhabitants, Ethiopia is the second most populous country in Africa next to Nigeria⁵². The population of Ethiopia grew at an average annual rate of 2.6% between 1994 and 2007 and 45% of the population is under age 15⁵³. The population of Ethiopia is composed of eighty diverse ethno-linguistic groups that live in diverse agro-ecological zones⁵⁴.

1.4.1. Socio-economic context

NGOs have operated in Ethiopia to deal with poverty that resulted from poor economic performance and lack of development. Ethiopia is one of the poorest countries in the world, with a per capita annual income of about US\$ 380 in 2010 despite high GDP growth (10.8 percent and

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, P. 13

⁴⁹ Eve Sandberg, “Introduction...”, P. 9

⁵⁰ Sarah Michael, *Understanding Development: The Absence of Power among Local NGOs in Africa* (Indiana University Press, 2004), P. 20

⁵¹ Abera Abebe, “Institutional Features of Participatory Development: The Case of Agri-Service Ethiopia, Enebse Branch Office” (MA in Management of Agro-ecology and Social Change, Wageningen University, April 2004), P. 1

⁵² CIA, “The World Factbook” (January 18, 2015), P. 1

⁵³ Central Statistical Agency cited in “NGO Accountability: The Case of “Charities” in Ethiopia” (MA in Development Studies, Kimmage Development Study Center, Deblin, 2011), P. 3

⁵⁴ David Torton, “Introduction” in David Turton, *Ethnic Federalism: Experience from Ethiopia in Comparative Perspective* (Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa, 2006), P. 18

8.8 percent in 2008 and 2009 respectively). In 2005 39% and 77.5% of the population was living below \$ 1.25 a day and \$ 2 a day respectively; i.e. below the international poverty line⁵⁵.

The Ethiopian economy is based on agriculture. Agriculture constitutes 43% of GDP in the year 2007/08 while the service sector and industry account for 44% and 13% of the GDP respectively⁵⁶. Partly because of the recognition that agriculture is the mainstay of the economy and partly due to the commitment to assist poor house-holders in rural areas, NGOs prioritised agricultural and rural development. For instance, in 2000 alone, NGOs allocated 47% of their resources on agricultural and rural development programmes in Ethiopia⁵⁷.

In fact, it is not only NGOs but also successive governments of Ethiopia have worked hard on agriculture since the 1960s to increase productivity. However, there has never been major breakthrough in this regard. Conversely, crop production fluctuates widely according to rainfall patterns, leaving the country subject to recurrent and often catastrophic drought and famine. Present-day Ethiopia, largely identified with widespread food insecurity, was self-sufficient and classified as a net exporter of food grains up to the late 1950s. The annual export of grains to the world market rose to the extent of 150,000 metric tons in 1947/48. On the strength of its natural resources, many used to refer to the country as a potential bread basket for the sub-region⁵⁸. However, especially since the early 1960s, food production has failed to meet even domestic demand and the country has relied on food aid and commercial imports. In any one year, more than 4 million people on average face food shortages and need relief assistance. The nutritional status of the population has continued to deteriorate. General malnutrition increased from about 37% in 1983 to a high of 47% in 1992. The average per capita calorie consumption rate is below the recommended minimum⁵⁹.

⁵⁵ Ibid, P. 4

⁵⁶ Ibid, P. 4

⁵⁷ ASE, "ASE's 30th Anniversary", *Agri-Drum* (Addis Ababa, February 2000), P.11

⁵⁸ Daniel Sahleyesus, *Non Governmental Organization...*, PP. 59

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. 59

1.4.2. Political context

Excepting the brief period of Italian Occupation (1935–1941), Ethiopia has remained independent from colonialism. Thus, the Ethiopian idea of statehood is not derived from colonialism as may be the case in some African countries⁶⁰.

Home-grown statehood had profound implication on NGOs as the state took controlling NGOs as part of the effort to defend the Ethiopian sovereignty. Moreover, political centralism that remained a hallmark of the Ethiopian state system has left little room in which NGOs have operated. Monarchs and their entourage rigidly controlled the political and economic structures of the state until the Ethiopian revolution of 1974. Junior military and non-commissioned officers usurped power in the midst of the Revolution of 1974. The *Derg* accepted socialism as the only ideology to shape state and society⁶¹.

Ethiopia's long history as a monarchy and its subjugation by a brutal and doctrinaire Marxist regime left most structures of civil society stunted. Indeed, by the time the military government collapsed in May 1991, virtually civil society entities had been coopted or barred from meaningful existence by the regime⁶².

The 1990s saw the resurgence of civil society entities of which NGOs have been the most visible part. The Ethiopia People Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) defeated the military government in May 1991 and ratified a new constitution in 1994 and created nine and two city administrations that shared a great deal of legislative, executive and judiciary powers with the central government. By any measurement, these progresses visible since 1991 laid the foundations that made NGOs vibrant and active in the nation's political and economic revitalisation. This was particularly true with national NGOs⁶³.

However, not only changes but also continuities marked the political development since 1990s. The process in which elections were held as well as the results was always controversial. This was particularly true in 2005 elections when opposition parties performed very well, but they accused

⁶⁰ John W. Harbison, *The Ethiopian Transformation: The Quest for Post-Imperial State* (Westview Press, Boulder and London, 1988), P. 52

⁶¹ Andargachew Tiruneh, *The Ethiopian Revolution, 1974-1987: A Transformation from an Aristocratic to a Totalitarian Autocracy* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), P. 85

⁶² Jeffrey Clark, "Civil Society, NGOs, and Development in Ethiopia: A Snapshot View" (2000), P. 1

⁶³ Ibid, P. 1

the ruling party for vote rigging. In the violence that followed, close to 200 people were killed, thousands were injured and put in jail. A series of measures that the government introduced thereafter are indicative of reversal of progresses that the country witnessed since 1991. One of these measures is the promulgation of the Ethiopian Charity and Society Proclamation. NGOs state that this proclamation restricts their advocacy to bring about meaningful change in the political and economic life of the people⁶⁴.

1.5. Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs): An Overview

The magnitude of poverty in countries like Ethiopia has been beyond the capacity of state actors. This has caused the exestablishment of non-state actors that could complement efforts of state actors. Non-state actors could be numerous in a country and are different in objectives and the forms of organisation. NGOs have their own characteristics that distinguish them from other forms of organisations. This sub-section presents an operational definition of NGO. It also overviews the emergency of NGOs in both developed and developing countries. This is to show that the emergences of NGOs in Ethiopia that will be discussed in this work are not a unique phenomena.

1.5.1. Defining NGO

Providing one standard definition of NGOs is difficult. This is due mainly to the diversity of their purpose, interests and ideologies⁶⁵. Scholars have defined NGOs differently depending on which issues they have wanted to address. Broadly speaking, they have defined NGOs in line with two major approaches. The first, which could be called a general approach, assumes that there exist two power groups in any society, namely governmental and non-governmental organisations. Thus, any organisation that exists outside of the government could be referred to as a non-governmental organisation. For instance, M. Padron has defined NGOs as all organisations located outside the state's domain and the structure of government⁶⁶.

Defining NGOs as organisations existing outside the government has a major limitation in that the universe of non-governmental activities is so wide, large and all-inclusive. In fact, any form of

⁶⁴ Solomon Belete. "NGO Accountability: The Case of "Charities" in Ethiopia" (MA thesis. Kimmage Development Study Center, Deblin: Development Studies, 2011), P. 22

⁶⁵ Tegegne Teka, *International Non-Governmental Organizations in Rural Development in Ethiopia: Rhetoric and Practice* (Peter Land, Frankfurt am Mein, Germany, 2000), P. 5

⁶⁶ M. Padron cited in Kassahun Berhanu, "The Role of in Bahru Zewde and Siegfried Pauswang (eds), *Ethiopia: The Challenges of Democracy from Below* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikaninstitute and Addis Ababa: Forum for Social Studies, 2002), P. 120

contact or relationship with the wider society and/or environment outside of the state, whether in developed or developing countries, could be called a non-governmental activity⁶⁷.

There is also an established concept, that of the *third sector*, that assists in the effort to define NGOs. Third sector defines NGOs as distinct not only from the state, but also from businesses and corporations whose major orientations and activities are predicated on profit motives⁶⁸. But describing NGOs as third sector still does not tell us what they are. This is because the third sector, otherwise called *civil society*, also involves a variety of organisations other than NGOs. The nature and purpose of these organisations differs significantly from place to place. Dessalegn Rahmato tells us that four broad groups of organisations form civil society in Ethiopia. These are NGOs and advocacy organisations (rights-based institutions, institutions committed to the protection of the environment, wildlife, etc.), interest group institutions (professional societies, trade unions, cooperatives, chambers of commerce, employers associations) and cultural societies (including community organisations)⁶⁹. Dessalegn tells us further that these organisations are autonomous, voluntary organisations that provide services to individuals and articulate public interests. As intermediaries between the state on the one hand and the society at large on the other, civil society institutions bring forward demands on the state for goods and services, promote the broad interest of their constituencies and help extend the social space between the state and the individuals⁷⁰. When mentioned in this study, civil society organisations mean organisations with these attributes. However, one of the limitations of the classification of civil society organisations is that it does not define with precision each of these groups of organisations that together constitute civil society organisations.

As civil society organisations, NGOs have their own unique features. Based upon these features, we might discern an operational definition of NGO. One of these distinctions is the characteristics of beneficiaries. According to Freyold, NGOs are those organisations whose goods and services are targeted at non-members. This distinguishes NGOs from a number of other civil society organisations (e.g., the interest group institutions mentioned above, self-help organisations)⁷¹. As

⁶⁷ Tegegne Teka, *International...*, P. 5

⁶⁸ Kassahun Berhanu, "The Role of...", P.120

⁶⁹ Desalegn Rahmato, "Civil Society Organizations in Ethiopia" in Bahru Zewde and Siegfried Pauswang (eds), *Ethiopia: The Challenges of Democracy from Below* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet and Addis Ababa: Forum for Social Studies, 2002), P. 106

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, P. 104

⁷¹ Freyold cited in Daniel Sahleyesus, *Non Governmental Organization in Ethiopia: Examining Relation between Local and International Groups* (Ontario, the Edwn Mellen Press, 2005), PP. 2

shown by Dessalegn, their field of action, such as that of human rights, can serve to distinguish between NGOs and other civil society organisations such as advocacy organisations. It is not, however, entirely useful in this study to use fields of action as a criteria by which to divide organisations into NGOs and rights groups. As Dieter Neubert tells us (staying with the example of advocacy), NGOs might also advocate non-organisational member's interests⁷². Indeed, as will be shown in this study, over the last few decades, NGOs in Ethiopia have shifted from delivering goods and services to acting as advocates for the public interest. Ultimately, this researcher has settled upon using the term NGOs here as defined by Sarah Michael in her study of NGOs in Africa. Michael states that NGOs are:

Development actors existing apart from government and corporations, operating on non-profit or not for profit basis with an emphasis on voluntarism, and pursuing a mandate of providing development services, undertaking communal development work or advocating on development issues⁷³.

Even assuming a minimum criterion of voluntariness, non-profit, charitable status, different organisations with different objectives and purposes could fall into the NGO category. In order to encourage the study of NGOs, a number of useful attempts have been made by a number of scholars to further classify NGOs based on a number of criteria. Bratton has suggested classifying NGOs according to a number of attributes such as size (big, medium, small); origin (national, international); behaviour pattern (regime-conforming, regime-critical); central activity (relief/welfare, development); and orientation (secular, ecumenical)⁷⁴. In this study, a distinction is made whenever necessary between NGOs of different origins, specifically between national and international NGOs and between religious and secular NGOs.

1.5.2. The NGO Phenomenon

Charity, as the social response to vulnerable groups, has existed across millennia. NGOs are organisations that assist vulnerable groups to tackle their problems. Thus, NGOs as we know them today are modern forms of charity. The institution of NGOs is regularly presented as something new, active in the 1960s, linked to a new post-colonial order and rejecting older structures of power.

⁷² Neubert Dieter, "A Development Utopia Revisited: Non-Governmental Organizations in Africa", *Sociologus* 47 (1997), P. 55

⁷³ Sarah Michael, *Understanding Development: The Absence of Power among Local NGOs in Africa* (Indiana University Press, 2004), P. 3

⁷⁴ Michael Bratton cited in Kassahun Berhanu, "The Role of...", P.120

In reality, however, the NGO sector active in the 1960s forms part of a long continuum of the relief of poverty that stretches back into history⁷⁵.

NGOs showed up first in the developed world. Tegegne Teka identifies three phases of NGO formation that are important to observe here. The first phase was marked by the emergence of NGOs driven by religious and ethical factors in various regions of the developed countries prior to the outbreak of the First World War. Their religious and ethical philosophy was mainly Christianity, and as such they stood for, among other things, the equality of human beings in the eyes of God; helping the weak, the needy and the disabled, etc. This attitude has been a constant amongst faith-based NGOs and it still exists today⁷⁶.

Mikael Jennings argues that the origins of modern NGOs lie in the 19th century, starting with the formation of the World Alliance of the Young Men's Christian Association, established in 1855. Jennings also states that the Japanese Society of Gratitude, established in 1929, may be considered a forerunner of the NGO movement. In the following decades, the formation of NGOs became an accepted tradition in different parts of the developed world. By the end of the 19th century, about 130 international NGOs existed⁷⁷.

The second phase of NGO formation was what Tegegne has called the era of relief, welfare and philanthropic organisations that came into being in the context of the First and Second World Wars. Especially, the immediate aftermath of the Second World War was a landmark in this regard. The war's massive dislocation and destruction transcended the reparative capacities of states, leading to a rapid proliferation of NGOs whose stated goal was to extend support and assistance to people in need⁷⁸. Christian Aid and Oxfam GB were founded in the early 1940s to provide relief, initially for Greece, and expanded their mandates in the aftermath of the war. Care was founded in 1946 to send food aid to post-war Europe. World Vision was established during the Korean War of the early 1950s. Concern had its roots in the Nigerian Civil War⁷⁹.

For most modern NGOs the shift from relief of suffering to "developmental" objectives occurred in the 1960s. This marked the beginning of the third phase of NGO formation. John F. Kennedy's

⁷⁵ Mikael Jennings, *Surrogates of the State: NGOs, Development and Ujamaa in Tanzania* (USA, Kmarian Press 2008), P. 23

⁷⁶ Tegegne Teka, *International...* P.9

⁷⁷ Mikael Jennings, *Surrogates...* P. 23

⁷⁸ Kassahun Berhanu, "The Role of...", P.120; Tegegne Teka, *International...* P.9

⁷⁹ Mikael Jennings, *Surrogates...* P. 24

announcement of the first Decade of Development signalled a transformation of the voluntary aid industry. During the 1960s and 1970s NGOs in the developed world gradually turned away from their origins in relief (in rhetoric and intention, if not always in practice) towards a focus on development⁸⁰. Concurrently, the place of advocacy and campaigning began to assume greater importance. The NGO sector was influenced by not only broad trends in international development and the realities in the field, but also by the social movements that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s: liberation theology and conscientisation in Latin America, Ujjama and Pan Africanism in Africa, the peace and civil rights movements in North America, and the growth of radical institutions, publications and politics in Europe⁸¹.

1.5.3. NGOs in Africa

NGOs emerged in Africa in the context of struggles for independence. In the next decade, these nascent NGOs suffered the impact of various types of undemocratic regime,⁸² while at the same time, many African countries saw a drop off in public services that came with the withdrawal of colonial powers, whereafter the capacity of African states to provide services was greatly diminished in the period that followed independence. In many of the newly independent countries, expatriate Church organisations and missionary societies tried to bridge the gap by running schools, hospitals, vocational training centres, etc. To this end, they made use of their connections with philanthropic organisations and foundations in developed countries⁸³.

The coming of international NGOs to work in Africa provided some local initiatives with the incentive to establish NGOs by imitation. The adoption of multiparty democracy in the 1990s, the downsizing of the role of the state together with economic liberalisation and privatisation policies also prepared the ground for the rapid growth of NGOs, both in number and function. Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) that the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund imposed on African countries as part of the liberalisation programme resulted in the retrenchment of a huge labour force. In addition, social and economic stress was experienced by many families. The number of national NGOs increased following these events. This increase occurred partly to

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, P. 24

⁸¹ *Ibid*, P. 26

⁸² Daniel Sahleyesus, *Non Governmental Organization...*, PP. 42

⁸³ Kassahun Berhanu, "The Role of...", P.121

deal with these negative consequences of programmes such as SAP and partly due to the growing interest of donor organisations to work with national NGOs⁸⁴.

1.6. Conclusions

NGOs should be taken as actors in that they could influence a variety of actors as much as they are influenced by the same actors. Ideals of NGOs and their translations into actions have been shaped by their interactions with donors, national governments, and project participants. This evolving interaction that offered NGOs challenges and opportunities may be studied from a historical perspective. A historical approach has been deemed best suited to addressing the methodological challenge that arises from the diversity that exists between NGOs, and to contributing to the theoretical formulation about NGOs. In practical terms, it has been determined that this should be accomplished using a case study approach that allows for intensive investigation of inter-agency relationships between NGOs and diverse actors.

The evolving interaction between NGOs and a variety of actors have had political and socio-economic contexts. Ethiopia is now one of the poorest countries in the world in that its per capita income has been one of the lowest in the world, and its agriculture that remains the backbone of the economy has been dependent on rain. As a result, the country has remained vulnerable to periodic food insecurity.

The vulnerability of the economy and the recognition of state actors that they alone could not tackle poverty set the context in which NGOs in Ethiopia, as elsewhere in the developing countries, emerged and operated. However, centralisation of power that defines the Ethiopian politics cast its long shadow on the performance of NGOs. Thus, centralisation of power is to be taken into account while we try to understand articulation of NGO development visions as well as translating them into actions. In doing so, “knowledgeability” and “capability” are to be attributed not only to dominant actors such as the state but also to NGOs. Actor-oriented theory of Norman Long offers useful analytical principles in understanding the agency of actors (in this case NGOs) even in the most difficult circumstances such as that of centralization of power and authority.

⁸⁴ Daniel Sahleyesus, *Non Governmental Organization...*, PP. 42

Chapter Two

Actors and their aspirations

2.1. Introduction

Ethiopia is a textbook example of structural poverty that has left the majority of the people in abject misery, hunger and backwardness. This has been particularly pronounced since the mid-twentieth century as the country has been recurrently hit by severe droughts and famines. A number of actors have been involved in attempts to tackle the problem, and efforts to ameliorate the conditions of Ethiopians have been underway since the 1960s. Governments have been the major actors in the fight against poverty, while NGOs have been the second most, operating alongside with government organisations (GOs). As a result, there have been continuous interactions between NGOs and GOs. Donors are the third most significant actors, influencing both GOs and NGOs. This chapter first identifies actors involved in the activities of NGOs in Ethiopia and discusses the interplay between aspirations of NGOs on the one hand and that of other actors on the other.

2.2. State actors

NGOs define themselves in relation to the governments they interact with. This is because, as Clark remarked, NGOs can, “....oppose, complement or reform the state but they can’t avoid it”⁸⁵. This implies that state has influence on NGOs and their activities and thus it is identified as one of the actors NGOs interplay with. However, state is not a monolithic and cohesive entity and can’t easily be understood without referring to the roles and activities of a broader set of non-state actors⁸⁶. Thus, state actors must be understood to have been, effectively, more than one actor, given regime change, the plurality of governmental organisations and the diverse programme that NGOs managed.

The governmental organisations in Ethiopia that interact with NGOs have existed since the end of the Italian Occupation in 1941. Decree No 3, 1943 designated the types of governmental organisation that would supervise the registration and activities of NGOs. The decree established a committee comprising the Ministries of Education and Fine Arts, Interior and Foreign Affairs were represented⁸⁷.

⁸⁵ Clark quoted in David Lewis and Naznee Kanji, *Non Governmental Organizations and Development* (Routledge Publishers, London and Nework, 2009), P.4

⁸⁶ David Lewis and Naznee Kanji, *Non Governmental....*, P.4

⁸⁷ Alemayehu Alemneh, “A Review and Evaluation of the Work of Foreign Missions in Ethiopia in the Twentieth Century” (BA thesis, HSIU, Faculty of Theology, 1970), P. 7

The institutional arrangement reflects two major concerns of the imperial government. Firstly, the inclusion of the Ministry of Education into the committee mentioned above to supervise NGOs running educational programmes shows that education was a top priority of the country. Secondly, the representation of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Interior attests to the fact that security was accorded primacy over and above any other consideration. Although the way in which it evolved is not clear, what is today the International Organisations Affairs Directorate General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs began to investigate the backgrounds of NGOs before they were certified to start operation in Ethiopia⁸⁸. Via its missions abroad, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs undertook to investigate the histories of those international NGOs seeking to operate in Ethiopia and presented its recommendations to the Ministry of Interior, which based its decisions on whether or not to register particular NGOs on these recommendations. The Ministry of Interior used to register and oversee all forms of associations in the country as part of its broader mandate, and not just NGOs alone. The Ministry of Interior then had jurisdiction over the entire administration and security of Ethiopia. The Ministry's Public Security Department held this earliest mandate to register and oversee the activities of those numerous associations in the country, including NGOs. In 1960, this mandate was given specific legal support through the promulgation of the *Civil Code of the Imperial of Ethiopia*⁸⁹.

During the imperial regime that came to an end in 1974, the organisations created to register NGOs and oversee their activities were under the influence of the monarch and the Ministry of Pen, to both of whom NGOs would turn whenever they had unsettled questions, according to the hierarchy within the imperial state system⁹⁰.

Certainly, the earliest institutional arrangement outlined above was not responsive to the diverse programmes NGOs were running in the country. As time went on, a number of governmental organisations emerged to work with NGOs. Four different phases can be discerned. During the first phase that started in the early 1960s, the Ministry of Agriculture became chief actor interacting with NGOs. The Ministry was set up in 1943⁹¹. Although charged with a great number of functions,

⁸⁸ Dessalegn et al, "Oxfam Country Review: Ethiopia" (June 1990), P. 16

⁸⁹ Kassahun Berhanu, "The Role of in Bahru Zewde and Siegfried Pauswang (eds), *Ethiopia: The Challenges of Democracy from Below* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikaninstitutet and Addis Ababa: Forum for Social Studies, 2002), P. 127

⁹⁰ Letter from the Baptist Fellowship Mission to the Ministry of Education (November 16, 1959), the National Archive and Library Agency, File No 1.2.35.01

⁹¹ John M. Cohen and Peter H. Koehn, *Ethiopian Provincial and Municipal Government: Imperial Patterns and Post Revolutionary Changes* (Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan, 1980), P. 226

it was initially provided with limited resources and staff. In the 1950s and 1960s, however, it expanded, in part due to aid received from bilateral and multilateral aid organisations which helped train research and manpower⁹².

Decentralising reforms in 1963 and 1964 led to the establishment of regional agricultural offices, each headed by a provincial officer who supervised the ministry's activities in the area and its field agents. Occasionally, there were disputes with regard to the control of agricultural activities in the provinces. While the Ministry of Agriculture claimed to have mandate over technical matters, the provincial administrators argued that they had control over overall activities in their respective territories. In these disputes, provincial administrators used to win the argument, largely because they were closely tied with the Ministry of Interior, the most powerful ministry during the imperial period. This contestation gave NGOs the chance to choose which of the Ministry of Agriculture and the provincial organisations they wanted to work with⁹³.

During the second phase that coincided with the emergence of the famine in 1973-74, the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC) was set up and came to exercise a great deal of authority over NGOs. One of the reasons for this was that RRC was led by a prominent Ethiopian, *Ato* Shimeles Adugna who successively won the confidence of the monarch and his prime minister during the imperial period, and that of heads of state such as General Aman Andom Michael, General Teferi Benti and Megistu Haile Mariam during the military period⁹⁴. This gave the RRC the opportunity to influence the Public Security Department of the Ministry of Interior. The RRC used to issue travel permits to NGOs' representatives; these were sensitive during the entire period of the military government, due to ongoing wars in the country⁹⁵.

From the early 1980s on, the central government had a quarrel with the RRC blaming its distribution of free food rations for encouraging people to be dependent. This marked the beginning of the interference of the central government into the affairs of the RRC⁹⁶. From this point onwards, the RRC no longer remained a semi-autonomous professional organisation as it was staffed by key

⁹² *Ibid*, P. 226

⁹³ *Ibid*, , P. 226

⁹⁴ Shimeles Adugna, *Derqeina Rehben Lämäquaquam Yätädärägu Teretoch*, in Amharic (Addis Ababa, Forum for Social Studies, 2008), P. 5; "Report by Malcolm Harper of Oxfam on a Visit to Ogaden: 26th July-2nd August, 1975" (nd), P. 4

⁹⁵ "Report by Malcolm Harper of Oxfam on a Visit to Ogaden: 26th July-2nd August, 1975" (nd), P. 4

⁹⁶ Haile Mariam Seyfu, *Yetedfya Zämänat: Rehabna Čhänäfär, Yätarik Mastawša*, in Amharic (Addis Ababa, 2005EC), P. 51

party officials, and became one of the major actors leading controversial projects such as forced relocation of people from food-insecure areas to areas that could produce agricultural surplus⁹⁷.

During the third phase, a number of technical governmental organisations came to play an active role in NGOs' activities. The RRC lacked the technical expertise to oversee diverse NGO activities. As a result, the Ministries of Agriculture, Health and the National Water Resources Commission came to play an active part in their areas of competence, especially after the famine that occurred in 1983-84. However, NGOs continued to deal with the RRC, both formally and informally, as it was still one of the signatories to the project agreements that NGOs and technical organisations had to sign⁹⁸.

The competition between technical governmental organisations on the one hand, and the RRC on the other was quite visible during and after the 1980s famine period. Many governmental organisations wanted to become counterparts to NGOs, not really because of their concern to tackle rural poverty but rather due to their bureaucratic and organisational self-interest in growth and expansion. Those governmental organisations whose mandates included working on rural development tasks were entangled with complicated claims by legal and jurisdictional powers, their rivalries and conflicts over NGOs⁹⁹. The conflict between the Ministry of Agriculture and the RRC over who had the right to oversee developmental NGOs in rural areas was the most pronounced of all. An evaluation conducted at the beginning of 1990 noted the rivalry between the RRC and the Ministry of Agriculture and foresaw that "One area which will continue to hinder development activity for NGOs is the continuing rivalry between government bureaucracy, particularly that between MoA [Ministry of Agriculture] and RRC"¹⁰⁰.

After a regime change in May 1991, the governmental organisations that had interacted with NGOs went through a profound restructuring process. To begin with, the former RRC went through a decentralisation process in 1995 and became the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission. Moreover, the former Ministry of Interior was dissolved, and, through its Associations' Registration Office, the Ministry of Justice took the mandate of the former Public Security Department. As a result, from the mid-1990s on, more than any other organisation, the

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, P. 51

⁹⁸ Dessalegn et al, "Oxfam...", P. 16

⁹⁹ Tegegne Teka, *International Non-Governmental Organizations in Rural Development in Ethiopia: Rhetoric and Practice* (Peter Land, Frankfurt am Mein, Germany, 2000), P. 53

¹⁰⁰ Dessalegn et al, "Oxfam...", P. 13

Associations' Registration Office came to be one of the chief actors influencing the activities of NGOs until 2009 when a new agency, Ethiopian Charity and Society Agency was set up by the Ethiopian Charity and Society Proclamation (Proclamation No 625/2009).

2.3. Non-state actors

2.3.1. Foreign donors

Ethiopia has been heavily dependent on foreign aid. The amount of aid flowing to Ethiopia has increased. The country received 0.01 billion US\$ in 1960. In 2007, the volume grew to 1.181 billion US\$¹⁰¹. Similarly, the amount of money raised by NGOs has increased. From their humble beginnings in the 1960s, with small subsidies donated from individuals and organisations, NGOs are now able to source 20% of Ethiopia's annual revenue from abroad¹⁰².

Foreign donors have influenced successive governments and NGOs in Ethiopia. During the imperial period, the influence of the World Bank, USAID, and SIDA was considerable. These organisations exercised a great deal of influence on agricultural policy-making. This policy choice was informed by modernisation theory¹⁰³. The second phase, which began with the collapse of the military government in 1991, witnessed a number of donors that later set up the Donors Assistance Groups (DAGs). DAGs pressurised the new government to liberalise the economy and society by adopting a number of measures such as regionalisation, decentralisation, etc¹⁰⁴. From the mid-1990s, members of DAGs served as intermediaries between NGOs and the Ethiopian government. This increased the profile and visibility of NGOs.

The influence of donors on NGOs has also been significant. Most NGOs in Ethiopia mobilise resources from foreign donors. A number of scholars have argued that this dependency caused NGOs to drift from their founding visions. However, most donors recognise that NGOs sought autonomy to decide their policy. This stems from the assertiveness of NGOs themselves. There are NGOs that refuse to accept conditions set by donors. Oxfam, for instance, does not receive any assistance that it considers compromising to its internal policy¹⁰⁵. This has partly to do with the capacity which Oxfam has to mobilise resources. Oxfam mobilises resources from three different

¹⁰¹ CRDA, "A Case Study of Aid Effectiveness in Ethiopia: Analysis of the Health Sector Aid" (nd), P.5

¹⁰² "Open Letter" from CRDA et al to Meles Zenawi (October 21, 2004), P.1, Archive of CCRDA in Addis Ababa

¹⁰³ Dessalegn Rahmato, *The Peasants and the State: Studies in Agrarian Change in Ethiopia 1950s-2000s* (Addis Ababa University Press, 2009), P. 32

¹⁰⁴ Tony Vaux, "Visit to Ethiopia: September 17-29, 1991" (nd), P. 1

¹⁰⁵ Informant, Ato Mesfin Tadesse

sources: donation from individuals, shops, and financial support from donors that share value with Oxfam¹⁰⁶. Similarly, CCRDA depended mainly on the donations of churches and missions overseas until the beginning of 1990s. A variety of donors who were enthusiastic about regime change in May 1991 increased their contribution to CCRDA. However, these donors were large in number and different in policy and they lacked the consensus to impose a policy that CCRDA was to pursue¹⁰⁷.

However, it is difficult to argue that NGOs were immune from the influences of donors. This is because there has been close partnership between NGOs and their donors. NOVIB from Holland and Evangelische Zentralstelle für Entwicklungshilfe (hereafter EZE) from Germany have remained important long-term partners of CCRDA and ASE. NOVIB had been actively supporting local initiatives in Ethiopia since the famine of 1973-74 in Ethiopia¹⁰⁸, around the same time that EZE also started operating in Ethiopia¹⁰⁹. The third most important actor that has influenced ASE was INADES-Formation. It was a Catholic NGO based in Abidjan in Ivory Coast. There was significant difference between INADES-Formation on the one hand and NOVIB and EZE on the other hand with regard to their notion of “development”¹¹⁰.

2.3.2. NGOs in Ethiopia

NGOs in Ethiopia have assumed a greater role and profile from the early 1990s. NGOs had, however, evolved in response to diverse influences within Ethiopia and outside of it. Daniel Sahleyesus identified six modes of NGO formation in Ethiopia. These are a) NGOs formed out of church and mission-related works; b) NGOs set up due to the personal, moral and/or religious motivations of their founder/s; c) NGOs formed as a response to a humanitarian crisis; d) NGOs set up due to donors’ policies that encouraged NGO formation; e) NGOs set up due to founder/s exposure to similar initiatives and; f) NGOs evolved from the relief and development wings of ex-rebel movements and from current political parties¹¹¹. In fact, these modes of NGOs formation are not exhaustive. For instance, a new generation of NGOs that have worked on policy advocacy and human rights has emerged in Ethiopia since the early 1990s.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*

¹⁰⁷ Memorandum from Ato Asrat Gebre to Members of CRDA (October 9th, 1985), Archive of CCRDA in Addis Ababa

¹⁰⁸ Marjam van Reisen, "Agri-Service Ethiopia: Programme Evaluation, 1989" (July 26th, 1989), P. 5

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, P.26

¹¹⁰ Informant, Ato Getachew Worku

¹¹¹ Daniel Sahleyesus, *Non Governmental Organization in Ethiopia: Examining Relation between Local and International Groups* (Ontario, the Edwn Mellen Press, 2005), P. 116

The formation of NGOs in Ethiopia should be put in context. Although the idea of self-help is not strange to Ethiopian culture, the emergence of NGOs in a modern sense is a recent phenomenon, going back to the first quarter of the twentieth century. However, the humanitarian practice goes as far back as the spread of Christianity. Churches and missions pioneered the humanitarian practice in Ethiopia. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church has been taking care of people in need since its introduction in the 4th century¹¹². It was, however, only in the 1970s that the Church's humanitarian effort took an organisational form. Concerned by the famine of the 1970s, in 1972 the Church set up an NGO called the Development and Interchurch Aid Commission (DIDAC). DIDAC has currently focused on integrated rural development, food production, reforestation, water and health¹¹³. Likewise, Catholic missionaries started the earliest modern education project in Ethiopia in the 16th century¹¹⁴. This effort did not continue, however, due to the rebellion that erupted in response to the conversion of the monarch, Susenyos (1607–1632) to Roman Catholicism. As a result, the monarch abdicated in favour of his son, Fasiledos in 1632. The new monarch expelled foreigners from the country, marking the beginning of Ethiopia's "closed door policy"¹¹⁵. The country only opened its door again to foreign influences in the 19th century, when large numbers of Catholic and Protestant missionaries started to promote welfare, education, health, and community development activities along with their main agenda, evangelisation¹¹⁶.

A new generation of national NGOs emerged in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Members of the ruling class who had experienced exposure to the outside world set up NGOs. An important historical factor in this was the threat Italians posed to Ethiopian sovereignty. Worried by the threat of Italian invasion, some members of the political elite formed the Ethiopian Red Cross Society on July 8th, 1935 in preparation to relieve victims of the anticipated war¹¹⁷. In the same way, women members of the royal family set up two more NGOs: the Ethiopian Women's Welfare Association and the Ethiopian Women's Association for Good Work Service¹¹⁸.

¹¹² Francisco Alvares (Trans and ed. Beckingham and Huntingford), *The Prster John of the Indies* (London, 1961), vol.2, P. 541, Francisco Alvares (Trans and ed. Beckingham and Huntingford), *The Prster John of the Indies* (London, 1961), vol.1, pp. 88, 224-226

¹¹³ Jefferey Clark, "Civil Society, NGOs and Development: A Snapshot View" (USA, 2000), P. 9

¹¹⁴ Daniel Sahleyesus, *Non Governmental Organization...*, P. 85

¹¹⁵ Mordechai Abir, *Ethiopia and the Red Sea: The Rise and Decline of the Solomonic Dynasty and Muslim-European Rivalry in the Region* (Frank Cass and Company Ltd., New York, 2006), P. 225

¹¹⁶ Kassahun Berhanu, "The Role of...", P. 121

¹¹⁷ Ethiopian Red Cross Society, "The Ethiopian Red Cross Society: 1935-1965" (Addis Ababa, n.d.), p.14

¹¹⁸ Women's Affairs Section of Office of the Prime Minister, *Kewanéna Re'iy: Yä Ityopya Sétoč Inqeseqasé Bähayagñaw Keflā Zāmān*, in Amharic (Addis Ababa: Berhanena Sälam Printing Press, 1993 EC), p.131

After a quarter of a century had elapsed, a number of development-oriented NGOs emerged due to the rise of a professional class. Emerging graduates of high school and university believed that neither the government nor self-help systems could address poverty in the country. Thus, national NGOs began to help fill the perceived void¹¹⁹. These NGOs were of two types: philanthropic NGOs and single-issue development NGOs. The monarch himself pioneered the effort to set up philanthropic organisations. In 1955, he set up the Haile Selassie I Foundation to set an example that would encourage other well-to-do citizens to take as a model¹²⁰. The emerging urban middle class such as teachers, civil servants, military officers and their spouses, politicians and artists duly modelled their organisations on that of the Haile Selassie I Foundation¹²¹. Though they did not have regular income of their own, students who later played a significant role in the socio-economic and political lives of the country also pooled their pocket money to relieve destitutes. The Association for the Destitute set up in 1964 by a group of high school students is an example of this group of NGOs. These students started by relieving those destitute patients waiting their turn to be admitted for medical treatment by St. Paul Hospital by providing tea in the evening¹²². This effort evolved into an NGO that came to have legal status in 1964¹²³. Single-issue NGOs included the Family Guidance Association of Ethiopia (FGAE) and Agri-Service Ethiopia, both of which were set up in 1969¹²⁴.

The two famines that occurred in 1973–1974 and 1983–1984 attracted international NGOs in large number. Impressed by the number of international NGOs operating in the country, Kurt Janson, the United Nations Assistant Secretary General for Emergency Operations in Ethiopia has remarked that, “For a Marxist government to permit so many Western NGOs to function in all parts of the country was highly unusual”¹²⁵. Although international NGOs were much more visible, Ethiopians who were shocked by the two famines also set up NGOs. The earliest of these was the Haile Selassie I University Famine Relief Committee that was set up in 1973 by faculty members

¹¹⁹ Jeffry Clark, “Civil Society...”, P.4

¹²⁰ Abära Jänbäré, *Yä Qādamawi Häylä Selasé Bägo Adragot Derejet Amäsārarāt*, in Amharic (Addis Ababa: Berhanena Selam Printing Press, 1951 EC), p. 98

¹²¹ Daniel Sahleyesus, *Non Governmental Organization...*, P. 88-89

¹²² Informant: G.L. Wilson

¹²³ Association for the Destitute, Minute (Puagmé 4, 1959 EC)

¹²⁴ *Ibid*, P. 89

¹²⁵ Tegegne Teka, *International Non-Governmental Organizations in Rural Development in Ethiopia: Rhetoric and Practice* (Peter Land, Frankfurt am Mein, Germany, 2000), P. 232

of the Haile Selassie I University¹²⁶. Other Ethiopians in private business and civil service also set up NGOs of one kind or another to deal with the recurrence of disasters throughout the 1980s¹²⁷.

The relative liberalism that followed the collapse of the military government and the rise of donor support encouraged citizens to set up various forms of NGO in the country¹²⁸. While those NGOs set up earlier were still operational, dealing with emergency situations that occurred following the fall of the military government, three new types of NGOs emerged in the 1990s. The first group was NGOs that aspired to defend human and democratic rights. The earliest of these were set up by vocal critics of the government and lawyers. The Ethiopian Human Right Council is the case in point. The Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association was also part of this group of NGOs¹²⁹. This group of NGOs was much more visible from the late 1990s due to donor mediation that came about as part of the liberalisation process¹³⁰. The second group of NGOs was policy research and advocacy organizations. The Ethiopian Economic Association sat up in 1992 was a pioneer in this regard. This was followed by the Forum for Social Studies (FSS) that was registered by the Ministry of Justice in 1998. The FSS organised public debates based on research findings on development, gender, education etc. The third group of NGOs came into existence out of the concerns of the government. Concerned especially by the rise of human rights NGOs, the government set up pro-government NGOs. Firstly, the former relief organisations of rebel movements such as Relief Society of Tigray, the Oromo Relief Organisation, the Ethiopian Relief Association (later the Amhara Relief Development Association) were promoted into NGOs¹³¹. Secondly, the government created ethnically-based development associations in different parts of the country such as the Amhara Development Association, the Tigray Development Association, and the Oromo Development Association etc¹³².

¹²⁶ Berhe Beyene, "How CRDA Come into Being?" (October 5, 1988), P. 4

¹²⁷ Daniel Sahleyesus, *Non Governmental Organization...* P. 123

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, PP. 123-124

¹²⁹ *Ibid*, P. 110

¹³⁰ Dessalegn Rahmato, "The Voluntary Sector in Ethiopia: Challenges and Prospects" in Taye Assefa and Bahru Zewde (eds), *Civil Society at the Crossroads: Challenges and Prospects in Ethiopia* (Forum for Social Studies, Addis Ababa, 2008), P. 97

¹³¹ Tony Vaux, "Visit to Ethiopia..."

¹³² Dessalegn Rahmato, "The Voluntary Sector...", P. 97

2.3.2.1 Origins of the selected NGOs in Ethiopia

The earliest development discourse and practice of the 1960s and the food crisis in Ethiopia of the 1970s set the contexts in which Agri-Service Ethiopia (ASE), the Consortium of Christian Relief and Development Association (CCRDA) and Oxfam GB emerged.

Inspired by the ongoing development discourse and practices in the country, two groups of actors set up ASE in 1969. Expatriate teachers who were affiliated to the Catholic Church constituted one group of actors. Fr. Henry Ravain, a French Catholic priest acted as chief spokesperson of this group of actors. He had compared the living conditions in rural Ethiopia with those in France where he was born, with French Catholics in Addis Ababa, Nazareth and Paris. They had reached an agreement that the living conditions in rural Ethiopia were morally unacceptable and that efforts should be made to improve them¹³³. In doing so, this group of actors gave up their personal luxury and comfort. Concerning their commitment, one of the founders explained that “...our desire was to be– to make ourselves humus of the indigenous growth of the rural population”¹³⁴. The commitment of this group of individuals surprised even their own close relatives back home, who would tell Ethiopians studying in France that the founders of ASE were much more concerned about Ethiopian poverty than the founders’ concern about their own country¹³⁵. Ethiopians themselves had deep appreciation for this group of individuals. In 2009, one of the founders of ASE, Fr. Henry Ravain, passed away. When the news about his death was heard, ASE issued a summary of his biography that described the extent to which he was appreciated by Ethiopians, part of which stated that:

አባ ሄነሪ ራቫን በተማሪዎቻቸው በስራ ባልደረቦቻቸው በኢትዮጵያና ውጪ ባፈርዋቸው ወዳጆች ዘንድ ለኢትዮጵያና ለህዝቦች በነበራቸው አድናቆትና አክብሮት ለታሪኳና ባህሏ በነበራቸው ጥልቅ እውቀት እንዲሁም ለሰዎች ሁሉ ባሳዩት ፍቅር ደግነትና መልካም አርባያነት እንዲሁም በመለካም መንገድ አመለካከታቸው ሲታወሱ ይኖራሉ ።

Fr. Henry is remembered forever by his students, friends, and colleagues in and out of Ethiopia for his respect and appreciation for Ethiopia and its people as well as for his profound knowledge about their histories and cultures and for the love, humility he showed throughout his life as well as for the exemplary job he did and for his readiness to show the right direction¹³⁶

The founders of ASE grew up with, and lived by Christian values. Some of them were priests affiliated to the Catholic Church¹³⁷. However, they did not intend to place their initiative to deal

¹³³ Informant, *Ato Alemu Gebrewold*

¹³⁴ Agri-service Ethiopia, “30th Years Anniversary”, *Agri-Drum* (February 2000), P.24

¹³⁵ My informant, *Ato Alemu* was told by *Ato Bunuko* who studied in France

¹³⁶ “Yä aba Henri Acir Yähiwot Tarik” (Addis Ababa, nd) , in Amharic, P.2

¹³⁷ Informant, *Ato Alemu*

with poverty under the auspices of the Catholic Church. The first project agreement, signed on June 1st, 1969 stipulated that the project would operate autonomously, detached from the Catholic Church¹³⁸. Two factors explain this decision. The protagonists intended to pursue their own development approach with a view to dealing with what they called “social evils”. More specifically, they were concerned about the perception of peasants in Ethiopia of their own potential to improve their socio-economic status. Concerning this problem, an earliest source tells us that “Experience shows us every day to what extent peasants underestimate themselves and easily take refuge in fatalism”¹³⁹. The founders of ASE intended to address this social problem in order to tackle the challenges of poverty. To that end, they aspired for organisational autonomy that would avert the influence of the Catholic Church. Secondly, the founders of ASE were concerned that putting ASE under the influence of the Catholic Church would create an impression that ASE only stood to assist poor Catholic people¹⁴⁰. This was partly informed by the bitter memories Ethiopians held about Catholicism. As Alemayehu rightly states, “...the civil war which [had been]...caused by the [Catholic] missionaries [in the 17th century]... inculcated hatred in the minds of the Ethiopians”¹⁴¹.

The second group of actors that played an active part in the formation of ASE was senior politicians of the imperial government. They were part of the progressive group within the imperial state system. Two officials in particular played an active part with regard to the formation of ASE. The first one was *Däjjazmač* Girmachew Tekle Hawariat who was then Minister of Agriculture. He was appreciated by university students in favour of radical political change for his critical stance towards the government. While the Ethiopian revolution was underway, the minister was approached by a group of revolutionaries. The point he raised in the discussion shows his alienation from the imperial government in consequence. He asked them, “Do you [revolutionaries] know what a maid-wife is? She is a woman in traditional Ethiopia who at certain time acts as a wife of a man, and at other times is treated like his maid. That is me”¹⁴². In his ministerial capacity, *Däjjazmač* Girmachew invited development organisations from abroad to come and complement efforts underway in the country. In 1965, he invited a French Catholic NGO called Institut Africain

¹³⁸ Agri-service Ethiopia, “ASE’s 30th...”, p.13

¹³⁹ ASE, “Situational Report” (May 1975), P.2

¹⁴⁰ Akpak Studio, “Yä Agri Service Ityopya Ina Yäwädäfit Aqtača” (2000)

¹⁴¹ Alemayehu Alemneh, “A Review...”, P. 10

¹⁴² Dawit Wolde Giorgis, *The Red Tears: War, Famine and Revolution in Ethiopia* (Red Sea Press, Trenton, 1989), p.8

Pour le Développement Economique et Social-Centre Africain de Formation (INADES-Formation) to run the same rural educational programme on offer in other Francophone countries in Ethiopia. Sometime before he made this invitation, the founders of ASE had already established a relationship with INADES-Formation; INADES-Formation influenced the founders of ASE in a number of ways, including their formulation of similar visions and modality of development¹⁴³. The invitation of the minister, however, consolidated this relationship and the interest that he showed created a situation whereby ASE easily gained legal recognition. This was because the Minister of Agriculture served as an intermediary between the founders of ASE and senior government officials including the monarch. The monarch was fully convinced that ASE could assist peasants to improve their living condition. Concerning this, one of the founders of ASE himself said that ASE was established on, “June 6, 1969 at the feet of H.M. [His Majesty] Haile Selassie I”¹⁴⁴. The approval of the monarch was formalised by the Ministry of Interior on December 24, 1969 when ASE was given legal certificate¹⁴⁵.

The governor of Wollaita, *Däjjazmač* Wolde Semait, was the other senior government official who influenced ASE. There had been duplication of effort between the provincial administration in Wollaita province and the Catholic Church which the founders of ASE were affiliated to. For instance, once the administration had built a school nearby the Catholic school where Fr. Henry, one of the founders of ASE was teaching. Fr. Henry argued with the Wollaita administrator, saying that in a country like Ethiopia where many people had no access to education, it was not fair to run two schools in the same locality. The administrator advised Fr. Henry to incorporate agricultural courses to teach not only the youths but also the peasants. This changed the career of the founders of ASE. The former teachers of the Catholic School in Wollaita now started agricultural courses, evolving gradually into an NGO called ASE that stood for “...the social and economic advancement of the rural poor”¹⁴⁶.

The cooperation that government officials showed the founders of ASE also had a broader explanation that went back to the Italian Occupation (1935–1941). The Italians had decimated educated Ethiopians especially after an attempt was made to kill the Italian Viceroy, Marshal Graziani, in Addis Ababa in 1937. Restored in 1941, the government started pursuing a policy that

¹⁴³ Akpak Studio, “Yä Agri...”

¹⁴⁴ Agri-service Ethiopia, “ASE’s 30th ...”, p.33

¹⁴⁵ “A Brief Note on Agri-Service Ethiopia” (Addis Ababa, nd), P.1

¹⁴⁶ “Bigger NG(D)Os in Eastern and Southern Africa” (1989), P. 24

encouraged NGOs, especially to launch educational programmes to satisfy the new demand¹⁴⁷. This resulted in a number of NGOs many of which had religious origins¹⁴⁸.

When famine broke out in 1973–74, NGOs that had existed since the defeat of Italians started operating together under the umbrella of the Consortium of Christian Relief and Development Association (CCRDA). This was to deal with the looming famine. The idea to bring NGOs under the umbrella of CCRDA was informed by experiences from the Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970). Fr. Kevin Doheny, one of the Catholic priests who had been involved in a joint relief operation during the Nigerian Civil War proposed that NGOs should put collective actions in place to deal effectively with the famine in Ethiopia. Doheny wrote in his memoir that, “For me, it [Christian Relief Fund, the precursor of CCRDA] was an outgrowth of the Biafran [Nigerian civil] war. I would not have got the idea were it not for Biafra”¹⁴⁹.

The formation of CCRDA constituted a significant progress for and by NGOs in Ethiopia. For the first time, NGOs with diverse backgrounds came together for a common purpose. The founders were tied together by Christian values. Describing the role of Christianity, one of the earliest publications of the Association tells us that “...CRDA [CCRDA] is solidified by the basic Christian commitment to serve [the poor]”¹⁵⁰. However, the leadership of CCRDA went to great lengths to make sure that religion would never intervene in the way CCRDA acted. This was because the founders were divided over the interpretation of Christianity and this influenced all the discussions held to set up CCRDA. Even after a consensus had been reached to set up CCRDA to coordinate the relief operation, a representative of the American Lutheran Mission rejected the idea of joint NGO operation. His justification was that the proposed organisation would be dominated by the Catholics and that this would undermine the religious freedom of its members¹⁵¹. Moreover, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church had from the start rejected the idea of creating an all-inclusive consortium¹⁵². However, Christianity was used as a means to mobilise resources. In a memo he circulated on October 9th 1985, the chairman of the Association told members that “...if we look at the roster of donors, they are church related organisations who see in CRDA [CCRDA] an

¹⁴⁷ Alemayehu Alemneh, “A Review...”, PP. 6-7

¹⁴⁸ Dessalegn Rahmato, *The Peasant and the State: Studies in Agrarian Change in Ethiopia 1950s-2000s* (Addis Ababa University Press, 2008), P. 50-66

¹⁴⁹ Kevin Doheny, *No Hands but Yours: Memoirs of A Missionary* (Veritas Publications, Ireland, 1997), P. 100

¹⁵⁰ CRDA, “1977 Annual Report” (May 1977), P.1

¹⁵¹ Berhe Beyene, “How CRDA Did Come into Being” (October 5, 1988), P. 4

¹⁵² Berhe Beyene, “How CRDA Did Come into Being” (October 5, 1988), P. 4; “Memorandum of Association of Oxfam”, P.2, Archive of CCRDA in Addis Ababa

ecumenical experiment that is working”¹⁵³. It is, thus, possible to argue that although they were inspired by Christian values, representatives of 13 faith-based NGOs set up and sustained CCRDA to, “...relieve human suffering and improve the standard of living for the underprivileged people in Ethiopia”¹⁵⁴.

The food crisis that brought NGOs under the umbrella of CCRDA also attracted international NGOs in large numbers. One of these was Oxfam GB. The origins of Oxfam GB go back to the Second World War. The Oxford Committee for Famine Relief (OCFR), the precursor of Oxfam GB, was set up by a handful of individuals including the Mayor of Oxford in October 1942 to rescue victims of the war in Greece¹⁵⁵. From the early 1960s onwards, Oxfam expanded the scope of its operation and took on a global mandate¹⁵⁶. Oxfam’s presence in Ethiopia goes back to the early 1960s and when the Ethiopian famine of 1973–1974 reached a critical stage, the organisation sent Mr. Toby Gooch to open an office in Ethiopia¹⁵⁷.

To sum up, NGOs were formed and evolved according to diverse influences within shifting national and international contexts. Individuals of good intentions together with state actors were involved in the formation of NGOs. Development visions that the founders of NGOs articulated confirm that even those NGOs whose formation was real due to Christian values were more preoccupied with tackling social concerns than spreading a particular religion.

2.4. NGO visions of development and state

2.4.1. Introduction

NGOs are capable of articulating development visions. Concerning this, the President of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) has rightly said that “NGOs....have some very practical, as well as visionary virtues”¹⁵⁸. This ability stems from the fact that NGO leaders have had access to education and information. Education and information give these leaders advantage to understand the environments in which they live and to develop strategies to change their environments¹⁵⁹.

¹⁵³ Memorandum from Ato Asrat Gebre to Members of CRDA (October 9th, 1985)

¹⁵⁴ CRDA, “1977 Annual Report” (May 1977), P.1

¹⁵⁵ Maggie Black in Tegegne Teka, *International...*, P.10

¹⁵⁶ “Memorandum of Association of Oxfam”, P.2

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, P. 24

¹⁵⁸ Tegegne Teka, *International...*, P. 15

¹⁵⁹ Robert Pinkney, *NGOs...*, P. 63

However, development visions are translated into actions within a given political environment. In Ethiopia, these visions have evolved through the imperial (collapse in 1974), the military (1974–1991) and the current federal (since 1991) governments. These three forms of government have exercised varying degrees of control over public discussions on issues such as how to “do” development. Concerned by the repression of the governments, NGOs have usually confined their discussions within themselves. Oral narratives and archival transcripts show that NGOs had an intention to “empower” poor people to negotiate with governments. Conversely, the three forms of governments have invariably insisted that the function of NGOs is to carry out state development policy. However, there has been difference between the three forms of government. NGOs articulated their visions during the imperial period. The junior military and non-commissioned officers who seized power in the midst of the 1974 revolution stifled alternative model of development. In the face of this, NGOs drifted from their visions. In the 1990s, the leaderships of NGOs developed unprecedented assertiveness, not only in rearticulating development visions but also speaking openly about these visions. This resurgence is seen in relation to changing national and global contexts. Nationally, the military dictatorship was violently overthrown and a new government was set up in May 1991 on the basis of some liberal principles. Globally, the Soviet Camp scrambled and a new form of relationship was established between the national government and Western donors. Motivated by the relative liberalism, the leaderships of NGOs in which Ethiopians were represented in large number came up with political visions.

2.4.2. The roots of NGO visions and their opportunity in Ethiopia

There have been differences between NGOs with regard to their strategic preferences on how to achieve “development”. NGOs also share common features in analysing social concerns that they intend to address. This stems from the fact that they put the poor people and their contexts at centre stage. NGOs intend to “empower” the poor people to negotiate with dominant actors. This stands contrary to other ways of changing politico-economic structures such as the Marxist class struggle, revolutions, wars, coups and counter coups¹⁶⁰.

NGOs were not alone in pioneering the effort to address the socio-economic concerns of poor people. State actors also have worked on programmes that intended to improve the socio-economic conditions of poor rural population since the early 1960s. When the earliest development rhetoric

¹⁶⁰ Dessalegn Rahmeto, “The Voluntary Sector...”, P. 103

was heated in the early 1960s, officials of the imperial government believed that NGOs aspired to realise the same visions that the imperial government aspired to. As a result, NGOs were able to get the encouragement of the imperial government. The reason is that “development” was accepted as morally “good”.

However, there were marked differences between the government and NGOs with regard to how to achieve “development”. Influenced by American planners, the imperial government was driven by modernization theory that intended to promote quick macro-economic growth until the end of the 1960s. There was a shift towards assisting the small-hold farmers to improve their socio-economic status by the end of the 1960s. The theoretical basis of the intervention remained unchanged, although there was a shift towards assisting small-hold farmers. The imperial government believed that for rural residents to improve their status, they should abandon their tradition and culture that impeded their development¹⁶¹. NGOs, like officials of the imperial government, were concerned about rural poverty. However, the strategy NGOs crafted to deal with poverty in rural setting was different from that of the imperial government. The major difference lies on how NGOs looked at the role of poor people in tackling their own problem. NGO leaders believed that poor people had untapped potential to be active players to improve their socio-economic and political status. The leaders of ASE were the earliest that came with this ideal. In 1974, the leaders of ASE published a document in which they summed up their confidence about the capability of poor farmers to uplift their living standard. Part of the document stated that:

No one can develop small farmers. It is up to the farmers to develop themselves. Other people and development organisations [NGOs] can help them but in the final analysis it is the farmers themselves who are the agents of their own development¹⁶².

The conviction that poor farmers had the potential to improve their living standard raises a question related to the role that NGOs would play in the process. The response of ASE to this issue predicated on the way the organisation understood the causes of poverty in rural Ethiopia. The founders of ASE witnessed that rural residents accepted their poverty as something given; rural residents believed that they could not change the overall environment in which they were living. A text written in 1975 describes the extent to which rural residents reconciled themselves with their own problem, stating, “Experience shows us every day to what extent peasants underestimate

¹⁶¹ Mikael Jennings, *Surrogates of the State: NGOs, Development and Ujjama in Tanzania* (USA, Kmarian Press 2008), P. 117

¹⁶² ASE, “Situational...”, P.2

themselves and easily take refuge in fatalism”¹⁶³. This attitude, leaders of ASE argued, stifled the peasants’ potentials to improve their socio-economic status. As a result, peasants would remain poor unless the problem was addressed¹⁶⁴.

The founders of ASE stated that the kind of poverty that they witnessed was too complex to be tackled by “external” intervention. As a result, they rejected any intervention that could be run by expatriates. According to the founders of ASE, “external” intervention mixes up “development” with equipment which would, in the end, fail to address the root causes of poverty. Instead, they called upon Ethiopians themselves to be an active force in the development process. On one occasion, one of the founders of ASE, Fr. Henry, himself an expatriate, summed up the two premises summarised above. Part of it reads:

We Frenjis¹⁶⁵, we mix up “development” and “equipment”...Our [humans in developed world] true development is not given by our having more but our own efforts to live a better life together...You, you, you know...Here [humans in developed world] we don’t [know how you develop]. You have, you the Ethiopian people, a deep wisdom the world needs to become conscious of its being a family, a human family...and to direct its entire doings to build it. This is the way, the only way to true development¹⁶⁶.

Basing their premise on the potential of Ethiopians, the founders of ASE came to hold ideal situation that would come into existence. They envisioned an Ethiopia wherein rural peasants had reached the stage of “adulthood”, capable of negotiating with governments¹⁶⁷. They believed that a human being reaches adulthood when s/he becomes fully conscious of her/his value as well as the social, economic and political environment in which s/he lives. To that end, ASE put in place resources, “...to help arouse in them [project participants] a greater awareness of their dignity as human being”¹⁶⁸. The strategic choice of ASE suggests further the confidence that it of the capability of project participants. ASE adopted correspondence education to reduce the influence of “experts”. This was because the founders of ASE argued that “experts” tended to act as if they had solutions to the problems confronting the peasants, and that this would stifle the peasants’ initiative to solve their own problems¹⁶⁹.

¹⁶³ ASE, “Situational...”, P.2

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*, P.2

¹⁶⁵ The Amharic word for “foreigner”

¹⁶⁶ Agri-service Ethiopia, “ASE’s 30th...”, PP.24-25

¹⁶⁷ Informant, *Ato Amanueal Assefa*

¹⁶⁸ ASE, “Situational...”, PP. 2-3

¹⁶⁹ Informants, *Ato Getachew Worku* and *Ato Amanuel Assefa*

ASE's development vision and its strategic choice were nurtured by INADES-Formation, which, in many ways, considered itself as a "parent" of ASE. INADES-Formation believed that the peasantries of the developing world had the potential to develop themselves and that rural correspondence education was the only realistic way to true "development"¹⁷⁰. This conviction also originated from the global self-help development discourse of the 1960s that argued that human beings have untapped potential to deal with the socio-economic and political constraints that have led to their underdevelopment¹⁷¹. There was, in fact, one major difference between ASE and INADES-Formation with regard to the role an organisation should play in the development process. While INADES-Formation argued for the provision of technical information and advice to project participants, ASE opted for an inclusive approach to assist the poor. Concerning this difference that it had with INADES-Formation, ASE once stated that it was, "...because we [ASE, unlike, by implication, the INADES-Formation] are not only concerned with do's and don'ts but also to achieve his [a peasant] fulfillment as a human being. Ours [ASE's] is an integrated approach to life in all its complexity"¹⁷².

Like ASE, Oxfam believed in the potential of poor people to change their status. Oxfam stated in 1975 about its confidence about the potential of poor people. One of the documents states that "Oxfam believes in the essential dignity of people and in their capacity to overcome the problems and pressures which can crush and exploit them"¹⁷³.

In order to identify its role, Oxfam analysed the nature of poverty in areas where it operated. Oxfam believed that poverty had structural causes. It argued that power holders controlled the structures with which they underdeveloped the powerless. As a result, the structures were either to be bypassed or reformed and new structures were to be created or adapted¹⁷⁴. Maggie Black called this position Oxfam's "anti-institutionalism"¹⁷⁵. Oxfam identified itself as a partner of poor people who struggle to overcome problems and pressures that threatened them. Oxfam itself asserted that it "...is a partnership of people – people who, regardless of race, sex, religion or politics work together for the basic rights of food, shelter and reasonable condition of life"¹⁷⁶.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*, P.1

¹⁷¹ Informant, Ato Getachew Worku

¹⁷² ASE, "Marking" (nd), P. 15

¹⁷³ Mikael Jennings, *Surrogates*... P. 121

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*, P. 208

¹⁷⁵ Maggie Black, *A Cause for our Time: Oxfam the First 50 Years* (Oxfam, Oxford University Press, 1992), P. 208

¹⁷⁶ Mikael Jennings, *Surrogates*... P. 121

Basing its premise on the structural poverty and the capacity of poor people to dismantle this structure, Oxfam articulated in 1965 a broad vision. The 1965 Memorandum of Association explained that Oxfam stands:

To relieve poverty, distress and suffering in any part of the world (including starvation, sickness or any physical disability or affliction) and primarily when arising from any public calamity (including famine, earthquake, pestilence, war or civil disturbance) or the immediate or continuing result of want natural or artificial resources, or the means to develop them, and whether acting alone or in association with others¹⁷⁷.

Oxfam analysed the causes of poverty and the way to tackle it driven by development rhetoric. In the 1960s, the global discourse turned to ensure that the new nations emerging from colonisation could be developed rapidly and poverty could be overcome. The optimists of economic modelling in the 1950s had given way to a new generation of development planners and theorists who saw the developmental objectives as the elimination of poverty, rather than just the elimination of economic bottlenecks to rapid industrialisation. This led NGOs to turn towards promoting more sustainable livelihoods, increased production and improving the standard of living as preemptive measures against disaster, rather than reacting when disasters occurred¹⁷⁸. In 1960, Dr. Binay Ranjam Sing launched the Freedom from Hunger Campaign (FFHC). Its aim was to reduce the impact and frequency of famine by increasing food production in developing countries, thus preventing disasters from occurring rather than simply reacting when they did¹⁷⁹.

National FFHC committees were established throughout the world in order to coordinate the fundraising and activities of the various NGOs engaged in this work. Oxfam's association with the FFHC was one of the significant factors in influencing the emergence of a development vision within the NGO. In early 1961, the Director of Oxfam, Leslie Kirkley explored the possibility of establishing an FFHC programme in the three British High Commission territories of Basutoland (Lesotho), Bechuanaland (Botswana) and Swaziland, to be both funded and run by Oxfam. Having realised, through his experience during the Congo famine, that direct supervision was beneficial in coordinating action, Kirkley appointed Jimmy Betts as field director to personally oversee the programme. Over the next decade this system expanded to cover the major areas of Oxfam interest¹⁸⁰.

¹⁷⁷ Oxfam, "Memorandum of Association" (1965), P. 15

¹⁷⁸ Mikael Jennings, *Surrogates...*, P. 116

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid*, P.116

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid*, P.116

Like ASE and Oxfam, CCRDA had the intention to deal with poverty that dehumanised the peasantry during the 1970s food crisis. Although they represented NGOs of various backgrounds, the founders of CCRDA were bound together by a, “....collective vision of improving the plight of the poor in Ethiopia through the willingness of working together”¹⁸¹. As with other NGOs in the country such as ASE and Oxfam, CCRDA emphasised that project participants had the potential to develop themselves and that the role of NGOs was to be limited to provision of materials and technical skills¹⁸².

It could, thus, be stated that NGOs of the 1960s and 1970s aspired for visions that were informed by political content. ASE’s vision for changing power relation and Oxfam’s structural analysis of poverty and the strategy it suggested were highly political. The next two decades from the collapse of the imperial regime in 1974 saw NGOs drifting from their radical ideas. A major historical factor for this was the revolution that erupted in 1974. The junior military and non-commissioned officers who seized power in the midst of the revolution set up the Provisional Military Administrative Council (*Derg*). The *Derg* pursued a series of nationalisation measures, which were to be based on a political and economic programme¹⁸³. To that end, the *Derg* announced “Ethiopian Socialism” on December 20th 1974¹⁸⁴. This was followed by a series of measures. In February 1975, the *Derg* issued the Ownership and Control of the Means of Production Proclamation Act, by which private firms like banks and insurance companies were nationalised. A month later, the government introduced the Rural Land Proclamation that abolished the land tenure system. In July 1975, the government nationalised urban lands and excess houses previously owned by individuals¹⁸⁵.

In early 1975, the *Derg* sent out high school and university students and their teachers to re-organise rural residents, educate them about the ideals of socialism and redistribute land to each household¹⁸⁶. Various forms of organisation were soon set up at different levels throughout urban and rural areas. In spite of the early-stage rhetoric that they would serve their constituents, the new organisations came to be an implementation arm of the military government. Subsequently, when government officials were asked about the neutrality of these organisations, they responded that,

¹⁸¹ CRDA, "Strategic Plan Document" (Addis Ababa, December 1997), P. 1

¹⁸² Christian Relief Fund, "First Report from Christian Relief Committee to Relief and Rehabilitation Commission" (September 1974), P. 6; CRDA, "1977 Annual Report", P. 5

¹⁸³ Andargachew Tiruneh, *The Ethiopian Revolution, 1974-1987: A Transformation from an Aristocratic to a Totalitarian Autocracy* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), P. 85

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid*, P. 86

¹⁸⁵ Christopher Clapham, "Revolutionary Socialist Development in Ethiopia", PP. 152-153

¹⁸⁶ Dessalegn Rahmato, *The Peasants...*, P. 140

“Those organisations set up so far and to be set up in the future would never be politically neutral”¹⁸⁷.

While residents in urban and rural areas were expected to participate in organisations set up in the revolutionary context, conversely, the *Derg* discouraged alternative forms of organisation. Any form of organisation over which the government had no direct control was considered as reactionary and it was disbanded¹⁸⁸. Even self-help systems rooted in the Ethiopian culture that had flourished during the imperial period were considered to be a remnant of the old regime. Due to this, they were closed down¹⁸⁹.

The government did not spare NGOs. It took two measures with regard to NGOs in the country. Firstly, it banned the NGOs set up by members of the royal family. These included the Haile Selassie I Foundation¹⁹⁰. Secondly, the government introduced the institutional arrangement with a view to ensuring that NGOs could have neither the autonomy nor the agency to influence the government or society. This created a situation whereby, as noted in an evaluation undertaken by a group of consultants contracted by Oxfam in 1990, the, “...working environment in Ethiopia has enforced NGOs into close relationship with government organisations with the result that donors [NGOs] are viewed by peasants as part of the implementation arms of the government”¹⁹¹.

NGOs offered four types of responses to the military government that asserted such strong authority in the country. Some international-cum-religious NGOs withdrew from the country at the early stage of the revolution for they believed that freedom of religion was suppressed¹⁹². Médecins Sans Frontières was overtly opposed to official policies like resettlement. As a result, it was expelled from the country by the government¹⁹³. National NGOs adhered to official policy lines and adjusted themselves to them. While international-cum-secular NGOs were internally debating the government’s attempts to build a strong socialist state, their covert resistance remained ineffectual; they in practice allowed themselves to be instrumentalised by the regime¹⁹⁴.

¹⁸⁷ “Yäheberär Sera Mäsärätä Hasaboch i.e Fundamentals of Cooperatives” (nd), P. 32

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*, P.13

¹⁸⁹ Desalegn Rahmato, “Civil Society Organizations in Ethiopia” in Bahru Zewde, and Siegfried Pauswang (eds), *Ethiopia: The Challenges of Democracy from Below* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikaninstitute and Addis Ababa: Forum for Social Studies, 2002), P. 104.

¹⁹⁰ Andargachew Tiruneh, *The Ethiopian...*, P. 85

¹⁹¹ Dessalegn Rahmeto et al “Oxfam...”, P. 44

¹⁹² *Ibid*, P. 15

¹⁹³ Robert Dodd, “Oxfams Response to Disasters in Ethiopia and the Sudan” (nd), P. 130

¹⁹⁴ Will Campbell, “The Potentials of Donor Mediation in NGO-State Relations: An Ethiopian Case Study” (nd), P. 13

The submission of national NGOs resulted partly from the way they looked at the revolutionary measures. The revolution had wide popular legitimacy. The land reform in particular was well received by people all over the country and resulted in equitable resource distribution. This has been witnessed even by strong critics of the military government. A leader of the Ethiopian People Revolutionary Party (EPRP) that fought the military government described how, “...in one stroke [the] land reform addressed both the economic problem of the people and the economic aspects of the national questions”¹⁹⁵. Like other sections of the society, national NGO leaders welcomed major radical changes, including many that were directly related to their own specific activities. For instance, influenced by INADES-Formation, the leaders of ASE received the new government’s rural land reform, and its intention to make education available to all citizens of the country – including rural residents – very well. Previously an advocate for an “empowered” peasant class, ASE now believed that there was no basic difference between its own rural education programme and the massive rural education programme started by the Ministry of Agriculture. A note circulated in the mid-1970s when ASE sought to work alongside the Ministry of Agriculture clearly shows the attitude of ASE’s leadership. Part of it reads:

ድርጅቱ ለገጠሩ የሚሰጠው ትምህርት እርሻ ሚኒስቴር ከሚሰጠው አገልግሎት የአሰራሩ ዘዴ የተለየ ቢሆንም አላማው ተመሳሳይ ስለሆነ የበለጠ ሊያበረክት የሚችልው ከግብርና ሚኒስቴር ጎን ለጎን ለመስራት ሲቺል ነው ብሎ INADES-Formation ስላመነበት ድርጅቱ ለጊዜው በእርሻ ሚኒስቴር ሆኖ የሚሰራበት ስምምነት እንዲደረግ እ.አ.አ በሃምሌ ወር 1975 አ.ም ጥያቄ በደብዳቤ አቀረበ

Though the rural education the organization (ASE) delivers to the rural residents is different [from that of the Ministry of Agriculture] with regard to the method, they both have the same aim. Thus, INADES-Formation submitted a draft agreement in July 1975 based on which ASE would operate alongside the Ministry of Agriculture¹⁹⁶.

The leadership of ASE argued that organisations running educational programmes were to adjust themselves to changing socio-economic and political contexts. This argument was set out in summary in one of the earliest documents. Part of it described that “Any organisation with an essentially educative nature such as ASE is necessarily concerned by the major socio-political events which are in the process of transforming”¹⁹⁷.

The evolving socio-economic changes in rural Ethiopia were palatable to the leaders of ASE. Moreover, they fully believed that the leadership of the new government was committed to

¹⁹⁵ Kiflu Tadesse, *The Generation: The History of the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Party*, vol. 1 (Trenton, New Jersey, 1993), P. 209

¹⁹⁶ “Selä Gebrena Agäleglot Yäqäräbä Mastawäsha” (nd), P. 1

¹⁹⁷ “Supplementary Note on Conclusion and Recommendations of ASE Evaluation (1970-89): Extract (nd), P. 9

managing these changes in favour of the poor people. This assessment resulted in a situation whereby ASE's leadership aspired for a semi-governmental status. A text published at the early stage of the revolution attests to this attitude of the leadership. It says that "Legally, it [ASE] has so far been a private organisation; in practice it has been semi-governmental"¹⁹⁸.

Governmental organisations involved in the revolutionary process welcomed NGOs that supported official policies. Moreover, governmental organisations ran short of resources to implement the massive rural programme. As a result, they welcomed NGOs largely because they saw in NGOs the resources that they required to undertake their programme. By the time ASE showed a great deal of interest in operating alongside the Ministry of Agriculture, a senior official of the Ministry published a note in which he described the resources ASE commanded. It stated that "The facilities and experience that ASE has created over many years in Ethiopia could complement the efforts of the Ministry of Agriculture that has already created an extension network covering most parts of the country"¹⁹⁹.

Although it favoured the new revolutionary measures, ASE maintained its autonomy. An evaluation report that studied the relation between ASE and governmental organisations stated that "ASE's cooperation with the government structures...is of a rather functional nature: it concerns delivery of services and support in both directions. But ASE runs its own programme"²⁰⁰. This functional relation defined the relationship that other national NGOs developed with governmental organisations as well. From the start, for instance, CCRDA saw no difference between its own programme and that of the government (RRC). CCRDA believed that both organisations promoted food security in the country. As a result, it saw the need to, "...assist the government by sharing the common problems concerning the welfare and development of the Ethiopian people"²⁰¹.

While the positive aspects of the revolutionary measures and the institutional arrangement were important factors, internal dynamics also pushed NGOs to lean towards governmental lines. The dynamics differed from one national NGO to the other. For instance, ASE lacked the capacity to cope with the rapidly changing rural context. The organisation that had operated in a relatively stable rural setting was now overwhelmed by profound changes. As a result, it lacked the authority

¹⁹⁸ ASE, "Situational...", P. 6

¹⁹⁹ Agri-Service Ethiopia, "Project of I.F International in Ethiopia: Project Agreement" (1982), P.6

²⁰⁰ "Bigger NG[D]Os...", P. 33

²⁰¹ CRDA, "1977 Annual Report" (May 1977), P. 2

to mobilise the masses and it felt that it lost its organisational relevance. In order to have the necessary authority, ASE argued for integration of its educational programme into that of the Ministry of Agriculture that was a leading actor for mass mobilisation²⁰². Likewise, CCRDA lacked sufficient authority. Members of CCRDA believed that it competed with them for resources. As a result, they at the early stage stood against CCRDA. One of the founders of CCRDA tells us that “it [CCRDA] was seen as a threat”²⁰³. In a situation where it shifted its priority to rehabilitation works in 1974/1975, CCRDA described the lack of harmony within itself. It stated regrettably that the, “...CRF [precursor of CCRDA] does not speak with a corporate voice on behalf of its members”²⁰⁴. Thus, CCRDA gave up the mandate to the RRC. Concerning this, the same source quoted here states that, “...each of our constituent members should be approached for information individually by the Commission [RRC]”²⁰⁵.

In a sharp contrast to national NGOs, international NGOs were against the domination of the government. They argued that the heavy hand of the government stifled project participants who would otherwise have played a key role to solve their problem. This went along with the visions that they had aspired toward²⁰⁶. These criticisms were being discussed among leaders of each of the international NGOs, and came to inform the actions of each NGO as a result. The way Oxfam saw this governmental domination and how it reacted to it exemplified the response of international NGOs. Informed by its vision for poverty alleviation, Oxfam had taken an active part, running long-term development projects. The speed with which it turned to “development” proved that the organisation was, in fact, putting aside emergency operation, in favour of addressing factors that created this emergency. This was a lesson the organisation had drawn from the Freedom From Hunger Campaign. While relief operations by other NGOs, were still underway, e.g., Oxfam UK notified the RRC that, “... as of the end of April 1974, it would no longer conduct any medical and nutritional activities in Wollo because the emergency period was over”²⁰⁷. The first operational agreement signed in April 1975 with the RRC shows that Oxfam was, in fact, committed to carrying

²⁰² *Ibid*, P.7

²⁰³ Berhe Beyene, “How CRDA...”, P. 6

²⁰⁴ Christian Relief Fund, “First Report...”, P. 1

²⁰⁵ *Ibid*, P. 1

²⁰⁶ Dessalegn Rahmeto et al “Oxfam...”, P. 15

²⁰⁷ Fantahun Ayele, “NGO Relief Operation in Wollo: 1973-1986” (MA thesis, History, AAU, May 1994), P. 26

forward its vision. The agreement stated that Oxfam would carry out projects including agriculture, health, education, training, water development and social welfare²⁰⁸.

However, the socio-economic reorganisation from the early 1975 onwards and the centralisation of power thereafter convinced Oxfam that Oxfam, in fact, would not “do” development in the way it understood it. Contrary to Oxfam’s strategic direction that necessitated public space in which project participants would be active in the development process, the government asserted its authoritarian rule through a network of organisations. This, according to Oxfam, stifled the self-help spirit of the people. Frustrated by the situation, Mr. Stephen Llod, Deputy Country Representative of Oxfam in Ethiopia reported that, “...it is very difficult to find ways of working here which are not top-down. The heavily directive nature of official intervention leaves little room to develop a particular milieu”²⁰⁹. Oxfam argued that this heavily directive condition not only narrowed the space but also contributed to weaken the country’s economic performance and exacerbate the agricultural crisis of the 1980s. Oxfam’s Field Director reported to the Oxfam office in Oxford that the erroneous economic policy of the government was the prime factor behind the agricultural crisis that was apparent in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Preference for large scale commercial agriculture, controlled pricing, lack of incentive to small-holding agriculture were some of the factors that he emphasised²¹⁰. Similar criticisms within Oxfam continued throughout the military period. A policy discussion within Oxfam reached its peak level in the middle of the 1980s²¹¹. Stephen Lloyd enumerated a wide range of structural constraints that, he believed, traumatised the poor people. He said, for instance, that farmers were forced to pay excessive tax and contribute to mass organisations, service cooperatives, etc²¹². He also discussed the paradox wherein the governmental Agricultural Marketing Corporation was imposing quota systems on farmers for supply, while, on the other hand, the Ministry of Agriculture and the RRC were appealing for food aid to relieve these farmers²¹³. The market for the remaining surplus was severely restricted. The result of all these, Mr. Lloyd concluded, “...greatly reduces not only the incentive to increase output, but also the ability to invest in inputs and land improvement”²¹⁴.

²⁰⁸ “Agreement between the Provisional Military Administrative Council: Relief and Rehabilitation Commission and Oxfam GB” (April 24, 1975), P.1

²⁰⁹ Letter from Stephen Llod to Roger Nauman (September 7th, 1987), P.1, Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

²¹⁰ Letter from Hugh Gyder to Oxfam (Oxford), April 1, 1983, Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

²¹¹ *Ibid*, P. 1

²¹² *Ibid*, P.1

²¹³ *Ibid*, P.1

²¹⁴ *Ibid*, P.1

As a response to the prevailing socio-economic and political conditions that it criticised, Oxfam kept a low profile. The intention of Oxfam to keep a low profile was quite apparent from the beginning. A senior official of Oxfam advised the organisation in 1975 in the context of the Ogaden region that “We [Oxfam] should not err on the side of instigating too large a project...I would feel that the lower figure is the more sensible; with tentative commitments by us to remain involved in an extended scheme”²¹⁵. The last phrase, “...tentative commitment to remain involved” suggests that Oxfam developed a survivalist attitude. This was, however, a universal attitude of international NGOs, and as one of the sources shows, “Those [international NGOs]...adopted low profile”²¹⁶. The government noted this reaction and encouraged NGOs to develop their welfare commitment even further to ...[be] allowed [by the government] to function in the new society”²¹⁷

However, international NGOs turned down the government’s request to increase their profile. Rather, in order to deal with the anticipated anger of the government, they were engaged in trying to build up their image. In a massive rehabilitation programme that UNHCR had launched in the Ogaden in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Oxfam was selected as one of the partner NGOs. The reports that Oxfam’s liaison officer submitted show that Oxfam still wanted to keep its profile low. In the rehabilitation process in the Ogaden, organisational rivalry between UNHCR, the RRC and the Red Cross was evident. UNHCR developed a strong leaning towards the Red Cross League. Rather oddly, it began to criticise nearly everything that the League did and yet sent its staff to imitate the League’s work²¹⁸. The extraordinary care that Oxfam’s field officer took shows the extent to which Oxfam cared about possible threats to its image. He reported that “I have refused several times to do things which I believe would prejudice Oxfam’s relations with the authorities here”²¹⁹. This made the organisation almost idle in the ongoing rehabilitation process in the Ogaden. The field officer reported that, “We have stood on the sidelines watching the play”²²⁰. However, the marginal role of Oxfam itself posed a potential threat to its image. The RRC had profound expectations of Oxfam and it had informed Oxfam about this²²¹. As a result, the field officer was concerned that the minor role Oxfam was playing in the Ogaden could tarnish its image. Due to this, he called up on his superiors to step up the commitment of the organisation. He

²¹⁵ “Report by Malkolm Rarpar...”, P.12

²¹⁶ Dessalegn et al, "Oxfam...", P. 15

²¹⁷ *Ibid*, P. 15

²¹⁸ Letter from Gerry Salole to Goyder et al (March 5th, 1983), Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

²¹⁹ *Ibid*

²²⁰ *Ibid*

²²¹ Letter from Ato Shimäles to Oxfam GB (June 10, 1982), Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

recommended in one of his reports “I believe that it would stand Oxfam’s image in Ethiopia much good [better] if we were seen to be taking some responsibility for apart...indirectly of the returnees programme”²²². He also specified the type of activities and the area where they would be implemented. He suggested water and sanitation to be implemented in Aysha that would “...help restore and better the living condition of people who have been much abused by war [the Ethio-Somalia War of 1977–1978]”²²³.

The outbreak of the famine in 1983–1984 and the solution that the government proposed triggered debate within and between NGOs in the country. In its early stage, international NGOs underestimated the famine and played an insignificant role in the relief operation. The main factor here had to do with the development ideology that they pursued at that time. By the early 1980s, student radicalism had merged with socialism to produce a particular ideology among NGOs which can be called developmentalism. This focuses on increasing agricultural production, the construction of schools, hospitals, and water wells but also assumes that this process can lead to the transformation of the state. The idea was revolution through development. There was a firm belief that groups of people involved in development projects could transform economic relationships and ultimately the state itself²²⁴. A number of NGOs including Oxfam were driven by this ideology. Individuals sharing this ideology took over the leadership of Oxfam in Oxford. Driven by this ideology, Oxfam was opposed to managing the relief operation when the famine occurred in 1983–1984 in Ethiopia. This was the main reason why Oxfam’s trustees decided in early 1984 that in Ethiopia “...relief projects should be avoided and development projects sought”²²⁵.

The intention to avoid relief operation had a profound consequence. Unlike Oxfam, a number of NGOs notably the SCF took an active role in the relief operation and this was praised by the media. Conversely, Oxfam was criticised for failing to play an active part in the relief operation. This created disagreements within Oxfam. Concerned by the grave consequences that a media report could have on Oxfam, a senior official in Oxford criticised the Oxfam Field Director. He told the Field Director that:

The problem over the Ethiopian situation was of course the unsuspected and sudden showing of the television films with the very strong SCF bias. It would have been of great help to us if you

²²² *Ibid*

²²³ *Ibid*

²²⁴ Tony Vaux, *The Selfish Altruist: Relief Work in Famine and war* (USA and UK, Earthscan, 2001, P.62

²²⁵ *Ibid*..., P. 46

could have sent us a telex informing us that those films were being made and that they were going to be shown very shortly. We were also very taken aback by Mike Wooldridge's wild and hysterical statements that we could not ignore²²⁶.

Under pressure from the media, Oxfam abandoned its survivalist attitude and started playing an active part in relief, rehabilitation and development activities. These activities were carried out in a context wherein the government was undertaking a number of controversial projects to follow. International NGOs were involved in these projects and in doing so, they allowed themselves to be surrogates of the military government.

The government started agricultural and environmental rehabilitation programmes that included a massive resettlement programme from the mid-1980s. The government believed that relocating people from famine-prone areas in the north to surplus producing areas could ensure food security. In 1988, the RRC addressed a letter to Oxfam where it summed up the viability of the resettlement programme. It states that "...the settlement programme is and will continue to be a viable development scheme and designed and carried out by our government to improve the lot of our people and thereby extricate them from dependency"²²⁷. However, the resettlement programme had political motives as well. The military government used raw force to resettle people in food insecure regions, although the government always argued publicly that resettlement was voluntary²²⁸. The reality was different. The governor of Wollo, from which the people were resettled in large numbers, told officials of Oxfam and SCF that "...given the natural attachment of people to their homes resettlement could not succeed as a voluntary activity"²²⁹. This forced relocation of people was in fact aimed at meeting a political end. The regions of Wollo and Tigray, from where the majority of the people were relocated, were threatened by rebel organisations such as the Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF). The government wanted to drain the social basis of the rebels by relocating the people from these regions. Thus, relocation of the people was part of the counter-insurgency strategy of the military government²³⁰.

Médecins Sans Frontières dared to publicly denounce the government's use of force and tried to mobilise other NGOs in the country to stand together against the government policy²³¹. Other

²²⁶ Letter from Mikael Harris to Goyder (May 13, 1983), P. 1, Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

²²⁷ Letter from RRC to Oxfam (February 23th, 1988), P.1; Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

²²⁸ Letter from RRC to Oxfam (February 23th, 1988), P.1; Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

²²⁹ RRC, Wollo province to RRC, Addis Ababa (February 11, 1988, P.1, Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

²³⁰ Hugh Goyder, "Report on Oxfam's Work in Drought Relief: March 14-28, 1983", P. 1

²³¹ Robert Dodd, "Oxfams...", P. 130

NGOs took the opposite side. Oxfam, who took the lead in supporting resettlement, clashed with Médecins Sans Frontières. Oxfam justified itself by arguing that as long as resettlement was inevitable, it was important to assist the people during the process. Oxfam became an easy target for criticism by Médecins Sans Frontières, largely because it was the only agency that was providing water in the resettlement sites²³². Although its rationale is not clear, Oxfam also endorsed the villagization (resettlement of people in designated villages during the military period in Ethiopia), at least in areas where it operated. Its own evaluation report stated that "...Oxfam has tacitly gone along with the government villagization program which was not popular with the peasantry, donor agencies or NGOs"²³³.

Oxfam was not the only agency that supported the resettlement and villagization programme. In fact, it was CCRDA that convinced its own members, including Oxfam, to support the resettlement programme. In a situation where Médecins Sans Frontières condemned Oxfam and other NGOs, CCRDA issued a position statement. CCRDA (then CRDA) condemned Médecins Sans Frontières for criticising the government's policy that, it said, was sensible. Part of it reads "CRDA's position is that it does, through its members, support the general policy of resettlement as this is a defensible policy in the light of chronic drought conditions of northern Ethiopia"²³⁴. CCRDA also rejected the accusation of Médecins Sans Frontières that the government committed gross human rights violations in the name of resettlement. Concerning this, the same statement quoted above states that "CRDA members would point out that it is impossible to prove or disprove their allegations, as many might have died of starvations or related diseases if they have stayed either in their own villages or in the relief camps"²³⁵.

Resettlement in which NGOs were involved was only one way of dealing with the food crisis. The Ministry of Agriculture started a massive agricultural and environmental relief programme, with which it called upon NGOs to get involved²³⁶. The Ministry found it easiest to convince ASE to get involved in this programme, as the leadership of ASE itself saw that the correspondence education ASE had been supplying could not address the socio-economic crisis that the famine created. This was a big strategic shift, as ASE had previously held the firm belief that

²³² Tony Vaux, *The Selfish...*, P.62

²³³ Dessalegn Rahmeto et al "Oxfam..." , P. 20

²³⁴ "CRDA Memebers Statement on Resettlement" (nd), P.1

²³⁵ *Ibid*, P. 1

²³⁶ Ministry of Agriculture, "Guidelines for Ministry of Agriculture and NGOs Cooperation" (November 1990), P. 4

correspondence education was a reliable strategy for achieving the objectives of development. A statement made at an early stage shows the extent to which the organisation believed in the validity of this strategy. It stated that:

We are utterly convinced...[that]...correspondence course...can achieve their educational aim and provide learning experiences for groups of people. And they [beneficiaries] can do so by themselves. It is not necessary for one to go on the spot to set up groups and teach them²³⁷.

In the midst of food crisis, the leadership of ASE concluded that correspondence education alone could no longer be the only strategy employed. Due to the environmental crisis, the leadership of ASE believed that unless otherwise supported with intervention projects, education and training alone would never address the poverty that had resulted in famines²³⁸. Like those NGOs that argued for the resettlement programme, ASE argued for a modification of its strategy. One of ASE's donors, the INADES-Formation openly rejected the argument put forward by ASE's officials on the basis of its own development philosophy. INADES-Formation strongly believed that though it appears to be sluggish and cumbersome, rural education through correspondence is the only feasible approach to carrying out sustainable development in African and Latin American contexts²³⁹. INADES-Formation continued with this argument for the next ten years, while ASE was similarly determined to carry forward the ideas *it* had proposed. On closer observation, ASE's confidence originated from the strong interest NOVIB and EZE (ASE's major donors) had shown since the early part of the 1980s in modifying ASE's development strategy. Thus, when the conflict between ASE and INADES-Formation became evident, the two donors allied with ASE²⁴⁰. Thus, a split apparently emerged, between ASE officials and their major donors EZE and NOVIB on the one hand and INADES-Formation on the other. As far as this is concerned, a senior INADES-Formation official said that:

I had the opportunity to meet the two main donors of ASE, EZE and NOVIB, to whom the position of the head office [INADES-formation] was explained. They expressed concern about the position of IF towards ASE and also about the fast growth of ASE²⁴¹.

In rejecting the new development approach pursued by ASE, INADES-Formation made its position clear, stating that, "...rural development takes more than three years project to yield significant

²³⁷ "Marking" (nd), P.2

²³⁸ Informants, *Ato Gétachäw Wäрку; Ato Amanuél*

²³⁹ Informants, *Ato Gétachäw Wäрку; Ato Amanuél Assäfa*

²⁴⁰ Edouard de Loisy, "Mission Report: 2nd-26th April 1987" (May, 1987), P. 1

²⁴¹ *Ibid*, P.1

results”²⁴². In this INADES-Formation remained adamant, despite the fact that it saw some impressive changes wrought by ASE’s strategic shift. A field visit by INADES-Formation’s mission in 1994 concluded that “ASE’s... intervention appeared to be responsive to the local needs...”²⁴³. Regardless, not long after this report was made, INADES-formation sent another mission that still argued that ASE was to focus on rural education and training. This contradictory position taken by INADES-Formation, and the methodology with which this last evaluation was undertaken angered the leadership of ASE greatly, and did nothing to weaken their determination. They issued the following response:

We would like to point out that re-evaluation of evaluation without full cognition of ASE’s development philosophy, objectives, strategies like the case of the IF [INADES-Formation] mission, clearly shows lack of professionalism and premeditated interest and outright rejection of other development option. It should be born in mind that, socio-economic environment that ASE operates is quite distinct with that of other INADES-formation offices and global recommendations of adult education through correspondence is not acceptable by ASE²⁴⁴

The leadership of ASE warned that “...If the condition set by the mission to abandon the new orientation is endorsed by the IF, ASE shall remain holding fast to its development and operational objectives regardless of dissociation with IF”²⁴⁵.

In summary, NGOs proposed radical ideas that were opposed to the orthodoxies of dominant actors such as the state. While the state argued for conventional intervention driven by modernization theory, NGOs considered themselves as allies of the poor and pledged to “empower” them so that they would have the capability to negotiate with dominant actors. NGOs deviated from this vision during the military period. Two factors are mentioned for this. To begin with, the military government that secured its legitimacy from the revolution of 1974 ensured its dominance through a series of measures. Secondly, NGOs’ internal weaknesses induced them to consider the revolutionary government as a useful ally. As a result, NGOs endorsed official policies and acted accordingly without bothering much about the implications of their decision and actions on their development ideals.

²⁴² *Ibid*, P.1

²⁴³ Letter from ASE to IF (1996), P.5-6, Archive of ASE

²⁴⁴ *Ibid*, P. 9

²⁴⁵ *Ibid*, P. 9

2.4.3. A New Order, a Quest for New Visions and State Action

NGOs have shown an impressive progress with regard to re-articulation of their vision and to act accordingly since the beginning of 1990s. Both external and internal environments are to be explored in order to analyse the content of this new vision. Externally, the Soviet Camp on which the military regime had depended collapsed and under pressure from donors who now became powerful, the new government took a series of measures that favored NGOs. The issue here is how NGOs understood the context in which donors and the Ethiopian government negotiated and how they seized this opportunity in reformulating their vision. Before addressing these issues, we should discuss the “indigenisation”. Indigenisation was a process that goes back to the beginning of NGOs’ activities in Ethiopia. However, reaching a new height in the 1990s, “indigenisation” placed to the leadership of NGOs Ethiopians who played an important role in the articulation of the new visions.

2.4.3.1. “Indigenisation” of NGOs

In the 1960s and 1970s, expatriates were heavily represented in the leadership positions of NGOs. NGO leaders noted very well that this did not go along with their visions. This led them to varying degrees of “indigenisation”. Differences did exist between NGOs with regard to the degree and pace of “indigenisation”. For instance, ASE went through the earliest rapid and complete “indigenisation” process. The process started with the leaders of ASE trying to resemble the locality where they were operating. Expatriate ASE staff were able to speak Amharic, the official language, translated the French texts for teaching project participants into Amharic²⁴⁶. They prepared close to 50 training manuals in Amharic for training farmers and development agents. The Ethiopian Ministry of Agriculture duplicated these materials to serve the Agarfa Farmers Training Center and other agricultural training institutions in the country²⁴⁷. Moreover, as per the agreement reached with ASE, the Ministry of Education introduced an agricultural syllabus into the Ethiopian elementary school system with a textbook prepared in Amharic by leaders of ASE²⁴⁸.

“Indigenisation” of ASE had an organisational dimension as well. “Indigenising” ASE was conceived of as soon as ASE became operational. *Ato Zeleke Dessalegn*, a service student²⁴⁹ at

²⁴⁶ Informants, *Ato Amanuél*; *Ato Alemu*; “Yäaba Hénri...”

²⁴⁷ “Ya Abba Hénäri Ravayn...”, P. 2

²⁴⁸ *Ibid*, P.2

²⁴⁹ Before graduation, university students during the imperial period should deliver service for one year and they were called service students, the name derived from the programme itself, National University Service

Alemaya University whom the Ministry of Agriculture assigned to serve ASE in 1971, narrates that he, "...was a director almost half of the period [totally more than a year]" he worked for ASE²⁵⁰. Indeed, *Ato Zeleke* was assured by the director that he could take over the leadership if he wanted to work for ASE. However, he declined to accept the offer for personal reasons²⁵¹. The rapid expansion of ASE due to the willingness of some donors to support ASE's activities in the context of the revolution of 1974 also facilitated the "indigenisation" process. This was because ASE employed a number of Ethiopians. In 1975, it had 22 staff, 16 of whom were Ethiopians²⁵². Due to the difficulty of finding qualified candidates, the leadership positions were still occupied by expatriates. However, the organisation planned that, "Ethiopian counterparts work alongside foreign personnel and will eventually take over, some as early as next year [1976], others after a period of further training here or abroad"²⁵³. This was fully achieved. By recruiting experienced Ethiopians who had worked for the Wollaita Agricultural Development Unit (WADU) and by sending competent Ethiopians abroad for study, the transfer of responsibility from expatriates to Ethiopians was completed in 1977; the transfer included the direction of ASE at the management and section level²⁵⁴. *Ato Tilahun Haile* became the first Ethiopian executive director of ASE in 1977²⁵⁵.

While it was achieved relatively easily in the case of ASE, "indigenisation" was influenced by the origins of a number of other NGOs in Ethiopia, some of which encountered structural problems in carrying the "indigenisation" process through to enlisting Ethiopians to fill leadership positions. A good example of this was CCRDA. Ethiopians played a significant role in establishing the Christian Relief Fund (CRF), the precursor of CCRDA. In fact, it was an Ethiopian, *Ato Berhe Beyene*, who together with the Irish priest Fr. Kevin Doheny, first proposed the idea to set up the broad-based organisation that eventually became CCRDA. *Ato Berhe* himself tells us that, "If one asks Berhe who was the brain behind the establishment of CRDA, Berhe would say Dohney. If one asks Dohney the same question, he would certainly say Berhe"²⁵⁶. *Ato Berhe* was the first chairman of CCRDA²⁵⁷, while representatives of certain Ethiopian NGOs such as the Haile Selassie I Famine

²⁵⁰ ASE, "ASE's 30th...", P.31

²⁵¹ Informant, *Ato Amanuél*

²⁵² ASE, "Situational...", P. 5

²⁵³ *Ibid*, P.5

²⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 3

²⁵⁵ Informant, *Ato Getachew Worku*

²⁵⁶ Berhe Beyene, "How did...", p.6

²⁵⁷ Kevin Dohney, *No Hands...*, P.99

Relief Committee were also founding members of CCRDA. The Haile Selassie I Famine Relief Committee was one of the organisations that had presented the earliest report about the Ethiopian famine of 1973–1974²⁵⁸. However, expatriates were much more visible in the leadership of CCRDA. This was because the executive committee was elected from the members of CCRDA, and foreign NGOs were predominant in Ethiopia. This was considered to be of major concern. The vice chairman of CCRDA, Fr. Doheny was always concerned about the problem and encouraging member NGOs to bring Ethiopians into the leadership in their respective NGOs. *Ato* Berhe tells us about the consistent concern of Fr. Doheny. He says that:

በክርስቲያን በጎ አድራጎትና ልማት ድርጅት ወርሃዊ ስብሰባዎች ላይ የፈረንጆች ቁጥር ከኢትዮጵያውያን ቁጥር በዝቶ የተገኘ እንደሆነ በጣም ያዝኑ ነበር። የሚሰዩን ድርጅቶች ኢትዮጵያውያንን በመሪነት በየስብሰባው መገኘትና ማስተማር እንዳለባቸው ምክር የሚሰጡ ናቸው።

He [Fr. Dohney] was sad whenever the number of foreigners was greater than the number of Ethiopians in the monthly meeting of CRDA. He used to advise the missions [NGOs] that they should let Ethiopians take the lead²⁵⁹.

The situation started to change towards the end of the 1970s and the early 1980s. Though their number was still fewer, Ethiopians in the leadership were more assertive and were involved in major decisions. This could be seen from the debate that followed the decision of CCRDA to get involved in the relief operation in 1984–1985. Ethiopians, spearheaded by the chairman *Ato* Asrat Gebre, argued that as an Ethiopian organisation CCRDA had a direct responsibility to relieve Ethiopians stricken by the famine²⁶⁰. Representatives of some 20 foreign NGOs argued that CCRDA's mandate should be limited to coordinating the work of its member organisations²⁶¹. In the context of this heated debate, the chairman reminded expatriates that they were in Ethiopia just to assist, and warned them not to argue further. He told them that:

Since this is [our] home, most of you have come to help, and since many of you are new to Ethiopia, we will not disappoint you with a schism. I hope this way of doing business is not repeated again simply because the thread that holds us together is very thin and weak”²⁶²

The outbreak of the famine itself caused the establishment of national NGOs. These NGOs became members of CCRDA and their representatives occupied positions in the executive committee, the general assembly as well as in the secretariat. However, the position of the executive director that symbolised CCRDA was still held by an expatriate. The “indigenising” of CCRDA was completed after a further regime change in 1991. The new government developed a policy of reducing foreign

²⁵⁸ Berhe Beyene, “How did...”, p.4

²⁵⁹ Berhe Bayene, *Bäsämén Ityopya Yätäkäsätaw Rehab: 1964-1966*, Amharic (Addis Ababa, 1983 EC), P.104

²⁶⁰ David Alexander, “Memorandum” to CRDA chairman of CRDA (1985), P.1, Archive of CCRDA in Addis Ababa

²⁶¹ *Ibid*, P.1

²⁶² “Memorandum” from *Ato* Asrat Gebre to Members of CRDA (October 9th, 1985), P.3

influences. In response, Brother Augustus O’Keeffee, a French expatriate who had served CCRDA as executive director for 20 years, resigned in 1995²⁶³. A committee set up to recruit a candidate stipulated that his incoming replacement, the British expatriate John Roberts, was to hand his post on to an Ethiopian. Roberts agreed that he would train an Ethiopian as his successor. However, this did not work out because the government refused to grant a work permit to Mr. Roberts. It was under this circumstance that CCRDA came to have its first Ethiopian executive director, *Ato* Kebedde Asrat, and with this it was fully Ethiopianised²⁶⁴.

The policy that the government pursued to reduce foreign influences influenced international NGOs as well, which also went through some degree of “indigenisation” in response. One of these was Oxfam, which recruited Ethiopian managers as well as Ethiopian employees. However, a report published in 1990 stated that, “There is too big a gap in experience and qualifications between the expatriates at management level and the Ethiopian staff”²⁶⁵. As in other parts of the world, Oxfam’s office in Ethiopia came to have some degree of autonomy. This followed the regionalisation process that started in the mid 1990s. As a result, Ethiopians started holding key leadership positions. For the first time in its history, Oxfam came to have the first Ethiopian resident representative, *Ato* Gezahegn Kebede, who served Oxfam as Country Director from 1998 to 2003²⁶⁶.

2.4.3.2. NGOs between opportunity and challenge in relative liberalism

Although they have provided assistance of one kind or another, donor organisations have not necessarily aimed to influence the state to grant NGOs space where they could argue for alternative development paradigms. This was particularly true in the context of the Cold War when governments in Africa aligned themselves with either the socialist or the capitalist camp, which often led to African leaders abusing their power over their own peoples²⁶⁷.

Towards the end of the 1980s, the context changed with the collapse of the socialist camp. The then-current Ethiopian government had been dependent on the socialist camp, and could therefore no longer get any form of assistance. This, together with its military defeats at the hand of armed opposition forces in the north, forced the military government to negotiate with the Western

²⁶³ Minutes, “Executive Committee Minutes” (February 22nd, 1995)

²⁶⁴ “Executive Committee Minutes of CRDA” (July 29th, 1997)

²⁶⁵ Dessalegn et al, “Oxfam...”, P. 51

²⁶⁶ Informant, *Ato* Semu Terefe

²⁶⁷ Tony Vaux, *The Selfish...*, P.48

powers. As a result, in March 1990, the government announced the “New Economic Policy” that intended to liberalise the economy²⁶⁸. Just over a year later, the military government collapsed and a new transitional government was set up by ex-rebels who had embraced Albania’s version of Marxism together with political parties that represented various ethnic groups²⁶⁹.

In what could be described as a step toward significant progress, the new government, as represented by the RRC, began to drive NGOs to adopt long term perspectives, by guiding them to abandon their relief orientation. To this end, the government issued a series of legislations, including a ban on importation of goods, including food, from abroad²⁷⁰. Moreover, in order to stifle free distribution of food, the government introduced a new national policy on disaster prevention, preparedness and response that argued for the integration of food aid with development work²⁷¹. In order to follow up the implementation of this national policy and as part of its reorganisation of central governmental offices, the government decentralised the RRC²⁷².

For highly centralised NGOs namely CCRDA, the decentralisation of governmental organisations posed a serious problem. This was because CCRDA did not have regional structures to negotiate with newly created regional governmental organisations. Moreover, the government introduced a series of legislations that affected NGOs without consulting NGOs themselves, on e.g. NGOs’ re-registration, duty free status, legislation on micro finance etc²⁷³. In protest, leaders of CCRDA resigned one after the other. This put the association in a critical condition. The chairman of the association summed up the prevailing frustration within CCRDA, telling the Executive Committee that “It is critical to ensure that the integrity of CRDA [CCRDA] is... [maintained] during this time when we are facing big challenges and are in a difficult moment”²⁷⁴.

CCRDA adjusted itself through a strategic planning exercise and embraced a broader vision in 1997. The strategic planning document described how CCRDA envisioned a poverty-free Ethiopia²⁷⁵. This vision was widely debated by the Executive Committee of CCRDA. A sub-

²⁶⁸ Dessalegn Rahmeto et al, “Oxfam...”, P. 10

²⁶⁹ Aregawi Berhe, “A Political History of the Tigray People Liberation Front: 1975-1991” (PhD Disertation, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, 2008), P. 213

²⁷⁰ “Minutes of the Executive Committee of CRDA” (July 23th, 1996)

²⁷¹ “National Policy on Disaster Prevention and Management” (October 1993), P.5; CRDA, “Position Paper of Member Agencies on Food Security in Ethiopia” (August 1996), P.3

²⁷² *Ibid*, P.3

²⁷³ CRDA “Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting” (July 23th, 1996)

²⁷⁴ “Minutes of the Executive Committee” (September 22nd, 1995)

²⁷⁵ CRDA, “A Conceptual Paper for Organizational Repositioning of CRDA” (Addis Ababa, August 2008), P. 13

committee set up to follow up the strategic planning exercise consulted every member of the executive and management committees and came to a conclusion that poverty alleviation and collective actions were common denominators²⁷⁶. Poverty alleviation had long been supported by donors. On the eve of the collapse of the military government, a group of donors such as NOVIB and EZE met the Executive Committee of the CCRDA, "...to find the vision which CRDA [CCRDA] has for the future"²⁷⁷. NOVIB and EZE also told the Committee that, "...sustainable development by local NGOs is their priority"²⁷⁸. Thus, in order to carry forward its vision, CCRDA adopted capacity building for members and creating an enabling environment as its key strategic directions²⁷⁹.

Poverty alleviation was advocated as well by donors who funded ASE. This was the result of a shift in donor policy after the cessation of the war in the country, during which NOVIB, as one of the chief donors of ASE, had limited its provision of funds. A few months after the regime change of May 1991, the Africa Desk officer of NOVIB told the acting executive director of ASE that "Novib's policy with regard to Ethiopia was based on the reality of the wars"²⁸⁰. Following the end of the military government, NOVIB increased its financial commitment in an effort to alleviate poverty. Thus poverty alleviation in Ethiopia was again part of NOVIB's priority at the international level. In the early 1990s, NOVIB noted that the end of the Cold War would give way to market-led economic systems in developing countries and the market would never address poverty and hunger. As a result, NOVIB concluded that poverty alleviation and gender equality were to be their priority²⁸¹. In doing so, NOVIB had conducted consultations with its partners including ASE. In a letter addressed to NOVIB, the Executive Director of ASE stated that he fully agreed with the poverty alleviation agenda in Ethiopia²⁸². Thus, in 1996, ASE came up with a broader vision of a happy (desirable) rural Ethiopia that would be realised by eradicating poverty²⁸³. Like CCRDA and ASE, Oxfam was influenced by changes taking place in and outside of Ethiopia. In June 1990, Oxfam contracted a group of consultants to evaluate the opportunities that the "New Economic Policy" of March 1990 would create for NGOs. Two years before the

²⁷⁶ "Minutes of the Executive Committee" (January 6th, 1997)

²⁷⁷ "Minutes of the Executive Committee" (February 5th, 1990)

²⁷⁸ "Minutes of Executive Committee (February 5th, 1990)

²⁷⁹ *Ibid*, P.13

²⁸⁰ Letter from Marck Couwenbergh to Ato Wold Gebreal (July 4th, 1991), P.2, Archive of ASE in Addis Ababa

²⁸¹ "First Draft of NOVIB's Position Paper: The UN Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen (March 1995) and the UN Women's Conference in Beijing (September 1995) for the Dialogue with Partners (1993)", P.1

²⁸² *Ibid*, P. 1

²⁸³ ASE, "ASE's Strategic Plan" (2000), P. 45

Policy was announced, Oxfam had articulated a sentiment that development in the way it understood it could not be “done” in Ethiopia. These consultants challenged this tendency within Oxfam, arguing that the contention put forward by Oxfam that development could not be “done” in Ethiopia rested on a “too narrow” definition of development in the Ethiopian context. In their final report, the consultants appealed to Oxfam to “...develop and feel comfortable with a long term perspective”²⁸⁴.

Motivated by the end of the Cold War, the international office of Oxfam conducted a strategic review and reaffirmed that Oxfam stood to relieve poverty and suffering in any part of the world. In its strategic review document, Oxfam stated with a new sense of conviction that “The continued existence of poverty on the eve of the twenty-first century is a scandal which shames us all. Its elimination is the greatest moral, political and intellectual challenge that the world faces”²⁸⁵.

The government encouraged NGOs to adopt a long term perspective largely because the government itself took poverty alleviation as its top priority, introducing various strategies of its own to that end, at different times. In 1993, it introduced what is known as Agricultural Development Led Industrialization. Sponsored by the World Bank and the IMF, the government also introduced the Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Programme in 2001/2002²⁸⁶.

The Ethiopian government and NGOs, thus, reached a tacit agreement, with the government assuring NGOs that they would be part of the effort toward alleviating poverty²⁸⁷. The government was, however, concerned by the impact that NGOs could create on the government. In 1993, the ruling party stated its concerns on the growth of NGOs and its political consequences, stating that:

We should not try to bring in outsiders to lead the peasants. In the rural areas, there are an increasing number of governmental and non-governmental development workers. These lower level members of the intelligentsia can undermine our influence and development programme if they oppose our political line²⁸⁸.

The government seem to have got evidence from the mid-1990s that NGOs could, in fact pose a challenge as a number of NGOs adapted the “rights-based approach” to development, which itself gained impetus in the early 2000s. As a study sponsored by CCRDA and Oxfam shows, “The

²⁸⁴ Dessalegn Rahmeto et al “Oxfam...”, P. 43

²⁸⁵ “Setting Course for the Twenty –First Century: Oxfam GB Strategic Review” (July 1998), P. 6

²⁸⁶ Dessalegn Rahmeto, “The Voluntary...”, P. 103

²⁸⁷ Tony Vaux, “Visit to Ethiopia: September 17–29, 1991”, p. 3

²⁸⁸ John Markakis, *Ethiopia: the Last Two Frontiers* (James Curry Ltd, Britain, 2011), P. 253-254

rights-based approach had become the main development agenda in order to increase people's claim for their basic and human rights"²⁸⁹. However, NGOs were cautious with regard to acting within the framework of this "rights-based approach". CCRDA in particular pursued this with excessive caution. In July 1996, the secretariat of CCRDA together with Fund for Peace planned to organise an advocacy training program with regard to women, children, the disabled and those with HIV/AIDS. To that end, the secretariat asked the Executive Committee for advice as to how to run the training. The response of the Executive Committee shows the policy of extreme caution that CCRDA was pursuing, advising the secretariat to act in close collaboration with the relevant government offices like the Women's Affairs Office of the Prime Minister²⁹⁰.

Despite their apprehension, NGOs hoped for mediation by foreign donors. In the early 1990s, major donors, World Bank and the IMF had focused more on grand reforms such as liberalisation of the economy and reorganisation of governmental institutions, and it was not uncommon for NGOs to approach representatives of major donor organisations. In January 1997, e.g., the leadership of CCRDA met Mr. J.D. Wolfenson, the then president of the World Bank, and made a presentation to him on NGO-government relations in Ethiopia²⁹¹. A decisive move came about in the early 2000s when the World Bank and IMF came with the preoation of the Poverty Reduction Strategic Paper (PRSP) for Ethiopia. Government officials had earlier argued that the government was the sole body responsible for preparing the PRSP. NGOs who knew that the stated terms of the IMF and World Bank called upon the government to include NGOs in the preparatory phases had taken the proactive step to discuss amongst themselves the PRSP. The government thus necessarily decided to include them, as both were required to prepare one document²⁹².

When the PRSP document was eventually finalised in 2002 (and came to be known as the Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Paper, SDPRP), it contained a few statements indicating goodwill on the part of the government towards NGOs. It noted that NGOs could become development partners in activities related to poverty reduction and in service delivery in the core areas of agriculture, health, education and water. SDPRP was willing to grant NGOs at the local level the role of monitoring poverty reduction fund management. The document also envisioned a

²⁸⁹ Horn Consult, "Constituency Building on Ethiopian NGOs" (Addis Ababa, November 2003), P. 4

²⁹⁰ CRDA, "Minutes of the Executive Committee" (July 9th, 1996)

²⁹¹ CRDA, "Minutes of the Executive Committee" (January 21th, 1997)

²⁹² Dessalegn Rahmeto, "The Voluntary...", P. 102

greater role for the organisations in the democratisation process begun via the poverty reduction and decentralisation processes²⁹³.

Once they trusted that a plurality of views was allowed for in the country, NGOs articulated political visions in the framework of poverty alleviation. As the representative of a substantial number of NGOs in the country, CCRDA took the leading role in promoting a new political vision of, "...the Ethiopia society which is poverty free and empowered in handling its own affairs"²⁹⁴. Oxfam in Ethiopia upheld a similar vision to CCRDA, which they articulated in terms of, "Empowered citizens enjoying fundamental and democratic rights..."²⁹⁵ This reflects the fact that Oxfam, had come to the conclusion that governance in Ethiopia was a key strategic issue in moving the effort toward creating a poverty-free Ethiopia forward²⁹⁶. ASE argued that the people had to be "empowered" in order to make poverty eradication sustainable²⁹⁷.

The NGOs' new sense of purpose aimed to redress the power inequity that existed between citizens and the government. This was based on the conviction that poverty results from the power imbalance that exists between rulers and the ruled. As a result, it was held that no technical solution would address the problem; it rather required major changes in governance. In a Position Statement that was circulated to various organisations, the Executive Committee of CCRDA pointed out that democracy was a key issue for addressing poverty in the country. Part of it stated that:

The long aspired desire of the Ethiopian people...is to see an enabling environment for their active involvement in the development endeavors of the country. This stems from the desire to extricate themselves from the quagmire of poverty and destitution and thereby lead a dignified life. This...can't be realized without the prevalence of peace, stability and no less importantly/quite critically democracy²⁹⁸

This interpretation of poverty originated from the global development discourse of the 1980s. The development as "empowerment" approach began to emerge as a part of a new formula that challenged "top down" development policies and engaged relationships of power and inequality. The emphasis was on grassroots work and collective action, through which marginalised communities could take autonomous actions to assert greater control over the environment in

²⁹³ *Ibid*, PP. 102-105

²⁹⁴ CRDA, "A Conceptual Paper for Organizational Repositioning of CRDA" (Addis Ababa, August 2008), p. 17

²⁹⁵ Oxfam, "The Changes that Need to Happen in Ethiopia, and Oxfam GB's Role: Draft National Change Strategy (Addis Ababa, 2008), P.17

²⁹⁶ *Ibid*, P. 17

²⁹⁷ Amanueal Assefa, "Supporting Rural/Farmer Centered Civil Society Institutions (CSI): Strategies and Guidelines for the Establishment and Development of CBI" (Addis Ababa, May 2006)

²⁹⁸ CRDA, "Position Statement" (Addis Ababa, June 20th, 2005), P.1

which they lived²⁹⁹. While they analysed the Ethiopian situation in the light of this framework, NGOs were also influenced by ideals of a group of individuals who wanted to see change in Ethiopia. In other words, the new visions of NGOs were supported by a group of Ethiopians in the opposition party who were connected to CCRDA, which articulated the visions that the majority of NGOs in Ethiopia upheld. The “empowerment” discourse within CCRDA was well articulated in 2003/2004 by a British organisational development advisor, Allan Kaplan. He was contracted by the Executive Committee of CCRDA to study the future role and place of CCRDA within civil society. The resulting report, published in March 2004, triggered debate at various levels. Members of the Executive Committee endorsed the recommendations of Mr. Kaplan. The position of the Executive Committee, as summed up in one of the documents, stated as follows:

CRDA would like to enable its members to become leading exponents of a civil society; to see themselves as participating and contributing towards such a civil society. This is a far cry from seeing NGOs simply in the role of relief and service delivery towards poverty reduction. It recognizes that fostering of a civil society includes actions towards justice, social transformation and the dimension of marginalization and social exclusion wherever it is found in society. It will strive as central to its vision and mission to enhance the capacity of civil society organisations to engage with social transformation and good governance³⁰⁰

For organisations like CCRDA that had remained docile throughout the military period, this strategic shift was, in fact, a bold decision. The consultants themselves were impressed by the ease with which the new strategic direction was endorsed by the Executive Committee as well as by members of the Secretariat. They reported that “The conversations that took place allowed the groups [Executive committee and members of the secretariat] to engage critically and openly with the issue at hand, to move beyond defensiveness and fear and to arrive at a point of understanding and clarity in relation to the issue at hand”³⁰¹.

The main reason the new strategic direction was received enthusiastically was that politicians who were critical of the government were well represented in the Executive Committee. The Memorandum of Associations that the organisation endorsed at various times did not forbid politicians to be members of the Executive Committee. As will be discussed below, in the context of violence which emerged in Addis Ababa following the 2005 elections, CCRDA was to be accused of circulating an “illegal” position statement. In clarifying the position statement,

²⁹⁹ David Lewis and Naznee Kanji, *Non Governmental...*, P.55-56

³⁰⁰ CRDA, “CRDA Change Management Plan: Towards Building a Vibrant Civil Society” (Addis Ababa, March 2005), P. 8

³⁰¹ Memo on “Consultation Process on the Membership” from Sue Davidoff and Allan Kaplan to Executive Committee of CRDA” (April 26, 2004), P. 1, Archive of CCRDA in Addis Ababa

incoming Executive Committee members discussed the representation of these political party members therein, stating that:

As we have come to understand after the issuance of the [Position] Statement, the presence of political party leadership in the CRDA Executive Committee at that time, and the issuance of the Position Statement under such circumstance, could have undermined the credibility of the Executive Committee as well as the Position Statement³⁰².

While members of the Executive Committee and the Secretariat were fully committed to the vision they articulated, some members of the CCRDA stood against the speedy endorsement of the new political vision. Members of the secretariat organised meetings in which they discussed the new sense of purpose. The initial and general response of the membership was one of high emotion and defensiveness. Members of CCRDA argued that the report detailing the new strategy which the membership was provided with was blunt and direct, and that the new strategy was a political direction³⁰³. Members of the Secretariat also reported that they were unfairly attacked by some of the members for presenting the new strategy for open discussion³⁰⁴. However, some members also supported the new strategic direction³⁰⁵.

Imbued with a new sense of purpose, NGOs were driven into the national Parliamentary elections that took place in Ethiopia on May 15th, 2005. This election was the most contested that the country had ever experienced. Under the auspices of CCRDA, NGOs were variously involved throughout the election process, in the pre-election, election and post-election phases. Prior to the election, CCRDA published brochures on the basic tenets of democracy, and its leaders gave a series of interviews to private newspapers. CCRDA also sponsored the publication of civic education materials in weekly newspapers³⁰⁶. During the election day itself, CCRDA dispatched 104 representatives from member NGOs whom it had recruited and trained to observe the fairness of the election³⁰⁷. Concerning their neutrality, the ex-executive director of ASE stated that:

እኛ ምንም ስለ መንግሥት አንናገርም ፡፡ ግን ህብረተሰቡ ራሱ መብቃት ያለበትን ምን እንደሆነ እናስተምረዋለን ፡፡ እኛ እከሌ መጥፎ ነው እከሌ ጥፋ ነው የማለት መብቱም አቅሙም የለንም፡፡ የራሱን ምርጫ ይወስዳል፡፡ ያን ትምህርት ‘ቤዝ’ አድርጎ ሚ.ር ‘X’ ወይ ሚ.ር ‘Y’ ፓርቲ መምረጥ የራሱ ጉዳይ ነው፡፡ አግሪ ሰርቪስ ይሄን አድርግ አይልም፡፡

We don’t speak about the government. But we teach the society about how to empower itself. We do have neither the right nor the capacity to label this or that party as good or bad. Let he/she

³⁰² *Ibid*

³⁰³ “Following the Tracks” (nd), P. 1

³⁰⁴ *Ibid*, P.1

³⁰⁵ *Ibid*, P. 1

³⁰⁶ “Outline of Activities undertaken by CRDA in Connection with the May 2005 National Election and the aftermath” (Addis Ababa, nd), P.1

³⁰⁷ *Ibid*, P.1

[member of the society] takes his/her choice. It is up to him/her to choose Mr. 'X' or Mr. 'Y' on the basis of that education. ASE does not say do this or that one³⁰⁸.

In the tense and violent post-election period, CCRDA called upon both the ruling and opposition parties to respect the verdict of the people. To that end, the organisation issued two position statements, both of which were circulated to the contending parties, donors and embassies, NGOs and the wider public. The first CCRDA position statement was issued on May 21st, 2005. The statement first praised the active public participation that attested to the desire of Ethiopians to handle their own affairs. The statement pointed out its concern that the looming tension would stifle the enthusiasm of the people and called upon the contending parties "...to adhere to the lofty ideals of democracy, which involves, among others, accommodating, tolerance, and respect for the views of others and ironing out of differences through negotiations and resorting to constitutional and legal provisions of the country to iron out the problem"³⁰⁹. Their second position statement was issued a month after that, on June 20th, 2005. In the interim, the security forces had committed grave human right violations. Demonstrators were arrested in their thousands, human rights defenders were harassed, quite large numbers of people were killed and a controversial state of emergency was declared by the prime minister. This position statement condemned all of those acts and called upon the government to set up an independent investigation inquiry mission, of which NGOs should be members, to investigate whether the security force used excessive force or not³¹⁰.

In the post-election period, the government came up with the Ethiopian Charity and Society Act approved in 2009. The law classifies NGOs into three categories based on nationality and income. "Ethiopian Charities" are those formed under the laws of Ethiopia, all of whose members are Ethiopians; which generate more than 90% of their income from Ethiopia, and are wholly controlled by Ethiopians. These NGOs may work on governance and rights issues. The category of "Ethiopian Residents Charities", on the other hand, refers to national NGOs that receive more than 10% of their funding from foreign sources, and these are unable to work on human rights and governance issues. "Foreign Charities" are defined as charities that are formed under the laws of foreign countries, or which consist of members who are foreign nationals, or are controlled by

³⁰⁸ Informant, *Ato Gétachāw Worku*

³⁰⁹ CRDA, "A Statement on the Recent National Election in Ethiopia" (Addis Ababa, May 21, 2005), P.2

³¹⁰ CRDA, "Position Statement of the Executive Committee on the Current Situation in Ethiopia" (June 20th, 2005), P.2

foreign nationals, or receive funds from foreign sources³¹¹. Like Ethiopian Residents Charities, “Foreign Charities” may not work on governance and rights issues. This proclamation was a heavy blow for the flourishing civil society sector in the country³¹².

2.5. Conclusions

In this chapter, we have explored the contexts in which the selected NGOs in Ethiopia have articulated and rearticulated development visions. These visions contained ideas, ideologies, policies, strategies; approaches that focused on the structures of poverty and the potential of project participants to change these structures, the means to exploit their potential such as public participation, empowerment and equality.

The NGO leaders demonstrated their ability to analyse the national and global contexts while articulating their development visions. However, as a number of scholars rightly argued, the ideals held by NGOs have failed to transform the wider scope of poverty or social inequality³¹³. The Ethiopian case has shown that ideals that NGOs held as to how to manage development enjoyed only limited opportune to flourish. Certainly, successive governments tolerated NGOs out of necessity. They saw that NGOs could mobilise resources that the country needed to tackle the food and agricultural crisis since the 1960s. Moreover, the government that seized power in May 1991 was bound to tolerate NGOs due to the influence of donors. However, none of the three forms of government allowed NGOs ideals either to coexist with their own views on development, or to get the upper hand. This has had to do with clear differences between governmental actors and NGOs with regard to their strategic preferences on how to achieve “development”.

³¹¹ Dessalegn et al, *CSOs/NGOs in Ethiopia: Partners in Development and Good Governance* (Addis Ababa, 2010), P. 104

³¹² *Ibid*, P. 104

³¹³ David Lewis and Naznee Kanji, *Non Governmental Organizations and Development* (Routledge Publishers, London and Nework, 2009), P.88

Chapter Three

Space of Action

3.1. Introduction

NGOs operate in multiple-organisational contexts. As a result, NGOs space of action is determined by their continuous interrelationships with these organisations. Space of action here refers to the extent to which NGOs have freedom to translate plans that they design to achieve the objectives for which they operate.

Governments determine the scope of space in which NGOs operate. The extent to which governments determine this scope depends on the attitude that they hold towards NGOs. Governments' attitudes to NGOs vary from place to place, and tend to change with successive regimes. These attitudes range from active hostility, wherein governments may seek to intervene in the affairs of NGOs or even to dissolve them (with or without good reason), to periods of active courtship and partnership (and sometime cooptation), as governments may, alternatively, seek to incorporate NGOs into their own policy and intervention processes³¹⁴.

A range of factors might nurture the attitudes of governments towards NGOs. For instance, governments feel threatened when e.g., international resources, previously provided as bilateral aid, are given over entirely to NGOs. In this case, governments tend to control NGOs, insisting that NGO governance and finances be monitored in order to ensure honesty, and that there should be proper coordination of activities, both between their government and NGOs, and among NGOs themselves. As a result, relations between NGOs and the state are often tense and unstable³¹⁵. On the other hand, NGOs may tend to favour an operating context that provides an enabling environment in which the state provides sound management of the economy, provides basic infrastructure and services, and maintains peace and the democratic rule of law. And depending on the context, this too may also strain relations with the government or governments in question³¹⁶.

Generally, the NGOs in Ethiopia operated in a hostile political environment. As Fowler has stated, "...the official perspective [of the regimes] is one of NGOs as less desirable elements within

³¹⁴ David Lewis and Naznee Kanji, *Non Governmental Organizations and Development* (Routledge Publishers, London and Nework, 2009), P.26

³¹⁵ *Ibid*, P. 27

³¹⁶ *Ibid*, P. 27

wider...forms of civil society as preferred development partner”³¹⁷. However, political regimes have not been the only factor that has determined NGOs’ space of actions in Ethiopia. The military period (1974–1991), saw perpetual conflict. This determined the NGOs’ space of action in two ways. To begin with, the mobility of NGO staff was constrained by the government. Secondly, armed groups, notably the TPLF, took NGO workers as hostages and threatened their development works.

The presence of difficult circumstances does not necessarily suggest the absence of venues in which NGOs operated. In spite of their hostility, none of the Ethiopian regimes attempted to outlaw the existence of NGOs, as a consequence of their utilitarian attitude towards them. On the other hand, they did force NGOs to refrain from intervening in “hot” issues. To that end, they introduced administrative and legal mechanisms that made NGOs accountable to government offices. Thus while NGOs adhered to official policies, they also used various tactics to survive during the imperial and the military period. Change came with the regime change in the 1990s when NGOs went into high gear in terms of both seizing and creating opportunities to speak on behalf of the people and stand with them. This was particularly true in the context of the parliamentary elections of 2005.

3.2. Policies of governments towards NGOs in Ethiopia

3.2.1. Religious hostility of governments and NGOs

The policies of governments in Ethiopia have been motivated by various factors, starting with religion, which has informed official attitudes of all the three regimes in Ethiopia, whose common attitude has been to stand against such evangelisation as comes under cover of “development”. However, they have nonetheless each recognised the contributions of faith-based NGOs. The imperial government realised that faith-based NGOs could support efforts to reconstruct the country after the damages inflicted by the Italian occupation. That government planned to undertake massive infrastructural development, for which it required the raising of educational standards. Missionaries became involved in the process. However, the official body of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) was opposed to the proliferation of missionaries. In order to appease the national Church, the government introduced Decree No 3, 1944 whereby the country was divided into Christian and non-Christian zones. The missions were then allowed to build

³¹⁷ Alan Fowler, “Preface” in Daniel Sahleyesus, *Non Governmental Organization in Ethiopia: Examining Relation between Local and International Groups* (Ontario, the Edwn Mellen Press, 2005), P. iii

churches in the non-Christian areas where each of the missions would be allotted specific areas of influence, but the decree barred foreign missions from converting adherents of the EOC. They could build hospitals and schools in Christian area as long as they were not engaged in evangelisation³¹⁸.

Clearly, the decree was the first legal document that created opportunities for faith-based NGOs to start operating in the post-Italian period. However, in line with the position of the EOC, the government intervened in the religious affairs of faith-based NGOs. In July 1960, the Adventist Mission applied to the Ministry of Interior for permission to open schools and clinics in three places in Kambata province, in the south-west of Ethiopia. The Ministry told the Adventist Mission that it had to comply with two preconditions: a) that the mission would not preach orally or in written form against the observance of the national holidays, especially Sunday; b) that the mission would not baptise any person who was already a baptised member of the EOC before the individual concerned was above 21 years of age and thus mature enough to make their own choice³¹⁹. On another occasion, however, the Ministry of Interior may be seen to have acted in a way that sidelined the provision of Decree No 3, 1944. By the early 1960s, the American Lutheran Mission planned to start schools, clinics and agricultural development project in Ella, in Awsa province in the Wollo region. According to Decree No 3, The American Lutheran Mission could run the proposed programmes in Ella, as it belonged to the non-Christian area. However, senior government officials argued that the project should be started in Wuchale, an area that remained under the influence of the EOC, despite the fact that the Mission clearly stated that the primary objective of the project was to preach the Gospel. In a letter it addressed to the Ministry of Pen, the Mission stated that “....we are primarily concerned with bringing the advantages of civilization and the Gospel of Jesus Christ to people such as the Danaklies that is to those who don’t yet know Christ”³²⁰. The government nonetheless insisted that the American Lutheran Mission could run the programme it proposed, without evangelising. The two cases show two important things. The first is that because of the official policy that favoured the EOC, the government intervened in the

³¹⁸ Alemayehu Alemneh, “A Review and Evaluation of the Work of Foreign Missions in Ethiopia in the Twentieth Century” (BA thesis, HSIU, Faculty of Theology, 1970), P. 6

³¹⁹ Letter from the Ministry of Interior to Ethiopian Union Mission of Seventh Day Adventist (August 11, 1960), the National Archive and Library Agency, File No 1.2.35.01

³²⁰ Letter from the Ministry of Pen to the American Lutheran Mission (December 21, 1959), the National Archive and Library Agency (NALA), File No 1.2.35.01

religious affairs of faith-based NGOs. The second issue is that the government nonetheless welcomed the contribution of NGOs.

The military government that seized power in 1974 soon accepted socialism as a state ideology and discouraged the influence of religion on public life. NGOs responded in two ways: some faith-based NGOs left the country³²¹, while others remained quiet and refused to make public statements. This was intentional and necessary, “...to avoid the provocative nature of the repressive Communist regime of Mengistu [the president] whose hatred to religion and the West was loudly pronounced”³²².

A decisive incident occurred in 1983–1984 when NGOs rushed into Ethiopia to rescue famine victims. The government believed that these NGOs had a hidden agenda. The ex-chief commissioner of the RRC stated that, “They [NGOs] were looked up on [by the government] as...religious organisations that dampened the militant spirit of the people”³²³. As if to confirm the perception of the government, some faith-based NGOs were caught distributing Bibles and pamphlets and preaching in relief shelters. This provoked the regime. In March 1985, the regime issued a decree that closed down about 700 places of worship in the southern provinces of Sidamo and Shoa and a number of clergymen and followers were put in jail³²⁴.

The end of the military government reduced significantly state intervention on affairs of NGOs that predicated on religion. This has been enshrined in the constitution that Ethiopia ratified in 1994. Article 27, No 1 of the constitution recognised that “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion”³²⁵. However, the Ethiopian government has expected that faith-based NGOs should have programme that could assist the effort of the government. Two issues stand out here. The first one has to do with the difficulty to decide whether programmes of NGOs have been supportive to the development of Ethiopia or not. Secondly, the government has been concerned that faith-based NGOs could disseminate extreme version of religion. The two issues could be shown in connection with the Kenyan Gospel of God Church that applied to the Ethiopian Embassy in Harare to get legal permission to operate in Ethiopia. The Ethiopian Embassy in Harare supported the application of the Kenyan Gospel of God Church on the grounds that its plan went

³²¹ Dessalegn et al, "Oxfam Country Review: Ethiopia" (June 1990), P. 15

³²² ASE, “ASE’s 30th Anniversary”, *Agri-Drum* (Addis Ababa, February 2000), P.8

³²³ Wolde Giorgis, *The Red Tears: War, Famine and Revolution in Ethiopia* (Red Sea Press, Trenton, 1989), P. 241

³²⁴ *Ibid*, P. 241

³²⁵ “Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia”, P.8

along with the “development” underway in the country, as the Church stands to fight laziness and theft³²⁶. Conversely, the Ethiopian Embassy in Kenya that was approached to comment by the International Organisations Affairs Directorate General sent a report that was opposed to the recommendation of the Ethiopian Embassy in Harare. The Ethiopian Embassy in Kenya stated that the Church would not contribute to “development” in Ethiopia at all. Instead, the Embassy stated that adherents of the Church shave their hair and grow their beards, and that over time might pose a serious threat to Ethiopia³²⁷. The International Organisations Affairs Directorate General automatically rejected the application of the Kenyan Gospel of God Church and informed the Ministry of Justice that it was not in favour of the registration of the Church³²⁸. Moreover, using the case of the Kenyan Gospel of God Church as an opportunity, the Directorate General summarised the long-standing policy of the government. In a letter addressed to the Ethiopian Embassy in Kenya, the Directorate General stated that:

ድርጅቱ ያቀረበው የፈቃድ ጥያቄ አገራችን የምታደርገውን የልማት እንቅስቃሴ የሚያግዝ ባለመሆኑና ከዚህ ቀደም በተመሳሳይ መልኩ ሀይማኖታዊ ተግባር ለማከናወን የመጡ መንግስታዊ ያልሆኑ ድርጅቶች በመስሪያ ቤታችን በኩል ድጋፍ ያላገኙ መሆኑና የዚህም ድርጅት ጥያቄ ለመደገፍ የምንችል መሆኑን አየገለጽን፤ ለወደፊትም ቢሆን በተመሳሳይ መልኩ በብቸኝነት በሃይማኖት ስራ የተሰማሩ ድርጅቶች የማናስተናግድ መሆኑን ተገንዝባችሁ ተመሳሳይ ጥያቄ ለሚያቀርቡ እንድታሳውቁ እንጠይቃለን።

As it was not supportive to the development that the country has been undertaking and as similar other organizations failed to get our organization’s approval, we hereby let you know that we decline to accept the request of the organization [the Kenyan Gospel of God Church] and that you inform in the future similar organizations engaged solely in religious affairs that their applications would not be endorsed³²⁹

3.2.2. Ethnicity, governments and NGOs

Ethnicity is also one of the major factors that influenced the attitudes of government officials. A number of ethnic/region based NGOs have been operational since the 1950s: the Guraghe Road Construction Organisation (renamed the Gurage People’s Self-Help Development Organisation), the Gojjam Development Organisation, the Gonder Development Association and Mecha and Tulama Self-Help Association among the most prominent³³⁰. Their primary objective was to build schools, clinics, and feeder roads with funds from their members. However, they were looked upon

³²⁶ Embassy of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia in Zimbabwe (Harare) to International Organizations Affairs Directorate General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (23.06.2005), File No. 4-4/0/4

³²⁷ Embassy of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia in Zimbabwe (Harare) to International Organizations Affairs Directorate General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (08.11.2004), File No. 4-4/0/4

³²⁸ Letter from International Organizations Affairs Directorate General to the Association Registration Office of the Ministry of Justice (09.08.2005), File No. 4-4/0/4

³²⁹ Letter from International Organizations Affairs Directorate General to the Ethiopian Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya (15.11.2004), File No. 4-4/0/4

³³⁰ Daniel Sahleyesus, *Non Governmental Organization...*, P. 84

with suspicion by the imperial government for conducting anti-government activities. As a result, they operated under restrictions³³¹. Concerned by the growing influence of these ethnic/region-based NGOs, the imperial government promulgated the Legal Notice 321 of 1966. According to Legal Notice 321/1966, registration regulations for associations were incorporated into the “Internal Security Act”³³².

The first victim of the sensitivity of the imperial government was the Mecha and Tulama Self-Help Association set up in 1963 mostly by Oromos in Addis Ababa. The Association did not have any political ambitions amongst its official objectives³³³. However, the organisation could mobilise its members to a large extent. As a result, it remained under the watchful eye of the security persons. Finally, the organisation was outlawed and its leaders were accused of attempting to overthrow the government and they were sentenced to various punishments³³⁴.

This skeptical stance towards ethnic / region-based NGOs only intensified during the military period (1974–1991). The formation of ethnic-based development associations was strongly discouraged by the government. Thus, the approach of people organising themselves along ethnic or locality lines stayed out of favour up until 1991³³⁵.

The Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) that seized power in May 1991 used ethnicity as a guiding principle to restructure the governmental system. As a result, the government encouraged ethnic/region based NGOs to flourish. Concerning this, Mr Tony Vaux, a senior official of Oxfam who met with the new official of the RRC in 1991, reported that, “NGOs...are...welcome to set up programmes [operational or otherwise] wherever they wish, and it seems that the TG [Transitional Government] will not at all object to the adoption of specific areas for comprehensive development”³³⁶.

³³¹ Dessalegn Rahmeto, “Civil Society Organization in Ethiopia” in Bahru Zewde and Siegfried Pausewang eds. *Ethiopia: The Challenges of Democracy from Below* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet and Addis Ababa: Forum for Social Studies, 2002), P. 104

³³² Kassahun Berhanu, “The Role of NGOs in Promoting Democratic Value: The Ethiopian Experience” in Bahru Zewde and Siegfried Pauswang (eds), *Ethiopia: The Challenges of Democracy from Below* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet and Addis Ababa: Forum for Social Studies, 2002), P. 127

³³³ Olana Zoga. *Gezot: Yä Méca-Tulama Mahbär Tarik* (Addis Ababa, 1985 EC), P. 459.

³³⁴ Christopher Clapham, *Haile-Sellassie's Government* (London: Longmans, 1969), P. 177

³³⁵ Daniel Sahleyesus, *Non Governmental Organization...*, P. 84

³³⁶ Tony Vaux, “Visit to Ethiopia: September 17-29, 1991” (nd), P. 3

3.2.3. Security and Accountability of NGOs in Ethiopia

NGOs are accountable under the relevant laws of the particular country in which they operate, and states have legal powers to intervene if, e.g., NGOs transgress laws relating to accounting rules, bureaucratic procedures and registration obligations³³⁷. The term accountability is used here as defined by Edward Hulme and Hugo Slim. According to Edward Hulme, accountability refers to, “The means by which individuals and organisations report to a recognized authority [or authorities] and are held responsible for their action”³³⁸. As Hugo Slim has rightly said, accountability is more than financial reporting and includes, “...reporting on relationships, intent, objectives, method and impact”³³⁹.

NGOs in Ethiopia had existed long before a governmental organisation to which they were accountable was designated. The Ethiopian Red Cross Society, the Boy Scouts Association, the Ethiopian Women Welfare Association, the Minelik II Memorial Fund, the Haile Selassie I Foundation and the Young Male Christian Association of Ethiopia had all been set up, governed and regulated by Charters enacted by imperial Order³⁴⁰.

In the 1950s, when ethnic-based NGOs emerged in large number, the imperial government saw the need to recognise and account for them. Thus, Article 47 of the revised 1955 constitution granted the right to form or join associations³⁴¹. In 1960, the Ethiopian Civil Code was promulgated, which stipulated that an Office of Association would be set up within the Department of Public Security of the Ministry of Interior to administer NGOs³⁴². The Department came to have excessive power to intervene in the internal affairs of autonomous associations. A legally registered association had to report to the Department of Public Security whenever it held a meeting³⁴³. The Department of Public Security might also be represented by an observer at such a general meeting. Any such association was also to inform the Department about the decisions taken within a month following the holding of such a meeting³⁴⁴.

³³⁷ David Lewis and Naznee Kanji, *Non Governmental...*, P.26

³³⁸ Edward Hulme quoted in Solomon Belete, “NGO Accountability: The Case of “Charities” in Ethiopia” (MA in Development Studies, Kimmage Development Study Center, Deblin, 2011), P. 21

³³⁹ Slim H quoted in Solomon Belete, “NGO Accountability...”, P. 21

³⁴⁰ “Good Practices and recommendations on the Legal Framework for NGOs in Ethiopia” (2002), P.7

³⁴¹ Christopher Clapham, *Haile-Sellassie's...*, P. 177

³⁴² Imperial Government of Ethiopia, *Civil Code of the Empire of Ethiopia* (1960), P.78

³⁴³ *Ibid*, P.79

³⁴⁴ *Ibid*, P.80

This institutional arrangement suggests that security was a primary concern to the imperial government. The Public Security Department exercised strict control over NGOs from the early 1970s onwards due to the outbreak of the famine in 1973–1974. On 14th April, 1973 three staff members of Haile Selassie I University visited famine-stricken areas of Wollo and submitted a report in which they described the state of famine and presented photos of victims. Students of Haile Selassie I University reacted to the disaster instantaneously, trying to assemble to address the problem. Facing the government’s determination to hide the famine, students were confronted with concerted attacks by university guards and police who had invaded the campus³⁴⁵. To complicate the situation further, radical students prepared for armed struggle against the imperial government. From 1974 onwards, their struggle was directed against the military government that had seized power in the midst of the revolution³⁴⁶.

The ongoing conflict had profound implications for NGOs. When students protested against the government, the Public Security Department refused to grant permission for NGOs to come from abroad to help famine victims³⁴⁷. Eventually, however, the fact that the famine grew beyond the ability of the state to manage it, “...forced the imperial government to open its doors to NGOs”³⁴⁸.

During the military period, the government carried out a profound restructuring of NGO accountability. This was particularly true in the context of the famine that occurred again in 1983–1984. Two factors stand out here. To begin with, armed groups operated in Northern provinces where the famine was much more serious. Moreover, the government was openly hostile to the Western countries from which 48 NGOs staffed by 500 expatriates came. The head of state, Mengistu Haile Mariam argued that NGOs posed a security threat and that they were to be chased out. The chief commissioner of the RRC argued back, however, insisting that, “...if we were suspicious about the activities of...foreigners, the solution was not to get rid of them, but to strengthen our security agencies”³⁴⁹. The commissioner’s argument saved the NGOs. NGOs were allowed to relieve famine victims and continue operating after the relief operation was over, and the RRC retroactively legalised the presence of those expatriate staff of NGOs that had entered

³⁴⁵ Bahru Zewde, *The Quest for Socialist Utopia: The Ethiopian Students Movement c. 1960-1974* (James Currey Ltd, 2014), P. 183

³⁴⁶ Letter from Miller to Tony Vaux (23th December, 1981), P.18, Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

³⁴⁷ Desalegn Rahmato, “Civil Society...”, P. 106

³⁴⁸ *Ibid*, P. 106

³⁴⁹ Dawit Wolde Giorgis, *Red Tears*...P. 200

Ethiopia without the necessary documents due to the famine³⁵⁰. Concerning this, RRC told NGOs that:

There is no other better way to legalize the participation of each expatriate in saving human lives and to protect the validity of their humanitarian endeavors in our country than to assure that each and every expatriate of each NGOs possess all the necessary legal documents which justify his/her presence in the country for undertaking his or her assignment³⁵¹.

This legalisation of expatriates should not, however, be taken to suggest there was any relaxation of control of NGOs. As will be discussed below, the RRC imposed heavy restrictions on NGOs. Although motivated by security concerns, these restrictions were also used by the RRC to control NGOs' resources. These restrictions were included in an agreement NGOs signed in June 1984³⁵². Two issues therein remained controversial. The first issue was that resources connected to projects were under the custody of the RRC³⁵³. The second was that the salaries of NGO employees were to be made public³⁵⁴. NGOs argued that these provisions constituted government control over their activities³⁵⁵. The commissioner argued that the intention of the new agreement was to standardise the agreements held between the government and all NGOs present in Ethiopia. He further stated that:

We have found out that these agreements [earlier agreements between RRC and NGOs] need to be standardized. The non uniformity of these agreements has sometimes been a major cause of misunderstanding and their uneven applications have been a source of unnecessary discussion and correspondence³⁵⁶.

However, provisions in the agreement also suggest that the RRC wanted accurate accounts of NGOs' financial activities. According to No 1 of Article VII, NGOs were expected to keep genuine income and expenditure accounts. No 2 of the same article empowered the RRC to review and verify the financial management of all NGOs. Article 8 stipulated that external auditors should be jointly appointed by the RRC and NGOs³⁵⁷. Moreover, RRC wanted to have control over NGOs' resources. Article II, No 3 stipulated that NGOs would have to hand over all their assets to the RRC at the end of their operation³⁵⁸.

³⁵⁰ Fantahun Ayele, "NGO Relief Operation in Wollo: 1973-1986" (MA thesis, History, AAU, May 1994), P. 86

³⁵¹ Letter from RRC to Oxfam (September 26, 1986), Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

³⁵² *Ibid*, P.86

³⁵³ "Minutes of the Meeting [between RRC and CRDA]" (December 9, 1983), P. 2

³⁵⁴ *Ibid*, P.2

³⁵⁵ Fantahun Ayele, "NGO Relief...", P. 87

³⁵⁶ Letter from Chief Commissioner of RRC to Brother Augustine O'Keeffe: CRDA's Coordinator (March 29, 1984), Archive of CCRDA in Addis Ababa

³⁵⁷ "General Agreement for Undertaking Relief and/or Rehabilitation Activities in Ethiopia by NON-Governmental Organizations [CRDA], Article II, No 4 (September 5, 1984); Fantahun Ayele, "NGO Relief...", P. 87-88

³⁵⁸ *Ibid*, P. 89

Although they were opposed to this, all NGOs except the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) signed the general agreement with the RRC. Since it was a national NGO, the EECMY refused to sign the general agreement prepared for foreign NGOs. The Aid Coordination Department of the RRC subsequently refused to grant work and travel permits to expatriates employed by EECMY. The EECMY could no longer resist. In 1985 it was finally forced to come into line with the RRC and sign the general agreement³⁵⁹.

After signing the agreement with the RRC, NGOs were required to present a detailed plan of the operation/s to be undertaken. Based on this information, a draft project agreement would be prepared and signed. This specific agreement included a detailed description of all project activities to be carried out, the amount of relief and rehabilitation goods to be distributed, the number of beneficiaries to be assisted, the number of expatriate and local staff to be employed and the total budget to be allocated. Like the general agreement, the project agreement consisted entirely of the obligations and responsibilities of NGOs. The main responsibility of the RRC was to supervise and follow up project activities. NGOs, on the other hand, were committed to providing the required funds for the implementation of a project, to employ expatriate (if need arose) and local staff and to supply the necessary goods and tools³⁶⁰.

However, undertaking hectic emergency operations in the country, NGOs failed to send reports to the RRC. As RRC told NGOs, “The Relief and Rehabilitation Commission has not been receiving reports from the agencies [NGOs] on their relief and rehabilitation programmes”³⁶¹. In order to deal with the problem, the RRC set up five teams within its Early Warning Department and grouped the 42 NGOs into four categories. Each of four teams in the Early Warning Department would control one group of NGOs and one team would supervise the whole³⁶².

When the emergency period was over towards the end of 1986, the same modality of controlling NGOs was maintained. Depending on the type of projects that they wanted to run, NGOs were entering into partnership with technical line departments together with the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission³⁶³.

³⁵⁹ Fantahun Ayele, “NGO Relief...”, P. 87

³⁶⁰ RRC, “Procedures and Guidelines for Obtaining Clearance and for Undertaking Humanitarian Activities in Ethiopia: An RRC Manual (February 1982), P. 7-8; Fantahun Ayele, “NGO Relief...”, P. 92

³⁶¹ Letter from Relief and Rehabilitation Commission to Oxfam (July 29th, 1986), P.1, Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

³⁶² *Ibid*, P.2

³⁶³ Dessalegn et al, "Oxfam...", P. 16

To conclude, the policies that the three regimes followed in collection with NGOs were nurtured by factors chiefly religion and ethnicity. The imperial and military governments developed systems whereby they accounted NGOs. This was for three main reasons. To begin with, they were against religion. The imperial government was in favor of the national Church. Partly because of this, imperial government stood against evangelization by faith-based NGOs that came from abroad. To make things worse, the military government stood not only faith-based NGOs that came from abroad, but also the national church. The same was true with regard to ethnicity. Due to their pan-Ethiopian agenda, the imperial and military governments discouraged ethnicity as a way of organizing society. Secondly, NGOs were considered to be a security threat and hence the imperial and military governments accounted NGOs. Thirdly, the military government wanted to control the resources that NGOs mobilised. It is, thus, clear, that the continued existence of NGOs depended to a larger extent on how skillful were NGOs in maneuvering during the imperial and the military period.

3.3. NGOs' maneuvering and its effects

NGOs used numerous tactics to tackle administrative, legal and political constraints, once they realised that the imperial and the military governments held strict control over their activities. In response, the NGOs operated in ways that built up the confidence of governments in them. NGOs believed that their objectives would be met only when they worked closely with authorities of the two regimes. This remained unchanged throughout the imperial and the military periods, however a significant change NGOs experienced with the transition from one to the other was to the form of their relationship with each government. During the imperial period, NGOs generally had a form of relation with the government that could be called courtship. This was the time when NGOs went to great lengths to assure the imperial government that they were working in support of them. The most commonly-used tactic of those national NGOs that emerged prior to the 1960s was to enlist high-ranking officials in the leadership of their organisations. Concerning this, Kassahun tells us, "This first generation [national] NGOs in Ethiopia functioned in close cooperation with government departments. Government officials presided on the organizations' decision making bodies as presidents and board chairpersons and members"³⁶⁴.

³⁶⁴ Kassahun, Berhanu, "The Role of...", P. 122

The close relation between state and NGOs continued throughout the 1960s and 1970s. NGOs that showed up during this time secured the favour of government officials although they did not place high-ranking government officials in their leadership. As they began to recognise the role of NGOs, officials of the imperial government showed a great deal of interest in assisting them. Sometimes, this led to stiff competition between officials. For instance, due to the role of government officials during its establishment, ASE secured various form of support from the Ministry of Agriculture. This was in line with a project agreement signed on June 1st, 1969 whereby ASE would operate under the “sponsorship” of the Ministry of Agriculture. The Minister of Agriculture, *Dejjazmach* Germachew Tekle Hawariat, believed that such “sponsorship” gave the Ministry of Agriculture a ground upon which to guide ASE. When, before long, he insisted that ASE was to withdraw from Wollaita and start to operate in Harar, his birthplace, this was resisted by *Dejjazmach* Wolde Semait, the administrator of Wollaita. The two officials finally reached an agreement that ASE would operate chiefly in Wollaita, and then expand towards Harar depending on its resources³⁶⁵. *Dejjazmach* Wolde Semait was grateful to ASE’s decision to operate in Wollaita. As a result, ASE secured all of his authority’s administrative and technical support. As Fr. Henry stated, “...We [the founders of ASE]...together gave life to ASE, backed as we were, by the local authorities of the government”³⁶⁶.

The leaders of ASE were not mere observers in the conflict of interest between the Minister of Agriculture and the administrator of Wollaita. Recognizing the favour that they had secured from the administrator at the provincial level, the leaders of ASE told the Minister of Agriculture that they wanted to operate in Wollaita. When the disagreement became heated, they considered petitioning to the monarch to settle the matter³⁶⁷. This supplication was a usual option to which NGOs resorted in order to resolve the problems they faced during the imperial period. Specific cases suggest that this tactic was effective. Frustrated by the bureaucratic hurdles thrown up by the Ministry of Education and Fine Arts, a representative of the Baptist Bible Fellowship appealed to the monarch, stating, “...I have striven to get the business finalised so that the new mission might begin working, but without success”³⁶⁸. On July 25th, 1960, this representative of the Fellowship

³⁶⁵ Informant, *Ato Amanuél*

³⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p. 24

³⁶⁷ Informant, *Ato Amanuél Assefa*

³⁶⁸ Letter from the Baptist Church Fellowship Mission to the Ministry of the Imperial Palace (August 25, 1960), National Archive and Library Agency, File No 1.2.35.01

managed to meet with the monarch, who consented to consider the project. Permission was soon granted and the organisation continued its religious and educational activities³⁶⁹.

ASE's readiness to use the same means influenced the Minister of Agriculture to allow ASE to operate in Wollaita. Mollified, also, by the promise that ASE would expand towards Harar, the Minister of Agriculture assisted ASE's activities. This was in line with the "sponsorship", a form of relation between ASE and the Ministry of Agriculture. ASE duly asked the Ministry to provide technical cooperation and organisational assistance. This was granted. Organisationally, ASE depended on the network of rural governmental organisations. Extension workers of the Ministry assisted ASE's project participants by explaining concepts³⁷⁰. *Ato* Dessalegn Tanga, one such extension agent, played a significant role in this regard. He personally believed that teaching, "...scientific agricultural system not only the youths but also the farmers' would eventually address the structural problems in the region³⁷¹. The Ministry also seconded staff to work for ASE. Run by expatriate volunteers in its early stages, ASE was understaffed. As a result, it applied to the Ministry to assign a service student from Alamaya University³⁷². Thus, *Ato* Zeleke Dessalegn was seconded³⁷³. The assistance of the Ministry had an organisational dimension as well. Organisations under the management of the Ministry of Agriculture –the Extension and Project Implementation Department (EPID), which was the official agricultural extension service; the Wollamo Agricultural Development Unit (WADU), and the Kenbata Agricultural Development Unit (KADU) – served ASE as channels through which teaching materials of ASE used to reach project participants³⁷⁴. ASE also made use of other channels, such as missionary offices in ASE's operational area³⁷⁵.

The revolution that erupted in 1974 was a landmark event with regard to the NGOs' space of action. Coordinated by CCRDA, NGOs in the country had played a pivotal role in the relief operation in 1973–1974. The military government, which condemned the imperial government for failing to avoid the famine, appreciated NGOs, particularly CCRDA, whose fame became widespread. *Ato*

³⁶⁹ Edward P. Lipton, *Religious Freedom in Africa* (Nova Science Publishers, 2002, New York, 2002), p.57

³⁷⁰ "Supplementary Note on Conclusion and Recommendations of ASE Evaluation (1970-89): Extract (nd), P. 28

³⁷¹ Akpak Studio, "Yaagriservis Ethiopia Ameseraretna Yewedfit Aqtachaw"

³⁷² During the imperial period, third year university students were sent to different government offices before they got their degree

³⁷³ Akpak Studio, "Yaagrisärvis..."; ASE, "ASE's 30th Years...", P.30; informant, *Ato* Amanuél Assefa

³⁷⁴ Mariyam van Reisen, "Agri-Service Ethiopia: Programme Evaluation (1989), P. 5; "Supplementary Note...", P. 28

³⁷⁵ Mariyam van Reisen, "Agri-Service Ethiopia...", P. 5

Berhe, one of the founders, described how, "...the credibility of CRF [precursor of CCRDA] grew beyond the imagination of its members"³⁷⁶.

CCRDA used its credibility to negotiate with the authorities of the military government. Two points were important here; the first was how to legalise CCRDA. CCRDA started its operation without any legal basis. Authorities of the imperial government had permitted CCRDA to open a bank account to mobilise resources for relief operations³⁷⁷. The legal status of CCRDA became a top priority when the relief operation was over. Legal experts of the government argued that CCRDA was quite unique, and as such could not easily be accommodated by the existing legal framework. Finally, as informants in CCRDA recall it, the chairman of the Provincial Military Administrative Council (PMAC) gave a special order for the registration of CCRDA as an NGO³⁷⁸.

Putting itself on firmer legal ground, CCRDA started to negotiate with officials of the RRC with regard to NGO's entitlements. The response of the RRC was positive as the government expected NGOs to play their own role in building a new socialist society³⁷⁹. As a means to encourage NGOs, the RRC accepted the demands of CCRDA and for the first time, the RRC introduced a list of privileges NGOs were entitled to. These privileges came to be part of the first agreement NGOs signed with the RRC in 1975. Article IV was about the most important privileges of NGOs. It stated that NGOs would have custom and tax exemptions. The extent to which the RRC followed up on the implementation of the legislation was impressive. The RRC had secured the consent of senior government officials with regard to NGOs' privileges³⁸⁰. However, leaders of governmental organisations were not consulted about it. For instance, Article IV, No 2 of the agreement signed between the RRC and NGOs in 1975 exempted expatriate staff of NGOs from income tax and other fiscal charges and levies in respect of any and all emoluments paid to them from external sources by the NGOs of any sort³⁸¹. Soon after the agreement was signed, however, the Ministry of Finance informed CCRDA that its expatriate staff were exempted from payment of income tax, "...only if they come to Ethiopia in a bona fide member of the Voluntary Agency"³⁸². In defense of NGOs,

³⁷⁶ Berhe Beyene, "How Did CRDA Come into Being" (October 5, 1988), P.5

³⁷⁷ *Ibid*, P.5

³⁷⁸ Informant, Ato Mitiku Abebe

³⁷⁹ Dessalegn et al, "Oxfam...", P. 15

³⁸⁰ Shiferaw Bekelle, "Mägbya i.e. Introduction" in Shimeles Adugna, "Derqen ina Rehaben Lämäquaquam Yätädärägu Enqesiqaséwäch: 1966-1983 EC i.e. Efforts Made to Withstand Drought and famine: 1974-1983 (Forum for Social Studies, Addis Ababa, 1997 EC), P. 5

³⁸¹ Agreement between the Provisional Military Administrative Council: Relief and Rehabilitation a Voluntary Organization Working in Relief and Rehabilitation (CRDA), (March 1975)

³⁸² Letter from Ministry of Finance to CRDA Coordinator (April 26th, 1976), Archive of CCRDA in Addis Ababa

the RRC argued that, "...expatriate staff assigned to projects approved by the Commission were exempted from paying tax on income obtained from external sources"³⁸³. The RRC then asked the Coordinator of CCRDA to send a list of expatriate staff to aid their negotiations with the Ministry of Finance and the RRC was successful³⁸⁴. Likewise, according to Article 4, No 1 of the agreement signed every three years from 1975 on, Article 3, No 4 of the agreement signed every three years from 1984 on, and according to the procedures and guidelines issued in February 1983, expatriate staff of NGOs were exempted from payment of customs and import duties of materials and equipment for personal use and use for projects and programmes approved by the Commission³⁸⁵.

Towards the end of 1987, these privileges were conditioned by two requirements that NGOs could easily meet. In a circular letter, the RRC informed NGOs that, "...all NGOs, prior to the termination of any project period should submit an annual inventory report to the RRC"³⁸⁶. The RRC said also that, "The Logistic and Aid Department of RRC should be notified about the sale or export of personal effects which have been brought into the country duty free"³⁸⁷.

However, such privileges were not enough to guarantee the continuation of NGO activity. The revolution created uncertainty in a number of ways. The military government came to be the sole body to lead the revolution. Due to the unjust land tenure system, the revolutionary government mobilised the general public in the south and NGOs in the region were overwhelmed by the intensity of the revolutionary process. In the north and north-western parts of the country, counter-revolutionary forces and left-wing armed groups emerged to fight against the military government. The war going on between the government forces and rebels influenced the operation of NGOs in the regions. NGOs in the north, e.g., suffered frequent disruptions as they were threatened by rebels. As exemplified by referring to ASE that operated in the south and Oxfam in the east and the north, the NGOs pursued similar tactics to cope with the two source of uncertainty: they sheltered themselves in the structures of the military government, and they secured the cooperation of government authorities.

³⁸³ Letter from W.H.S. Oliver, Coordinator of CRDA to Aid Coordination Department of RRC (April 27, 1976)

³⁸⁴ *Ibid*

³⁸⁵ Agreement between the Provisional Military Administrative Council: Relief and Rehabilitation a Voluntary Organization Working in Relief and Rehabilitation (CRDA), (March 1975); Procedures and Guidelines for Obtaining Clearance for Undertaking Humanitarian Activities in Ethiopia: RRC Manual (February 1983); "General Agreement for Undertaking Relief and/or Rehabilitation Activities in Ethiopia by Non Governmental Organizations: CRDA (September 5, 1984)

³⁸⁶ Letter from RRC to Oxfam (December 3, 1987), Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

³⁸⁷ *Ibid*

In the revolutionary context, NGOs in the south such as ASE were concerned about their organisational relevance. The structures on which ASE had based its educational programme were dismantled due to rapidly changing rural circumstances³⁸⁸. Project participants of ASE were themselves mobilised to join the revolution by high school and university students and their teachers, and ASE became almost idle. In fact, the organization believed that due to the fact that the revolutionary process was being led exclusively by military officers, ASE did have neither the authority nor the capacity to mobilise project participants³⁸⁹. For the loyalty that it demonstrated in trying to get this authority to mobilise project participants, ASE was rewarded with ample opportunity. Soon after the outbreak of the revolution, INADES-Formation passed a resolution. The resolution was to work out a framework in which ASE would operate alongside the Ministry of Agriculture³⁹⁰. ASE took a series of measures to implement the resolution, beginning with the opening of ASE's branch office in Addis Ababa in November 1974³⁹¹. In April 1976, the headquarters of ASE was shifted to Addis Ababa³⁹². This was a response to an evaluation done in 1976, which recommended that, "The correspondence course system [strategy of ASE] could...only benefit from merging of the education programme within a single public institution with the required authority and resource"³⁹³. In order to realise this, the evaluation recommended moving the headquarters to the capital³⁹⁴.

INADES-Formation had officially requested the Ministry of Agriculture to design a framework in which ASE would operate alongside the Ministry in July 1975³⁹⁵. However, the request did not fare well. Soon after the request was submitted, the Minister of Agriculture, *Dejjazmach* Germachew instructed a comprehensive evaluation to be carried out on ASE. However, the minister himself was then removed due to a reshuffling of government officials³⁹⁶. The new minister was preoccupied with ministerial reorganisation and the Ministry of Agriculture and Settlement resulted from the process³⁹⁷. When the reorganisation was over, INADES-Formation

³⁸⁸ Francios Enguehard, "Draft Agreement between Socialist Ethiopia and IF [INADES-Formation]" (November 30th, 1980), P. 1

³⁸⁹ "Supplementary Note...", P. 27

³⁹⁰ *Ibid*, P. 1

³⁹¹ "Agri-Service Ethiopia, Project of INADES-Formation International: Project Agreement (nd), P. 1

³⁹² "Selä Gebrena Agäleglot Yäqäräbä Mastawäsha", P.1

³⁹³ "Supplementary Note..."(nd), P. 28

³⁹⁴ *Ibid*, P. 28

³⁹⁵ Selä Gebrena..." (nd), P.2

³⁹⁶ *Ibid*, P.2

³⁹⁷ *Ibid*, P.2

submitted its official request again, along with a model framework, to the Minister of Agriculture and Settlement in January 1977³⁹⁸.

INADES-Formation proposed a modality that would recognise ASE as having organisational autonomy. As in a related memo, the Amharic phrase, “...ጎን ለጎን ለመስራት...”, signifying “To operate alongside” the Ministry of Agriculture, attested to this autonomy. But ASE’s programme would be integrated with the Ministry of Agriculture³⁹⁹.

The Ministry of Agriculture considered the request which INADES-Formation had presented in January 1977. The Ministry of Agriculture and Settlement was the leading governmental organisation actively involved in the revolutionary process, and was badly in need of resources; financial as well as organisational assistance⁴⁰⁰. The officials of the Ministry saw in ASE a wide range of resources they were aspiring for. Thus, they favoured the proposal put by INADES-Formation. In one of the publications, their attitude towards the resources of ASE was summed up thus:

Its [ASE’s] programmes, the production of teaching materials and aids, its rural radio forums and farmers newsletters are invaluable for the dissemination of ideals and methods. Even its programme of training farmers though on a limited scale has provided an opportunity for ASE to gain practical experience with the needs and conditions of farmers in rural Ethiopia. The facilities and experience that ASE has created over many years in Ethiopia could complement the efforts of the Ministry of Agriculture that has already created an extension network covering most parts of the country⁴⁰¹.

Officials thus expressed the, “...desire of the ministry to give direction to ASE...”⁴⁰² In order to legitimise such claims, officials praised the role the Ministry of Agriculture had played in establishing ASE in Ethiopia, even dismissing the role of key personalities in the process⁴⁰³.

A series of discussions and consultations were held among the governmental departments concerned. In 1980, the final draft was submitted to the National Revolutionary Campaign and Central Planning Supreme Council (NRCCPSC) of the Ethiopian Government⁴⁰⁴. The NRCCPSC referred the proposal to its Department of Agriculture, which commented on the proposed

³⁹⁸ *Ibid*, P.2

³⁹⁹ *Ibid*, P.1

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid*, P.1

⁴⁰¹ “Agri-Service Ethiopia, Project of...”, P.6

⁴⁰² Letter from the Legal Service Department to the Foreign Economic Relation of the Ministry of Agriculture and Settlement (nd), P.2, Archive of ASE in Addis Ababa

⁴⁰³ *Ibid*, p. 3

⁴⁰⁴ “Deregitu Lä...”, P. 1

agreement⁴⁰⁵. The Department of Agriculture referred the proposal to the NRCCPSC Department of External Affairs, which presented comments and questions to INADES-Formation⁴⁰⁶. The representative of INADES-Formation then submitted his explanations and answers to the NRCCPSC on January 12th, 1982⁴⁰⁷. After incorporating the explanations and answers of the representative of INADES-Formation, the NRCCPSC referred the final draft agreement to the Council of Ministers for approval⁴⁰⁸. However, the Council of Ministers did not discuss the proposed agreement. On June 29th, 1982, the Minister of Agriculture wrote a letter in which he stated the problem that the pending agreement created for the Ministry as well as on ASE. He said that, “ስምምነቱ ውሳኔ ሳያገኝ በእንጥልጥል ላይ በመቆየቱ ምክንያት በስራ አፈፃፀም በኩል ለድርጅቱም ሆነ ለመስራቢታችን ትግር ፈጥሮብናል።” i.e. Because of the fact that decision was not passed on the agreement, it created problem to the organisation [ASE] as well as to our organisation”⁴⁰⁹. On October 20th, 1982, the office of the Council of Ministers asked the Minister who himself was a member of the Council to bring the draft for endorsement with him⁴¹⁰. However, the Minister did not submit the draft to the Council of Ministers. The reason for this is not clear; one of the sources simply says that, “...ሆኖም ባልታወቁ ምክንያቶች ጉዳዩን ሳያቀርቡ ቆይተዋል።” i.e. For unknown reasons, he [the Minister of Agriculture] did not present [the draft to the Council of Ministers]”⁴¹¹. However, we can assume a broader explanation for this. The Minister saw that senior government officials appreciated NGOs managed by Ethiopians. A later evaluation shows this appreciation of government officials for ASE. The report stated that “Government officials...show respect and appreciation for the rather rare species of authentic Ethiopian NGO”⁴¹². As a result, government officials were against the tendency of INADES-Formation to undermine the Ethiopian character of ASE. One of the documents summed up a provision included in the draft agreement that undermined the autonomy, as an Ethiopian entity, of ASE. It stated that:

The autonomous status of ASE granted by its registration with the Ministry of Interior as a non-profit making association is repealed and replaced by the [proposed] agreement....as a consequence of the agreement, ASE is no more an autonomous Ethiopian entity...It become

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid*, P.1

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid*, P. 1

⁴⁰⁷ "Deregitu Lä...", P. 1

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid*, P. 1

⁴⁰⁹ Letter from Dr. Geremew Debele, Minister of Agriculture to the Council of Ministers (June 29th, 1982), Archive of ASE in Addis Ababa

⁴¹⁰ "Deregitu Lä...", P. 1

⁴¹¹ *Ibid*, P.1

⁴¹² "Bigger NG[D]Os in Eastern and Southern Africa" (1989, P. 33

obvious that ASE will not be any more registered with the Ministry of Public Safety and State Security as an association⁴¹³.

Its appreciation by government officials, coupled with the readiness that ASE showed to adhere to government policy, provided ASE with ample opportunities to run its programme. After the massive reorganisation of rural society, peasant, and women's associations became the most important structures for local government. This led ASE to believe that the educational programme should be based on them⁴¹⁴. Officials of these local level structures considered ASE as an extension of the Ministry of Agriculture. As a result, service cooperatives, peasant associations, women's associations, and youth associations served ASE as a channel through which educational materials were passed to project participants⁴¹⁵. In fact, ASE had used similar structures since its establishment. The difference was that ASE now came to have a great deal of authority over officials of these local level organisations. An indication of this was that these officials were now expected to mobilise project participants for ASE's educational programmes⁴¹⁶. Towards the end of the 1970s, as one of the sources shows, project participants "...no longer come on individuals basis to take training from ASE; rather, ASE approached project participants through "production cadres", whose number ranged from three to five in every peasant association"⁴¹⁷.

ASE's authority over local level organisations originated from the strong relationship it developed with governmental offices in Addis Ababa. Government officials themselves noted the resources that ASE commanded. In his 1978 annual report, the Executive Director of ASE stated that various offices in the Ministries of Agriculture and Education, "...have started to believe...in ASE educational materials for different purposes"⁴¹⁸. This opened up ASE's space of action. This was because these offices argued that ASE should be permitted to, "...prepare a series of educational materials in different subject matters...as [it has profound experiences] and it has qualified personnel as well as other facilities for this task"⁴¹⁹. This positive attitude encouraged ASE to take the initiative to convince various departments of the Ethiopian government to launch a radio transmitter in Wollaita province. Soon after the necessary technical and social prerequisites were

⁴¹³ Francios Enguehard, "Draft Agreement between...", P. 2

⁴¹⁴ Mariyam, "Agri-Service Ethiopia...", P. 20

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid*, P. 10

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid*, P. 18

⁴¹⁷ Tilahoun Haile, "A Report from ASE to the General Assembly of 1979, INADES-Formation, Abidjan" (nd), P.4-5

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid*, P.1

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid*, P.2

met, a tripartite programme that included ASE, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Agriculture started in 41 centers in the Sidamo region of Wollaita province⁴²⁰.

Clearly, ASE went to great lengths to secure official favour. Other NGOs pursued similar courses. Although they did not seek a structural integration with governmental organisations, many NGOs in the country noted that operating along official lines was the only realistic way to cope with difficult circumstances. This was particularly true with NGOs operating in the eastern and northern parts of the country where insecurity was widespread. In order to gain protection, NGOs sheltered themselves under governmental organisations. Oxfam was one such organisation, operating under the protection of the RRC. Oxfam had previously opened an office upon the invitation of the imperial government; this had given NGOs, of which Oxfam was one, a strong influence over the young RRC. These influences were apparent in 1974 during the relief operation in the Ogaden in the east. Oxfam advocated on a number of issues to relieve famine victims in the region. When NGOs arrived in the region in 1974, no one exercised authority over relief shelters in the Ogaden. Thus, Dr. Lusty of Oxfam called upon the RRC to take over the leading role in coordinating the relief operation⁴²¹. He also engaged the RRC to ensure that, "...the number of feeds for the severely malnourished...be stepped up to 4 times daily and a high energy food [be] used"⁴²². The main challenge for the RRC at the regional level was that decision-making within the RRC was in the hands of senior officials in the head office in Addis Ababa. Oxfam, thus, recommended that:

The administration at Dire Dawa [provincial capital] should be strengthened both in personnel and power: It should not have to refer to Addis for approval of every decision. Additional personnel should be seconded to Dire Dawa: where possible these people should have previous experience as in Wollo. Many workers in Wollo could be spared even if only briefly to help set up the programme in the south. The administration in Dire Dawa should also have more money, fuel and transport⁴²³.

In order to strengthen the RRC at the provincial level, Oxfam recommended that one health officer and one nutritionist were to be based in each of the five districts in the Ogaden province that would travel around the relief centres in the region⁴²⁴.

⁴²⁰ "Evaluation of the Adult Rural Radio Forums in Wolayta Province, Sidamo Region" (Addis Ababa, October 1981), P.2

⁴²¹ "Report by Tim Lusty" (June 23-24 June, 1974)

⁴²² "Report by Tim Lusty" (June 17, 1974)

⁴²³ "Tour of the Ogaden: 14th-21st, April, 1975" (April 1975), P.2

⁴²⁴ *Ibid*, P.2

Some of Oxfam's proposals were taken up. The RRC proposed that three mobile teams be deployed in each province. This was soon realised; each team was respectively stationed in Degahbour, Kebri Dahr and Warder. Progress was observed also in the general situation in the shelter. Some months after his recommendations, Dr. Lusty found the situation in Warder to be, "...well set up with improvement since April [1974]"⁴²⁵.

The RRC accepted Oxfam's proposals out of mutual concern. Thus, the RRC facilitated Oxfam's activities. In line with Article 3, No 2 and 3, expatriate staff of NGOs were entitled to get entry and exit visas, resident and travel permits, and tax-free importation goods⁴²⁶. Although security issues were the prerogative of the Public Security Department of the Ministry of Public Safety and State Security, the RRC used to issue travel permits. However, traveling in Ethiopia was still extremely difficult due to wars and conflicts, with Ogaden being the most troubled area, as the Somalia government had territorial claims over the region. As a result, the Ethiopian forces were always suspicious of any movement in the region. Due to this, even the travel permits that RRC used to issue to NGO expatriate staff were not a guarantee. In July 1975, the East Africa Regional Representative of Oxfam, Malcolm Harper visited the Ogaden to assess Oxfam's relief operation. In his final report, Mr. Harper summed up the sensitivities of the Ethiopian army, due to long standing tensions, and the difficulties he and his team encountered in one of their visits. He reported that:

We were searching Dellyn's house and taking the wrong turning, ended up at the bridge. The troops on guard kept us in our vehicles until an officer from the nearby base had been telephoned and had come to release us and to guide us to Peter's house. Although we were able to produce letters from Ato Shimeles [RRC's chief commissioner] in Addis Ababa justifying our presence in the Ogaden, nevertheless the military situation is sensitive enough for this sort of incident to occur⁴²⁷.

Insecurity was even worse in Tigray, Gonder and Wollo. Assisted by the United States, the Ethiopian Democratic Union (EDU) had fought against the government since the mid-1970s⁴²⁸. Towards the end of the 1970s, the power of EDU was weakened and the Tigray People Liberation

⁴²⁵ "Report by Tim Lusty" (June 24, 1974)

⁴²⁶ "Agreement between the Provision Military Administrative Council: Relief and Rehabilitation Commission and Oxfam" (Addis Ababa, April 1975), Article 3, no. 1 and 2

⁴²⁷ "Report by Malcolm Harper of Oxfam on a Visit to Ogaden: 26th July-2nd August, 1975" (nd), P. 4

⁴²⁸ Letter from Miller to Tony Vaux (23th December, 1981), P.18, Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

Front came to be a formidable political force, first in Tigray and then in neighbouring provinces such as Gonder and Wollo, where Oxfam had been operating since the mid-1970s⁴²⁹.

Security was tight in conflict areas, which made Oxfam's operations difficult. Oxfam thus resorted to cultivating personal friendships with decision-making bureaucrats. This facilitated getting travel permits. At this early stage, getting travel permits was quite important for NGOs like Oxfam. This was because the organisation had limited its role to funding projects. The agreement signed between the RRC and Oxfam in April 1975 stated that, "...it [Oxfam] provides financial and material assistance to organisations and agencies engaged in relief and development activities"⁴³⁰. In order to assess these projects and follow up on their implementation, the field director of Oxfam had been travelling back and forth to the project sites for which he needed travel permits. The above approach of Oxfam was successful, to the extent that the Field Director of Oxfam was able to get travel permits to visit and assess projects in areas where even the government did not have effective control. On a visit to Gonder in 1981, for instance, the Field Director of Oxfam reported that:

It was an extremely interesting visit...because Gonder region has become in recent years one of the least known regions for voluntary agency [NGOs] representatives and even government officials. Both in Addis and Gonder, I was told that I was extremely fortunate in having been able to visit so much of the region⁴³¹.

The assistant commissioner of the RRC's branch office in Gonder made the trip possible. In his appreciation to the chief commissioner, the field director reported further that, "The credit for this, and for the free way in which I was able to discuss problems with officials [I] met, must go to Ato Adane [assistant commissioner] of the RRC in Gonder"⁴³². This appreciation led the Field Director to trust that the RRC's Gonder branch office would faithfully implement projects with Oxfam's funds. In the same report quoted above, the Field Director proudly said that, "I have a lot of confidence in the ability of the RRC Gonder office to disperse approved funds according to budgets agreed"⁴³³. The Field Director's trust was so high that Oxfam did not even follow up on how funds were used. In the early 1980s, there was a debate within Oxfam. Senior officers in Oxford questioned the lack of follow up with regard to project implementation, as well as financial utilisation. In defence of the RRC's officials in Gonder, the Field Director told his superiors that,

⁴²⁹ Aregawi Berhe, "A Political History of the Tigray People Liberation Front: 1975-1991" (PhD Diserttation, Vrije Universiteit, Amesterdam, 2008), P. 135

⁴³⁰ "Agreement between the Provision Military Administrative Council...", P.1

⁴³¹ Letter from Miller to Tony Vaux (23th December, 1981), P.18, Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

⁴³² *Ibid*, P. 18

⁴³³ *Ibid*, P. 18

“There is not much to show for our series [of] grants to the RRC in Gonder over the years, and this is not really the fault of the excellent assistant commissioner, *Ato* Adane who has been there for 6 years. The real problem is the lack of follow up of grants made, either by us or the RRC”⁴³⁴.

The Field Director worked closely with officials of the RRC. Senior officials of Oxfam believed, however, that the Field Director became an apologist for the government. Tony Vaux, chief Oxfam official in Oxford said that, “In the early 1980s, Oxfam...became alarmed that its own representative was acting as an apologist for the government”⁴³⁵. Despite this criticism of the Field Director, Oxfam pursued a policy that necessitated that the organisation must operate alongside the government. One of the documents summed up the advantage of this. Part of it stated that:

A general recommendation, applicable to works in all part of the country, is that time spent talking and introducing programmes and ideas to all levels of the administration and staff members of technical ministries is never wasted and hopefully can avoid potential mistrust later on in the implementation of such programme⁴³⁶

Assisted by the assistant chief commissioner of the RRC in Gonder, Oxfam launched its own water programme in Ibbat district in Gonder in 1983. Oxfam’s programme was most welcomed by local officials. Concerning the response of officials, one of the sources stated that, “...we should report that the proposed programme met with considerable enthusiasm from all those with whom it was discussed”⁴³⁷. The extent to which local officials went to protect and encourage Oxfam to work on water wells was impressive as well. On May 25th, 1983, Zway Hammused town in Libo district was ransacked by the Tigray People Liberation Front. This raised the level of vigilance of security officials of the government; the local administration took a very restrictive attitude towards expatriate movements outside of Ibbat, the main town⁴³⁸. Even in this tightened security situation, however, local government officials allowed Oxfam to operate. This surprised even employees of the RRC. Oxfam’s Field Director stated of the situation that, “...all the RRC staff in Ibbat were surprised that we were given permission to go there at all...”⁴³⁹ The main reason for local authorities to allow Oxfam to operate even in difficult times was that water was a chronic problem.

⁴³⁴ Hugh Goyder, “Ethiopia Drought Situation: Visit to Zwa-Hamusid, Libo Awraja, Gonder” (February 17th, 1983), P.2

⁴³⁵ *Ibid*, P. 49

⁴³⁶ “Final Report on Work in Gonder Region: 14th August-20th October 1983” P. 1

⁴³⁷ *Ibid*, P. 1

⁴³⁸ *Ibid*, P.1

⁴³⁹ *Ibid*, P.1

Concerning this, the source quoted above further stated that, "...Ato Workeneh [the administrator of Ibnat], defended [Oxfam] on the grounds that water was essential for Kwalates [a village]..."⁴⁴⁰.

NGOs were not only influenced by the ongoing war, but also threatened by armed groups. Various factors motivated rebels, particularly the Tigray People Liberation Front, to target NGOs. The first motive was publicity. In order to bring their cause to the attention of the international community, the TPLF ransacked towns where NGOs carried out relief and development activities. An attack conducted by the TPLF against Korem town on April 12th, 1983 was motivated by this factor. The TPLF captured the town, seized humanitarian supplies and took seven relief workers hostage, including two British citizens from the Save the Children Fund⁴⁴¹. The attack was also aimed at frustrating the government's counter-insurgency strategy. The government was maintaining famine victims in shelters such as Korem in Tigray indefinitely. In doing so, the government wanted to weaken the social bases of the TPLF⁴⁴². The second motive was that the TPLF believed that locally recruited employees of NGOs were "collaborators" of the government. In a report submitted to Oxford House on the attack in Ibnat on May 25th, 1983, Oxfam's Field Director stated that, "At present I gather they [local staff] are all treated as though they are 'collaborators' of the Durg [Derg]"⁴⁴³. Thirdly, the TPLF ransacked relief shelters and stores for food⁴⁴⁴. Fourthly, the TPLF believed that projects that NGOs were running might legitimise the military government. For instance, the Kobo Alamata Agricultural Development Project (KAADP) that GTZ-RRC had been running since 1976 was frequently ransacked by the TPLF. The most serious of these attacks took place in July 1983, when the TPLF looted and burned the equipment of the project in Kobo town⁴⁴⁵.

These attacks had grave consequences for the movement of NGO employees. In the process of its counter-attack on the rebels, the government tightened its security measures, making efforts to assess the famine conditions difficult. The Field Director of Oxfam reported on the difficulties he faced after the Korem incident thus:

After the attack on Korem, there has been even less news about the drought...government is being much stricter about issuing travel permits to foreigners than it was before the kidnapping...I

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid*, P. 1

⁴⁴¹ Letter from Hugh Goyder to Walsh, May 27, 1983, Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

⁴⁴² Hugh Goyder, "Report on Oxfam's Work in Drought Relief: March 14-28, 1983", P. 1

⁴⁴³ Letter from Goyder to Walsh (June 4th, 1983), P.1, Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

⁴⁴⁴ Letter from Michael Miller to Hugh Goyder (10th October, 1983), Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

⁴⁴⁵ Hugh Goyder, "Notes on a Visit o Kobbo Alamata Project: Eth 202" (nd), P. 1

have been refused permits for Mekelle [Tigray] and Lalibela [Wollo] in the last fortnight, which has been frustrating⁴⁴⁶.

However, NGOs were not passive observers. They responded to each of the attacks, with mixed results. For instance, Oxfam advised its staff to take maximum precautionary measures⁴⁴⁷. A senior official of Oxfam in the headquarter told the field director that, "...at no time should they [the employees] put the work before their own personal security..."⁴⁴⁸. Moreover, the organisation engaged in areas thought to be "safe". Oxfam analysed the social base of the TPLF in areas where it had started water works, and resumed works in areas where the TPLF had no support. For instance, Oxfam believed that the TPLF had no popular support in an area called Kwalissa and as a result, it resumed its water works there, while declining to resume water works in areas such as Zway Hammused on the grounds that, "...they [TPLF] seem to be more accepted in the villages like Zway Hammused further north, and they seem unlikely to leave there for the rest of this dry season"⁴⁴⁹. Nonetheless, by early 1984, Oxfam concluded that water works in Gonder had cost the organisation huge resources because of the insecurity. As a result, the Field Director recommended that Oxfam should shift its water programme to Wollaita in the south where it would run, "...hand dug wells and spring protection without all the interruptions caused by the security problems"⁴⁵⁰. Insecurity was not a problem in Wollaita province at all. Moreover, Oxfam was assured they would have the cooperation of the local administration to assist in running water programmes in the Damot Gale district⁴⁵¹. Oxfam also negotiated with rebels to avoid damage to its projects, notably the KAADP. Initiated in 1976 by GTZ together with the RRC, KAADP had suffered from frequent attacks by the TPLF. Oxfam was fully aware of this; however, it took the risk of financing this project. The Field Director strongly advised Oxfam headquarters that, "[the risk] should not discourage us entirely"⁴⁵². He rather advised that precautions be taken, proposing that, "We should inform Khartoum [Oxfam's office] to persuade the TPLF that this project should not be a target"⁴⁵³. This proposal was well accepted at headquarters, and there is no report of any further attack to KAADP. The relation Oxfam had with the TPLF was the main factor⁴⁵⁴.

⁴⁴⁶ Letter from Hugh Goyder to Walsh (?), May 27, 1983, Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

⁴⁴⁷ "Report on Visit to Libo Awraja, Gonder Drought: February 15-16, 1984", P. 1

⁴⁴⁸ "Final Report on Work in Gonder Region: 14th August-20th October 1983" P. 1

⁴⁴⁹ "Report on Visit to Libo Awraja, Gonder Drought: February 15-16, 1984", P. 1

⁴⁵⁰ Hugh Goyder, "Report on visit to Libo Awraja, Gonder Drought: February 15-16, 1984", P. 2

⁴⁵¹ Letter from Sidamo province, Damot Gale district administration to Oxfam (23/11/78), P. 4, Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

⁴⁵² *Ibid*, p. 1

⁴⁵³ *Ibid*, P.1

⁴⁵⁴ Letter from Nigel Walsh to Hugh Goyder (April 1, 1985), Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

In summary, NGOs survived difficult circumstances by securing the favour of either government officials or organisations that they represented. NGOs succeeded in maintaining their space of action. The challenge came from the rebels. Rebels threatened NGOs. NGOs overcame the problem either by operating in “safe” areas, or by negotiating with rebels. NGOs were concerned that the government could identify their links with rebels.

3.4. Fields of action and NGOs

3.4.1. NGOs’ fields of action and the response of governments: 1960s–1991

NGOs complemented the efforts of both the imperial and military governments by providing inputs of various sorts, including their technical expertise. Apart from these, neither the imperial nor the military regimes would tolerate activities that they considered to have political implications, as evidenced e.g., by the action taken against the leadership of the Mecha and Tulema Association by the imperial government. The leadership’s frequent discussion of sensitive land issues resulted in the dissolution of the Association. The leaders of the Association were accused of conspiring against the government and they were sentenced to imprisonment and death⁴⁵⁵.

The military government was even worse than the monarchy with regard to the oppression of NGO activities. The sensitivity of the military government to issues considered to be political may be inferred from the agreement NGOs were compelled to sign with the RRC every three years from April 1975. For example, the inclusion of Article IV, No 3 into the agreement was aimed at discouraging NGOs from political and controversial activities. The Article stated that, “Its [each NGO’s] expatriate staff members [must] refrain from any political or controversial activities and shall respect the laws of Ethiopia”⁴⁵⁶.

NGOs themselves refrained from any activities that they considered would provoke the military government. National NGOs not only took maximum care in avoiding controversies with the government but adjusted their fields of action in line with government policies. This was particularly true during the first years of the Ethiopian revolution. The revisions that ASE made to the syllabus of its socio-economic course exemplified this. ASE had started offering socio-

⁴⁵⁵ John Markakis, “Ethnic Conflict in Pre-Federal Ethiopia”, *First National Conference of Federalism, Conflict and Peace Building* (May 5-7, 2003, Addis Ababa), P. 5

⁴⁵⁶ Agreement between the Provisional Military Administrative Council: Relief and Rehabilitation Commission and Voluntary Organization Working in Relief and Rehabilitation (CRDA), March 1975

economic courses in 1972⁴⁵⁷. These courses analysed and described the socio-economic conditions of rural residents and delivered practical advice and information on how to improve these conditions⁴⁵⁸. The revolutionary change created confusion as to how to continue to run the socio-economic course. As a document produced in the revolutionary context stated, “The challenge that this course [socio-economic] has encountered is that there is fast social, economic and political changes taking place in the rural areas; as a result of these changes, the previously planned work programme became obsolete”⁴⁵⁹. In order to cope with the changes occurring in rural areas, ASE revised the content of the courses to reflect these changes, or so it believed. In the meantime, the government, which planned to expand cooperativisation in socialist Ethiopia, introduced detailed guidelines on the formation and modalities of cooperatives. ASE adhered to these guidelines, on grounds it had, “...to keep up with developments in rural areas”⁴⁶⁰.

The decision of ASE to adhere to these guidelines, and change the way it ran its socio-economic courses was part of its standing position to operate according to government policies. The response of ASE’s director to a sensitive question raised by NOVIB in 1989 illustrates the extent to which ASE operated along government policy lines. NOVIB wanted to know the extent to which ASE worked on sensitising project participants to know their basic rights. The executive director of ASE told NOVIB that, “...we would like to remind you that ASE is a non-political...organisation. ASE’s partnership with NOVIB is based on this understanding”⁴⁶¹. The Director further stated that ASE ran educational programme in line with existing government policy⁴⁶². It could thus be concluded that while this government pressure did exist, national NGOs deliberately ignored fields of action that, they considered, could provoke the military government. This constituted a break and perhaps a learning from the imperial period, in which NGOs like Mecha and Tulama had raised sensitive issues, though it resulted in the dissolution of the organisation and the death of the leaders.

Like national NGOs, international NGOs, adhered to those government policies that prioritised agriculture and environmental conservation, water, rural development, health, income generation and so on. However, for the international NGOs running these programmes in Wollo, where the resettlement programme took place, the way the resettlement programme was carried out

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid*, P. 5

⁴⁵⁸ Agri-Service Ethiopia, “Annual Report of 1977 (Part II): ASE Annual Work Programme”(Addis Ababa, January 1978), P, 3

⁴⁵⁹ Tilahoun Haile, "A Report from ASE...", P. 5

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid*, P.5

⁴⁶¹ From *Ato* Tilahoun Haile to Mr Yan Ruysenaars (August 14, 1989), P.1, Archive of ASE in Addis Ababa

⁴⁶² *Ibid*, P.1

complicated their activities. As a result, a number of individuals working for NGOs like Oxfam attempted to frustrate the resettlement programme. In March 1985, two Oxfam nurses, who had observed that the government starved those famine victims who refused to resettle recommended that Oxfam withdraw from the region in defiance of the Ethiopian government⁴⁶³. Oxfam rejected the proposal on the grounds that Oxfam's decision alone would not stop the resettlement programme; almost all NGOs still operated in the context of forced relocation of people. Angered by Oxfam's response, one of the nurses joined a MSF press conference in London, in mid-December 1985, and roundly condemned the Ethiopian government⁴⁶⁴. In early November 1985, SCF and Oxfam had suspended their Joint Trucking Operation (JTO) in protest over drivers being forced to move settlers⁴⁶⁵. The RRC was concerned by this condemnation of the government by the Oxfam nurse and the suspension of the JTO. As a result, the RRC called upon the Oxfam Field Director for clarification. One of the confidential reports circulated at that time documented the situation in the following way:

The authorities in Addis, believing this [the campaign of the nurse as well as suspension of the trucking operation] to be the official Oxfam policy, summoned the Field Director [Oxfam] for an explanation and there were real fears that Oxfam, too, might be expelled. The Field Director recalls that, having listened to the explanation, the RRC appeared relieved. The official...said that if Oxfam had joined MSF he would have regarded that as a very serious matter⁴⁶⁶.

This came as a shock for Oxfam, which thus refrained from taking measures that could provoke the government and from making any public statements. In other words, Oxfam effectively endorsed the policy and the activities of the government, even if it had its own reservations. Its response to the villagization programme which followed the resettlement programme in Wollo province, where Oxfam was operational, is further illustrative of this attitude. Having noted the previous response of the government, Oxfam now argued that it had no power to stop any government sponsored programme. Concerning the beginning of villagisation programme that started in Wadla Delanta and Borena provinces, Oxfam stated that:

Whatever our feelings about the desirability of this programme or the way in which it is being carried out, we have to accept that it is the policy of the Ethiopian Government, and as such will be carried out regardless of the attitude of agencies such as Oxfam⁴⁶⁷.

⁴⁶³ "Minutes of Monitoring Meeting: Dessie" (March 9, 1985)

⁴⁶⁴ Robert Dodd, "Oxfams Response to Disasters in Ethiopia and the Sudan" (nd), P. 131

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid*, P.130

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 131

⁴⁶⁷ "Oxfam/EWWCA Drought Relief and Development Water Programme: Wollo Administrative Region: Update Report No 13 to 31st January 1986" (2nd February 1986), p. 2

Internal sources show that this submission was informed by the growing sensitivity of government officials to the insecurity, especially in Wollo, which was a war zone. Government officials cautiously followed any activity that contradicted the government's policies in Wollo, as reflected in this statement by the Deputy Director of Oxfam: "Wollo is a tense place, a war zone where any hint of non-compliance with policies is regarded with deep suspicion, where Party and Administration officials can find themselves quite literally in the firing line"⁴⁶⁸.

In 1988, by contrast, Oxfam openly protested the government's abuse of power. On February 8th, 1988, the government used excessive force to resettle famine victims in Korem town and six people lost their lives. The Relief Coordinator of Oxfam, Mr. William Day, protested against the actions of the security forces⁴⁶⁹. The administrator of Wollo, *Ato* Shimeles Alemu, accused Mr Day of acting improperly in Korem⁴⁷⁰. Soon, the field directors of Oxfam and SCF told the RRC that they would find it difficult to run their joint transport operation unless forced resettlement was stopped⁴⁷¹. They also asked for an assurance that William Day would not be expelled from Ethiopia⁴⁷². Satisfied with an assurance that Mr. Day would not be expelled, Oxfam and SCF resumed their activities in the country, albeit the RRC warned Oxfam that Mr Day's, "...failure to do so [to adhere to terms and conditions] on his part would compel us to resort to radical measures"⁴⁷³. However, this courageous challenge to government policy was not the result of policy change within Oxfam. It was, rather, founded on decisions taken by individuals such as Tony Vaux in Oxford and Mr. Nikolas Winer, the new Field Director⁴⁷⁴.

To sum up, NGOs operating in Ethiopia either refrained, or were discouraged by the political systems from initiating and running programmes that could trigger controversy with the government. As a result, they delivered services that went along with the priorities of governments.

3.4.2. NGOs' hope, apprehension, dynamism and frustration

By the beginning of the 1990s, things started to change. The power of the military government was waning. The declaration of the "New Economic Policy" in March 1990 was indicative in this sense.

⁴⁶⁸ "Memo" from Stephen Lloyd to Nick Winer and Patrick Mcclay (January 2nd, 1987), Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

⁴⁶⁹ Letter from Oxfam to RRC Addis ababa (February 11, 1988), P. 1, Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid*, P.1

⁴⁷¹ Letter from RRC Addis Ababa to Oxfam/SCF (February 23rd, 1988), P. 1, Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

⁴⁷² Letter from Oxfam to RRC Addis ababa (February 11, 1988), P. 1, Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

⁴⁷³ Letter from RRC Addis Ababa to Oxfam/SCF (February 23rd, 1988), P. 1, Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

⁴⁷⁴ Tony Vaux, *The Selfish Altruist: Relief Work in Famine and war* (USA and UK, Earthscan, 2001), P. 65

The policy was intended to guide the transition from a centralised command economy to a mixed economy that would involve the active participation of both the state and private enterprises, in production, commerce and other areas⁴⁷⁵. Optimists like the World Bank were enthusiastic about the policy⁴⁷⁶. Likewise, NGOs were encouraged by the general sense of optimism that followed the announcement of the policy. Oxfam believed that the announcement marked the beginning of a decline in the authority of the government. Thus, it encouraged those of its staff running urban development programmes in Addis Ababa to reduce their dependency on the local administration and start reorganising project participants⁴⁷⁷. Other NGOs saw the new policy positively as well. For instance, ASE's project participants in Gamo Goffa and Bale had previously not taken care of their own land, largely because they did not have ownership over it; instead, they had carried out environmental conservation on reserved hillsides. Now, ASE believed that the new policy would give rights to farmers to freely dispose of trees grown on their land. This would in turn encourage the "participation" of rural communities in forest activities⁴⁷⁸. CCRDA, which saw the positive reaction of its members to the new policy, hosted a series of workshops on it. In its positive response to the new policy, CCRDA stated how the government came by the new policy:

After a detailed and analytical deliberation on the aforementioned economic and social conditions of the country, and after undertaking the necessary process of policy analysis, review and evaluation undertaken during 1988–1990, the Ethiopian government adopted the mixed economic policy as a guiding principle, on March 6, 1990⁴⁷⁹

Regime change in May 1991 removed some of the constraints to the NGOs' space of action. Security was now restored. Tony Vaux of Oxfam visited Ethiopia soon after the fall of the military regime. His account shows the general sense of security that prevailed in the country. He said that, "The atmosphere in Ethiopia was extraordinarily relaxed and the freedom to travel without restriction is a wonderful tonic"⁴⁸⁰.

Regime change was followed by a great deal of hope and optimism. Soon after the Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) entered Addis Ababa, a group of NGOs' representatives asked the new officials of the RRC to organise a meeting where issues of security guarantees,

⁴⁷⁵ Dessalegn Rahmeto et al, "Oxfam...", P. 10

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid*, P. 10

⁴⁷⁷ "Preliminary Report and Comments" (May 22, 1991), P. 7

⁴⁷⁸ ASE, "Project Proposal of AOTP Integrated with Rural Development Projects in Semien Omo, Bale and Misrak Gojjam: January 1991 to January 1994" (Addis Ababa, May 1990), P. 53

⁴⁷⁹ CRDA, "Proceedings of the Workshop held on the New Policy" (1990), P.2

⁴⁸⁰ Tony Vaux, "Visit..." (nd), P. 2

clearance, visas, and travel permits were raised⁴⁸¹. The new commissioner of the RRC assured the NGOs' representatives that, "...things are getting better and secure that NGOs...can start operation"⁴⁸². The commissioner also described that the existing system, with regard to clearance, visas and travel permits, would be maintained. However, he promised that "...bureaucracy would be avoided"⁴⁸³. In a separate meeting, the commissioner made remarks that built up the confidence of prominent international NGOs, notably Oxfam that developed interest to get involved in development activities by financing national NGOs. Concerning this, Tony Vaux said that, "NGOs...are...welcome to set up programmes [operational or otherwise] wherever they wish"⁴⁸⁴.

The optimism soon gave way to apprehension. During the transitional period (1991–1995), the government embarked on political and economic liberalisation, including a regionalisation policy; wrote a new constitution and set the stage for multi-party regional and national elections⁴⁸⁵. These processes influenced NGOs in many ways. In driving NGOs to take on a long term perspective within the newly reconfigured state system, the government issued a new regulation that forbade the duty free importation of goods, including food and fuel⁴⁸⁶. These were privileges NGOs had enjoyed since 1975. As a result of the ban, many NGOs that had ordered goods from abroad were now in great deficit, as they had to pay customs tax⁴⁸⁷. Moreover, following the re-registration of NGOs in 1996, the government banned 47 national NGOs that, the Ministry of Justice argued, failed to meet the requirements⁴⁸⁸. This was followed by extensive media propaganda that depicted NGOs as organisations dampening the self-help spirit of the people. NGOs also were accused of lack of transparency in their financial management⁴⁸⁹.

The government's antagonism toward NGOs may be traced back to the early 1980s, when major Western NGOs were involved in the "Cross Border Operation", whereby relief assistance reached rebel-held territories in Tigray through Sudan. They helped to relieve the people through the active participation of REST, the humanitarian wing of the TPLF. NGO participation in the "Cross Border

⁴⁸¹ CRDA, "Executive Committee Minutes" (June 6th, 1991)

⁴⁸² *Ibid*

⁴⁸³ *Ibid*

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid*, P. 3

⁴⁸⁵ Will Campbell, "The Potential for Donor Mediation in NGO-State Relations: An Ethiopian Case Study (nd), P.14

⁴⁸⁶ CRDA, "Executive Committee Minutes" (February 23th, 1993)

⁴⁸⁷ CRDA, "Executive Committee Minutes" (December 14th, 1993)

⁴⁸⁸ Campbell, R. John. "Drawing a Line Between Autonomy and Governance: The State, Civil Society and NGOs in Ethiopia." In Ondine Barrow and Michael Jinnings (eds), *The Charitable Impulse: NGOs and Development in East and North East Africa* (Oxford: James Currey Ltd. 2001), PP.163-164

⁴⁸⁹ "Ethiopian NGOs" *Addis Zemen*, Teqmt 25, 1996 (November 5, 2003), P.2

Operation” violated international and national laws. Officials of the TPLF who were now in power were concerned that international NGOs might get involved in similar activities that would undermine the government. As a result, the government was anxious to strictly control NGOs, and to make use of the flow of aid funds themselves, rather than share it with independent NGOs⁴⁹⁰.

Despite this period of apprehension, NGOs developed a great deal of assertiveness during the liberalisation process that followed the collapse of the military regime. This growing assertiveness may be shown by the actions of CCRDA. During the military period, CCRDA that “represented” a substantial number of NGOs in the country⁴⁹¹ intentionally underplayed the concerns of NGOs, so as not to provoke the military government. For instance, in 1989 the authorities of the Addis Ababa city council terminated the work permits of the expatriate staff of Canadian Physicians for Aid and Relief (CPAR) and ordered them to leave the country. When CPAR asked CCRDA to intervene, CCRDA decided that it, “...would not take any action”⁴⁹², instead encouraging each NGO to negotiate with the government on its own behalf. However, this individual approach proved to be unsuccessful. In a petition that they submitted to CCRDA, a group of NGOs expressed their frustrations with this individual approach, stating, “We all recall examples of the sometimes frustrating effects of the individual approach, not to mention the time and energy lost”⁴⁹³. In order to push CCRDA to take a more proactive role, this group of NGOs stated that, “Through elections we have given you the mandate to...receive our ideas, views and problems and present them to the Ethiopian government, mainly RRC”⁴⁹⁴. The major problems for members at this time were that project permissions were not signed on time; fuel shortages, cumbersome clearance procedures at the ports, travel permits, and the difficult nature of the reporting formats that the RRC had prepared and required⁴⁹⁵. With regard to projects remaining unauthorised indefinitely, CCRDA’s Executive Committee decided that “...these matters...[be]...best handled by the concerned members”⁴⁹⁶. With regard to even more sensitive issues, such as travel permits and customs clearance, the

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid*, P.253

⁴⁹¹ “Memorandum of Association of the Christian Relief and Rehabilitation Commission”(1986), Archive of CCRDA in Addis Ababa

⁴⁹² CRDA, “Executive Committee Meeting Minutes” (October 24th, 1989)

⁴⁹³ Petition from list of NGOs to the Executive Committee of CRDA (March 1990), P.1. Archive of CCRDA in Addis Ababa

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibid*, P.1

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid*, P.1

⁴⁹⁶ CRDA, “Executive Committee Minutes” (March 31st, 1990)

Executive Committee decided that “...CRDA [CCRDA] members would have to abide by the rule of the government”⁴⁹⁷.

After the regime change in 1991, CCRDA became more confident and started to debate with the RRC, the Ethiopian investment authorities, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Justice with regard to improving the environment in which NGOs were operating⁴⁹⁸. The first meeting on the free importation of goods was held on August 10th, 1993, though details are lacking on the topic⁴⁹⁹. The RRC and NGOs also met on November 1st, 1994 on which date an agreement was reached that RRC would meet regularly with CCRDA and the Council of Ethiopian Voluntary Organisations (CEVO), another coalition of national NGOs⁵⁰⁰. The NGOs saw, however, that their effort alone would not bring about the desired change. From 1997 on, they approached what later came to be known as Donors Assistance Groups (DAGs). DAGs, which started out as a forum for information sharing among bilateral and multilateral organisations in Ethiopia, has later come to consider itself as a “community” with a collective voice, and as a partner with, respectively, the Ethiopian government, civil society and the private sector⁵⁰¹. Oxfam played a significant role in establishing this relationship with DAGs through the British Ambassador in Ethiopia, who was also a member of DAGs⁵⁰². In the meantime, creating an “enabling environment” became a major strategic objective of a number of networks and coalitions, including CCRDA, which took on the creation of an “enabling environment” as its strategic objective in 1997⁵⁰³.

A meeting held on July 23rd, 1998 was decisive in a number of ways. It brought together NGOs, donors and government representatives to discuss the NGOs’ concerns. The government was represented by officials from the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Labor Affairs. The Ministry of Justice promised that it would shorten the bureaucracy involved in the registration process. Details are lacking as to which part of the bureaucracy was cut short, however, the decision satisfied the NGOs. A report of the meeting tells us that, “NGOs expressed their satisfaction on the

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid*

⁴⁹⁸ CRDA, “Executive Committee Minutes” (May 7th, 1992)

⁴⁹⁹ CRDA, “Executive Committee Minutes” (August 10th, 1993)

⁵⁰⁰ CRDA, “Executive Committee Minutes” (November 1st, 1994)

⁵⁰¹ Dessalegn et al, CSOs/NGOs in Ethiopia: *Partners in Development and Good Governance* (Addis Ababab, 2008), p.19

⁵⁰² “Oxfam GB-Ethiopia July 1998 Monthly Report” from Aregawi Hagos to Liz Gascoigne (August 4, 1998), P. 3

⁵⁰³ Informant, Ato Semu Terefe

improvement in the registration process”⁵⁰⁴. However, as the same source stated, “...lack of clarity over the registration process remains a concern”⁵⁰⁵. These concerns were to persist until the early 2000s. At this time, the government started implementing the civil service reform programme. Like every governmental organisation, the Association Registration Office of the Ministry of Justice went through a process of reform. Consequently, the Ministry of Justice introduced two reform measures. The first one was that NGOs did not have to submit project proposals before they were officially licensed. According to the Ministry, this procedure created coordination problems as various technical ministries were required to evaluate only part of each project proposal. Moreover, even after evaluation, each project proposal was subject to change due to lack of finances and other issues⁵⁰⁶. Secondly, checking the backgrounds of international NGOs by Ethiopian missions abroad was no longer a requirement. However, the Ministry of Justice said that it would carefully watch NGOs that could undermine peace and security of the country. The vice minister of Justice told representatives of governmental organisations that “ከምዝገባ በፊት አስተያየት መጠየቅ በመርህ የቀረ ቢሆንም አንዳንድ በአገር ሰላምና ደህንነት ላይ አጠራጣሪ ሁኔታዎች ሲኖሩ አስተያየት የምንጠይቅበት ጊዜ ሊኖር ይችላል።” which means that “Though it is canceled in principle, we will ask for opinion [before registration] if there is doubt with regard to national security and peace”⁵⁰⁷.

These reforms were introduced in response to frequent outcries by NGOs about the proposal review and background check processes. These complaints were aired in a meeting held on August 6th, 2004. The meeting was organised precisely to receive such complaints by NGOs so that they could be addressed through the civil service reform programme. One NGO representative told the Vice Minister of Justice that “የፈቃድ አሰጣጥን በተመለከተ ችግር አለ። በተለይም ከውጭ የሚመጡትን የሚመለከተው የባሰ ነው። በዚህ ተማረው ወደ ሌላ አገር የሚሆዱም አሉ።” which roughly means “There is a problem with regard to issuing licenses to [NGOs] to start operation. This is worse with regard to foreign NGOs. There are [foreign NGOs] that leave the country because of the problem”⁵⁰⁸. Another representative pointed out that NGOs were seen as “robbers” and “sellers of the country”. As a result of this attitude, officials at various levels would not tend to cooperate as much as they should have⁵⁰⁹.

⁵⁰⁴ “Oxfam GB-Ethiopia July 1998 Monthly Report” from Aregawi Hagos to Liz Gascoigne (August 4, 1998), P. 3

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid*, P.3

⁵⁰⁶ “Bä Mahbārat Mezegāba Sehefāt Bēt lijāmār Yātasābāw Yātāshalä Yāagälegelot Asātat Bāmimālākāt Yātāsātā Mabrarīya i.e. An Explanation about Planned Improved Service Delivery (September 11, 2002)

⁵⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 2

⁵⁰⁸ “Proceeding of a Workshop prepared to improve licencing and the service delivery of Association Registration Office” (Addis Ababa, July 2004), P. 4

⁵⁰⁹ *Ibid*, P. 6

The reform with regard to registration went hand in hand with the growing interest a number of NGOs had to work on governance. The World Bank and IMF had negotiated with the Ethiopian government as to how NGOs could play a role in bringing about good governance; human rights, democracy and peace in the country, all the same fields of action that the government planned to work in. The Ethiopian Constitution adopted in 1995 established a multi-party parliamentary system of government and recognises most of the human rights endorsed under international law. The government also reformed domestic laws to harmonise with international human right standards, emphasising good governance, in various policies and programmes such as the Plan for Accelerated Development to End Poverty (PADEP)⁵¹⁰.

The PADEP, which was prepared jointly by NGOs and the Ethiopian government and ratified in June 2002, recognised the role NGOs could play in governance, namely human rights, democracy, and peace building. Various documents published after the PADEP also recognised that NGOs could work on governance. Alongside contributing to preparing the PADEP, NGOs argued that the Ministry of Justice should institute a new legal framework for NGOs in Ethiopia. A series of draft proclamations prepared by the Ministry of Justice described how NGOs could work on governance issues. For instance, the preamble of the third draft described that:

ድርጅቶቹ በተለያዩ መስኮች የህብረተሰቡን ግንዛብ ለማሳደግ፣ በዲሞክራሲ ስርዓት ግንባታ፣ በሰብአዊ መብት ረገድ የሚያደርጉትን አስተዋጽኦ ማጎልበትና የሚያንቀሳቅሱት ከፍተኛ ሃብትም በአግባቡ የታለመለት አላማ መዋሉን ማረጋገጥ አስፈላጊ በመሆኑ...በኢትዮጵያ ፌዴራላዊ ዲሞክራሲያዊ ሪፐብሊክ ህገ-መንግስት አንቅስ 55 /1/ መሰረት የሚከተለው ታውጇል።

Intending to promote the organisations' [NGOs] role in raising awareness of the people, building democracy, and in human rights and to ensure that the huge resources they mobilize are spent for the intended purpose, the following is proclaimed as per Number 55 (1) of the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia⁵¹¹.

NGOs received the goodwill shown by the government as a significant step, in light of the fact that the government had earlier threatened NGOs working on governance issues; no less than three member NGOs of CCRDA engaged in human rights activities had been suspended by the Ministry of Justice by the end of 1997⁵¹². The case of the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association (EWLA) was quite well known; this association which defended the rights of women was banned. The chairwoman of the Association expressed her frustration about the way the Association

⁵¹⁰ Dessalegn et al, *CSOs/NGOs in Ethiopia...*, p.19

⁵¹¹ "A Proclamation Issued About NGOs: Draft", in Amharic (2002), P.1

⁵¹² CRDA, "Executive Committee Minutes" (September 17th, 1996); CRDA, "Executive Committee Minutes" (October 5th, 1996); CRDA, "Executive Committee Minutes" (September 23th, 1997)

Registration Office of the Ministry of Justice handled the case, saying that, “የማህበራት ምዝገባ ጽህፈት ቤት ባለሙያዎች ጉዳዩን እንዴት ይዘውት እንደነበር ሳስታውስ ይገርመኛል።” which means “I am sad whenever I remember the way experts of the Association Registration Office handled the case”⁵¹³. The same was true with an international NGO called Plan International. Like the EWLA, Plan International was banned and its files were confiscated by federal police, only to be returned after eight months⁵¹⁴. As a result of such cases, NGOs had pursued a cautious approach that, they believed, would not provoke the government. They had even tended to enlist governmental organisations while advocating for change. For instance, in the summer of 1996, the secretariat of CCRDA planned to host a series of training programmes about how to advocate for the rights of women, children, the disabled and those with HIV/AIDS. The secretariat asked the executive committee for their advice, and since the committee was afraid of the government’s response to such a programme, it advised the secretariat to organise the training in close collaboration with the relevant government offices such as the Women’s Affairs Office⁵¹⁵.

NGOs became more outspoken in 1998 when the Ethio-Eritrean War broke out. In a meeting held on June 8th, 1998, 144 NGOs, coordinated by CCRDA, issued a position statement in which they described the human and material losses of the war and its consequence on the overall economies of the two poor countries, adding that the war should stop immediately⁵¹⁶. A year after its outbreak, Oxfam engaged with many other international NGOs to attempt to influence the governments of Ethiopia and Eritrea to stop the war. They thus circulated a joint letter addressed to the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, *Ato* Meles Zenawi; the President of Eritrea, *Ato* Esayas Afeworki and to Ethiopian Embassies worldwide⁵¹⁷. This NGO advocacy against the war could be taken as a preparatory phase of NGOs movement to influence the governance structure to listen to public concerns. The government and NGOs jointly prepared the Plan for Accelerated Development to End Poverty. NGOs were then to follow the implementation of programmes outlined in the document. To that end, CCRDA had set up a Poverty Reduction Strategic Paper Task Force. The NGOs were against the way some of the programmes in the document were being implemented.

⁵¹³ “Proceeding of a Workshop prepared to improve licencing and the service delivery of Association Registration Office” (July 2004), P. 5

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid*, P. 5

⁵¹⁵ CRDA, “Minutes of the Executive Committee (July 9th, 1996)

⁵¹⁶ Letter from CCRDA to Commissioner of the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (June 10, 1998), P.1, Archive of CCRDA in Addis Ababa; “Position in Connection with Current Situation in Ethiopia” (June 8, 1998), P. 1, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archive No 1, File Folder መያድ:4-4

⁵¹⁷ Email Conversations with Oxfam GB (April 11, 2000)

The voluntary resettlement of people from food insecure areas to surplus produce areas was included as a strategy to ensure food security, however the way the resettlement was being carried out remained a major concern of NGOs. The Task Force issued a statement that reflected the new assertiveness of NGOs in criticising the government's wrongdoings. It stated that:

The PRSP [Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper] Task Force...draws concern on the Government's resettlement programme, which is designed to relocate farmers from drought prone areas to those that are believed to have greater agricultural potential. The way the resettlement programme was designed has been described as cause for grave concern. There was no adequate preparation for settlers and many of the settlements sites pose serious health threat to settlers. There is also profound concern as regards the viability of the sites for rain fed agriculture, as they don't receive sufficient rains⁵¹⁸

NGO advocacy for change gained momentum in the context of the May 2005 elections. The NGOs educated citizens about their democratic rights and trained them in how to cast their ballots. Realising that they had emerged as significant actors in the election process, the ruling party began to show signs of hostility to the NGOs. Remarks that government officials made long before the election indicate the kinds of measures that the government intended to take against them. In a civil society debate held on September 26th, 2004, for example, senior government official belittled the contribution of NGOs. This led nine networks, coalitions, and NGOs to appeal to the Prime Minister. They stated that, "...we have been surprised and even found confusing to hear the negative statements given at the debate by the EPRDF [the ruling Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front] representative against the NGOs sector"⁵¹⁹. On the eve of the elections, the ruling party argued that NGOs did not have a mandate to observe the national and regional elections. NGOs took the case to court, which decided that NGOs could monitor the elections⁵²⁰.

Concerned about the growing influence of NGOs, the ruling party took a series of measures in the post-election period. The government argued that NGOs supported the opposition parties, using state media to accuse NGOs in general and CCRDA in particular of being partisan⁵²¹. Some "independent" press also accused CCRDA of being an instrument of opposition groups. For instance, the pro-government newspaper, *Eftin*, argued that CCRDA could no longer be politically neutral⁵²².

⁵¹⁸ "CRDA Newsletter, Vol 19, No 10 (November 2003)

⁵¹⁹ Letter from CRDA and et al to Prime Minister Meles Zenawi (October 21, 2004), Archive of CCRDA in Addis Ababa

⁵²⁰ "Outline of Activities undertaken by CRDA in Connection with the May 2005 national elections and the aftermath" (nd), P.1

⁵²¹ CRDA, "Minutes of the Executive Committee" (August 18, 2005)

⁵²² CRDA, "CRDA has Political and Religious Neutral Mission and Principle" (nd), P.1

CCRDA, as one of the prime targets, defended its neutral position. It argued that, like anywhere in the world, CCRDA and its members had their own part to play in building democracy and good governance in the country. This did not compromise their neutrality⁵²³. The media accusation was followed by serious reactions by the Ministry of Justice, which first referred to a letter that it had written on to CCRDA on March 31st, 1998. The letter listed “permitted activities and programme”. On the basis of this letter, representatives of the Ministry of Justice questioned the position statement that CCRDA had circulated on June 20, 2005, by raising the following three questions:

- ✓ Is CCRDA mandated to come up with the position statement that it did?
- ✓ Has CCRDA consulted all its members before going to public with the position statement?
- ✓ Does CCRDA have evidences for all the allegations that it has included in its position statement? Are all the allegations supported with evidence?⁵²⁴

CCRDA tried to defend its position. It argued that it was acting in a context in which people were being killed, and that as citizens of the country, the leadership of CCRDA had a responsibility to stand alongside the people⁵²⁵. Concerning the second question, the leadership of CCRDA stated that the Executive Committee was fully mandated by the general membership. As a result, it did not have to ask the consent of the membership on specific issues⁵²⁶. As far as evidence was concerned, the leaders argued that the government itself had issued voluminous information about the number of people killed and detained and that the data on which the Executive Committee of CCRDA had based the position statement was public knowledge⁵²⁷. The representatives of the Ministry of Justice were not satisfied with the explanation that the leaders of CCRDA gave with regard to CCRDA’s mandate, stating that CCRDA worked on issues that the Ministry did not allow⁵²⁸. Thus, in a letter written on September 6th, 2005 the Ministry of Justice gave CCRDA a last written warning for “breaching” the law of the country⁵²⁹. The Ministry also told the CCRDA to cancel the conference it had planned to organise. CCRDA had proposed a national peace and reconciliation conference in Addis Ababa, in which it had intended that religious leaders, prominent personalities, community leaders, contending parties, donors and so on would participate in resolving the conflict in the country⁵³⁰. Moreover, CCRDA was forced to delete

⁵²³ *Ibid*, P.1

⁵²⁴ “Ministry of Justice/CRDA Joint Meeting Minutes: First Draft” (July 19, 2005), PP.1-2

⁵²⁵ *Ibid*, P. 2

⁵²⁶ *Ibid*, P.1

⁵²⁷ *Ibid*, P.

⁵²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 4

⁵²⁹ Letter from the Ministry of Justice to CCRDA (September 6, 2005), Archive of CCRDA in Addis Ababa

⁵³⁰ CRDA “Position Statement” (Addis Ababa, June 20, 2005), P. 3; “Outline of Activities undertaken by CRDA in Connection with the May 2005 national elections and the aftermath” (Addis Ababa, nd), P.3

vision statements, missions and basic tenets from a new Memorandum of Association that it had submitted to the Ministry of Justice for endorsement. In a meeting held among themselves, members of the Executive Committee argued that, "...there are unacceptable points forwarded in the comments given like the deleting of the Vision and Mission of the CRDA"⁵³¹.

As CCRDA was the prime target, its members were also put under pressure by the government. Government authorities stopped projects run by these NGOs. Some of these projects were SIDA's Urban Environmental and Sanitation Project in Addis Ababa, Becha Water Supply in Oromia, Risk Reduction HIV-AIDS in Addis Ababa, Dugda Bora in Oromia, and Packard's Promotion of SRHR (Women and Adolescent) in Sodo in Gurage⁵³². Similarly, when the ruling party lost the elections in areas where Agri-Service Ethiopia operated, NGOs in these regions were accused of sympathizing with the opposition parties. A number of NGO staff fled from these areas after they were intimidated by local government officials⁵³³. The most serious of these repressive measures was the targeting of those staff of NGOs who actively participated in monitoring the elections. As a member of the Executive Committee of NGOs that coordinated the May 15th, 2005 elections, *Ato* Daniel Bekele, the Policy, Research and Advocacy Manager of Action Aid made a number of public statements in the media. On October 22nd, 2005, he was attacked and badly beaten by two armed men, who asked him, "Who are you to criticise EPRDF [the ruling Ethiopian People Democratic Front]?"⁵³⁴ Partly because of this attack, Action Aid influenced the Executive Committee of CCRDA to hold discussions with the government. In a letter addressed to the chairman of the Board of CCRDA, the Director of Action Aid expressed his frustration and called for them to take a firm position. He said that:

It is sad to note that the response we got from the government and particularly from the MoI [Ministry of Information] and the MoJ [Ministry of Justice] is seriously disheartening and disappointing. I believe that they have neither the reason nor the legal ground to issue public statements in the media and demand the removal of our fundamental principles, visions and missions and core activities from our Memorandum of Association. They have the right to check whether or not our Memorandum of Association is incompatible or in contradiction to the established laws of the country and its constitution provisions. The demand made by the registration office through the letter sent to CRDA is tantamount to writing Memorandum of Association for us. Since such act can strip off the little freedom and public space we gained so far we should commit to challenge and argue out case strongly and professionally⁵³⁵.

⁵³¹ CRDA, "Minutes of the Executive Committee" (October 11, 2005)

⁵³² "Outline of Activities...", P.4

⁵³³ Informant, *Ato* Getachew Woru

⁵³⁴ A Letter addressed to CCRDA by Action Aid Ethiopia entitled "Attack on member of the Civil Society Community" (Addis Ababa, October 17, 2005), Archive of CCRDA

⁵³⁵ Letter from Fikre Zewde (Action Aid Ethiopia) to Gebreal Galatis, Chairman of the Board of CCRDA (October 20, 2005), P.1, Archive of CCRDA in Addis Ababa

In the meantime, the government came up with the Ethiopian Charity and Society Proclamation (No 625/2009). According to its official narrative, the proclamation is intended to defend the sovereignty of the country. Officials argue that since Ethiopia is an independent country, it does not allow foreigners to do whatever they want. The argument is that because they receive cash from abroad, NGOs have become surrogates of Western donors⁵³⁶. The NGOs argue, however, that Ethiopians have constitutional rights to organise themselves and that the proclamation stands against the constitution. The proclamation also divides NGOs based on the source of their income. Any NGO getting more than 10% of its income from abroad is labelled as a Ethiopian Resident Charity. This group of NGOs are no longer allowed to work on governance issues such as human rights, peace building and conflict resolution, child rights, women rights, democracy and so on⁵³⁷.

3.5. Conclusions

NGOs in Ethiopia were bound to adhere to the policies set by the imperial and military governments. NGOs worked closely with officials of the two regimes, suggesting that they adhered to policies. The collapse of the military government in May 1991 was a landmark in a number of ways, as the war that had so disrupted NGO activities came to an end. Moreover, NGOs started running new fields of action, such as governance, which they had earlier sidelined or been frustrated in by the imperial and military governments.

However, the government that came to power then only assured NGOs they could begin to work on governance in order to satisfy donors. The governance issues that NGOs started to work on had deep political implications, which the current government would not allow. Part of the reason for this was that officials recalled the involvement of NGOs in the “Cross Border Operation” of the 1980s which had violated the laws of the country, and these officials were afraid that NGOs would again be involved in similar activities. For this reason, the government endeavored to control NGOs via controlling registration. The government took a number of decisive actions in 2009 by barring foreign organisations from involvement in the field of human rights and conflict. The Ethiopian Charity and Society Proclamation stated that Ethiopian Charity could work on governance so long as they mobilise more than 90% of their income locally. If they mobilise more than 10% of their

⁵³⁶ Informant, *Ato Wolde Hawariat Gebre Selassie*

⁵³⁷ Informant, *Ato Tibebe Dejene*

income from abroad, they are called either Foreign Charity or Ethiopian Resident Charity both of which could not work on governance.

It could, thus, be concluded that history and NGOs field of action have remained main factors that decided their space of action.

Chapter Four

Expansion and Contraction

4.1. Introduction

NGOs expand and contract in terms of territorial scope, and of programme type and scale. Chief amongst the determinant factors is the amount of resources NGO can mobilise. Due to constraints on raising income locally, NGOs in Ethiopia depend on foreign sources. The volume of resources channelled through NGOs has historically been influenced by the relationship between the regime type in power in Ethiopia at any given time, and Western donors. Geo-strategic, ideological and governance factors have influenced the relations between them. During the military period, Western donors sought to channel their resources to Ethiopia through NGOs, rather than handing the resources to the regime itself. This was particularly pronounced from the mid-1980s on, and this tendency continued even after the regime change of May 1991. While major donors notably World Bank and the European Commission channeled most of their aid through governmental organisations, a number of donor organisations continued to fund NGOs due to their stated aims of fostering liberalism in Ethiopia.

However, the flow of resources to NGOs has never been a straightforward process. Donors were concerned about the authoritarian rule and the ongoing war in the north during the military period. Moreover, after the regime change in 1991, the government won the trust of Western donors by promising that it would build up democracy and good governance. As a result, the Ministry of Development and Economic Cooperation (MeDEC) became a major recipient of donor funding. Moreover, a number of new NGOs emerged in the post-1991 period, which resulted in stiff competition for resources. Thus, the relations between Western donors and successive Ethiopian regimes have offered NGOs in Ethiopia both challenges and fortunes.

This chapter aims to investigate the flowing of resources to the selected NGOs in the context of the relation between donors and the Ethiopian governments. It also investigates how NGO's choice of operation areas has determined programme type and scale of these NGOs.

4.2. Resource and resource mobilisation

Resources are a decisive factor to run NGO programmes and sustain NGOs. The majority of NGOs in Ethiopia are now dependent on foreign donors, as they have been in recent history. This foreign-donor dependency is different from the imperial period, when NGOs depended entirely on local

resources. The revolution of September 1974 created a situation where national NGOs were put under threat and individual contributors declined their assistance, until the fall of the military government in May 1991.

4.2.1. Voluntarism and NGOs' resource mobilisation in Ethiopia

Ethiopia has long been the home of a strong philanthropic tradition. This tradition has persisted to this day. An Ethiopian has once summed up aspects of this philanthropic tradition and its influence on NGOs thus:

Our country has been known about its virtues from as early as antiquity. A lot has been written about its hospitality. Goodwill has certainly been the raw material for the NGO movement and we have had plenty of this in our homes and communities. In the Ethiopian normative development, with goodness essentially being seen as kindness to all and as an important factor in one's holiness, it has indeed been pervasive⁵³⁸.

Churches and mosques are expressions of this kindness. Members of the two religious groups express the virtue of almsgiving in different ways. Almsgiving includes not only donation of cash to the needy; families also prepare meals to feed the hungry. Many take strangers into their homes to attend to their needs. Those who have no means for survival go from house to house asking for food in the name of one angel or another, and often manage to have their bags full by the time they retire for the day. Until recently, certain families used to leave food out by their doors, for the needy to help themselves to without having to beg⁵³⁹.

National NGOs that were active during the imperial period tapped into this traditional Ethiopian generosity to support their programmes in various ways. The most common way of collecting cash was to approach and register members, and collect money through membership fees. As membership fees were their only source of income in this early stage of their existence, national NGOs were in competition for members. This competition was quite intense; for instance, between the Ethiopian Women Welfare Association and the Ethiopian Women Good Work Association, both of which were set up in 1935. In order to encourage both NGOs, many individuals became members of the two associations⁵⁴⁰.

⁵³⁸ Minas Hiruy, "The Evolution of the NGO Sector in Ethiopia", presented at a Seminar on the Role of NGOs (Addis Ababa, September 7, 1996), P.1

⁵³⁹ *Ibid*, P.1

⁵⁴⁰ Women's Affairs Section of Office of the Prime Minister, *Kewanéna Re'iy: Yä Ityopya Sétoč Inqeseqasé Bähayañaw Keflä Zäimän* (Addis Ababa: Berhanena Sälam Printing Press, 1993 EC), p.5

The membership fees that NGOs raised varied from NGO to NGO. Some NGOs developed strong structures that reached wider sections of the society. The Ethiopian Red Cross Society and the Ethiopian Family Guidance Association belong to this group of NGOs. They developed a system of recruiting and encouraging members to participate in their activities. Today, both NGOs still depend on members for human and material resources. In 2002, for instance, the Ethiopian Red Cross Society had over 700,000 fee-paying adult members and about 90,000 youth volunteers⁵⁴¹. Although the proceeds from membership fees do not make up a significant proportion of the organisation's income, members and volunteers still play a paramount role in the functions of the Ethiopian Family Guidance Association. They serve on the national and regional boards and participate actively in the various committees assigned to special tasks⁵⁴².

Ultimately, however, membership fees alone proved an inadequate and unreliable source of income for the majority of national NGOs, which reported the problem of dependency on membership fee on many occasions. Describing the inadequacy and unreliability of membership fees as a source of income, the vice chairman of The Association for the Destitute (founded in Addis Ababa in 1964 by a group of young students) stated that:

ማህበራታችን የሚፈለግባቸውን የወር ክፍያ በጥንቃቄ ባለመስጠታቸውና አንዳንዶቹ ደግሞ ከተመዘገቡበት ቀን ጀምሮ እስከ ዛሬ አንዳች ነገር ያልረዱን በመሆናቸው የማህበሩን ጠቅላላ ገቢ በመቶ 50 ዝቅ አድርጎታል፡፡

Because our members did not regularly pay their monthly contribution and some had not paid at all since the beginning of their membership, the annual income of the Association is reduced by 50%⁵⁴³.

The same problem was frequently reported by the Ethiopian Women Welfare Association and the Ethiopian Women Good Work Association⁵⁴⁴.

These problems with membership fees led NGOs to embark on alternative resource mobilisation techniques. This included the organisation of bazaars in Addis Ababa, at which various activities were held; articles of various sorts were sold, food and drinks were served, tenders were organised, and the income from these activities were used for charitable purposes⁵⁴⁵. It was also common for NGOs to organise fundraising dinners in Addis Ababa hotels, for which tickets were sold.

⁵⁴¹ Daniel Sahleyesus, *Non Governmental Organization in Ethiopia: Examining Relation between Local and International Groups* (Ontario, the Edwn Mellen Press, 2005), PP. 263

⁵⁴² *Ibid*, P. 263

⁵⁴³ Association for the Destitute, "Annual Report of the Association for the Destitute" (Addis Ababa, August 25, 1968), P.1

⁵⁴⁴ Women's Affairs Section of Office of the Prime Minister,, *Kewanéna*, p.5

⁵⁴⁵ *Ibid*, P, 5

Government officials, merchants, representatives of foreign governments and foreigners residing in the capital would be invited, in the hope that they would donate more money. Organisers also tried to minimise the cost involved in organising a dinner programme as much as possible. This, however, had its own consequences; sometimes, guests refused to consume what was served. Certain of this study's informants recalled that the Association for the Destitute once organised a dinner programme to which a number of distinguished guests were invited. For the occasion, leftovers from different hotels were served. The guests refused to eat the food, to the embarrassment of the organisers⁵⁴⁶. The third way by which NGOs used to mobilise resources was via the organisation of entertainment programmes. These included dance, drama, and music, performed by both Ethiopian and foreign bands. These were especially organised during major holidays such as Ethiopian Easter, Christmas, and New Year⁵⁴⁷.

The imperial government encouraged NGOs, and itself donated financial and material support to them. It also started to give awards, both to NGOs and to individuals for their philanthropic contributions. The monarch, Haile Selassie I himself, also got involved in philanthropic activities via the Haile Selassie I Foundation⁵⁴⁸. Conversely, the government also took a number of actions that undermined the activities of NGOs. For instance, the Ethiopian Women Welfare Association initiated a lottery system which gave the Association a significant income, until the government decided to expropriate the lottery system that the Association had developed. The Association protested, however, the government remained adamant. The government eventually decided that the Association would get only Eth \$ 50,000 every year from the Ministry of Finance. In fact, the government also allowed the Association to organise what was called a Tombola Lottery once a year and to use the income obtained from that⁵⁴⁹.

The military government (1974–1991) and its actions greatly affected the contributions that national NGOs received from philanthropists. Driven by socialist principles, the military government confiscated commercial and production enterprises, and nationalised excess urban and rural lands. This confiscation affected many well-to-do individuals who had previously contributed to NGOs. Now, they also felt that giving could expose their wealth⁵⁵⁰.

⁵⁴⁶ Informants: Professor Bahru Zewde, Ato Mengistu Jenbere and Ato Getachew Minas

⁵⁴⁷ Ethiopian Women Welfare Association, "Grand Ball" (August 26th, 1961)

⁵⁴⁸ Minas Hiruy, "The Evolution...", P.3

⁵⁴⁹ Women's Affairs Section of Office of the Prime Minister, *Kewanéna* ..., p.12

⁵⁵⁰ Minas Hiruy, "The Evolution...", P.3

Although it encountered major constraints during the revolutionary period, voluntarism did not disappear completely. The establishment of a number of NGOs during the famine that occurred in 1983–1984 attests to its continued existence. Furthermore, with the collapse of the military government in May 1991, voluntarism revived greatly. Individuals with meagre resources took the initiative and began to deal with problems in their localities by setting up NGOs. For instance, Light for Generation is an NGO set up in 2005 by a group of voluntary college students. Concerning its humble beginning, the current executive committee narrates that:

The founders started with adult and children education. They started the activities with teaching adults and children with meager resources from their own pocket. They started teaching the whole process by renting a small private house close to which were they able to build a tent made of plastic in which they taught adults and children of the poorest sections of the locality....The founders used to ask and secure assistance from the locality in which the association was born and from the university (Unity University) community⁵⁵¹.

The same was true about Developing Families Together. It was set up by *Wäyzäro* Kidest and five other individuals she mobilised to fight against HIV/AIDS in their locality. As long as they managed to secure financial support from foreign donors, they depended on their own pocket money⁵⁵². Extra to such local organisations, a number of NGOs have also been established by volunteers since 1991 along thematic, intersecting regional and national lines⁵⁵³.

The potential for local fundraising once more became apparent in the post-1991 period. Many of the newly emerging national NGOs received contributions from philanthropists in the early 1990s⁵⁵⁴. As time went on, transparency and accountability became of major concern to those individuals who wanted to support NGOs, some of which were accused of serving personal interests. As a result, in a significant divergence from the imperial period, NGOs came to be seen as venues where corruption of various sorts was committed⁵⁵⁵.

NGO leaders knew very well of this public perception of NGOs and they attempted to deal with the problem. Led by CCRDA, 178 NGOs signed a Code of Conduct in 1998, intended to make Ethiopian NGOs adhere to principles that NGOs uphold globally, such as honesty, integrity, transparency, and serving the poor⁵⁵⁶. Since 1998, NGOs coordinated by CCRDA have organised

⁵⁵¹ Informant, *Ato Tebebu Dejenie*

⁵⁵² Informant, *Ato Fekadu Bizuneh*

⁵⁵³ *Ibid*, P. 5

⁵⁵⁴ *Ibid*, P.5

⁵⁵⁵ Horn Consultant, "Constituency Building: Diagnostic Survey of Ethiopian NGOs Prepared for Oxfam GB and CRDA" (Addis Ababa, November 2003), P.35

⁵⁵⁶ CRDA, "Minutes of the Executive Committee" (June 30th, 1998)

forums in which the wider public is informed and oriented in relation to NGOs and their activities. The most prominent of these is “NGOs’ Day”, a celebration at which NGOs publicly present themselves and their activities, with videos and photos as documentation. On the “NGOs’ Day” that coincided with CCRDA’s Silver Jubilee, people from a broad section of society met with NGOs leaders and were apprised of their accomplishments. Occasions like this one have improved the public perception of NGOs. One of the visitors to CCRDA’s Silver Jubilee NGO day stated how his own attitude had been changed, saying:

በጣም ጥሩ ጅምር ነው። በዚህ ቀጥሉበት። ለመን? የሚለው ጥያቄ ዛሬ በሃገራችን ለአርዳታ ድርጅቶች ለዩ አስተያየት ነው ያለኝ። በኔ በኩል ለቆሙለት አላማ ሳይሆን ወደ ግል ጥቅማ ጥቅሞች የቆሙ ስለሚመስለኝ ነው። አሁን ግን የተሻለ ግንዛቤ ላይ ደርሻለሁ።

It is good beginning. Continue like this. To answer why? I had a different perception about NGOs for it appears to me that they stand for personal wealth. Now I have a better understanding⁵⁵⁷.

4.2.2. NGOs and trends in foreign-mobilised resources

The resources that NGOs in Ethiopia have received from abroad have increased in the last decades. The interplay between global and national circumstances has contributed to this. Four different phases are identifiable with regard to resource flows to NGOs:

- ✓ The earliest phase: covers up to the early 1970s;
- ✓ The second phase covers the period from the outbreak of the 1973 famine and of the Ethiopian revolution that followed it;
- ✓ The third phase covers from the early 1980s to the late 1980s and
- ✓ The fourth phase covers the period after the collapse of the military government in 1991.

During the first phase, which covers the 1960s and early 1970s, NGOs could not mobilise many resources. Two main factors explain this. Firstly, major donors, notably USAID, Canadian International Development Assistance (CIDA), and the World Bank, preferred governmental organisations to NGOs. Resettlement, as envisaged in the Third Five Years Plan (1968–1973), was one of the programmes that donors funded. The plan stated that:

A gradual but accelerating shift in agricultural population will begin to be seen during the Third Plan from the present crowded Northern and Central highlands to the lowland areas and in a still longer run to the southwestern highlands and those parts of the southern highlands where population was not a problem⁵⁵⁸.

Agricultural mechanisation, and later, by the beginning of the 1970s, various packages and programmes that focused on smallholding farmers, were some of the aspects of the programme that

⁵⁵⁷ CRDA, "On the Occasion of the 25th Anniversary of CRDA, Comments Given: Views of People" (Addis Ababa, 2003)

⁵⁵⁸ Shiferaw Bekelle, "An Imperial Account of Resettlement in Ethiopia" in Anatoly Andreevich Gromyko (ed), *Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress of Ethiopian Studies, Moscow*, 26th-29th, 1986, 6 vol, Moscow 1988, P. 130

received significant support from foreign donors. These aids were part of a wide range of support Western donors offered to the imperial government. This had to do with the alignment of Haile Selassie's government in the international politics. The imperial government was a key partner in an effort to contain the spread of communism in the Horn of Africa and at the international level. It was, thus, unlikely that Western donors would consider NGOs as conduit through which to channel aid to Ethiopia. This had implication on the financial capacity of NGOs. Describing its failure to secure funds from Western donors in Ethiopia, ASE reported that, "...a number of funding agencies are more...inclined to help more concrete projects as resettlement schemes, road building and well digging projects, etc"⁵⁵⁹.

As a result, NGOs depended on their capacity to mobilise resources in Europe. The founders of ASE made a trip to France in 1965 to mobilise resources. The father of Mr Francois Enguegard, one of the founders of ASE, donated his own car to the founders of ASE for them to undertake their activities in Wollaita province⁵⁶⁰. Fr. Henry, one of the founders of ASE, conducted his second fundraising tour of France and Germany in 1968. He succeeded in collecting money from the Germany Catholic Bishops' Organisation and Development Cooperation (MISEREOR)⁵⁶¹. Then for their first project agreement signed on June 6th, 1969, ASE also began to get financial, administrative and technical support from INADES-Formation⁵⁶². Donors associated with INADES-Formation gave also subsidies to ASE at various times; Peace and Development, French Technical Cooperation, CIDA, CCFD (Terre Solidaire), CNSD (Centre National de Coopération au Développements) were amongst these⁵⁶³. Similarly, many other NGOs operating in Ethiopia had developed permanent structures of their own to mobilise resources from diverse sources. International NGOs in particular were known for designing systems of fundraising. For instance, Oxfam introduced a fundraising structure that soon identified three sources of funds: membership fees, donations from individuals and funds from donor organisations⁵⁶⁴.

Despite their efforts to mobilise resources from abroad, NGOs' programmes in Ethiopia received small financial subsidies in this early period. This obviously put both the sustainability of individual projects, and that of the NGOs who ran these projects under risk. Concerned about this,

⁵⁵⁹ ASE, "Situation Report" (May 1975), P. 20

⁵⁶⁰ Informant, *Ato Ammanuel Assefa*

⁵⁶¹ "Yä aba Henri Acir Yähiwot Tarik" (Addis Ababa, nd), P. 4

⁵⁶² "Supplementary Note on Conclusion and Recommendations of ASE Evaluation (1970-89): Extract (nd), 8

⁵⁶³ "Bigger NG[D]Os in Eastern and Southern Africa" (1989), P. 37

⁵⁶⁴ "Setting Course for the Twenty-First Century: Oxfam GB Strategic Review (July 1998), P. 6

ASE reported that, “Financing an organisation such as Agri-Service Ethiopia has always been something of a problem”⁵⁶⁵. The issue was much more complex with regard to international NGOs, and the availability of finance was not the only factor that inhibited NGO programmes in Ethiopia. The priority that international NGOs accorded to Ethiopia also informed their budgeting. During the 1960s and 1970s, the developed countries from which international NGOs originated were committed to assisting newly independent countries in Africa to achieve development goals. International NGOs went in line with this. As a result, Ethiopia, as a country that had remained independent, was not on the priority list of international NGOs. The fact that Oxfam opened its first field offices in Basutoland (Lesotho), Bechuanaland (Botswana) and Swaziland shows that the organisation accorded primacy to former British colonies⁵⁶⁶. Likewise, the fact that Oxfam’s programme in Ethiopia was managed by its Kenya-based East Africa Regional Office shows that the organisation gave priority to former British colonies⁵⁶⁷.

The famine of 1973–1974 and the revolution of September 1974 increased the finances of NGOs operating in Ethiopia. Following the famine, Oxfam, Concern, from Ireland, and the Catholic Relief Service from the USA started to fund national NGOs such as CCRDA and the Ethiopian Catholic Secretariat. In the autumn of 1973, the media in Europe picked up the Ethiopian famine as a major issue and reported extensively about it. A film entitled “The hidden hunger” by Jonathan Dimbleby, a British journalist that was screened in October 1973 shocked the European audience. This was followed by television and radio appeals to rescue the famine victims⁵⁶⁸. For the first time, a large number of international NGOs carried out extensive fundraising campaigns on behalf of the Ethiopian poor and designated Ethiopia as their priority area⁵⁶⁹. NGOs mobilised resources not only for their relief activities, but also for extensive rehabilitation programmes. Concerning the willingness of donors, and the readiness with which NGOs could run projects, CCRDA reported that:

We have already received pledges of ongoing support from a number of donor agencies who know of the shifts [towards rehabilitation] in emphasis and what it entails. The CRC [Christian Relief Committee, precursor of CCRDA] now finds itself in a very strong position to offer viable

⁵⁶⁵ ASE, “Situation...”, P. 20

⁵⁶⁶ Mikael Jennings, *Surrogates of the State: NGOs, Development and Ujjama in Tanzania* (USA, Kmarian Press 2008), P. 116

⁵⁶⁷ Kevin Doheny, *No Hands but Yours: Memoirs of A Missionary* (Veritas Publications, Ireland, 1997), P. 100

⁵⁶⁸ *Ibid*, PP. 103-104

⁵⁶⁹ Fantahun Ayele, “NGOs’ Relief Operation in Wollo: 1973-1986” (MA thesis in History, AAU, May 1984), P. 24

projects to those and other funding sources. It is important that agreement be reached on priority needs because CRC can then approach with greater confidence, its financial sources⁵⁷⁰.

The 1974 Ethiopian revolution was variously received by NGOs and donors. Those donors that welcomed the revolution enhanced their financial commitment to NGOs. For instance, ASE, which had earlier suffered from financial uncertainty, now found itself in the most comfortable financial situation. This was because ASE donors such as INADES-Formation supported the revolution, and were committed to enhancing the role of ASE. Imbued with this new level of support, ASE reported that, "...of late [since towards the end of 1974] some funding agencies have begun to allot a portion of their budget to educational ventures. In any event, funds were fully available for the last year [1975] and it seems that they will again be available for this year [1976] and the next years"⁵⁷¹.

As the famine relief operation of the early 1970s diminished and finances flowed on, NGOs stepped up their commitment towards addressing other, long-term development challenges faced by the country. This required their consortium, CCRDA, to play a role in providing technical support. To this end, CCRDA received substantial amounts of financial support from foreign donors who believed there was an, "...explicit need of development personnel for technical information and advice on appropriate technology for rural development"⁵⁷². CCRDA was given the responsibility of delivering such technical support to NGOs as it, "...represent [ed] the cooperation of most NGOs, churches and missions involved in relief and development"⁵⁷³. This programmatic support role remained a source of finance for CCRDA⁵⁷⁴.

While some donors increased their contributions during the revolutionary period, the majority of Western donors withheld their aid to Ethiopia. Initially, it was a protest against the compulsory nationalisation of a series of commercial and production enterprises by the revolutionary government. From around 1977 onwards, the military government became committed to Soviet-style socialism⁵⁷⁵. Major donor governments, chiefly the United States and Britain, sought to pressurise the Ethiopian government to weaken its bonds with the Soviet Union, by withholding

⁵⁷⁰ CRF, 1974 Annual Report, PP. 5-6

⁵⁷¹ ASE, "Situation...", P. 20

⁵⁷² Everett Ressler, "Appropriate Technology Unit (CRDA): Operational Report of the First Six Months, May to October 1975 (Addis Ababa), P.1

⁵⁷³ *Ibid*, P. 2

⁵⁷⁴ Letter from W.R.S Oliver, CCRDA Coordinator to Brot for die Welt (Germany), Oxfam (Canada), Christian Aid (Britain) and Lutherhjälpen, Sweden (June 30th, 1975)

⁵⁷⁵ Maggie Black, *A Cause for our Time: Oxfam the First 50 Years* (Oxfam, Oxford University Press, 1992), P. 258

all bilateral assistance, while encouraging improved relations with the West⁵⁷⁶. Partly in response to this, however, the Ethiopian government only became more xenophobic toward the West, moreover accusing Western donors for being responsible for all the country's problems⁵⁷⁷. In the context of the famine of 1983–1984, a politburo of the Ethiopian government made a conference speech in which he blamed Western donors for having failed to provide Ethiopia with the financial support to preempt the famine. He said that:

It is because the necessary funds have not been available for development efforts and for an increase in food production in the traditional drought-prone areas of the country that we are now witnessing the current tragedy of death and starvation and are unable, from own resources, either to prevent famine or to mitigate its effect⁵⁷⁸.

Noting that socio-economic conditions had deteriorated, in the early 1980s Western donors again started to channel financial support to Ethiopia, only this time through NGOs. This marked the commencement of the third phase, listed above, wherein NGOs secured huge resources, while, due to ideological differences and human rights issues, Western governments such as that of the Netherlands had severed technical cooperation with the military government⁵⁷⁹. In 1980, the Netherlands government decided to assist selected countries in Africa through Netherlands-based NGOs such as NOVIB, ICCO (Protestant background), Bilance (Catholic background), and Hivos (humanitarian background). These NGOs signed a “Programme Financing Agreement” with the Ministry of Development Cooperation of the Netherlands Government. This agreement authorised each of these NGOs to manage their own (government-funded) projects and report on their policies and activities to the Ministry of Development Cooperation⁵⁸⁰.

According to the “Programme Financing Agreement”, these NGOs were to channel the aid they received from the Netherlands Government through their national partner NGOs. Ethiopia was one of the countries in which these four NGOs agreed to invest the aid. In fact, all four NGOs, especially NOVIB and ICCO, had financed national NGOs in Ethiopia since 1976. NOVIB's earliest contact with ASE was in 1976. With reference to this date, a document states that, “Since the first time of cooperation between Novib and ASE in 1976, the relationship between the two

⁵⁷⁶ Paul Kolemen, “The Politics of the Famine in Ethiopia and Eritrea” in Peter Halfpenny (ed), *Manchester Sociology Occasional Papers* (nd), P. 9

⁵⁷⁷ Maggie Black, *A Cause...*, P.258

⁵⁷⁸ A Politburo of the military government quoted in Daily Telegraph, Paul Kolemen, “The Politics of the Famine in Ethiopia and Eritrea” in Peter Halfpenny (ed), *Manchester Sociology Occasional Papers* (nd), P. 9

⁵⁷⁹ “Bigger NG[D]Os....”, P. 34

⁵⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 5

organisations has gradually intensified and expanded”⁵⁸¹. Likewise on February 7, 1977, the representative of ICCO, Mrs Kroemer met the Executive Committee of CCRDA. She told the Executive Committee of CCRDA that ICCO, “...is interested in supporting development projects especially those which stress self-help”⁵⁸². As a result of the “Programme Financing Agreement” that they signed, NOVIB and ICCO subsequently increased their financial support to national NGOs such as ASE and CCRDA. Likewise EZE, which had financed national Ethiopian NGOs since 1976, increased its financial support of NGO programmes such as those of ASE and CCRDA⁵⁸³.

At around the same time, as part of their policy of attempting to woo Ethiopia away from the Soviet Union, major donor organisations such as the World Bank not only resumed, but increased their financial support of the Ethiopian government in February 1981. Indeed, the Bank proposed to make Ethiopia, “Africa’s foremost recipient of the Bank’s concessional aid by tripling lending from \$ 150 million planned for 1982/83 to \$ 400–500 million before the end of the decade”⁵⁸⁴.

The revival of donors’ interest in the early 1980s motivated those international NGOs that had reduced their Ethiopian commitment, due to the anti-Western propaganda of the military government, to increase their financial commitments once more. For instance, motivated by the growing interest of donors, the leadership of Oxfam argued for Oxfam to increase its financial commitment to Ethiopia⁵⁸⁵. As part of this revival, Oxfam replaced its Field Director in Ethiopia, Mr Michael Miller, with Mr Hugh Goyder. Before he was posted to Ethiopia, Mr Goyder had been Oxfam’s Field Director in India. Immediately after his arrival in 1980, Mr Goyder revived Oxfam’s commitment to fostering self-generative grassroots structures⁵⁸⁶.

The outbreak of the 1983–1984 famine gave even greater impetus to the revived interest of NGOs and donors. The famine presented one of the best opportunities for NGOs to conduct successful fundraising campaigns in Western countries. SCF in Europe and World Vision in the United States were the first to begin such fundraising campaigns. NGOs such as Oxfam had earlier underestimated the famine. This put these NGOs at a disadvantage. The frustration this generated

⁵⁸¹ “Ethiopia, “Agri-Service Ethiopia: Novib Programme Assistance (1983-85)”, P. 1

⁵⁸² “CRDA General Membership Meeting” (February 7th, 1977), P.4

⁵⁸³ “Ethiopia, Agri-Service Ethiopia: Novib...”, P. 1

⁵⁸⁴ Paul Kolemen, “The Politics of...”, P. 9

⁵⁸⁵ Tony Vaux, *The Selfish Altruist: Relief Work in Famine and War* (Earthscan Publications, UK and USA, 2001), P.145

⁵⁸⁶ Maggie Black, *A Cause...*, P. 258

within Oxfam may be discerned from one of the letters exchanged between its Field Director and a senior official at headquarters, following an appreciative media report of SCF activities in Korem. This in turn had generated a significant influx of financial support from donor organisations and individual contributors to SCF, while, conversely, Oxfam had been criticised for having failed to take action with regard to the famine. In this context, a senior official of Oxfam told the Field Director that:

The problem over the Ethiopian situation was of course the unsuspected and sudden showing of the television films with the very strong SCF bias. It would have been of great help to us if you could have sent us a telex informing us that those films were being made and that they were going to be shown very shortly. We were also very taken aback by Mike Woolridge's wild and hysterical statements that we could not ignore⁵⁸⁷.

This brought Oxfam into stiff competition with other international NGOs, namely SCF and World Vision. To this end, Oxfam sponsored a film by Buerk and Muhammed Amin that was screened towards the end of 1984. This film by Buerk and Amin broke the hearts of the international community. Since the public was the major source of income, NGOs extended their appeals to private contributors. Telephone numbers and/or bank accounts of various NGOs were published on TV screens, in newspapers and magazines to help people easily send in their contributions⁵⁸⁸. This was met by significant contributions from the European public. SCF, for example, received 1000 telephone calls within half a day – a record in its long history. Oxfam, for its part, registered 400 calls within just an hour. Within five days, public contributions to Oxfam totalled more than \$1 million. In less than a month, Oxfam and SCF raised £2 million each, while World Vision's UK office collected £160,000 over the same period⁵⁸⁹. This was the first time that NGOs were able to collect such enormous resources. Concerning Oxfam's fundraising, Graham Hancock explained that, "...public donations [to Oxfam] remained fairly static until 1985 when appeals on behalf of the starving in Ethiopia multiplied Oxfam's earnings again – to an all time high of £51.1 million, up from less than £20 million in 1983-84"⁵⁹⁰.

While international NGOs focused on mobilising resource overseas, large numbers of donor organisations channelled their assistance to national NGOs. National NGOs such as CCRDA and ASE received a massive quantity of resources. CCRDA in particular received not only financial but also material support, including large number of trucks of varying size. The governmental RRC

⁵⁸⁷ Letter from Mikael Harris to Hugh Goyder (May 13, 1983), P.1

⁵⁸⁸ Fantahun Ayele, "NGOs'...", P. 105

⁵⁸⁹ *Ibid*, P. 105

⁵⁹⁰ Letter from Oxfam to Haile Wodesenbet (RRC Dessie), December 12, 1986; Letter from RRC to Oxfam (November 28, 1988)

had initially been opposed to the fact that NGOs came to own large trucking operations, however, once it became clear that donors were unwilling to donate their resources to the government, they ultimately gave way. Minutes in the CCRDA archive document the government's position on this issue, stating that

The chief commissioner [of RRC] had his own reservation. The commissioner while expressing some reservations regarding the implementation of this type of project by a voluntary agency [NGO], agreed to the proposed project and offered to make the services of RRC staff available in drawing up the project proposal⁵⁹¹.

Other major NGOs in the country also acquired large numbers of trucks with various carrying capacities. Some of the NGOs that undertook large-scale trucking activities included the joint Oxfam-SCF Trucking Operation, the joint Lutheran World Federation-Ethiopia Evangelical Church Mekan Yesus Trucking Operation, Mennonite Mission, Catholic Relief Service, and World Vision International⁵⁹².

NGOs that had acquired sufficient experience in development assistance continued to secure funds from donors after the regime change in May 1991. This regime change in fact increased the confidence of major donors, who trusted that the new transitional government in Addis Ababa would democratise the country. As aid to the country was tightly linked to the dismantling of state-controlled enterprises and the promotion of the free market, the government started to act in line with neo-liberal ideology. At the early stage, donors such as the European Economic Commission were disappointed with the pace with which the government proceeded with economic restructuring⁵⁹³. Later on, however, donors became satisfied that state-owned enterprises were being privatised, and the new government drafted a relatively liberal constitution that, among other things, stipulated that periodic elections were to be held on competitive basis, and power would be decentralised to federal units that would respect local languages and ethnicity⁵⁹⁴. As it was keen to assert its control over aid flows, the government set its own agenda around the notion of development, particularly by designing sector development programme for roads, education and health⁵⁹⁵. The Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (MEDAC) was designated to coordinate foreign aid⁵⁹⁶.

⁵⁹¹ CRDA, "General Membership meeting (October 3rd, 1983), p.7

⁵⁹² CRDA, "General Membership meeting (August 1st, 1983), p.14

⁵⁹³ Tonny Vaux, "Visit to Ethiopia: September 17-29, 1991" (nd), P.1

⁵⁹⁴ *Ibid*, P. 1

⁵⁹⁵ Arthur van Diesen and Karen Walker, "The Changing Face of Aid to Ethiopia: Past Experience and Emerging Issues in British and EC Aid" (January 1999), P. 8-9

⁵⁹⁶ *Ibid*, P. 8

Despite the fact that bi-lateral and multi-lateral donor organizations funded the Ethiopian government, a number of other donor organizations wanted to fund NGOs. The majority of these donors were in favour of the development programmes of national NGOs⁵⁹⁷, however, they were concerned that these NGOs did not have experience to manage these programmes independently. This had two implications. Firstly, donors introduced rigorous criteria when processing project proposals submitted by national NGOs. Most national NGOs were unable to meet these criteria, since, having emerged recently, they did not have sufficient numbers of qualified staff, the means to realise logistics or even strategy. Representatives of those donor organisations that sought to strengthen national NGOs became concerned about the stiff competition that national NGOs faced for receiving funds. A representative of one such donor organisation who discussed the matter with officials of national NGOs reported that donor organisations imposed “unreasonable” demands on national NGOs, proposing that, “...for new NGOs there should be some forum to protect them...”⁵⁹⁸. Meanwhile, those NGOs that had acquired experience were favoured, as they often continued to get financial support from their “traditional” donors, while, additionally being able to convince new donors that they could run development activities, which also proved necessary and useful. ASE, for instance, had been financed by both EZE and NOVIB in the past, until their financial commitment was influenced by the war between the government and rebels. Indeed, a few months after the regime change in May 1991, the Africa Desk officer of NOVIB informed the acting executive director of ASE that, “Novib’s policy with regard to Ethiopia was based on the reality of the wars”⁵⁹⁹. NOVIB’s chief concern had been that the ongoing conflict could destroy projects that they had financed, especially in war zones such as Gojjam. The collapse of the military government motivated these donors to increase their financial support again; not, however, by going back to how things had been before. NOVIB argued that ASE was too heavily dependent on the support of NOVIB and EZE, and that ASE should look for other donors to finance its programmes. Also, as will be seen in the next chapter, due to their mistrust with regard to ASE’s utilisation of finances, NOVIB and EZE withheld their support from ASE in 1990, and this posed a real threat to ASE. As a result, the leadership of ASE took NOVIB’s advice to approach alternative donors for support seriously, not only to reduce their dependency on too few donors, but also simply to ensure the existence of ASE. ASE’s Board passed a resolution that the long term solution to such problems was the diversification of donors. Thus, it advised the management of

⁵⁹⁷ CRDA, Executive Committee Meeting Minutes (November 5th, 1990)

⁵⁹⁸ CRDA, “Minutes of the Executive Committee (February 5th, 1990)

⁵⁹⁹ Letter from Marck Couwenbergh to Ato Wold Gebreal (July 4th, 1991), P.2

ASE to review its existing project documents and initiate new ones, to be submitted to potential donors⁶⁰⁰. In 1997, ASE started to get financial support from Action Aid Ethiopia⁶⁰¹. ASE presented its donor diversification programme as an integral part of its activities. In so doing, the organisation, succeeded in securing financial support to run various specific programmes from Troicare, KAFOD, Christian Aid, Dan Church Aid, Care Ethiopia, and Oxfam Canada and small scale subsidies from a number of donors⁶⁰².

These donors' decisions to fund ASE were based on their assessment that ASE had acquired experience and laid down structures at the grassroots levels. The assessment made by Action Aid Ethiopia shows the confidence donors had about ASE. Concerning the organisation's decision to fund ASE, Action Aid's Executive Director told ASE that, "...three decade of grassroots experience has built our belief that ASE... [was] a prospective partner in poverty alleviation"⁶⁰³.

Although they were very much in favour of NGOs with experience, donors did not ignore emerging national NGOs altogether. The same donors who funded ASE told the leadership of CCRDA that they would like to support sustainable development proposed by emerging national NGOs. ICCO and NOVIB from Holland, and EZE from Germany came to the fore with this proposal⁶⁰⁴. Their decision also favoured CCRDA, as donors wanted CCRDA to assist national NGOs to build up their capacities⁶⁰⁵. These donors thus increased their financial support to national NGOs, and made use of CCRDA as a channel for fund disbursement as well as to supervise project implementation. Conversely, other new donors wanted well-experienced NGOs to run projects, and they also designated CCRDA to identify such NGOs, and disbursed funds to them to coordinate projects. The designation of CCRDA in this role was the result of donors' confidence that CCRDA was well experienced, both in fund management and in overseeing the implementation of projects. As opined by the representative of Partnership for Africa and Canada, one of the new donors organizations, "CCRDA is the best mechanism [to channel resources and supervise their implementation]"⁶⁰⁶.

Like national NGOs such as ASE and CCRDA, international NGOs operating in Ethiopia also continued to win the favour of donors. International NGOs were involved in "cross-border

⁶⁰⁰ *Ibid*, P. 4

⁶⁰¹ ASE, "ASE's 30th Years Anniversary, *Agri-Drum*" (February 2000), P. 18-19

⁶⁰² Informant, *Ato Abeyu*

⁶⁰³ ASE, "ASE's 30th..." , P. 22

⁶⁰⁴ CRDA, "Executive Committee Meeting Minutes" (November 5th, 1990)

⁶⁰⁵ *Ibid*

⁶⁰⁶ *Ibid*

operations”, aimed to relieve victims of famine in those territories which had been under the control of rebels since 1983. For this purpose, NGOs like Oxfam secured financial support from the European Economic Commission (EEC), sending in financial and material assistance through the Relief Society of Tigray (REST), the Eritrean Relief Association, and the Oromo Relief Association. After the regime change, these relief organisations secured official NGO status and the EEC showed an interest in financing them, especially REST. However, the Commission was not confident about their capabilities and thus invited Oxfam to serve as intermediary between the Commission and such emerging national NGOs. Oxfam accepted the invitation as this proposal conformed to the organisation’s principle of encouraging national NGOs to carry out development activities in their respective areas. As soon as the military government collapsed, for example, senior staff at Oxfam had discussed the issue, suggesting that, “...we may be able to respond to local initiatives, rather than ourselves [Oxfam] to initiate responses”⁶⁰⁷. However like the EEC, Oxfam was also concerned that national NGOs lacked the experience to manage development programmes. As a result, Oxfam did not end up disbursing as much as the EEC had planned for them to. Concerning this, the organisation also stated in 1995, “...we remain convinced of the need to work with and through Ethiopian organisations [national NGOs], but we have restricted the number of new ones we engage with”⁶⁰⁸.

The situation started to change in the mid-1990s, as Oxfam came to appreciate that Ethiopia was a strategic location in which to invest, and locate, more resources. As a senior official of Oxfam informed the Minister of Justice, “Addis Ababa is best suited as the location” of Oxfam’s Horn of Africa sub-regional office, for example⁶⁰⁹. This increased Oxfam’s Ethiopian budget. In one of its publications, Oxfam stated that, “The Oxfam programme and partners in Ethiopia are expected to benefit [possibly disproportionately] from having the additional support provided by regional staff and office resources close at hand”⁶¹⁰. Two more events contributed to increasing Oxfam’s Ethiopian resources. These were the outbreak of the Ethio-Eritrean war in 1998 and the occurrence of the famine in the eastern and southern provinces in 1999–2000. The war displaced people close to the border, and drained the government’s coffers to the extent that the central government asked regional governments to return their budgets⁶¹¹. Oxfam thus sent out an assessment team to

⁶⁰⁷ “Oxfam Ethiopia Senior Staff Meeting” (October 29th, 1991), P. 1

⁶⁰⁸ “Outline Country Strategy” (nd), P.1, P. 1

⁶⁰⁹ “Regional Programme Coordinator Post Review: Terms of Reference for Consultant to Review” (nd), P. 2

⁶¹⁰ “Planned Transition to Oxfam Regional Offices in Africa: 1998-1999” (Oxford, nd), P.1

⁶¹¹ “Oxfam GB: Horn of Africa Regional Annual Report to SMT, 1998-1999” (nd), P. 2

investigate this outbreak of war and famine. The team recommended that Oxfam should increase their Ethiopian budget for food aid, water, sanitation, and health⁶¹².

To conclude, the interplay between domestic and global circumstances has determined the flow of resources to NGOs. The quantity of resources that NGOs have mobilised in Ethiopia has increased in the last decades. During much of the military period, donors preferred to channel part of their resources through NGOs. The improvement of inter-state relations after the end of the military government diverted some donor resources from NGOs to the government. However, a number of those NGOs in operation throughout all three regimes of government were not so affected by the decision of donors to channel resources through the government, because certain donors continued to prefer to channel their resources through NGOs with ample experiences.

4.3. Territorialisation and NGOs

The territories in which NGOs operate have witnessed a great deal of expansion. Successive Ethiopian governments have attempted to exercise a high degree of authority over the regional distribution of NGOs, arguing that NGO resources must be fairly distributed throughout the country. NGOs, however, for their part, have invariably tended to prefer to remain in the areas in which they started their activities. This has been for two reasons: firstly, that NGOs felt they could secure legitimacy among project participants in areas where they had operated for a long time. Secondly, that continuous shifting from area to area involves adjustment problems and additional costs. As such, NGOs have often remained attached to specific regions, which have had the result of dividing the country into their own spheres of influence. Concerning this manner of division during the military period, the ex-chief commissioner of the RRC stated that:

Consciously or unconsciously, voluntary agencies [NGOs] divided the country into sphere of influences [sic]. The American Catholic Relief Service was interested more in the troubled northern region of Eritrea and Tigray. UK Save the Children Fund had Korem and the surrounding area of Wollo; Oxfam UK took other parts of Wollo; the Lutherans were mostly involved in southwestern Ethiopia; World Vision was generally in the north; World University Service Canada (WUSC) and Care from the United States were in Harar⁶¹³

This attachment of NGOs to specific areas was so strong that they refused to shift to other areas of greater need. This created controversy with the RRC. As in the case of Save the Children Fund

⁶¹² “Minutes of an Emergency Coordination Meeting held on Tuesday 19 April 2000”, P.2

⁶¹³ Dawit Wolde Giorgis, *The Red Tears: War, Famine and Revolution in Ethiopia* (Red Sea Press, Trenton, 1989), p.242

(SCF), the ex-chief commissioner of the RRC wrote: “Save the Children [Fund] had been operating for so long in the Korem areas that it was difficult to make individual workers understand that at times Korem might not have national priority for certain supplies”⁶¹⁴. RRC tried to convince NGOs to adhere to priorities set by the RRC, but it was unsuccessful. NGOs even considered these attempts of the RRC’s as interventions into their internal affairs. Whenever the RRC attempted to persuade NGOs divert supplies to areas of great need, NGOs soon reported this to their headquarters. Their headquarters announced it to the media, and it became one more factor for the condemnation of the RRC and the Ethiopian government⁶¹⁵.

A certain degree of disagreement also existed between NGOs. This became evident at the regular meetings held at CCRDA. As the chief commissioner recalled, “In the field one could see some conflicts among the agencies: CRS [Catholic Relief Service] and Oxfam did not get along, nor did World Vision and Irish Concern, nor did the Lutherans and the Catholics”⁶¹⁶. In areas such as Wollo, where multiple NGOs operated, the competition between NGOs to grab projects was high. In 1986, an Oxfam consultant documented his experience in Wollo in the following way:

There...seems to be unofficial competition between donor agencies, where I encountered the experience of an Irrigation Scheme being promised for just at the site. The following day after my visit – and this is no joke – a giant of some 6 million Birr...[was pledged]. It is against such a background that unfortunately we are going to have to try to apply Oxfam’s thinking⁶¹⁷

The competition between NGOs running programmes in adjacent territories constituted a serious issue that sometimes resulted in a lack of cooperation and poor coordination of efforts. ASE and SOS Sahel, for example, ran programmes in adjacent territories in Bale province. Concerning the lack of communication that existed between them and other NGOs, a consultant contracted by NOVIB in 1990 complained that, “There is now a small British agency, SOS Sahel, working in Balli, north Omo, along the same principle as ASE. ASE Omo project coordinator and I visited them. For him it was his first visit to them despite SOS having been in Balli for about a year”⁶¹⁸.

Donors were aware of this lack of coordination between NGOs. For instance, an evaluation undertaken in 1976 under the auspices of INADES-Formation pointed out that the lack of coordination in Wollaita, where ASE was operational, hindered the effectiveness of ASE’s

⁶¹⁴ *Ibid*, P. 243

⁶¹⁵ *Ibid*, P. 243

⁶¹⁶ *Ibid*. 243

⁶¹⁷ Yakob Aklilu, “Some Indicating Points for Future Development Programme: Wollo”(July 1986), P. 7

⁶¹⁸ "ASE: Some Comments" (1990), P. 1

educational programme. To solve the problem, the evaluation recommended that, "...a formula should be sought which would make it possible to coordinate those different programmes [in Wollaita]"⁶¹⁹. However, a similar evaluation in 1989 also concluded that a lack of coordination obstructed the implementation of ASE's educational programme⁶²⁰. The same problem was identified with regard to Oxfam, when Oxfam itself noted that the lack of coordination between NGOs and governmental organisations in Wollo was one of the primary factors that challenged the effectiveness of one of its programmes⁶²¹.

Given the competition that existed between NGOs, coordination of efforts was just not possible. NGOs rather pursued what could be described as peripheralisation, which means that they consciously expanded their operations toward areas that experienced socio-economic and political marginalisation. NGOs usually gave moral justifications for their focus on peripheral areas, and donors accepted such justifications⁶²².

Two patterns emerge with regard to NGO expansion towards the periphery: the first is their rural bias. NGOs believed that rural areas did not receive sufficient attention from governments. Clearly, successive governments in Ethiopia have introduced rural development policies that favoured agriculture, however, those of the first two regimes marginalised smallholder agriculture. The imperial government pursued a policy that encouraged large-scale commercial farming as a strategy to ensure food security in the country⁶²³. Similarly, the military government pursued a rural development scheme that focused on "modernisation", the large-scale mechanised production of cash crops, particularly in huge state farms, and the formation of top-down hierarchies of cooperatives⁶²⁴. In response, NGOs focused on supporting smallholding agriculture in rural areas. This pattern was quite apparent to NGOs, donors and governments, and resulted in a perceived NGO bias toward rural areas. In a critique of NGOs' rural bias, one observer in attendance at a CCRDA meeting in 1980 stated that, "...while there were needs in Addis Ababa, the welfare organisations were concentrating on the rural areas"⁶²⁵.

⁶¹⁹ "Supplementary...", P. 3

⁶²⁰ "Bigger NG[D]Os...", P. 25

⁶²¹ Melaku Ayalew and Philippa Coutts, "The Impact of Drought on Highland Wollo, Ethiopia and Recommendations for Action for Oxfam GB" (May 2000), P. 16

⁶²² Informant, Ato Abeyu

⁶²³ Dessalegn Rahmato, *The Peasant and the State: Studies in Agrarian Change in Ethiopia 1950s-2000s* (Addis Ababa University Press, 2008), P. 32

⁶²⁴ "Bigger NG[D]Os...", P. 24

⁶²⁵ CRDA, "General Membership Meeting (December 1st, 1980), p.13

The second pattern has to do with the fact that both the imperial and military governments favoured excess-producing regions. In response, NGOs focused on rural areas that remained marginal to the national economy. As such marginal areas were many, NGOs introduced a list of criteria that they applied more or less flexibly to identify the areas in which they would operate. The major criteria that each NGO applied most strictly in selecting its operational areas was the presence or absence of other NGOs⁶²⁶. This suggests that NGOs intentionally avoided possible competition with other NGOs. This was also because NGOs considered the presence of societal needs that they could address, considering that the presence of another NGO indicated that some needs at least were already being met; however, they did not apparently believe that any area's need was so enormous that it required the efforts of other NGOs, in *addition* to its own⁶²⁷.

It follows that each NGO directed its efforts toward those areas where government services were limited and other NGOs were non-existent. Those NGOs that operated in the 1960s directed their efforts towards the poorer and most remote areas where the involvement of the rural development ministries had been limited or sometimes absent⁶²⁸. ASE and Oxfam, for instance, started to operate in those western, southern, and certain central parts of the country that received little attention from the imperial government. ASE began its activities primarily in the seven districts of Wollaita province in the south, and selected districts of Kenbata-Hadya province in central Ethiopia, while Oxfam initiated its first engagement in the Anger-Gutin district of Wollega province in the western periphery of the country⁶²⁹. In fact, the areas where ASE and Oxfam began their activities were already centres of NGO concentration. Since the late 19th century, NGOs connected to specific religious groups had been allowed by the imperial government to establish schools, clinics and other small-scale community development schemes in the southern, western and south-western parts of the country, where there has been a relatively minimal influence by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. As a result, faith-based NGOs found the south, southwestern and western parts of the country favourable for promoting their evangelisation⁶³⁰.

Some of the NGOs based in the south-west, such as ASE, saw the injustice of the land tenure system. As a result, they welcomed the Ethiopian revolution, and took active initiatives in response

⁶²⁶ Informants, *Ato Getachew Worku and Ato Fantahun Alemu*

⁶²⁷ Informants, *Ato Getachew Worku and Ato Fantahun Alemu*

⁶²⁸ "Bigger NG[D]Os....", P. 24

⁶²⁹ Letter from Oxfam to the Public security Department of the Ministry of Interior (October 22nd, 1975), p.1

⁶³⁰ ASE, ASE's 30th..., P. 11

to the revolutionary development. Driven by the force of the revolution, ASE expanded its territorial scope, stating, for example, in 1975 that, “These last few months [1975] Agri-Service...expanded its correspondence course activities well beyond the limits of the pilot sector of Wollamo and Kambatta”⁶³¹. With the growth of the organisation, the area of operation expanded into Western Shoa, Bale, Arsi, and Gamo Gofa in the south of the country⁶³². More importantly, the organisation also extended its outreach towards the north, namely in Gojjam⁶³³.

The expansion of ASE towards Gojjam could be taken as the earliest sign of balancing the regional distribution of NGOs. However, it was the famine of 1973–1974 that decisively balanced the regional distribution of NGOs. When the famine occurred, NGOs that had operated in the areas mentioned above extended their scope towards the northern and north-central parts of the country. A number of new NGOs also rushed into the north to rescue famine victims. For instance, Oxfam extended its outreach towards the north. Qalu province was the first territory in the Wollo administrative region in which Oxfam established itself, in October 1973⁶³⁴. This marked the beginning of Oxfam’s presence in Wollo, where Oxfam has continued operating until today. The presence of Oxfam in Wollo has been significant not just because of the needs prevalent in one of Ethiopia’s poorest and most ecologically vulnerable areas, but also because of the British public response to, and support of Wollo in past emergencies⁶³⁵. After it had firmly established itself in Wollo, Oxfam soon extended operations to the neighbouring province of Tigray. As the relief situation diminished in Wollo, in May 1974, “...Oxfam in conjunction with UNICEF was running feeding centres in Tigray”⁶³⁶.

Like Oxfam, a number of other NGOs also established themselves in Wollo and Tigray. This had its own ramifications. While NGOs were concentrated in the north and south, hunger and starvation also affected populations in the eastern parts of the country. In November 1974, CCRDA received a report from the United Nation Disaster Relief Organisation in which it stated that 75,000 people in the east needed emergency support. A few NGOs, namely Oxfam, World Vision, and Concern

⁶³¹ ASE, “Situation...”, P. 1

⁶³² “Bigger NG[D]Os...”, P. 25

⁶³³ *Ibid*, P. 25

⁶³⁴ Fantahun Ayele, “NGOs’...”, P. 26

⁶³⁵ Dessalegn Rahmeto et al “Oxfam...”, P. 37

⁶³⁶ CRDA, “1977 Annual Report” (May 1977), P. 14

thus extended their presence to the Ogaden in early 1975. Oxfam started relief programmes in Degahbour and Gode in the Ogaden⁶³⁷.

The territorial expansion of NGOs also had certain consequences. To begin with, operational expansion often went beyond NGOs' supervisory capacities. On this basis, ASE had previously turned down calls from different regions in the north for it to start programmes. Concerning this, an observer tells us that:

In my stay in the organization [1970], I was impressed. From the beginning, people from Gojjam and Bali even requested us to start the same project and at least to send them the materials so as to help themselves. At that time the capacity of the organization was limited⁶³⁸.

As above, in the revolutionary period, however, ASE responded by expanding its territories as far as Gojjam in the north. In order to deal with the supervisory problem, ASE then also shifted its headquarters from Soddo town, the capital of Wollaita province, to Addis Ababa⁶³⁹. In addition to such supervisory problems, the rapid expansion of NGOs created a situation whereby NGOs had to negotiate with officials of the RRC on a number of issues. Sometimes these negotiations could be frustrating, to the extent that certain NGOs like Oxfam even considered this to be a factor in deciding whether to reduce the number of areas in which they operated, as per one senior Oxfam official's recommendation:

Oxfam is to limit itself to 2 or 3 regions. We were to concentrate on only few areas we might be able to build up the right connections to local RRC as well as getting a decent amount of support from the RRC head office. I think that one of our major weaknesses is that we have not established our own priorities together with the RRC and thus suffer a lot from their indifference to what we are doing⁶⁴⁰.

Later, the outbreak of the Ethiopian famine in 1983–1984 and the massive rehabilitation efforts that followed bolstered NGOs' presences in their areas and caused some of them to expand their territories. However, NGOs sought to focus in the worst-affected areas of the northern provinces which secured the most media attention. This inevitably created competition for territory between NGOs. One of these worst-affected areas, and thus also the focus of media attention, was Korem in Wollo, where SCF had established itself. Oxfam's Oxford headquarters recommended that Oxfam should also extend to Korem. SCF, for itself, asserted that the region was its domain. The Oxfam Field Director told Oxfam in Oxford that, "We...felt there was little point in getting

⁶³⁷ Maggie Black, *A Cause...*, P. 258

⁶³⁸ Akpac Studio, "The Development and Future Direction of Agri-Service Ethiopia" (nd)

⁶³⁹ Informant, Ato Getachew Worku

⁶⁴⁰ *Ibid*

operationally involved in Korem, the town which had received so much world publicity in the last week...SCF has been working in Wollo....for the last five years”⁶⁴¹. As a result, Oxfam instead expanded its territories towards the western districts in Wollo province including Wadla Delanta, Kalu, Kobo-Alamata, and Worehimenu⁶⁴².

Oxfam also opened up new branches in the eastern part of Gonder that had suffered from repeated drought and famine. Oxfam began its activities in Gonder with a conviction that the region had been marginalised, not only by the government but also by NGOs themselves. The conflict between government forces and the Ethiopian Democratic Union in Gonder, which was fighting to restore the monarch, disrupted NGOs. As news about the famine spread, a number of NGOs rushed into Gonder. As a result, the competition for organisational hegemony made it difficult for Oxfam to gain space in eastern Gonder. As a source tells us, “This is an extremely sensitive area, with the Red Cross not wanting any interference from other agency”⁶⁴³. However, Oxfam and Red Cross officials discussed the issue in Addis Ababa, and Oxfam gained ground in the region. In a letter he addressed to the headquarters, Oxfam’s Field Director stated that, “We are working better with the Red Cross now, who in Addis admits to us the incompetence and apparent corruption of their Gonder branch”⁶⁴⁴.

The eastern part of Gonder was not the only region in which Oxfam established itself. In the context in which large number of NGOs were rushing into the country and taking areas of their choice, Oxfam extended its outreach to Wonberta district in Eastern Hararghe and to Wollaita province in the south, where it started first relief, and then also rehabilitation and development programmes⁶⁴⁵.

4.4. NGOs’ territorial contraction: shrinkage and NGOs’ response

Towards the end of the 1980s, the territories in which NGOs operated were reduced in size. The process of territorial reduction went back to 1983, at which time, NGOs operated in conflict-prone areas. As a result, the territorial expansion of NGOs contained inherent risk. The earliest real threat to NGOs started on May 25th, 1983 when Ibenat in Gonder was ransacked by TPLF⁶⁴⁶. A number

⁶⁴¹ Hugh Goyder, “Report on Oxfam’s Work in Drought Relief: March 14-28, 1983” (nd), P. 1

⁶⁴² “Minutes of Monitoring Meeting: Dessie” (March 9, 1985)

⁶⁴³ “Final Report on Work in Gonder Region: 14th August-28th October 1983”, P.4

⁶⁴⁴ Letter from Hugh Goyder to Walsh (June 4, 1983), p. 1

⁶⁴⁵ Tegegne Teka, *International Non-Governmental Organizations in Rural Development in Ethiopia: Rhetoric and Practice* (Frankfurt am Mein, Peter Lang, 2000), P. 143; “Memorandum” from Nicholas to Brendan et al (July 25, 1986), P.1

⁶⁴⁶ “Report for May 1983” (nd), P. 1

of NGOs that operated in the area were under security threat. In spite of the threat, some NGOs, including Oxfam, decided to resume their works. However, the insecurity was so high that the cost to the organisation was too much. Thus, by early 1984, Oxfam became pessimistic. Its Field Director stated that, "...we should not expect to be involved there [Gonder] after July this year [1984], as both the costs and security risks much exceeded the benefits derived from our assistance to the area"⁶⁴⁷. This led Oxfam to withdraw from Gonder and starting to concentrate in Wollo in the north-central, and Wollaita in the south-western part of Ethiopia⁶⁴⁸.

As before, however, Wollo was a province where NGOs operated in large numbers, and competed for territories. Government organisations favoured NGOs that had high budgets, prioritising them to operate in areas of their choice. For instance, Oxfam signed an agreement with the RRC, the Ministry of Agriculture and the EWWCA and started managing an agricultural project in the Kobo-Alamata valley. Soon, the Ethiopian Water Works Constructions Authority (EWWCA), the RRC, the Ministry of Agriculture started themselves the same programme in the same valley with \$25 million offered by the Italian Technical Cooperation (ITC). Attempts were made to divide responsibilities between Oxfam and the Italian-funded project⁶⁴⁹. However, these were not successful because Oxfam believed that as the Italian-funded project was centrally planned and capital intensive, it was thus, "... likely to make out smaller initiatives through the KAADP [Kobo-Alamat Agricultural Development Project] irrelevant"⁶⁵⁰. Oxfam, thus, decided to withdraw from the area in May 1987⁶⁵¹.

Not only the competition between NGOs, but also their insecurity was intense in Wollo. After withdrawing from Kobo-Alamata, Oxfam became extremely pessimistic about its activities in the north, notably Wollo. The advance of rebels and the weak response of the government forced NGOs to run away from the region towards the end of the 1980s. Because of its military defeats in the north, the government declined to give protection to expatriates in Tigray and Eritrea. The government set April 8th, 1988 as the deadline for expatriates to leave the two regions⁶⁵². With few exceptions, NGOs including Oxfam duly dismantled and removed their equipment from Tigray⁶⁵³.

⁶⁴⁷ Report on Visit to Libo Awraja, Gonder Drought February 15-16, 1984", P. 2

⁶⁴⁸ Tegegne Teka, *International...*, P. 141

⁶⁴⁹ "Oxfam Dessie: Minutes of Monthly Meeting" (May 10, 1986)

⁶⁵⁰ *Ibid*

⁶⁵¹ "Oxfam Dessie: Minutes of Monthly Meeting" (May 31st, 1986)

⁶⁵² Jan Devis, "Emergency Water Programme Report No 2: March 29, 1988-April 9, 1988" (April 9, 1988), P.

⁶⁵³ *Ibid*, P. 2

In 1989, a general uncertainty prevailed within Oxfam over Wollo due to serious security risks. Thus, towards the end of 1989, Oxfam terminated its agricultural programme in Wadla Delanata district and its water programmes in various parts of Wollo province⁶⁵⁴. Some of Oxfam's staff were cut off and trapped in Wollo by the advancing rebel forces of the Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front in Oxfam's project area. Concerning this, the Deputy Country Representative of Oxfam reported that, "...the situation in Dessie [the capital of Wollo] is not good and all the expatriate staff [of international NGOs] left Dessie for Addis. Two of our project staff, Kebede and Ali are cut off in Wogel Tena [the main town of Wadla Delanta district]"⁶⁵⁵.

The insecurity that forced NGOs like Oxfam to flee was, indeed, pervasive; no area in the north was immune from the influence of the ongoing conflict. Concerned by the fact that the battle in the north would destroy ASE's projects, NOVIB and EZE refused to fund ASE's educational programme in Gojjam, as it was closer to the theatre of war. Moreover, these donors sought to finance ASE educational and project interventions in Gamo Gofa and Bale only as they were hit severely by the famine of 1983–1984; ASE nonetheless continued to run the same educational programmes in Gojjam, Arussi and Sidamo⁶⁵⁶, until, believing that educational intervention alone could not address the profound societal needs of Gojjam, Arussi and Sidamo, ASE terminated the Arussi programme in 1989 and the Sidamo programme in 1990⁶⁵⁷. Meanwhile, a number of factors disrupted ASE's programme in Gojjam and ultimately forced the organisation to leave the region. Amongst these factors were the instability that followed the attempted coup of May 1989, the confusion that followed the announcement of the "New Economic Policy" in March 1990, and the civil war that had been going on in the north⁶⁵⁸.

NGOs acted similarly following their withdrawal from the north such as Wollo and Gojjam, transferring some of their employees to the east and some to the south. ASE transferred its employees to Bale and Gamo Gofa and Oxfam transferred some of its employees to Wollaita, East Hararghe and Somalia⁶⁵⁹. Though security was better in these regions, the government itself was

⁶⁵⁴ Letter from Marie Korner to Ato Alemayehu Fulas (December 20, 1989)

⁶⁵⁵ "Addis Staff Meeting Minutes" (October 16, 1989), P. 1

⁶⁵⁶ Klaus Schmitt, "Feasibility Study on the Project Proposal of Action Oriented Training Programme Intergrated with Rural Development Project in Semien Omo, Bale and Misrak Gojjam by ASE, May 1990" (Bonn, October/November, 1990), P. 15

⁶⁵⁷ ASE, "Project Proposal of Action Oriented Training programme integrated with Rural Development Projects in Semien Omo, Bale, and Misrak Gojjam: January 1991-January 1994 (Addis Ababa, May 1990), P. 9

⁶⁵⁸ Mulugeta Tamire et al "Reappraisal of the ASE Programme in Misrak Gojjam: 1987-1992" (Addis Ababa, 1992), PP.9-10

⁶⁵⁹ *Ibid*

insecure and the RRC refused to renew the project agreements of NGOs in order to reduce the movement of expatriate NGO staff. As a result, NGOs were unable to import goods duty free for their projects. NGOs such as Oxfam consequently froze projects like the Joint Trucking Operation in Wollo, the agricultural programme in Wobera, and the water development programme in Wollaita⁶⁶⁰.

4.5. Restoration and expansion towards marginal areas

The situation changed with regime change in May 1991. As peace was restored, NGOs not only regained the positions that they had lost, but also became confident that they could expand their positions in all directions. At the time, a senior technical Oxfam staff member appreciative of the political changes stated that they, "...will increase dramatically the geographical areas in which...Oxfam could work in Ethiopia"⁶⁶¹.

During the early 1990s, NGOs revived their programmes in areas from which they had withdrawn. Oxfam, for instance, went back to Wollo and Eastern Hararghe where it restored its agricultural programme. Likewise, it went back to Wollaita and restored its water programme⁶⁶². Moreover, the mandate to manage programmes in Tembien in Tigray (through the Relief Society of Tigray), in Eastern Hararghe (through the Oromo Relief Association) and in Wadla-Delanta district in Wollo (through the Amhara Rehabilitation and Development Association) was transferred from Oxfam's office in Khartoum to Oxfam's office in Addis Ababa⁶⁶³.

Like Oxfam, ASE restored its activities in the Adaba and Mendayu districts of Bale, the Boreda and Kutcha districts of Gamo Gofa, and the Debay Tilatgin and Goncha Enesse Siso districts of Eastern Gojjam⁶⁶⁴. Although it was still operating in districts in which it had been earlier, ASE increased the number of peasant associations within these districts. In 1987, ASE operated with 20 peasant associations, each of which included 300 rural residents. In 1990, ASE proposed that it would operate with 103 peasant associations, however NOVIB, EZE and Welthungerhilfe, a protestant German NGO, objected to the plan on the ground that the geographical coverage was

⁶⁶⁰ Letter from Mr. Nick, Oxfam's country representative to Aid Coordination Department of RRC (30th April, 1990)

⁶⁶¹ "Oxfam Ethiopia Senior Staff Meeting" (October 29th, 1991), P, 1

⁶⁶² Informant, Ato Mesfin Tadesse

⁶⁶³ *Ibid*, P. 7

⁶⁶⁴ ASE, ASE's 30th..., P. 39

too ambitious. After the regime change, EZE and NOVIB allowed ASE to manage its programmes in 54 peasant associations⁶⁶⁵.

There was a great deal of competition between NGOs for resources in the mid 1990s. As before, one way of gaining the favour of donors was to select areas that suffered from deep-rooted poverty and marginalisation. Initially, ASE's leaders made use of their own personal experiences to select poverty-stricken areas⁶⁶⁶. Lalo Mama Meder district in the Menz province of the North Shoa zone was the first to win a grant. The ex-managing director of ASE recalls having known that poverty was rampant in the area when he was vice minister of Agriculture. The ex-executive director of ASE, together with a senior official of ASE, went to Lalo Mama Meder to investigate the possibility of initiating a project towards the end of 1996. Six months later, a project was initiated with financial support from Action Aid Ethiopia and in 1997 ASE started its operation there, after it signed an agreement with the RRC⁶⁶⁷.

This project in Lalo Mama Meder was the first step of ASE's territorial expansion towards marginal areas. In the early 2000s, negotiations between the government and donors determined that food-insecure and marginalised areas should be their focus. The government, major donors and NGOs set up what is known as the Food Security Coalition. The Coalition identified 239 districts in Ethiopia as chronically food-insecure areas. Donors went along with the priorities set by the Coalition. In 2000, ASE started a project in Goro in Bale with financial support from Dan Church Aid, after the regional RRC proposed Goro for the project. As the head of the Bale RRC told ASE, "There is an opportunity to implement a full-fledged IRDP [Integrated Rural Development Programme] in Goro woreda [district]"⁶⁶⁸. ASE first ensured that there was no other NGO operating in the district⁶⁶⁹. Then, with financial support from a number of donors, such as Trócaire (an Irish NGO) and CAFOD (a Catholic NGO) in England and Wales, in 2000 ASE started running the same programme, as in Goro, in Amaro in the south⁶⁷⁰. From 2005 on, ASE expanded towards Borena, a pastoral area in Oromia regional state; the Debate district in Benishngul Gumuz regional state; the Dasenech and Yangatom districts, bordering with Sudan in the Southern People, Nation and Nationality regional state; Itang district in Gambela regional state, and the Ambassel and

⁶⁶⁵ Klaus Schmitt, "Feasibility...", P. 23

⁶⁶⁶ Informant, Ato Getachew Worku

⁶⁶⁷ *Ibid*

⁶⁶⁸ ASE, ASE's 30th..., P. 39

⁶⁶⁹ *Ibid*, P. 39

⁶⁷⁰ Informant, Ato Abeyu

Tehuleder districts of Wollo province in the Amhara regional state⁶⁷¹. All these areas are considered to have remained marginal to the national economy, and both donors and the government want NGOs to focus on areas of the same type. Concerning this understanding that the government and donors reached, as well as its impact on ASE's territorial expansion towards marginal areas, one of this study's informants stated that:

In the first place, the government policy stipulates that we [NGOs] should work at least in five regions. This means that since they claim to work on development, NGOs should work at least in five regions. The donors themselves are urged by the government to do so, especially to choose less developed areas. In the urban centers, the government can do its project. So the government urges them to help finance NGOs in underdeveloped areas⁶⁷².

Like ASE, Oxfam welcomed the idea that development was to focus on areas that suffered poverty and marginalisation. As soon as the new government was established in 1995, the Resident Representative of Oxfam in Ethiopia announced the new territories to which the organisation would expand, also stating that:

Of itself, this event [the formation of new federal government] does not call for a change of priorities for Oxfam, but we need to bear in mind at least two issues for the future. One is to do with the government policy of regionalization, which is now embodied in the Constitution. In time the policy is likely to result in changes of emphasis for Oxfam in regard to geographical areas of greatest need. Also issues to do with minorities and human rights are likely to come to the fore⁶⁷³

Oxfam duly expanded towards new poverty-stricken areas. The areas into which Oxfam expanded were pastoralist and semi-pastoralist regions such as Afar, Somalia, Borena, and Benishangul⁶⁷⁴. Oxfam's expansion to these marginal areas went along with the views of both donors and the government⁶⁷⁵.

From towards the end of 1990s, NGOs showed a marked progress with regard to inter-agency cooperation. This was in response to their strategic shift towards "empowering" project participants to claim their rights. NGOs formed and participated in either one or more of the 25 coalitions and networks operational in the country on the eve of the 2005 national parliamentary elections. These

⁶⁷¹ Informant, *Ato Sebsebie*

⁶⁷² Informant, *Ato Abeyu*

⁶⁷³ Chris Mason, "Ethiopia: Annual Report 1994/95" (August 1995), P.1

⁶⁷⁴ Informant, *Ato Mesfin Tadesse*

⁶⁷⁵ *Ibid*

coalitions and networks disseminated information, articulated and aired collective voices with regard to the interests of the NGOs themselves as well as of society⁶⁷⁶.

To summarise, territorialisation was not a spontaneous process. NGOs expanded towards areas that received little support from successive governments. This went along with the philanthropic principle that NGOs are supposed to uphold. However, NGOs' expansion towards marginal areas served as a means to secure resources. This is shown by the fact that there has been stiff competition between NGOs for resources and areas of operation. Inter-agency relation between NGOs has witnessed marked improvement since the late 1990s as NGOs formed and participated in many of the networks and coalitions.

4. 6. NGOs' programmes: sectoral diversity and volume

4. 6. 1. Introduction

Marginal areas in which NGOs have operated in large number are vulnerable to drought and famine. As a result, famine relief and rehabilitation dominated NGOs' programmes in Ethiopia. Once the two famines had gone, NGOs extended their ad hoc interventions of the famine years without further modification.

The country began to have better prospects in terms of food availability from towards the end of the 1980s. However, NGOs had tended to maintain their relief programmes as relief was considered to bring about more resources. Donors and the Ethiopian government that took over power in 1991 were against this relief orientation of NGOs. This led NGOs to adopt long term perspectives. This is not to suggest, however, that NGO programmes other than emergency relief had only started at the end of 1980s.

NGOs had launched large-scale multi-sectoral programmes in the context of the 1980s famine. Unlike their programmes initiated in the famine context, NGOs demonstrated marked progress with regard to *approach* from the late 1980s on, adopting an integrated approach to tackling poverty, mainly in rural settings.

⁶⁷⁶ Aster Birke, "Civil Society Networking and Coalitions Building in Ethiopia: Challenges and Prospects" In in Bahru Zewde and Siegfried Pauswang (eds), *Ethiopia: The Challenges of Democracy from Below* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikaninstitutet and Addis Ababa: Forum for Social Studies, 2002), P. 106

Although they drove NGOs to adopt a long term perspective, neither the government nor donors influenced NGOs to select a particular approach or programme contents. Asked about the influence of donors on their programme types and approach, a senior official of Oxfam in Ethiopia said the following, indicating that the organisation sticks to its principles:

We do not formulate projects for the sake of getting fund. But if a project adds value and meets the need of a particular people, we formulate it. We do not formulate [a project] for the sake of money because donors have trust in us. After that we have to implement it. When we implement it, we are not allowed to compromise the standard set by Oxfam. Whatever the cost the project requires we should invest in it, otherwise we are not allowed to compromise the quality of the project. If you do so and satisfy the needs of the stakeholders, then you will win their trust. These needs are also evaluated from different angles such as from quality and timely point of view, and how did you behave, and treat as human being⁶⁷⁷.

Similarly, a project informant stated that ASE sets its own programmes and that it turns down any demand from donors that stands against the purpose of ASE. The informant went on to state that donors knew very well the position of ASE on issues of integrity. ASE donors such as INADES-Formation on the one hand and EZE and NOVIB on the other, have disagreed on some strategic issues, which very disagreement, said the informant, gave ASE the chance to choose the programme types that, it believes, best responded to the Ethiopian situation⁶⁷⁸.

Though they might choose programmes that they themselves prefer, NGOs' ambitions to undertake large-scale programmes are also always subject to the availability of resources. From the mid-1980s, though they continued to be influenced by various events, NGOs' programmes were diversified to a large extent and saw significant expansion. With regard to the diversity as well as the scale of programmes run by NGOs since the mid-1980s, two distinct phases may be discerned. The first phase covers the period from the outbreak of the Ethiopian famine in the middle of 1980s to the middle of the 1990s. In defining this phase, it is also necessary to investigate NGOs' programmes prior to the mid-1980s. The second phase extends from the middle of the 1990s to the promulgation of proclamation No 621/2009.

4. 6. 2. Relief and rehabilitation programmes

4.6.2.1. Relief programmes

The food crises that occurred in the 1970s and the 1980s decided the nature of NGOs' programmes. The famine was so serious that even those NGOs that considered themselves to be developmental

⁶⁷⁷ Informant, Ato Mesfin Tadesse

⁶⁷⁸ Informant, Ato Abeyu

organisations got involved in emergency operations. This was because their activities were disrupted by the famine situation. For instance, though the scale of its emergency relief operation remains unclear, ASE claimed that during the 1973–1974 famine, it, “...had to decelerate its activities [education and training]...to engage itself in relief distribution”⁶⁷⁹. Likewise, during the famine of 1983–1984, ASE could no longer carry out its educational programmes in Bale and Gamo Gofa provinces. One of its major donors, NOVIB, thus proposed that ASE had to relieve famine victims in the two provinces. ASE accepted the proposal and started to distribute food to the people in four districts in which the organisation operated⁶⁸⁰.

While NOVIB and EZE were in favour of relief operation, INADES-Formation stood against ASE’s decision to carry out relief operations, arguing that relief operations were beyond the mandate of ASE. This attitude is apparent in a letter from an official of INADES-Formation addressed to the Executive director of ASE, which states that:

You [the Executive Director of ASE] tell me that...it [the famine] distracted your activities in training...I would have thought it was rather the job of NGOs specialized in relief operation to deal with the problem...This is the policy we followed in Chad when it was famine stricken in 1984-85⁶⁸¹

Like ASE, a number NGOs were forced to consider relief activities. Driven by their developmental orientation, NGOs such as Oxfam and CCRDA at first tended to avoid relief programmes during the 1983–1984 famine. In the midst of the critical famine situation, Oxfam initially decided that it would not run relief projects⁶⁸². Likewise, CCRDA failed to take a pro-active measure when the famine first occurred in 1983–1984⁶⁸³. When the famine reached its critical stage towards the end of 1984, CCRDA issued a statement of concern about the famine⁶⁸⁴. At the same time, Oxfam started to run relief programmes⁶⁸⁵.

Eventually, with the flow of resources that the famine caused, like all NGOs, CCRDA and Oxfam started to run relief programmes. The type and scale of these relief programmes in the 1980s was different from those of the 1970s. During the 1970s famine, CCRDA had coordinated the relief operation and disbursed financial support to member NGOs. Oxfam initially showed its support by financing CCRDA itself. Its first grant to CCRDA amounted to £1000 was made on May 20th,

⁶⁷⁹ ASE, “ASE’s 30th...”, P.20

⁶⁸⁰ Informant, *Ato Getachew Worku*

⁶⁸¹ Letter from IF to ASE (nd), P.1

⁶⁸² Tony Vaux, *The Selfish...*, P. 46

⁶⁸³ *Ibid*, P. 46

⁶⁸⁴ *Ibid*, P.49

⁶⁸⁵ *Ibid*, P. 46

1973⁶⁸⁶ and from then until October 1973, Oxfam donated £12,000 to CCRDA⁶⁸⁷. As the famine reached a critical stage, Oxfam started two “selective feeding” centres in the Qallu district of western Wollo. Selective feeding presupposed that the government should take responsibility for distributing family rations⁶⁸⁸. As a result, the Oxfam relief programme was modest. In October 1973, Oxfam mobilised 30 tons of milk powder, 2 tons of clothing and 5000 blankets from Britain⁶⁸⁹. Later, the organisation bought 8 tons of enriched soya and wheat flour, 1000 cartons of Faffa and 30 tins of edible oil from the Ethiopian Nutritional Institute⁶⁹⁰. Oxfam applied the same supplementary feeding technique wherever it carried out relief operations. In early 1975, 20,000 children were put under the joint Oxfam and UNICEF selective feeding programme in Tigray⁶⁹¹. Also in 1974, Oxfam sent out two medical teams that fed malnourished children in the Degahbour and Gode districts of Ogaden. On average, each of the teams treated 300 children per day until the programme came to an end in the summer of 1975⁶⁹².

When famine broke out again in 1983–1984, Oxfam initially commenced to supply the same supplementary feeding programme. Soon after the famine was reported, the Field Director of Oxfam stated that, “...for Oxfam... we must try to get some kind of supplementary feeding programme going”⁶⁹³. However, the magnitude of the famine as well as the context in which the relief operation was carried out required a massive deployment of grain, not just supplementary feeding. Oxfam thus set up supplementary feeding centres, first in Ibnat in Gonder, and then in Bora and Wogel Tena in Wollo. In doing so, Oxfam trusted that the Ethiopian government would distribute family rations to those in need. However, the government failed to get food from the Western donors. Two years after the first report was heard about the famine, the Food and Agricultural Organisations (FAO) promised to donate 250,000 metric tons (mt). However this food was not delivered on time⁶⁹⁴. In response, NGOs increased their aid to Ethiopia. Oxfam bought £3 million worth of wheat and shipped it to Ethiopia. This was the largest relief item that Oxfam had ever shipped to any country. As Black tells us, “This marked the transition for Oxfam into an

⁶⁸⁶ CRDA, “1977 Annual Report” (May 1977), P. 7

⁶⁸⁷ Fantahun Ayele, “NGOs’ Relief...”, P. 23

⁶⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 58

⁶⁸⁹ *Ibid*, P. 25

⁶⁹⁰ *Ibid*, P. 25

⁶⁹¹ CRDA, “1977 Annual Report” (May 1977), P. 14

⁶⁹² Maggie Black, *A Cause...*, P. 258

⁶⁹³ Hugh Goyder, “Ethiopia Drought Situation: Visit to Zwa-Hamusid, Libo Awraja, Gonder” (February 17, 1983), P.2

⁶⁹⁴ *Ibid*, P. 153

unprecedented league of disaster response-and not just for Ethiopia but for any major emergency”⁶⁹⁵.

The grain that Oxfam shipped to Ethiopia was delivered directly to the RRC for distribution. It was not clear as to how this grain was distributed to famine victims. Certainly, people in Bora and Wogel Tena in Wollo, where Oxfam set up supplementary feeding programmes, did not receive food from the RRC. The situation was the same in the whole of Wollo, in that the starving people did not receive food. This was because the government used food aid as an instrument to force people to go to new settlements. This threatened Oxfam’s supplementary relief programme in Wollo. Two of the nurses in Wogel Tena supplementary programme argued that people died of hunger because the government used food aid to achieve the objective of its resettlement programme, and that Oxfam should import grain and distribute it directly to the starving people. The two nurses were joined by the entire staff of Oxfam in Wollo, who stated that if Oxfam failed to import and distribute grain in this way, they would quit their jobs⁶⁹⁶. Oxfam increased the scale of its relief programme in response. Firstly, Oxfam dispatched 6000 metric tones grain to the RRC in Wollo. The RRC assured Oxfam that a reasonable proportion would be allocated to Bora and Wogel Tena, each accommodating about 30,000 famine victims⁶⁹⁷. Secondly, Oxfam, together with SCF, set up Oxfam-Save the Children Trucking, employing trucks of varying size in order to distribute grain to selected locations *before* a crisis of one type or another was reported. The objective was to discourage migrations of people whenever famine occurred. This too signalled the fact that relief had become a major programme for Oxfam⁶⁹⁸.

Oxfam’s increased relief programme was part of the overall expansion of relief programmes by NGOs. NGOs not only acquired massive amount of foods and non-food items from donors, but also a number of trucks that improved the profile of NGOs. The programme expansion of CCRDA shows that the famine that occurred in 1983–1984 improved the profiles of even small NGOs. CCRDA was set up to coordinate the relief operation in 1973–1974, and soon became a forum where issues related to the famine were discussed. Over time, two main motives of member NGOs emerged, respectively those of international and national NGOs. International NGOs wanted CCRDA to focus on negotiations with the RRC, so that administrative and bureaucratic bottlenecks

⁶⁹⁵ *Ibid*, P. 259

⁶⁹⁶ "Minutes of Monitoring Meeting: Dessie" (April 6, 1985); Robert Dodd, "Oxfams...", P. 123

⁶⁹⁷ "Minutes of Monitoring Meeting: Dessie" (July 27, 1985)

⁶⁹⁸ Dessalegn Rahmeto et al "Oxfam ...", P. 37

could be tackled. On the other hand, what concerned national NGOs was that CCRDA should develop project proposals that reflected the priorities of member NGOs and submit them to donors for funding. In 1985, the chairman of CCRDA summed up the two main interest groups of their member NGOs by stating that, “While the main problem of larger organisations [international NGOs] is negotiations with government, the problem of smaller organisations [national NGOs] is to find the funds to run their programmes”⁶⁹⁹. Some of the programmes CCRDA funded were expensive. For instance, CCRDA funded transportation of grain that donors had donated to NGOs and the RRC from the ports to various grain stores. However, inflation, which was high after the Ethiopian revolution, became a major challenge. Concerned by the rising inflation, the executive committee, in its meeting of February 7th, 1977 passed a resolution that asked member NGOs to cover a share of the cost of grain transport. The minutes of the organisation documented that:

The question of payment of transport of donated items from Assab to Addis Ababa was discussed. Transport costs had now risen from 6. 75 to 10 birr [Ethiopian currency] per quintal and it was becoming difficult to fund consignments. It was recommended that in future receipts be asked to pay a prorate share of the cost of transport⁷⁰⁰.

CCRDA made further attempts to solve the transport problem by proposing to purchase its own trucks. However, representatives of international NGOs rejected this proposal on the ground that this was beyond the mandate bestowed to CCRDA⁷⁰¹. When the famine of 1983–1984 became a major concern, CCRDA approached its donors and a telex it circulated on September 9th, 1983 resulted in a big success. The Ecumenical Consortium Church World Service, Lutheran World Relief and Catholic Relief Service agreed to fund the purchase of a fleet of 65 trucks of varying carrying capacity. CCRDA’s secretariat, led by the Coordinator played a pivotal role in this. Fr. Doheny in his memoir stated that, “Bro. Gus O’Keeffe [the Coordinator]...has become a legend in the organisation, with a fleet of sixty five trucks on the road bringing food to all the stricken parts of the country”⁷⁰². A number of trucks were also donated by EZE from Germany, ICCO from Holland and many others, and by the end of the 1980s, CCRDA had 158 trucks of different sizes⁷⁰³. Like CCRDA, other major NGOs in the country such as MEDEA, LWF, Oxfam Great Britain, SCF, and Christian Relief Society (CRS) approached donors for funds and acquired trucks that delivered food and non-food items to areas of great need in the country⁷⁰⁴.

⁶⁹⁹ Letter from Ato Asrat Gebre to Members of CCRDA (October 9, 1985),

⁷⁰⁰ “CRDA General Membership Meeting” (February 7th, 1977), P. 9

⁷⁰¹ “CRDA General Membership Meeting” (April 13th, 1982), P. 2

⁷⁰² Kevin Doheny, *No Hands...*, PP. 99-101

⁷⁰³ CRDA, Executive Committee Meeting Minutes (August 19th, 1999)

⁷⁰⁴ “CRDA General Membership Meeting” (August 1st, 1983), P. 14

CCRDA also started its own relief programme. While CCRDA had previously supplied foods and medicines to NGOs running relief programmes, the severity of the famine in 1984 led CCRDA to get directly involved in relief activities. In 1985, the chairman of the Association described the context in which CCRDA became operational. He told representatives of member NGOs that, “When most of you were not around and when people were dying like flies there was nothing else to do but to be operational”⁷⁰⁵. CCRDA recruited and deployed medical personnel who started managing 17 relief shelters, running from late 1984 into early 1986 in the Yefatna Temuga, Chebo and Gurage, and Merahbete provinces of Northern Shoa, and Wollaita province in the Sidamo administrative region⁷⁰⁶.

4.6.2.2. The rehabilitation programme

NGOs were aware that the recovery of the agricultural sector, which had suffered so many shocks in the 1970s and 1980s, would rely heavily on the provision of basic inputs such as seeds, plough oxen, hand tools, insecticides and pesticides⁷⁰⁷. The rehabilitation programme that NGOs undertook in 1986 and 1987 was their largest yet in terms of scale, however NGOs had previously managed a number of rehabilitation programmes in the aftermath of the 1970s famine. In 1974, for instance, Oxfam distributed oxen valued at Eth \$ 25,000 to farmers in the Qallu district of Wollo⁷⁰⁸. It also initiated and financed a handicraft project in Alamata town to rehabilitate those women who had lost their property due to the famine. Oxfam’s budget for running the handicraft programme was Eth \$ 50,000⁷⁰⁹. CCRDA’s rehabilitation programme in famine-ravaged areas in the 1970s was the largest of any NGO’s. During its first three months alone, from early June 1974, CCRDA financed 17 different projects that cost \$ US 325, 000. Of these, ten were in Wollo, five in Tigray, one in Kaffa and one in Gamo Gofa province⁷¹⁰.

NGOs rehabilitation activities continued with the resettlement programme that the military government started in the post-famine period. In 1975, the RRC closed eleven relief shelters in the Ogaden and moved the people to the Wabi Shebele River at Gode West, Kelafo, Imi, Mustahil, and

⁷⁰⁵ Letter from Ato Asrat Gebre to Members of CCRDA (October 9, 1985), 2

⁷⁰⁶ Fekerte Belete, "The Participation of Chirisian Relief and Development Association in Relief, Rehabilitation and Development in Ethiopia" (BA thesis, Sociology and Social Anthropology, AAU, 1987), P. 19

⁷⁰⁷ CRDA, "CRDA's Rehabilitation Programme: 1986" (Addis Ababa), P. 1

⁷⁰⁸ Fantahun Ayele, "NGOs...", P. 25

⁷⁰⁹ CRDA, "1977 Annual Report" (May 1977), 12

⁷¹⁰ CRF, "First Report from Christian Committee to Relief and Rehabilitation Commission" (September 3, 1974), P.3

Burkur⁷¹¹. A number of NGOs in the country showed their interest to get involved in this programme. In August 1975, Mr Malcolm, Oxfam's East Africa Regional Director, advised Oxfam that, "...with the general condition of the camp improving the maximum effort must be switched to rehabilitation"⁷¹². In the short term, NGOs such as Oxfam and Concern financed agricultural and engineering⁷¹³. They also set up a mobile workshop for vehicle repairs⁷¹⁴. In the long run, NGOs put in place rehabilitation programmes that contributed to the self-sufficiency of project participants. However, NGOs had a dilemma. On the one hand, they recognised that there was a profound need in the region. Mr Malcolm, for example, enumerated the activities that needed to be undertaken in the Ogaden. He proposed the deployment of agricultural extension officers in each district to make surveys on each province of the Ogaden region, to use tractors, to distribute hand tools and seeds, and to implement small scale irrigation works on the Webi Shebele River⁷¹⁵. On the other hand, due to the revolution having created such uncertainty in the country, Oxfam pursued an approach that kept its programmes minimal. Thus, the same person who proposed a wide range of activities to be undertaken in the region, Mr Malcolm, also opined that, "...We should not err on the side of instigating too large a project"⁷¹⁶.

Unlike Oxfam, CCRDA consistently financed the rehabilitation programmes that other NGOs and the RRC undertook. In early 1977, CCRDA disbursed its earliest support (Eth \$ 30, 942.48) to Concern to purchase and distribute oxen to the newly settled Somalis⁷¹⁷. CCRDA also always welcomed the requests of the RRC. At the beginning of 1978, the RRC asked CCRDA to finance a list of requirements in connection with the moving of 120,000 people from Wollo and Tigray to new settlement areas. The response of CCRDA shows that the organisation considered resettlement as amongst its priorities. CCRDA also stated that, "...it should not be necessary to deal with requests on an emergency basis but that CRDA [CCRDA] should plan its inputs well in advance..."⁷¹⁸ The main factor was that CCRDA noted that the conditions of resettlers were deteriorating as the government's capacity to assist them was challenged by other national priorities. As stated by a recent publication:

⁷¹¹ CRDA, "1977 Annual Report", P. 20

⁷¹² *Ibid*, P. 10

⁷¹³ *Ibid*, P.20

⁷¹⁴ *Ibid*, P.20

⁷¹⁵ *Ibid*, P. 10

⁷¹⁶ Report by Malcolm Herper of Oxfam on a visit to Ogaden: 26thJuly-2nd August, 1975 (nd), P.14

⁷¹⁷ CRDA, "General Membership meeting" (February 7th, 1978), p.2

⁷¹⁸ *Ibid*, p.9

During this period [1977-1980], CRDA was much focused on assisting resettlers from Wollo and Tigray who were resettled in Assosa, Bale, Ogaden and other places following the drought in the early 1970s. The situation of settlers was deteriorating owing to reduced assistance from the government, and most settlers were at high risk⁷¹⁹

Regardless of the position they took about the prevailing political situation, NGOs increased their rehabilitation programmes. This was because the famine of 1983–1984 had devastated the economic basis of farmers. The geographical focus, the type and scale of rehabilitation programme varied from NGO to NGO, depending on the amount of resources that they could mobilise. NGOs like CCRDA, which commanded huge resources, carried out massive rehabilitation programmes. With resources that it mobilised from member NGOs and a variety of international donors, CCRDA distributed 5,980 metric tons of a variety of seeds that amounted to Eth \$ 5.1 million in 1985 alone. It also delivered 99,655 agricultural tools, valued at Eth \$ 716,536. In addition, 1,959 heads of plough oxen valued at Eth \$ 791,800 were purchased and distributed to farmers of drought-affected regions⁷²⁰. Likewise, the organisation distributed 16,700 metric tons of seeds of various types, and delivered 437,000 tools to farmers in 12 administrative regions in 1986. While CCRDA's rehabilitation programme covered 12 out of the 14 administrative regions of the country, Wollo administrative region received the most assistance due to the severity of the drought and famine there. For instance, in 1986 farmers in Wollo received 6,272 tons of seeds, which accounted for one third of the total seeds that CCRDA distributed in all. Similarly, 145,000 hand tools were distributed to farmers in Wollo; one fourth of the total number of hand tools distributed by CCRDA. Shoa administrative region was the second most assisted region. Farmers there received 3,798 tons of seed (a little less than one fourth of the CCRDA total) and 109,288 tools (more than one fourth of the total number)⁷²¹.

CCRDA delivered its inputs via its own member NGOs. In 1985, 20 member NGOs were involved in distributing agricultural inputs to farmers. In 1986, the number rose to 32⁷²². NGOs themselves mobilised resources from their own donors for rehabilitation purposes. Oxfam was the first of the NGOs to start a rehabilitation programme. Oxfam believed that whenever disaster occurred, the maximum effort should be taken to encourage famine victims to stay at home. When people started to migrate to the shelters in May 1983, Oxfam offered Eth \$ 20,000 to the RRC branch in Gonder,

⁷¹⁹ CRDA, "30th Years of Service: Marching Together for Better Future" (Addis Ababa, 2003), P. 34

⁷²⁰ *Ibid*, P. 33

⁷²¹ CRDA, "CRDA's Rehabilitation...", P. 5

⁷²² *Ibid*, P. 5

to take advantage of the major rains to cultivate crops⁷²³. After it was forced to withdraw from Gonder in 1984, Oxfam carried out massive rehabilitation works in Eastern Hararghe and Wollo. In 1986, Oxfam distributed seeds (beans, barley and wheat) to 20,000 farmers in Kon, Bora, Tsehai Mewcha and Harawa in the Wadla Delanta district of Wollo⁷²⁴. Oxfam also carried out the same programme in the Wonbera district of Eastern Hararghe⁷²⁵. In the meantime, the RRC and the Ministry of Agriculture argued that free distribution of agricultural inputs would stifle the self-reliance of farmers, and that distribution of agricultural inputs should be undertaken on a loan basis. As these minutes of Oxfam stated, “As told by the RRC and the MoA [Ministry of Agriculture]...it is not good just to give seed to farmers. It is better to give to them in the form of loans”⁷²⁶. NGOs accepted this argument. Oxfam thus introduced an agricultural recovery programme that included diverse components such as seed bank development, soil and water conservation, tree nurseries, and credit facilities, first in Wonberta district⁷²⁷. The programme was aimed at bringing back farmers to pre-famine status. A year later, income generation was included into the programme. This aimed at assisting farmers to have more income, in order to resist disasters. Concerning the importance of income generation, a consultant of Oxfam stated that:

It was the absence of supplemental income which placed households in a food crisis...The key to new programmes in highland Hararghe will be to find means of diversifying the local economy through income generation, crop diversification, and the general intensification of agriculture⁷²⁸.

Oxfam set out to replicate the agricultural programme begun in Wonberta in Wollo. To that end, in July 1986, Oxfam sent out a consultant to Wollo, “...to find out those possibilities where Oxfam can participate in development actions”⁷²⁹. The consultant proposed that a reasonable number of Service Cooperatives were to be assisted to tackle four or five constraints⁷³⁰. The constraints identified were water development, vegetable production, oxen, soil conservation, expansion of tree nurseries, and distribution of improved rams⁷³¹. He advised further that this was not to be a package programme but rather an approach to solving critical problems, similar to that employed by the Ministry of Agriculture and peasant associations, and with less involvement by Oxfam⁷³².

⁷²³ Letter from Oxfam to Ato Adane Mamuye, assistant commissioner of RRC in Gonder (May 1983), P.1

⁷²⁴ “Oxfam Dessie: Minutes of Monthly Meeting” (August 16, 1986), P. 1

⁷²⁵ “Memorandum” from Nicholas to Brendan et al (July 25, 1986), P.1

⁷²⁶ “Oxfam Dessie: Minutes of Monthly Meeting” (January 5, 1987), P. 1

⁷²⁷ *Ibid*, P. 21

⁷²⁸ James McCann quoted in “Memorandum” from Roger Nauman to Girma Tilahoun et al (November 4, 1987), P. 1

⁷²⁹ Jakob Aklilu, “Some...”, P.1

⁷³⁰ *Ibid*, p.16

⁷³¹ *Ibid*, P. 16

⁷³² *Ibid*, P. 16

Like Oxfam, a number of NGOs carried out massive rehabilitation programmes in their areas of operation. Indeed, there was no NGO in the country that did not undertake rehabilitation activities. For instance, ASE, which basically ran education programmes, received massive amounts of financial support from its donors, such as NOVIB and EZE. It subsequently financed six cooperatives in Gamo Gofa to the tune of Eth \$ 600,000. In addition, 2470 Qts of maize seeds were distributed to Gamo Gofa, and 3245 Qts to Bale. Service cooperatives in Tigray, Hararghe, and Arussi also received financial assistance from ASE. The total number of project participants who benefitted from this support was 35,066, at a total cost of Eth \$ 684, 935⁷³³.

To summarise, both relief and rehabilitation activities have featured prominently in NGOs programmes in Ethiopia. This was due to the famines that occurred in the country in the 1970s and 1980s. The emergency situation diminished significantly towards the end of the 1980s. This had a profound effect on NGOs' long term programmes. The pages that follow discuss how the diminishing emergency reduced the income of NGOs and hence drove them towards long-term programmes.

4.6.3. The Rise of multi-sector development programmes

4.6.3. 1. Diminishing of relief situation and its impact on the programme of NGOs

The necessity for relief programmes had lessened significantly by the end of the 1980s. This gave NGOs a greater impetus to adopt long term perspectives. NGOs were driven towards adopting long term perspectives due to the influence of donors, and the government that seized power in May 1991. Certainly, the famines of the 1970s and 1980s had provided NGOs with massive resources. NGOs screened images of the starving people to mobilise resources. Although it was not introduced to serve this purpose, supplementary feeding programme itself had public relation potential that kept the flow of donation to NGO by way of evoking public emotions. At a time when the famine of 1983–1984 had reached its most critical stage, Oxfam published a paper in which it stated that, “....from a public relation point of view a supplementary feeding programme was an attractive proposition”⁷³⁴. The reason, as stated in the same report, was that, “The media tends to take less interest in water projects and plastic sheeting during a famine than in pictures and descriptions of starving people”⁷³⁵.

⁷³³ *Ibid*, p. 16

⁷³⁴ Robert Dodd, “Oxfams Response to Disasters in Ethiopia and the Sudan” (nd), P. 126

⁷³⁵ *Ibid*, P. 126

NGOs, thus wanted to maintain their relief and rehabilitation programmes even after the emergency situation had diminished markedly. This triggered debate within each NGO and between NGOs and their donors. For instance, ASE planned to include relief as part of its programme. Donors such as NOVIB opposed it. Donors knew that the relief operation had taken the, “...energy and attention from the management of ASE [and] that it jeopardises the quality of training programme...”⁷³⁶ In a situation where there was no emergency need, NOVIB found it irrelevant for ASE to include a relief programme amongst their activities. In fact, NOVIB pursued a policy that allowed for the financing of emergency programmes only if the emergency in question hindered the regular activities of its implementing partner organisations⁷³⁷. In April 1986, a NOVIB consultant recommended that ASE should not be involved in relief programmes in the country again, as this would endanger its current and future programmes⁷³⁸. As a result, ASE did not carry out relief operations after the end of the 1984–1985 crises in areas beyond its operational areas. There were localised food shortages in the areas in which ASE was operational. Thus, ASE ran relief programme in Gamo Gofa province in 1988 and 1994, and in Enebse Sar Mider in Gojjam province in 2002/2003⁷³⁹.

Likewise, the running of relief programmes in the post-relief situation generated debate within Oxfam. Towards the end of 1988, the Relief Manager of Oxfam argued that now the relief situation had diminished, Oxfam had to focus fully on preventive programmes. However, the Wollo-based Deputy Director of Oxfam did not agree with the Relief Manager. In a memo addressed to the Resident Representative of Oxfam, she stated, “I don’t quite share John’s [the Relief Manager’s] view that there is not enough emergency related work...I feel, and I told him [John Seller] so, that he could look at his work with a wider perception and take a more active approach...”⁷⁴⁰. However, as the so-called relief situation decreased, donors diverted their resources to other parts of the world. Towards the end of 1988, the Executive Director of CCRDA met the Minister of Dutch Foreign Affairs and reported back that, “...it will be very difficult for Ethiopia to obtain major Dutch donations for relief. Most of the relief financing will be diverted to Sudan this year”⁷⁴¹.

⁷³⁶ Gilles Pion and Anton Kruft, “Intermittent Consultancy No2 Regarding ASE” (August 1988), P. 8

⁷³⁷ Letter from Margaret Oostenrijk to Ato Tilahun Haile, ASE (January 7th, 1988)

⁷³⁸ “Supplementary...” P. 28

⁷³⁹ Letter from ASE to Christian Relief Society (April 22, 1994)

⁷⁴⁰ Fax from Marie Croner to Niculous Winner (nd), P.2

⁷⁴¹ CRDA, Management Committee Meeting Minutes (October 10th, 1988)

The new government that came to power in May 1991 also argued that NGOs should leave off their relief operations and focus on long term development programmes. As a result, NGOs downplayed their relief activities⁷⁴².

Good harvests in the country coupled, with the government's policy, left large numbers of NGO trucks almost idle. CCRDA tried to upgrade the performance of its trucks, to make them competitive in the transport market⁷⁴³. However, the vehicles were so old that their maintenance took about 53% of their total income⁷⁴⁴. Out of desperation, CCRDA's Executive Committee decided to discontinue 43 of the old trucks⁷⁴⁵.

4. 6. 3. 2. The rise of multi-sector development programmes

4. 6. 3. 2.1. Type and scale of NGO programmes in the post 1983–1984 famine period

NGOs diversified their programmes and increased their scale of operation in the post 1983–1984 famine period. This programme expansion was not only because of the agricultural crisis that the country saw in the 1980s. While some NGOs reappraised their programmes and introduced programmes that they considered were responsive to the Ethiopian situation, a number of NGOs expanded their programmes primarily as a means to appease the Ethiopian government. Soon after the famine occurred, the leadership of ASE, for instance, made the assessment that education alone, unless otherwise supported by other programmes, would not address the problems of the rural poor. In a letter addressed to the Ministry of Agriculture in July 1985, the Executive Director of ASE described the impact of the famine on the effectiveness of ASE's educational programme. Part of the letter reads:

The drought that hit Ethiopia in the last few years and the mass starvation that came in its wake, by limiting the effectiveness of AE's training programme have induced ASE to involve in long term preventive and development programme. Moreover, ASE is convinced that it should create preconditions by which its target groups can readily implement what they have been trained⁷⁴⁶.

On the other hand, most international NGO operated in areas under the control of the government, and rebel-held areas; their operations in rebel-held territories were undertaken with the assumption that the government had no means to know about them. While their relief operations were underway, NGOs noted the need to increase their development programmes in government-held

⁷⁴² CRDA, Management Committee Meeting Minutes (October 24, 1988)

⁷⁴³ CRDA, Management Committee Meeting Minutes (October 31st, 1989)

⁷⁴⁴ CRDA, Executive Committee Meeting Minutes (February 16th, 1989)

⁷⁴⁵ *Ibid*

⁷⁴⁶ Letter from ASE to the Ministry of Agriculture (July 15th, 1985)

areas as a pre-emptively means to appease the government, should they ever find out. Like many international NGOs, Oxfam ran relief programmes in both rebel and government-held territories. Initially, in fact, Oxfam disbursed much more money to relief operations in rebel-held areas than in the government-held territories, as reported in the summer of 1983 by the Field Director of Oxfam, who stated that, “We have in fact given more to the other side [£130,000 to rebel-held territories] than to Ethiopia [£ 80,553]”⁷⁴⁷. Consequently, Oxfam was concerned that the government might interpret this as Oxfam assisting the rebels. In order to prevent possible actions that the government might eventually take in response to that perception, Oxfam decided to increase the scale of its programme in government-held areas. As the Field Director of Oxfam in Ethiopia recommended to the senior officials of Oxfam in Oxford, “...an expanded programme here [government-held territories] seems essential if we wish to remain in Ethiopia after the drought is over”⁷⁴⁸.

As before, NGOs expanded the type and scale of their programmes in the post-famine period. The geographical focus, type and scale of these programmes differed from one NGO to the other, depending on their expertise, experiences, and history, as well as resources. Wollo was the focus of Oxfam’s post-famine programmes. Oxfam started by financing a multi-sector project called the Kobo-Alamata Agricultural Development Project (KAADP). GTZ and the RRC had initiated and been financing this project since 1976. When GTZ stopped financing the project, Oxfam showed an interest to, “...assist the farmers in the KA [Kobo Alamta] valley to get a partial harvest next year [1985]”⁷⁴⁹. Oxfam soon granted an initial budget amounting to Eth \$ 54,212 for the purchase of fertilisers, maintenance and spare parts for tractors, fuel for irrigation pumps and building stores⁷⁵⁰. This was to help farmers solve the problems that the famine had created⁷⁵¹. Oxfam found out that the project was managed by the project’s employees, with little interference from the RRC⁷⁵². The organisation also saw that with the financial assistance from GTZ, the project had developed various infrastructures such as water pumps, irrigation channels, tractors and so on. The Field Director noted that, “...only the KAADP had the infrastructures to assist them [the 125,000 farmers in the valley]”⁷⁵³. In other words, the project was cost-effective. As a result, Oxfam, agreed

⁷⁴⁷ Letter from Hugh Goyder to Walsh (June 4, 1983), P. 1

⁷⁴⁸ Hugh Goyder, "Report on Oxfam’s Work in Drought Relief: March 14-28, 1983" (nd), P. 2

⁷⁴⁹ Letter from Oxfam to RRC (December 4, 1984), P. 1

⁷⁵⁰ Letter from Oxfam to RRC (February 7, 1985), P. 1

⁷⁵¹ *Ibid*, P.1

⁷⁵² Hugh Goyder, "Notes on a Visit to Kobo Alamta Project"(nd), P. 1

⁷⁵³ *Ibid*, P. 2

to finance the project in 1985, which amounted to Eth \$214,269, and 30 tons of grain for the food for work programme⁷⁵⁴. Finally, Oxfam agreed to fund an agricultural and water development programme in the same valley with Eth \$ 1,235,434 for fifteen months from 1st February 1986⁷⁵⁵. The total amount of cash Oxfam invested in the Kobo Alamata Agricultural Development Project was much bigger than the total resources the organisation had committed to agricultural development in Ethiopia since the organisation started its operations there. Oxfam disbursed approximately Eth \$617,876 for agricultural development in Ethiopia from 1964 to June 1979⁷⁵⁶. The rapid expansion of Oxfam's programme had to do with the resources that it mobilised. Oxfam's appeal in 1985 had multiplied Oxfam's earnings to an all time high of £51.1 million, up from less than £20 million in 1983–1984⁷⁵⁷.

Due to the competition that it faced from the RRC, the Ministry of Agriculture and EWWCA, however, Oxfam withdrew from the KAADP, and launched two programmes of its own. The first was the Wadla Delanta agricultural recovery programme, which in the early 1990s evolved into an integrated agricultural development programme⁷⁵⁸. Secondly, Oxfam started to negotiate with the National Water Resource Commission [NWRC] to upgrade its emergency water supply into a strategy of water development in Wollo⁷⁵⁹. NWRC warmly welcomed the new proposal. The two operational arms of the National Water Resource Commission, i.e., the Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (WSSA), and the Ethiopian Water Works Construction Authority (EWWCA), which set up branches in Kombolacha in 1985, required, "...substantial institutional strengthening...for the offices to undertake various responsibilities being placed up on them"⁷⁶⁰. NWRC proposed a project that cost Eth \$ 2.4 million for the joint Oxfam/NWRC water development programme. Oxfam initially rejected the proposed amount but in the end it agreed⁷⁶¹. As with the agricultural programme, the decision of Oxfam to allocate Eth \$2.4 million marked a significant increase in terms of resources per programme. Oxfam originally started working on water development in the

⁷⁵⁴ Letter from Oxfam to RRC (March 19, 1985), P. 1

⁷⁵⁵ "Kobo Alamata Agricultural Development Project for Rehabilitation, Project Quarterly Report: January-March 1986" (April 1986), P.1

⁷⁵⁶ Letter from Oxfam GB to Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (June 6th, 1979)

⁷⁵⁷ Graham Hancock, *Lords of Poverty: The Power, Prestige, and Corruption of the International Aid Business*(London, 1989), P.4

⁷⁵⁸ Ros David and Teshome Woldeesemayat, "Evaluation Report: Delanta Integrated Agricultural Development Project" (Addis Ababa, January 1996), P. 24

⁷⁵⁹ "Update report No. 7 to June 30, 1985", p.1

⁷⁶⁰ "Programme of Provisional Military Administrative Council of Ethiopia (July 1, 1985), P. 3

⁷⁶¹ Letter from Keith Salt and Ben Fawcett to Ato Eshetu Haile Mariam (July 1, 1985)

Qallu district of Wollo in May 1974⁷⁶². A year later, Oxfam set up the Water Development Support Unit in Addis Ababa to technically assist NGOs running water programme in Ethiopia⁷⁶³. The Unit, "...basically concentrate[d] on areas within a 150-200 kilometers radius of Addis Ababa"⁷⁶⁴. However, the scale of this early Oxfam water development programme was quite limited. The financial records shows that from May 1st 1974 to April 31st 1976, Oxfam spent £ 47,801 on its water development programme, and the scale of this Oxfam water programme soon declined substantially⁷⁶⁵. This was because of the extensive anti-western propaganda of the then-government, whereupon in 1982, the Unit was incorporated into the Ethiopian Water Works Construction Authority⁷⁶⁶. Oxfam's water programme was revived due to the famine of 1983–1984, however, when the provision of water was Oxfam's top priority. When Oxfam realised that famine was threatening the country, it stated that, "....Oxfam [will] concentrate on developing ground water resources in the affected areas"⁷⁶⁷. By recruiting water engineers and mobilising the people in the locality, Oxfam initiated a water programme that undertook to hand dig fifty water wells, every year for two years, in the Ibenat district of eastern Gonder⁷⁶⁸. However, the security risk made the water programme a difficult one. Oxfam's Field Director recommended that the same programme was to be initiated, but elsewhere, by shifting the material and human resources of the project from Ibenat. As a result, an emergency water supply was initiated in Wollo that gradually evolved into the water development programme (discussed above). The same programme was soon begun in Wollaita in the south⁷⁶⁹.

As in Wollo, the water works in Wollaita was started as an emergency measure. It began by the transportation of drinking water, by lorry, to the different points of relief distribution in Wollaita. Oxfam's water activities in Wollaita could be divided into the relief phase [1985–1986], the rehabilitation phase [1987–1988] and the development phase [1988–1994]⁷⁷⁰. From the emergency through to the rehabilitation stage, the number of wells constructed increased greatly. During the emergency, Oxfam dug only two shallow wells for two peasant associations, while by the

⁷⁶² Fantahun Ayele, "NGOs'...", P. 25.

⁷⁶³ "Ethiopia: Bulletin No 4" (20th June, 1983), P. 1

⁷⁶⁴ CRDA, "General Membership Meeting" (February 7th, 1977), P. 4

⁷⁶⁵ Fantahun Ayele, "NGOs'...", P. 26

⁷⁶⁶ "Ethiopia Bulletin No 4" (June 20th, 1983), P. 1

⁷⁶⁷ "Ethiopia Bulletin No 2" (nd), P. 1

⁷⁶⁸ Hugh Goyder, "Report on a visit to Libo Awraja, Gonder Drought: February 15-16, 1984" (nd), P. 1

⁷⁶⁹ *Ibid*, P. 1

⁷⁷⁰ Tegegne Teka, *International...*, P. 143

rehabilitation phase it had managed to dig 48 wells⁷⁷¹. Oxfam was later put under pressure by regional authorities to upgrade the rehabilitation programme into water development, and an agreement between Oxfam, the RRC and Water and Sewerage Authority was duly signed in 1989⁷⁷². The project aimed to develop safe and sufficient drinking water for 52 peasant associations and to undertake the training of 104 selected trainees who would maintain the waterworks⁷⁷³.

In what could be described as a rare decision, Oxfam also began a multi-sector urban development programme in the post-famine period. NGO bias towards rural development had been quite apparent, up until the early 1980s, when this changed. In a meeting organised by CCRDA, an observer commented that, "...like any large city in the world, there were poor people in [Addis Ababa] in need of assistance...For some, fuel for cooking is a problem"⁷⁷⁴. Redd Barna [Save the Children Norway] soon responded to the critique. In 1981, Redd Barna started construction of access roads, and aimed to improve urban health, water supplies and so on⁷⁷⁵. The Tekle Haimanot area where in 1986 Oxfam initiated an urban programme with a budget of Eth \$5 million was one of the areas in which Save the Children Norway had operated. As a result, Oxfam copied many of Save the Children Norway's programmes, such as construction of access roads, water supply, health education. Oxfam also introduced the construction of communal kitchens, latrines, income generation projects and so on⁷⁷⁶.

Like Oxfam, the majority of NGOs also developed a wide range of multi-sector rural development programmes in the post 1983–1984 famine period. As before, also in the post 1983–1984 period, NGOs adjusted their programmes in a way that fostered long-term development. Earlier, this had not been possible due to the emergency situation in the country. For instance, CCRDA had coordinated the relief operations of its member NGOs throughout the period 1973–1980⁷⁷⁷. In the interim, however, the leadership had also attempted to prioritise long term developmental projects. The fact that the organisation changed its name from the Christian Relief Committee to the Christian Relief and Development Association on March 17th, 1975 suggests the orientation of the organisation towards long-term programmes⁷⁷⁸. However, this orientation was threatened by food

⁷⁷¹ *Ibid*, 143

⁷⁷² *Ibid*, P. 144

⁷⁷³ *Ibid*, P. 145

⁷⁷⁴ CRDA, "General Membership Meeting (December 1st, 1980), p.13

⁷⁷⁵ CRDA, "General Membership Meeting (September 7th, 1981), p.17

⁷⁷⁶ "Preliminary Report and Comments: Oxfam Urban Project" (May 21, 1991), P. 4

⁷⁷⁷ CRDA, "Past, Present and Future: A Recap" (Addis Ababa, December 2000), P. 13

⁷⁷⁸ CRDA, "Christian Relief and Development Association" (Addis Ababa, May 1977), P. 15

insecurity even after the famine of 1973–1974 was over. As a result, although CCRDA had planned to promote development projects, the chairman advised CCRDA to prepare to respond to sporadic famine. He advised that:

I would say that the Christian Relief Committee while pressing ahead with development projects should be prepared to meet the relief needs which could be expected to arise during the coming years⁷⁷⁹.

Towards the end of the 1970s and into the early 1980s, the relief situation diminished. This prompted CCRDA to give more attention to the causes of poverty in Ethiopia, to de-emphasise relief in favour of mobilising and allocating resources to development programme⁷⁸⁰. This is well reflected in the table below that shows that finances allocated to development projects from the late 1970s into the early 1980s saw significant increase.

Table 4 Cash mobilised and expended by CRDA: 1975-1982

Year	Relief/Rehabilitation		Development
	Cash	Kind	
1975	872, 180	-	267, 370
1976	467, 250	-	226, 270
1977	355, 150	-	316, 670
1978	1, 115, 71	-	671, 020
1979	851, 30	-	201, 120
1980	1, 777, 94	-	423, 850
1981	855, 380	-	884, 790
1982	1, 171, 07	-	854, 740

Source: "CRDA Resource Allocation by Type of Programme, 1973-2005" (2007)

With these funds, the organisation encouraged specific programmes. CCRDA itself funded two programmes. The first of these was to provide technical support to member NGOs. To that end, CCRDA took on the management of the Appropriate Technology Unit, and the Unit commenced its activities in May 1975⁷⁸¹. The Unit offered NGOs technical advice and information with regard to development in Ethiopia⁷⁸². The second CCRDA-funded programme concerned the variety of programmes that member NGOs implemented. CCRDA favoured the funding programmes such as

⁷⁷⁹ *Ibid*, P. 15

⁷⁸⁰ CRDA, "Past...", P. 13

⁷⁸¹ Everettt Ressler, "Appropriate Technology Unit (CRDA): Operational Report of the First Six Months, May to October 1975 (Addis Ababa), P.2

⁷⁸² *Ibid*, P.3

water development, preventive health, and environmental conservation⁷⁸³. In keeping with the emphasis it placed on development projects from the end of the 1970s, CCRDA funded income-generating activities. Its first grant to income-generating activities was made in 1981. In April 1981, the Yilma monastery in Shoa province submitted a project to CCRDA that focused on the purchase of a vehicle and a grinding mill. CCRDA approved on the grounds that the mills could generate income, declaring that, "...if members wished to implement this type of projects through a credit programme, CRDA would consider requests for funds"⁷⁸⁴.

Before a successful transition towards development, the 1984–1985 famine struck. Unlike before, however, CCRDA now introduced a system whereby project holders closely linked relief with long-term development programmes. The NGOs that received funds from CCRDA were encouraged to see relief as a supplement of development⁷⁸⁵. This suggests a qualitative change with regard to the contents of NGOs programmes. Moreover, due to the increase of donors' support, the programmes CCRDA ran through NGOs were expanded, and while relief programmes continued, the share of development assistance increased from 1984 on. The table below shows the comparative increase of CCRDA's financial allocation to relief and development programmes.

Table 5: Cash, in Eth \$ mobilised and spent by CRDA: 1983–1993

Year	Relief/Rehabilitation		Sub Total	Development
	Cash	Kind		
1983	2, 328, 440	1, 540, 080	3, 868, 520	904, 240
1984	-	5, 082, 450	5, 082, 450	4, 677, 70
1985	6, 005, 240	42, 329, 810	48, 335, 050	10, 584, 940
1986	6, 581, 950	14, 382, 380	20, 964, 330	21, 811, 340
1987	6, 523, 680	3, 556, 180	10, 079, 860	12, 709, 950
1988	7, 622, 750	-	7, 622, 750	15, 565, 870
1989	8, 425, 960	10, 608, 680	19, 034, 640	7, 547, 590

Source: "CRDA Resource Allocation by Type of Programme, 1973–2005" (2007)

In the post-famine period, CCRDA prioritised new programme components such as food production, cottage industries, vocational skill development and so on⁷⁸⁶.

⁷⁸³ *Ibid*, P. 16

⁷⁸⁴ CRDA, "General Membership meeting" (April 16th, 1981), p.2

⁷⁸⁵ CRDA, "Past...", P. 15

⁷⁸⁶ CRDA, "The Preliminary Draft of the memorandum of Association of the Christian Relief and Development Association: CRDA" (nd), P. 1

Although they experienced marked expansion in the post 1983–1984 period, NGOs’ programme types and scale were influenced by a number of factors in relation to donors. Certainly, as explicitly set out in many NGO publications, NGOs wanted to expand their programmes in order to ensure the sustainability of their organisations as much as they wanted to reach as many project participants as they managed. As a senior official of CCRDA told his colleagues, “Without a good number of projects, it will be...difficult to obtain support for the administrative budget”⁷⁸⁷. The same was true in the case of ASE. In preparing for programme expansion in the mid-1980s, ASE’s stated organisational position was that, “Within 17 years ASE has not changed its structure. There was a slow growth and this has to be improved”⁷⁸⁸. In fact, however, ASE’s programme had expanded markedly in terms of providing informal education. ASE was offering more informal education than any NG in the country. For instance, impressed by its massive educational programme, Oxfam offered funds to ASE to run what was called the Soddo Zuria education project. The project aimed to enable farmers get the theoretical background necessary to understand the shortcomings of “traditional” methods of farming and enlarge their knowledge to become innovators⁷⁸⁹. The project included all resident members of the Chila peasant association in Soddo Zuria district. During the first year, the project cost about Eth \$16,500⁷⁹⁰. Oxfam’s Field Director appreciated the massive anti-illiteracy programme in Ethiopia. After visiting an anti-illiteracy class in Gonder province, he informed Oxfam officials in Oxford that:

All members of the cooperative had been attending literacy classes and some had already passed their first exam. I was shown literacy classes in progress; it is obviously a source of pride and rightly so, for those involved in the programme that so much is going on and that so much interest is being shown by farmers and their wives in attending those classes⁷⁹¹

However, senior Oxfam officials in Oxford started to reject financial requests for informal education on the grounds that it was being used as a platform for political indoctrination. Once Oxfam received a request from officials of the Ministry of Agriculture to fund an informal training programme for farmers in Wollaita. While a senior official of Oxfam accepted in principle that the, “...idea of appropriate non-formal training being made available to rural people seems attractive”⁷⁹², however, Oxfam believed that the programme itself was imposed by the central government. Consequently, the Oxfam official stated that, “Unfortunately, as ever in Ethiopia, this

⁷⁸⁷ CRDA, “Management Committee Meeting Minutes (November 11, 1988)

⁷⁸⁸ “Report on the ASE’s Workshop” (April 26th-29th, 1986), P. 3

⁷⁸⁹ ASE, “Soddo Zuria Project No 2: October-December 1977”(nd), P. 1

⁷⁹⁰ *Ibid*, P. 13

⁷⁹¹ Letter from Mikael Miller to Tony Nasch (December 23, 1980), P. 8

⁷⁹² *Ibid*, P. 5-6

is not a local initiative, but Wollaita's bit of a national programme of adult education for which the ministry of education is responsible"⁷⁹³. Unlike Oxfam, ASE conformed to the standards of the socialist government, agreeing with officials of the Ministry of Agriculture that, "It [education] can be acquired not only at school but also at home"⁷⁹⁴. As a result, ASE consistently expanded the scale of its programme. ASE started its activities with an agricultural course in 1969. A year later, it introduced gender-oriented lessons that focused on hygiene for women⁷⁹⁵. In 1972, the organisation also introduced socio-economic courses that advised project participants on how to improve their socio-economic conditions⁷⁹⁶.

The scale of ASE's educational programmes thus increased steadily, also thanks to its founders. Concerning the role played by individuals, an evaluation report has the following to say:

While it has been possible to implement the programme to a larger extent despite a fairly critical financial situation at the outset, that must be attributed above all to the determination, devotion and competence of the principal originators and direct staff of the undertaking⁷⁹⁷.

ASE depended on educated volunteers who also played an active part in the increasing the number of project participants. Literate volunteers were assigned to teach peasants who were organised into groups. ASE found this group approach to be feasible. The development view of the organisation itself also encouraged this approach. As stated in one of the documents:

This advancement we are seeking to foster [education] must...be social in the sense that it must not be individuals that make progress but groups. The family must develop together, the district and the nation must progress as a whole. As we agree with a famous writer that "no one is an island", we believe the advancement of the Ethiopian farmer must be social⁷⁹⁸.

This ambition was matched by a growing number of project participants as shown in the table below.

⁷⁹³ *Ibid*, P. 5-6

⁷⁹⁴ ASE, "Situation...", P. 5

⁷⁹⁵ *Ibid*, P. 15

⁷⁹⁶ Agri-Service Ethiopia, "Annual Report of 1977 (Part II): ASE Annual Work Programme"(Addis Ababa, January 1978), P, 3

⁷⁹⁷ *Ibid*, P.8

⁷⁹⁸ ASE, "Situation...", P. 3

Table 6: Number of project participants from 1970 to 1974

Year	Project Participants
1969	-
1970	213
1971	468
1972	650
1973	150
1974	752

Source: Marjam van Reisen, "Agri-Service Ethiopia: Programme Evaluation, 1989" (July 26th, 1989), p.15

The abrupt decline in 1973, as shown in the table above, had to do with the famine that erupted in 1973–1974, causing ASE to slow down its educational activities⁷⁹⁹. The subsequent rise of project participants a year later in 1974 was related to the beginning of a new educational component called home science, designed by ASE to target women⁸⁰⁰.

Rapid territorial expansion during the revolutionary regime resulted in an exponential growth of project participants. For example, the number of project participants in agricultural programmes alone registered 600% growth in 1975–1976. The following table shows the actual number of project participants in agriculture, home science and socio-economic courses.

Table 7: Number of project participants from 1975 to 1976

Programme	Year	Project Participants	Remark
Agriculture	1975	1450	
	1976	2086	
Home Science	1975	604	
	1976	53	
Hygiene	1975	-	
	1976	-	
Socio-economic	1975	70	
	1976	253	

Source: Marjam van Reisen, "Agri-Service Ethiopia: Programme Evaluation, 1989" (July 26th, 1989), p.15

Evaluating its programme in 1976, ASE aimed to reach an even larger number of people through the use of the radio⁸⁰¹. In 1977, ASE, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Wollaita Rural Radio

⁷⁹⁹ ASE, "ASE's...", P.20

⁸⁰⁰ Marjam van Reisen, "Agri-Service Ethiopia: Programme Evaluation, 1989" (July 26th, 1989), P.15

⁸⁰¹ *Ibid*, P.16

Programme set up 29 listening centres in Wollaita, each of which had 25 project participants⁸⁰². 12 more centres were soon added, making the total number of centres 41⁸⁰³. Towards the end of 1981, the Rural Radio Forum (RRF) programme was evaluated as being effective: “The programme [Rural Radio Programme] has the effect of raising the economic standard and living conditions of the forum members in particular and the surrounding in general”⁸⁰⁴. Motivated by this, the report recommended the expansion of the geographical scope of the programme. Funded by financial grants of Eth \$ 55,000 from MISERIOR in Germany⁸⁰⁵, 493 centres were set up in five regions of the country. The following table shows the distributions of RRFs across regions.

Table 8: Distribution of Rural Radio Forums from 1981 to 1984

No	Areas		Centers	Remark
	Region	Province		
1	Sidamo	Wollaita	41	Each consisted of 25 project participants
2	Arussi	Chilalo	92	
3	Bale	Mendayo	62	
		Genale	27	
4	Gojjam	Debre Markos	62	
		Bechena	62	
5	Shoa	Kenbatana Hadeya	85	
		Jibatena Mecha	12	
Total	493			

Source: “Yegolemasoch Yäradio Program Madmächa Maekälat i.e. Adult Rural Radio Programme Listeners Centres” (nd), p.1

The famine of 1983–1984 put the relevance of informal education into question. Even ASE, which had emphasised the value of informal education, started to challenge the idea that education alone was sufficient to the Ethiopian situation, unless supported by project intervention. Donors such as NOVIB and EZE supported ASE’s assessment, and concomitant shift of emphasis. In a letter addressed to the Ministry of Agriculture, the Director of ASE described how, “The willingness and insistence of its [ASE’s] funding partners to fund rural development activities has...been instrumental in reorienting ASE’s activities”⁸⁰⁶.

⁸⁰² “Yegolemasoch Yäradio Program Madmächa Maekälat i.e. Adult Rural Radio Programme Listeners Centre” (nd), P.1

⁸⁰³ *Ibid*, P.1

⁸⁰⁴ “Evaluation of the Adult Rural Radio Forums in Wolaita Province: Sidamo Region” (Addis Ababa, October 1981), P. 30

⁸⁰⁵ ASE, “1980 Annual Report” (Janury 1981), P. 1

⁸⁰⁶ *Ibid*

The leadership and entire staff of ASE agreed that project intervention should thereafter dominate their approach. As a result, they hoped for a major shift in policy. Initially, one of their major donors, INADES-Formation, objected to any change being made to the educational programme of ASE. And while NOVIB and EZE, also major ASE donors, rejected INADES-Formation, position, they also rejected the ASE leaders' desire to place the primary emphasis on project intervention, arguing that projects to be financed were to be supportive to the training program⁸⁰⁷. Speaking on behalf of NOVIB, a Mr France warned ASE's staff that, "There is a danger to handle micro and macro projects which may dominate AOTP [Action Oriented Training Programme]. So, ASE should function as a training organisation implementing micro projects supportive to AOTP"⁸⁰⁸. Donors also did not want to fund ASE to operate in five regions, but only in Bale and Gamo Gofa. This shows that donors' decision was partly influenced by the famine, which had depleted the resource base of farmers in Bale and Gamo Gofa far more than in Gojjam, Arussi and Sidamo. EZE and NOVIB thus opted to fund ASE's Action Oriented Training Programmes in agriculture and women's education; village water supplies, and forestry, soil and water conservation in the Boreda and Kutcha districts of Gomo Gofa⁸⁰⁹. They also funded Action Oriented Training Programmes, and Maintenance and Operation Training Programmes for village water supplies in Mendayo and Genale provinces⁸¹⁰. The total budget allocated for the programmes that would run between 1987 and 1989 was Eth \$10, 598, 210⁸¹¹.

As above, NOVIB and EZE did not want to finance ASE's programmes in Gojjam, Arussi and Sidamo. The ongoing war caused NOVIB and EZE to restrain their financial commitment⁸¹². In 1990, ASE submitted a project proposal for a multi-sector programme that required \$13,854,150. ASE introduced a number of new programme components and expanded the number of villages in which it planned to manage programmes. Donors expressed their resistance to the proposed project on a number of grounds. One of these was that financing projects in Gojjam, where war was going on could be risky. Thus they questioned the proposal in the following terms:

Is it justified to invest a very substantial part of the budget [more than 1.2 million Eth \$] in this risk prone project. Since security problems are impossible to predict, it is very difficult to recommend any particular strategy. But even if the security situation may also deteriorate in

⁸⁰⁷ Informant, *Ato Getachew Worku*

⁸⁰⁸ *Ibid*, P. 4

⁸⁰⁹ "Supplementary...", P. 28

⁸¹⁰ Letter from ASE to the Ministry of Agriculture (July 15th, 1985)

⁸¹¹ Marjam van Reisen, "Agri-Service...", P.27

⁸¹² *Ibid*, P. 6

ASE's other operational regions, this is more likely to occur within the near future in Misrak Gojjam⁸¹³.

To summarise, the famine of 1983–1984 was a landmark with regard to the beginning of diverse and large-scale NGO programmes. While some NGOs enlarged and diversified their programmes out of concern to address the devastation of the famine of the 1980s, NGOs that were involved in “Cross-Border Operations” also started multi-sector programmes to appease the government. The famines of the 1970s and 1980s both devastated the economic bases of farmers and the demands in different parts of the country were almost the same. The majority of the new programmes that NGOs began to administer were on agricultural development, water supply, income generation, and environmental conservation. NGOs sought to have as many projects going on as they could manage. This was to ensure their organisational sustainability as much as assisting farmers who had suffered from the devastation of the Ethiopian famines of 1970s and 1980s. However, donors refused to fund as many programmes as NGOs sought them to, largely out of concerns about the ongoing war. Moreover, due to the improvement of the availability of food in the country, donors diverted their assistance to some other disaster prone areas in Africa. The government that seized power in May 1991 also discouraged the orientation towards relief. The interplay between all these factors led NGOs to adopt a long term perspective.

4. 6 .3 .2. 2. Regime change and NGOs’ programmes

Regime change in May 1991 changed the scale and geographical distribution of NGOs’ programmes and approaches to a certain extent. Conversely, NGOs showed a strong interest in maintaining the types of programme that they had run since the mid-1980s. As soon as the new government was established in August 1995, for example, the Resident Representative of Oxfam stated that, “...this event [formation of the new government] does not call for a change of priorities for Oxfam”⁸¹⁴.

However, NGOs did see marked change with regard to scale as well as geographical distribution. A major factor in the increase of NGOs’ scale was that the regime change, and the peace that followed, built up the confidence of donors. A few months after the regime change, Mr Marc Couwenbergh of NOVIB, for instance, told the acting Executive Director of ASE that, “Now... [that] it looks that there is peace, we have to reconsider our policies [the policy that had limited the

⁸¹³ *Ibid*, P. 15

⁸¹⁴ Chris Mason, “Ethiopia: Annual Report 1994/95” (August 1995), P.1

financial pledge]”⁸¹⁵. NOVIB thus sent out the consultant Jennie Street to Ethiopia to assess the situation and recommend possible measures to NOVIB. She recommended that NOVIB should increase its budget to fund programmes with a wider geographical coverage⁸¹⁶. As a result, NOVIB expanded its partnership with a number of national NGOs. From then until 1996, NOVIB funded the programmes of nine new organisations, and also resumed its earlier partnership with ASE, REST, Oromo Relief Organisation (ORO), and the Eritran Relief Organisation (ERO)⁸¹⁷. ASE was the prime beneficiary of NOVIB’s increased engagement. NOVIB first offered DFL (Dutch Florin, Dutch currency) 500,000 in 1991 and DFL 261,827 in 1992 to ASE to run programmes that evolved from the mid-1980s⁸¹⁸. Also, NOVIB contributed DFL 2,000,000 to finance a new multi-sector programme for the years 1993–1995. During the same period, EZE allotted a budget of DM (Deutsch Mark, German Currency) 1,700, 000 for the same programme for two years. EZE also promised that, “A separate EZE grant for the third year will be made [available]. In addition, we will try to raise ECU 140,000 with the European Community for each of the years: 1994–1995”⁸¹⁹. The programme was the same multi-sectoral programme that ASE had run since the mid-1980s; most importantly environmental conservation, water development, income generation, and vegetable gardening were programme components. Those donors who had initially turned down funding the programme in Gojjam due to insecurity now agreed to finance it. Also, with financial assistance from Action Aid Ethiopia, in 1997 ASE started running a further programme in Lalo Mama Mider in Northern Shoa which had environmental conservation, water development, income generation and vegetable gardening components⁸²⁰.

Many NGOs, such as ASE, still focused in rural areas. ASE argued that, “...development from within and rural based...is morally justifiable”⁸²¹. On the other hand, those NGOs that emerged following the regime change focused on urban areas. In becoming CCRDA members, these NGOs changed CCRDA’s membership profile. In 2000 they made up 36% of the regular membership of CCRDA, while the number of NGOs running programmes in rural areas made up only 23% and the remaining 41% shuttled between both urban and rural areas⁸²².

⁸¹⁵ Letter from Marck Marc Couwenbergh to Ato Wold Gebreal (July 4th, 1991)

⁸¹⁶ Sonja Boersma and Elias Haile Selassie “Report on Novib’s Country Policy Evaluation” (November 1996), P. 20

⁸¹⁷ *Ibid*, P. 20

⁸¹⁸ Letter from NOVIB to ASE (November 2, 1992)

⁸¹⁹ Letter from EZE to ASE (December 17, 1993)

⁸²⁰ Informant, Ato Getachew Worku

⁸²¹ ASE, ASE’s 30th..., P. 2

⁸²² *Ibid*, P. 10

The type of programmes CCRDA began to fund in urban areas were similar to those it funded in rural areas. In October 1991, the Executive Committee set up a sub-committee to study which of those urban programmes CCRDA could finance. The sub-committee recommended water supply projects, income generating activities (food processing, weaving, tailoring and injera baking centres); health (general medical care, mother and child services, building of health infrastructure such as clinics and related services); informal education, public works (access roads, sewerage disposal ditches and canals, drainage facilities and public latrines); and child and family support⁸²³.

NGOs also saw significant progress in the 1990s with regard to programme approach. Although they had diversified their programme types and increased their scale of operation, NGOs had not seriously considered their approach until that point. In July 1986, a senior Oxfam official visited Oxfam's programme in Wollo. Concerned about their anticipated critique, the Field Director of Oxfam asked Oxfam's Deputy Director, "How well can water work be integrated with other Oxfam activities?"⁸²⁴ This was a reminder that the organisation needed to develop its approach to tackling rural poverty. NGOs began to adopt more integrated approaches from the end of the 1980s on. A major factor in this was the improved food prospects in the country. When NGOs had fully withdrawn from their relief activities, they started to discuss their development approach. As the executive director of CCRDA told NGOs' representatives at this point, "...integrated development activities will have to be taken into account as Ethiopia moves to a stage where NGOs will be turning their attention from rehabilitation to development"⁸²⁵. Member NGOs and donors warmly welcomed this approach. Mr Laparte, a representative of the donor organisation Partnership for Africa and Canada (PAC), commented that, "...it is this type of project [integrated approach] that corresponds very closely to PAC's priorities"⁸²⁶. Member NGOs themselves thus adopted more integrated approaches. Concerning the integrated rural development programme that it adopted, ASE stated that, "...whenever the number of components are added the possibility of attacking the problems holistically increase"⁸²⁷.

However, NGOs' integrated approaches faced practical challenges when it came to implementation. The main challenge was that while the areas in which they operated were still

⁸²³ CRDA, "Minutes of the Executive Committee (October 16th, 1991)

⁸²⁴ "Memo" from Nicolaus Winner to Stephen Lloyd (1986)

⁸²⁵ CRDA, "Minutes of the Management Committee (November 18, 1988)

⁸²⁶ CRDA, Executive Committee Meeting Minutes (March 20th, 1989)

⁸²⁷ Agri-service Ethiopia, "30th Years Anniversary", *Agri-Drum* (February 2000), P.18

vulnerable to drought and famine, multi-sectoral integrated rural development programmes were devoid of relief food aid as NGOs pursued a policy of moving away from direct food distribution and focusing on tackling the causes of food insecurity⁸²⁸. Whenever food shortages occurred, NGOs lobbied the Ethiopian government to distribute food. However, this was not always successful, as the government hoped that NGOs would distribute food in their areas of operation. Like the government, project participants also expected NGOs to distribute food. In a situation where NGOs did not distribute food, the legitimacy of NGOs was questioned. In the mid-1990s, Oxfam noted this problem, stating:

Given the overall historical food aid needs of the country and Oxfam's profile in Ethiopia, the role played by Oxfam was very limited and focused in one region [Tigray]. This limitation had a negative implication on Oxfam particularly on its relationship with communities in the food insecure areas where Oxfam runs development projects. Furthermore, Oxfam's limited role in food aid has reduced its lobbying role in the food aid sector⁸²⁹.

Thus, while NGOs had re-evaluated the programmes that they had run since the mid-1980s and oriented their programmes towards ensuring food security – for instance, Oxfam, intending to carry out, “...a wide range of activities... which...help people feed themselves and their families”⁸³⁰, had divided its operational areas into two areas: highlands and lowlands, with highlands comprised of Wollo, Eastern Hararghe and Tigray – Oxfam did introduce food aid into its programme in the highlands⁸³¹. Overall, however, Oxfam's programme now focused on asset building and diversification of income to assist project participants earn income to ensure their food security. In order to deal with the environmental degradation, Oxfam also carried out soil management, forage development, pest control management and small scale irrigation and horticultural development projects⁸³². The Lowlands area included the pastoralist areas and areas where minority groups live of Afar, Somalia, Borena, and Benishangul Gumuz. As these people depended on their livestock, in 2003 Oxfam launched a pastoralist programme that included animal disease control, conflict resolution and hygiene. Unlike in the highland areas, rather than food aid, Oxfam provided water and pasture in time of stress in pastoral areas. As stated in an Oxfam document, “...relief does not necessarily mean food in pastoral areas...”⁸³³

⁸²⁸ Ros David and Teshome Woldeamayrat, “Evaluation...”, P. 24

⁸²⁹ *Ibid*, P. 4

⁸³⁰ “Memorandum” from Harriet Dodd to Demelash (June 5, 1997), P. 1

⁸³¹ *Ibid*, P.7

⁸³² Oxfam, “Oxfam GB's Ethiopia Programme: Annual Activity Report for the year ending April 30, 2003” (Addis Ababa, May 2003), P. 2

⁸³³ Oxfam, “The Changes...”, P.3

Oxfam's programme orientation towards food security launched an overall trend at the national level. Under the auspices of CCRDA, NGOs set up what is called the Rural Development and Food Security Forum, wherein NGOs discuss the strategic importance of food security. Moreover, the government and donors tacitly agreed that development in the country had to focus on food security. The establishment of the Food Security Consortium in Addis Ababa in the early 2000s, in which donors, NGOs and the Ethiopian government all participated, attests to the priority food security has gained. Influenced by ideals disseminated at the Rural Development and Food Security Forum and Food Security Consortium, and noting the chronic food shortage in their own operational areas, NGOs revised their programmes in ways intended to ensure food security. ASE, a participant in the Forum and the Consortium, came to believe that food security is a key strategic factor in at least reducing poverty. This assessment was not solely the result of influences from the Rural Development and Food Security Forum and the Food Security Consortium. It was also an assessment informed by ASE's own observation that poverty was becoming severe. After assessing the deterioration of food security and its link with poverty, ASE stated that, "...the link between poverty and food security, poor social services and environmental degradations becomes evident [now] than ever before"⁸³⁴. According to ASE, food security is a necessary but not sufficient condition for adequate nutrition (utilisation). In some cases, malnutrition may be caused by inadequate health care. As a result, ASE approached food security in an integrated way, calling its programme an integrated food security programme⁸³⁵. Like Oxfam, ASE launched both on-farm and off-farm activities including the provision of training, loans and technical advice. Though it still operated in four food-insecure regions, namely Enebse Sar Mider in eastern Gojjam, Lalo Mama in northern Shoa, Goro district in Bale, and Amaro in southern Ethiopia, ASE increased its financial commitment to these food insecure regions. NOVIB and EZE also increased their financial commitments to ASE. For instance, EZE approved DM 2,925 million and NOVIB Dutch Guilders 3 million (Eth \$ 22, 7 million in total) for the 2001–2003 period⁸³⁶.

4.7. Conclusions

Expansion and contraction have featured prominently in NGOs' programmes and operational areas. Resources have remained NGOs' programme and territorial scale.. Throughout their existence, at least those NGOs operational in Ethiopia for quite a long time have enjoyed opportune

⁸³⁴ ASE, "Strategic Plan for 2000-2005" (Addis Ababa, February 2000), P. 45

⁸³⁵ *Ibid*, P. 56

⁸³⁶ Letter from Ato Getachew Worku to Ato Asefa Abera, ANRS, DPPC (nd)

moments with regard to access to resources. The strained relationship that donors had with the military government, as well as the worldwide philanthropy that the Ethiopian famines of the 1970s and 1980s generated, are major factors that have assured NGOs have had access to resources. NGOs were also able to mobilise resources after the regime change in May 1991 due to renewed interest on the part of donors that had previously funded NGOs, as well as the emergence of new donors.

Despite the fact that they had secured resources to run their programmes, NGOs were concerned about the sustainability of their programmes as well as their organisations. As a result, they choose peripheral operational areas, largely because donors were morally compelled to finance areas that receive insufficient attention from the government. On the other hand, these peripheral rural areas in which smallholding farmers lived suffered from deep-rooted poverty that manifested itself in recurrent famines. As a result, relief and rehabilitation dominated NGOs programmes. Although they had tended to avoid engaging in these programmes at the early stage, NGOs sought to maintain relief programmes once they were up and running. This was because famine evoked public emotion that enabled NGOs to mobilise resources.

Although relief and rehabilitation dominated their programmes, NGOs did not ignore long-term development programmes. In fact, long-term programmes can be said to have co-existed with the relief and rehabilitation programmes of NGOs, and indeed NGOs large scale, multi-sectoral rural development programmes emerged in the context of the 1980s famine. While some NGOs started such programmes out of concern to deal with the depletion that the famine had inflicted, another motivation, on the part of those NGOs which had been involved in “cross-border relief operations” was to pre-emptively appease the government. Towards the end of the 1980s, the relief situation diminished significantly, at which point many donors diverted their resources to other vulnerable regions of the country such as Sudan. This raised resource-related issues for NGOs. Moreover, the new government that took over power in May 1991 discouraged the relief orientation of NGOs. NGOs thus slashed their relief programmes and started to seriously consider their long-term development programmes. Although they did not alter their programmes components, such as the agricultural development, environmental conservation, health, water development, and income generating activities that they had carried out, NGOs now came up with integrated rural development programmes. NGOs such as CCRDA also started integrated multi-sector development programmes in urban areas. This had to do with the rise of urban-based NGOs.

Despite the fact that donors and the Ethiopian government influenced NGOs to adopt a long-term perspective, especially from the end of 1980s onward, NGOs still had the autonomy to determine the type of programmes that they ran. NGOs' orientation towards ensuring food security from the mid-1990s is a testimony to this. Having assessed food shortages, NGOs evaluated their programmes and oriented them in a way that they believed could address food insecurity. However, the scale of their programmes depended on the availability of resources. Due to the insecurity that prevailed in the country, donors did not want to finance as many programmes as NGOs sought them to. This changed with regime change in May 1991. Donors that had shown marked restraint then started to finance NGOs large-scale, multi-sectoral programmes.

Chapter Five

Structuring and Restructuring

5.1. Introduction

New managerial thinking and approaches have occurred at the global level over the last couple of decades. Participatory decision-making and flexible work structures of organisations have come to be considered as essential to promoting democracy, sustainable development, and good governance⁸³⁷.

Pro-NGO authors argue that NGOs have participatory decision-making structure that assists their personnel to accomplish multiple responsibilities⁸³⁸. However, case studies have shown that NGOs don't have as much democratic and participatory management as their supporters argue. For instance, Kassahun Berhanu, who has studied management traditions within a number of NGOs in Ethiopia, tells us that:

The founder-directors of many NGOs are vested with overwhelming powers which enable them to make decisions single-handedly. The internal *modus operandi* of several NGOs is therefore undemocratic when it comes to allowing participation and divergent views⁸³⁹.

Many other researchers go along Kassahun's argument. Asheber has revealed that many founder-directors have centralised decision-making power and authority within NGOs in Ethiopia. Asheber states further that many of the founders of NGOs carry out most of the activities, while the staff are almost idle⁸⁴⁰.

Certainly, NGOs had rigidly centralised management systems for a long time since their establishment in the 1960s. However, decentralisation is a relative concept. It does not refer to the absence of centralisation, but denotes the degree to which decision-making authority is shared within the hierarchy of NGOs. Decentralisation is also "...the process of assigning the decision-making authority to lower level of an organisational hierarchy"⁸⁴¹.

The process of assigning the decision-making authority to lower level has been visible within NGOs in Ethiopia since the mid-1980s. This was in response to internal and external dynamics. Internally, there were arguments and counter-arguments between power-holders on the one hand,

⁸³⁷ J. S. Chandan, *Management Concept and Strategies* (New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House Pvt, 1999), P.1

⁸³⁸ *Ibid*, PP. 3-4

⁸³⁹ Kassahun Berhanu, "The Role of NGOs in Promoting Democratic Value: The Ethiopian Experience...", P. 128

⁸⁴⁰ *Ibid*, P.5.

⁸⁴¹ Joseph P.H. Fan et al quoted in Negussie Hailu, "NGO Management...", P. 1

and those who did not have power and authority on the other hand. Individuals who set up NGOs controlled decision-making structures. However, this was always questioned by other individuals within the same NGOs. Moreover, new concepts such as “participation” and “partnership” gained prominence among NGOs that required a decentralised management style. Externally, the global rhetoric about democracy and decentralised management has gained prominence in the last decades. NGOs could not be immune from this influence. This chapter explores mainly internal, and to some extent external, factors and investigates how they influenced NGOs to change their management style, from rigidly centralised to decentralised management systems. Before discussing the shift from centralisation to the decentralisation of power and authority, let us highlight the way decision-making authority was structured within NGOs such as ASE, CCRDA and Oxfam

5.2. Structures, centralisation and decentralisation of decision-making authority

5.2.1. Structures of decision-making authority

The Ethiopian legal frameworks have stipulated how NGOs in Ethiopia should organise their decision-making structures. The 1960 Civil Code conferred major decision-making authority to the general assembly of an NGO⁸⁴². A general assembly would select the board of directors who would oversee the implementation of decisions and policies put in place by the general assembly⁸⁴³.

The decision-making structures within different NGOs were thus similar with regard to the way authority was distributed. A group of individuals held key positions within the structures of NGOs and they used to “make and break things” for each decision. For instance, an agreement signed on June 6th, 1969 between ASE, INADES-Formation and the Ministry of Agriculture stipulated that a group of individual would form a Board that would have authority over ASE. This did not, however, materialise as the “indigenisation” of ASE did not proceed as fast as the founders of ASE had anticipated. As a result, the heads of the Agricultural, Women’s and Socio-Economic Sections within the structure of ASE, coordinated by the Executive Director, came to have ultimate authority over policy, organisational orientation, and inter-agency relations⁸⁴⁴. In 1978, INADES-Formation took over these powers from ASE. INADES-Formation, which supported the Ethiopian revolution,

⁸⁴² Imperial Government of Ethiopia, *The Civil Code of the Empire of Ethiopia* (Berhanena Sālam Printing Press, 1960), P. 73

⁸⁴³ *Ibid*, P. 72

⁸⁴⁴ ASE, “ASE’s 1977 Annual Report”, P. 2

pushed ASE to operate alongside the new Ministry of Agriculture. To that end, INADES-Formation asked for an agreement to be signed with the Ministry. Prior to that, INADES-Formation had signed an agreement with the Executive Director of ASE in April 1978. This agreement cancelled the autonomy that the Ethiopian legal framework had previously conferred on ASE. Concerning this, a representative of INADES-Formation stated that, “The autonomous status of ASE granted by its registration with the Ministry of Interior as a non-profit making association is repealed”⁸⁴⁵.

The agreement signed in April 1978 changed the structure of decision-making authority. To begin with, Articles 3 and 4 gave the President of INADES-Formation the authority to appoint the Director and Assistant Director of ASE⁸⁴⁶. Moreover, INADES-Formation could appoint a person as representative of INADES-Formation besides the Director to supervise financial and technical matters⁸⁴⁷. Secondly, ASE could no longer establish partnerships with governmental and donor organisations without the consent of INADES-Formation’s President⁸⁴⁸. This was to discourage ASE to formulate policies that could contradict those of INADES-Formation. Article 7 stands to serve this purpose. It states that “INADES-Formation would be informed of any project to be launched before it is due for implementation”⁸⁴⁹.

The President of INADES-Formation was responsible to the Governing Council of INADES-Formation. The Council was composed of nine elected members from the General Assembly and they would follow up the implementation of decisions passed by the General Assembly. The General Assembly, in turn, was composed of individuals and organisations that supported the objectives of INADES-Formation⁸⁵⁰.

Like ASE, the structure within CCRDA and Oxfam gave individuals in executive positions enormous authority, leaving policy issues to the upper structure. The general membership of CCRDA had earlier been a monolithic structure that used to decide collectively on issues related to the 1973–1974 famine. However, decision-making by the general membership was found to be

⁸⁴⁵ Francios Enguehard, "Draft Agreement between Socialist Ethiopia and IF [INADES-Formation]" (November 30th, 1980), P. 2

⁸⁴⁶ "Agreement between the Undersigned IF [INADES-Formation] represented by its President, Mr. Philippe Dublin, and Agri-Service Ethiopia hereafter called ASE represented by its Director, Mr. Tilahoun Haile", Article 3 and 4 (April 1978)

⁸⁴⁷ *Ibid*, Article 10

⁸⁴⁸ *Ibid*, Article 6

⁸⁴⁹ *Ibid*, Article 7

⁸⁵⁰ INADES-Formation, "Rules of Procedures" (1992), PP. 1, 6 and 16

inefficient. As a result, the Executive Committee was introduced in December 1973. It was authorised to assess projects submitted for funding. The Executive Committee had under it the Project Committee, the Personnel Committee and the Finance Committee⁸⁵¹. The Executive Committee then had to submit its decisions to the general membership for endorsement⁸⁵². A Secretariat that included a Coordinator and his/her staff was also set up. However, the Secretariat had less authority than the Executive Committee. The 1977 annual report summed up the duty of the Secretariat. It states that, “The coordinator, with the help of the CRDA [CCRDA] staff carry out the decisions of the general assembly, dispatches monthly reports to donors and is responsible for the overall supervision of the work”⁸⁵³. Like that of CCRDA, elected members of the Executive Committee of Oxfam decided on projects submitted for funding from different areas⁸⁵⁴. In 1957, the Executive Committee set up a Grants Sub-Committee that used to meet to consider proposals and allocate funds⁸⁵⁵. In 1963, Oxfam established regional desks that served as intermediary between the newly-opened field offices in different parts of the world (mainly in Africa) and the Grants Sub-Committee⁸⁵⁶. Projects were thus filtered at three levels. The field offices received, filtered and sometimes initiated project proposals; regional desks amended proposals prior to submission of those projects deemed acceptable, and the grants subcommittee used to assess whether projects matched Oxfam’s priorities and budget. Field directors assigned to different countries formed the frontline of Oxfam’s contact with the people whom it aimed to work with; they controlled the programme of Oxfam’s policy at the local level and acted as filters through which project applications were submitted for funding decisions⁸⁵⁷.

The decision-making structures outlined above remained intact until the early 1990s when NGOs started to restructure themselves. ASE carried out major restructuring in 1992. Consequently, ASE endorsed a new Memorandum of Association that took over ultimate decision-making authority from INADES-Formation and bestowed it on the newly established General Assembly. The General Assembly came to have authority over the organisation’s policies, programme, organisational orientation and so on⁸⁵⁸. The Memorandum of Association also set up the Board of

⁸⁵¹ *Ibid*, P. 4

⁸⁵² CRDA, “1977 Annual Report”, P. 11

⁸⁵³ *Ibid*, P. 3

⁸⁵⁴ Michael Jennings, *Surrogates of the State: NGOs, Development and Ujjama in Tanzania* (USA, Kumarian Press, 2008), P. 118

⁸⁵⁵ *Ibid*, P. 118

⁸⁵⁶ *Ibid*, P. 118

⁸⁵⁷ Michael Jennings, *Surrogates...* P. 117

⁸⁵⁸ "The New Memorandum of Association of Agri-Service Ethiopia", Article 6, A-C (nd), P. 4

Directors and conferred on it the authority to follow up on the implementation of policies and organisational orientation set by the General Assembly⁸⁵⁹. This structural change was due to the argument of EZE and NOVIB. NOVIB and EZE told ASE that it should terminate any structural relation with INADES-Formation because they believed that national NGOs should have internal autonomy in order to effectively manage sustainable development. This called for the new Memorandum of Association that established the General Assembly and the Board of Directors⁸⁶⁰. Like ASE, CCRDA and Oxfam carried out major restructuring from the middle of the 1990s. However, restructuring within those NGOs was aimed at shifting the decision-making authority to emerging structures. This was in the nature of decentralisation.

5.2.2. Centralisation of decision-making authority

Centralisation, seen as the absence of delegation of authority, marked the management system of NGOs in Ethiopia for a long time. Centralisation was usually preferred because it was believed to assist the efficient carrying out of decisions. In 1977, for instance, CCRDA stated that the (highly centralised) “Decision-making ... [within CCRDA]...on development projects is... efficient”⁸⁶¹. However, centralisation within NGOs like CCRDA remained problematic. This had to do with the inherent conflict of interest between the Executive Committee and the General Assembly. Members of the Executive Committee were representatives of NGOs that were members of CCRDA. They were, thus, entitled to apply to CCRDA for funding. Moreover, CCRDA was divided within itself between NGOs connected to Catholic and Protestant Churches. Members of the Executive Committee were, thus, accused of favouring their own NGOs, or one group of member NGOs, at the expense of others⁸⁶². Initially, the Executive Committee underestimated this mistrust. The Committee once stated that “They [member NGOs] share the difficult decisions about project funding and policy matters”⁸⁶³.

The mistrust within CCRDA became apparent in 1983–1984 when famine erupted. NGOs rushed into Ethiopia in large numbers to rescue famine victims, and they soon became members of CCRDA. These new members challenged the decision-making structure within CCRDA. At least 20 member NGOs submitted a petition in which they discussed a lack of transparency in decision-

⁸⁵⁹ *Ibid*, Article 7, No 9, a-f, P. 6

⁸⁶⁰ Informant, Ato Getachew Worku

⁸⁶¹ *Ibid*, P. 2

⁸⁶² *Ibid*, P. 3

⁸⁶³ *Ibid*, P. 2

making. As a result, the Executive Committee went back and discussed the longstanding mistrust between the Executive Committee and the general membership. In a memo circulated to the members, the chairperson of the Association regrettably described that, “There has always been some grumblings in some quarters that CRDA [CCRDA] funds are going to certain groups of organisations”⁸⁶⁴.

CCRDA introduced some changes to restore the confidence of members. The chairperson of CCRDA came up with a proposal that had two important components. The first component was to put limits on the tenure of the Executive Committee. In this regard, he suggested that a member of the Executive Committee would serve for four years after which s/he would “retire” for at least one year. He also suggested that the chairperson could be elected only for two consecutive terms, after which s/he would have to “rest” for at least one year. The second component of the proposal was making sufficient finance available. To that end, he proposed that CCRDA should only fund projects submitted by member NGOs; CCRDA had also funded projects submitted by governmental organisations and non-member NGOs up until that time, as members did not cover all areas that required assistance⁸⁶⁵.

The first two proposals put forward by the chairman of CCRDA were accepted. The membership endorsed that the tenure for an Executive Committee would be for one year and an Executive Committee member could stand for re-election for another three more years, after which s/he must “retire”. The general membership also accepted that the chair and vice-chair of the Executive Committee would be elected for one year and they could stand for re-election, after which they must “retire” for at least one year before they were re-elected again⁸⁶⁶. The introduction of the limit on the tenure of the Executive Committee and of its members was accompanied by an appeal system. The decisions of the Executive Committee had earlier been binding. Now it was decided that “...decisions of the Executive Committee and other committees may be appealed to the membership general meeting”⁸⁶⁷.

However, the measures taken do not suggest that members of the Executive were willing to respond to the demands of members of CCRDA. For instance, although it was introduced as a matter of

⁸⁶⁴ “Memorandum” from Ato Asrat Gebre to Member of CRDA (October 9, 1985), Archive of ASE in Addis Ababa

⁸⁶⁵ *Ibid*, P. 3

⁸⁶⁶ “Memorandum of Association: Christian Relief and Development Association” (1986), PP.4-5

⁸⁶⁷ CRDA, “Minutes of the Meeting of the Constitution Drafting Committee” (February 25, 1986), P. 1

principle, the appeal system did not function properly. This was because the Executive Committee did not allow it to operate. Members of the Executive Committee were concerned that once the appeal system started operating well, it would be difficult to handle the appeals of members⁸⁶⁸. As a result, complaints and gossips within the members were rife. Thus, the Executive Committee proposed on September 29th, 1987 the establishment of an Appeals Committee. The General Assembly approved the proposal on October 5th, 1987. However, member NGOs rejected the fact that members of the Executive Committee were members of the Appeals Committee⁸⁶⁹. As a result, the Appeals Committee performed poorly. Three years after its establishment, the Appeals Committee had not reviewed a single case⁸⁷⁰. The intention of the Executive Committee to centralise the decision-making process was so strong that it repeatedly rejected the demands of member NGOs for participatory decision-making within CCRDA. In July 1989, for instance, the Secretariat presented the demand by member NGOs that stated that members of the general assembly were to be elected to serve on the project selection committee. Initially, the Committee accepted the proposal. The minutes that documented the full consent of members of the Executive Committee is worth quoting here. It reads as follows:

It was pointed out that while this would reduce the work of the Executive Committee, it would have [the] added...advantage of involving more members in the work of the CRDA [CCRDA]. It was proposed that this committee having studied requests would approve, defer, and reject requests....The members having discussed the proposal agreed that it was a good idea, as it would increase the involvement of the members in the work of CRDA⁸⁷¹.

The Executive Committee soon rejected the proposal on the ground that the appeal system did exist and that the creation of another committee was redundant⁸⁷². Members did not accept this. In August 1990, member NGOs suggested that the decision-making process was to be reviewed. They also suggested the establishment of an Ethics Committee to oversee the decisions of the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee agreed that two Executive Committee members, together with the Secretariat, would review the decision-making process⁸⁷³. The Executive Committee soon rejected the idea of setting up an Ethics Committee, however, on the grounds that there was already an Appeals Committee and that there was no reason to set up another committee. The Executive Committee also decided that members could submit all their concerns to the Executive Committee

⁸⁶⁸ *Ibid*, P. 1

⁸⁶⁹ CRDA, "Minutes of the Executive Committee" (October 9th, 1990)

⁸⁷⁰ *Ibid*

⁸⁷¹ CRDA, "Minutes of the Executive Committee" (July 11th, 1989)

⁸⁷² CRDA, "Minutes of the Management Committee" (August 4th, 1989)

⁸⁷³ CRDA, "Minutes of the Management Committee" (August 28th, 1990)

that was directly responsible to the General Assembly⁸⁷⁴. Moreover, the Executive Committee decided that the review of the decision-making process was not necessary and ruled against the exercise altogether⁸⁷⁵. The last attempt was made in March 1993. The Deputy Executive Director of CCRDA who had been in contact some members of the organisation, proposed to the Executive Committee that they set up a Programme Committee that would include members of the association with ultimate decision-making authority. The Executive Committee "...agreed to study the proposal in more detail in the future", and there is no trace of the issue thereafter⁸⁷⁶.

It is thus apparent that CCRDA itself, which claimed to represent NGOs, was highly centralised with regard to decision-making. The same culture of decision-making was clear within NGOs operating in Ethiopia. What made centralisation within these NGOs worse was that while they had established regional offices since the early 1980s, the regional offices did not have authority. Most NGOs in Ethiopia had had not establishment strong regional offices. What complicated the relief operation during the 1983–1984 famine was partly that NGOs had not developed sufficient structures at the regional level. When the relief operation had gone, NGO representatives appraised their relief operation. An NGO representative pointed out how the absence of strong structures in the regions had complicated the relief operation. He regretfully said that "...organizations [NGOs] who were small before beginning the operation [famine] basically had no structure regarding personnel, policies etc."⁸⁷⁷.

NGOs' programmes suffered from lack of proper supervision at the regional level. Though it used to fund a wide range of programmes, Oxfam failed to follow up their implementation. Concerning Oxfam's projects in Gonder, the field director stated that, "The real problem is the lack of follow up of grants made, either by us or the RRC"⁸⁷⁸. Likewise, donors realised that ASE, which had concentrated its staff in Addis Ababa, failed to supervise its programme in the region. Explaining the reason about lack of proper supervision, an evaluation carried out under the auspices of donors described that, "...the upper structure of the organization was well organized and project participants were not"⁸⁷⁹.

⁸⁷⁴ CRDA, "Minutes of the Executive Committee" (October 9th, 1990)

⁸⁷⁵ CRDA, "Minutes of the Management Committee" (October 23th, 1990)

⁸⁷⁶ CRDA, "Minutes of the Management Committee" (March 30th, 1993)

⁸⁷⁷ Petter Myhren, "Management and Organization" in CRDA in "Report on Workshop on Lessons Learned" (Addis Ababa, November 4th, 1987), P. 5

⁸⁷⁸ Hugh Goyder, "Ethiopia Drought Situation: Visit to Zwa-Hamusid, Libo Awraja, Gonder" (February 17th, 1983), P.2

⁸⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 11

To follow the implementation of projects closely, NGOs regionalized their offices from the early 1980s on. In 1980, Mr Jan Russenaars, the Africa Desk officer of NOVIB, informed the Director of ASE that, “Generally it is not our custom to support all African programmes or organisations because their activities are remote from what Novib calls target group policy”⁸⁸⁰. ASE thus introduced a “top down” approach that involved putting structures in place closer to project participants. To that end, ASE embarked on a regionalisation policy. The organisation started opening regional offices in strategic locations. In 1982, ASE revitalised its office in Soddo (Wollaita province), from which it had shifted its headquarters to Addis Ababa in 1976. It also opened two more offices in Chench (Gamo Goffa province), and Robe (Bale)⁸⁸¹. Regionalisation has remained a distinguishing characteristic of ASE since then. The organisation opened regional offices in the Bichena district of Eastern Gojjam in 1986 and in the Molale district of the Northern Shoa administrative zone in 1997⁸⁸². In 2008, ASE had six regional offices and in 2012 it had 12 regional offices⁸⁸³.

The policy of regionalisation became a trend that a number of NGOs pursued. Oxfam, like ASE, also set up regional offices in the early 1980s, induced by the existence of massive emergency needs. The first emergency activity in that period was related to a rehabilitation programme in the Ogaden in which Oxfam was involved. After the Ethio-Somali war of 1977–1978 had siezed, NGOs started programmes to rehabilitate the Somali community. Oxfam was selected by UNHCR to participate in the rehabilitation programme. Thus, Oxfam’s Field Director requested the headquarters to open a regional office in Dire Dawa town, the capital of Eastern Hararghe. In response, in 1982 the headquarters sent Mr Gerry Salole to establish Oxfam’s regional office in Dire Dawa to supervise all Oxfam’s activities in the region⁸⁸⁴. The Field Director himself considered the decision as a significant progress for Oxfam. In his letter, the Field Director informed the Chief Commissioner of the RRC that “...the decision to open a field office in one of the regions marks a new initiative for Oxfam and one that we hope will contribute to the overall development of the country”⁸⁸⁵. The famine that occurred in 1983–1984 spurred the regionalisation process. At this time, most NGOs opened up regional offices in famine-prone areas such as Gonder,

⁸⁸⁰ Letter from Mr. Jan Russenaars to Ato Tilahun Haile (December 1980), Archive of ASE in Addis Ababa

⁸⁸¹ ASE, “Integrated Rural Development Programme in Gamo Goffa” (Addis Ababa, May 1986), P. 32

⁸⁸² Informant, *Ato Getachew Worku*

⁸⁸³ Informant, *Ato Abeyu*

⁸⁸⁴ Letter from Oxfam to Mr Gerry Solole (October 30, 1982), Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

⁸⁸⁵ Letter from Field Director of Oxfam to RRC (nd), P.1, Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

Wollo, and Tigray. As soon as the news was heard about the famine, Oxfam's Field Director visited the eastern parts of Gonder in February 1983 and appealed to the headquarters to send an emergency team to initiate a supplementary feeding programme⁸⁸⁶. Furthermore, the Field Director assigned a programme advisor to Gonder⁸⁸⁷. The programme advisor soon argued that Oxfam should set up a local structure in Gonder to address problems in the region. Concerning this, he stated that, "...the question now really is to find the appropriate structure through which we can best work to start some of the small scale projects at peasant associations and woreda [district] level that I think should be possible"⁸⁸⁸. The programme officer proposed to Oxfam that the same approach be pursued in Eastern Hararghe. He stated that someone was needed to work, "...closely with the Ministry of Agriculture at all levels and recommending small grants to Hugh [the Field Director of Oxfam] in Addis Ababa would seem to be one of the best ways of starting this small scale work..."⁸⁸⁹. Before this materialised, however, Oxfam withdrew from the area due to security concerns. The same person who had worked as Oxfam's water engineer in Gonder was now transferred to Wollaita, where in 1984 he opened Oxfam's regional Wollaita office that exists today⁸⁹⁰. Oxfam also opened a regional office in Dessie town in Wollo province⁸⁹¹.

Regionalisation was not, however, accompanied by a restructuring of decision-making power and authority with NGOs. NGOs believed that central management was essential to carrying forward their corporate vision. For instance, the agreement signed in 1978 that integrated ASE with INADES-Formation contributed to a centralisation of decision-making. As stated earlier, the agreement gave major decision-making authority to INADES-Formation. Moreover, the Executive Director became accountable to INADES-Formation. Thus, it was unlikely for the Executive Director to drift from the policy direction of INADES-Formation. Despite these limitations, the Director had full authority over the management of finances and of the organisation as well as the implementation of projects. However, to carry this out, the Director would establish a Management Committee and develop rules that would be submitted to INADES-Formation for endorsement⁸⁹². The Management Committee, which involved department heads, neither intended to delegate

⁸⁸⁶ "Summary Report on Nutritional Situation in Drought Affected areas of Gonder Region and Recommendation for Improvement in Supplementary Feeding" (nd), P. 1

⁸⁸⁷ Letter from Hugh Goyder to Mikael Miller (August 4, 1983), Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

⁸⁸⁸ Letter From Michael Miller to Hugh Goyder (October 10, 1983), Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

⁸⁸⁹ *Ibid*

⁸⁹⁰ "Report on a Visit to Libo Awraja, Gonder drought: February 15-16, 1984", P. 2

⁸⁹¹ "Minutes of Monitoring Meeting: Oxfam Office in Dessie" (April 6th, 1985), P. 1

⁸⁹² "Agreement between the undersigned INADIS-Formation represented by its president. Mr. Phillip Dubin and and Agri-Service Ethiopia, hereafter ASE represented by its Director, mr. Tilahun Haile" (April 7, 1978)

authority to regional offices nor to empower them to manage their activities. NOVIB argued that regional offices were to have clearly defined authority, power and clear lines of responsibility to execute their programme. To that end, in 1982 it sent out an ASE delegation to scrutinise how the decentralised offices of INADES-Formation functioned in Cameroon. The report of the delegation that the Executive Committee endorsed shows that the Executive did not allow regional offices to have as much power and authority as NOVIB sought. Concerning this, the report stated that, “The recommended ASE branch offices will not be so autonomous with so many employees as Bameda [one of the regions in Cameroon visited by ASE’s delegation]”⁸⁹³. At the early stage, the refusal to allow decentralised management had to do with the desire for branch offices within INADES-Formation to realise corporate vision⁸⁹⁴. However, centralised management persisted even after ASE rejected the influence of INADES-Formation in the mid-1980s. The organisational culture in Ethiopia that fostered hierarchy, centralisation and bureaucracy nurtured the persistence of central management. An observer who had herself experienced this organisational culture within ASE reported that:

There does not seem to be a culture of sharing information even within ASE; several interesting materials which I gave either to the Director or to the Omo project coordinator for dissemination, I found several days later had not been seen by any other staff. This is a worrying habit probably reflecting the hierarchical nature of Ethiopian bureaucracy rather than an organization which claims to espouse participatory and information sharing principles and practices⁸⁹⁵.

Like national NGOs, international NGOs pursued highly centralised management. Like national NGOs, international NGOs such as Oxfam believed that central management was essential to realising their corporate vision⁸⁹⁶. As a result the regional offices of Oxfam, like those of ASE, retained no authority. Instead, the field directors of Oxfam would review projects and recommend them – or not – to the Grants Sub-committee in Oxford for funding. This remained intact even after Oxfam opened regional offices in Dire Dawa, Gonder, Wollaita and Wollo. Regional officers used to assess the needs in their respective areas and actively seek projects that Oxfam could finance, but could not commit Oxfam to any action unless authorised to do so by the Field Director, to whom requests for help should be sent. They were also advised to avoid direct negotiations with any other organisation; again, they were to refer any such cases to the Field Director. Finally,

⁸⁹³ “A Brief Report on the Field Trip to INADES-Formation in Cameron” (1982), P. 12

⁸⁹⁴ Informant, *Ato Getachew*

⁸⁹⁵ ASE, “ASE: Some Comments” (1990), P. 1

⁸⁹⁶ “Setting Course...”, P. 150

regional officers should not make any public statement unless specifically authorised to do so by the Field Director⁸⁹⁷.

Just as regional officers did not have much influence, the Field Directors' influence over the decision of the Grants Sub-Committee in Oxford remained minimal. The Grants-Sub-Committee wanted to make sure that field directors had no influence on its decision. This could be shown by one case that occurred in 1982. Fr. Gannon, the head of the Catholic Mission in Arba Minch which had received funds from Oxfam since 1976, flew to England. The Field Director asked officials from the headquarters to meet with Fr. Gannon to discuss issues connected with projects funded by Oxfam. The arrival of Fr. Gannon coincided with the meeting of the Grants Committee to decide on projects submitted for funding. Fr. Gannon was not allowed to meet Oxfam officials before the meeting. The reason given was that "...the committee can't easily do them justice and the schedule of committee meetings have become tighter and tighter"⁸⁹⁸.

Central decision-making within Oxfam had its own ramifications. One of these had to do with responsiveness of the decisions to local circumstances. Oxfam had maintained a fair balance between relief and development until the early 1980s⁸⁹⁹. Then, a new team took over the leadership in Oxford that aspired chiefly toward aiding long-term development. This did not take into account the immediate circumstances in Ethiopia. During this time, the country was experiencing a serious food crisis, but while various other NGOs rushed into Ethiopia to relieve the famine victims, Oxfam decided in March 1984 that in Ethiopia, "...relief projects should be avoided and development projects sought"⁹⁰⁰. This was because Oxfam considered itself as a developmental organisation. The British media confronted Oxfam for its decision to eschew the famine relief operation. Oxfam was thus forced to reverse its decision⁹⁰¹.

The rapid programme expansion that followed the reversal of Oxfam's decision encouraged the headquarters to monitor even the technical implementation of programmes more strictly than ever. The Emergency Department Head in Oxford, Mr Brian Pratt, offered the expatriate staff of Oxfam in Ethiopia reasons for why the Ethiopian programme was to be under the strict supervision of the head office, telling them that close supervision of Oxfam is, "...not only related to our

⁸⁹⁷ "Field Officer for Hararghe Region: TOR" (June 1982); Letter from Hugh Goyder to Mikael Miller (August 4, 1983)

⁸⁹⁸ Letter from Tony Walsh to Mikael Miller (8th June, 1982), P.1, Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

⁸⁹⁹ Letter from Mikael Miller to Tony Walsh (December 23, 1980), Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

⁹⁰⁰ Tony Vaux, *The Selfish...*, P. 46

⁹⁰¹ *Ibid*, P. 52

responsibility to account for our handling of resources for such a large programme but also to our permanent quest to improve our overseas programme”⁹⁰². Moreover, the political context in Ethiopia contributed to this. Oxfam operated in areas controlled by rebels and the government. Moreover, the government’s resettlement programme complicated Oxfam’s activities. The two factors necessitated active decisions to be made in the field. In early 1983, officials at the Oxfam headquarters decided to work on famine relief in rebel-held territories without sufficient consultation with the Field Director in Ethiopia, who declined the decision. In a letter he addressed to Oxford, the Field Director pointed out that ,“...we need to review all our policies in this region rather critically”⁹⁰³. However, this was rejected by Nigel Walsh, who was mandated to oversee Oxfam’s programme in the region. As he informed the Field Director, “We will not hold up or change our present policy for aid to all those who are suffering at present...”⁹⁰⁴ In order to avoid the anger of the government, Oxfam’s officials in the head quarter pursued a cautious approach. Given the politicisation of the relief operation, this approach sometimes did not work out. The government manipulated food aid to force famine victims to go to selected settlement camps in 1984. Two Oxfam nurses protested against this, and argued that Oxfam had to withdraw from Ethiopia. Olwyn Gillespie, who had recently been sent by headquarters, told the nurses that, “...before any decision was made about the future of the programme, there would have to be discussions in...Oxford [where the headquarters of Oxfam was located]”⁹⁰⁵. The issue was referred to Oxford, and the Assistant Emergency Director of Oxfam took the case seriously. After the Assistant Emergency Director of Oxfam decided that Oxfam would not withdraw, the two nurses resigned and they were replaced by others⁹⁰⁶.

Certainly, centralisation of authority within Oxfam was much more rigid than in any other NGOs in the country. In June 1990, an evaluation was made of Oxfam’s programmes. The evaluation report compared the decision-making authority of Oxfam with that of SCF. In 1986, together, Oxfam and SCF had set up the Joint Tracking Operation. While the Save the Children Office in Ethiopia had full authority to decide the fate of the Joint Tracking Operation, Oxfam’s office in Ethiopia was not sure about the fate of the programme, which it did not have the power to decide. The report stated that:

⁹⁰² Letter from Brian Pratt to Expatriate Staffs (December 3, 1984), Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

⁹⁰³ Letter from Hugh Goyder to Negel Walsh (June 4, 1983), P. 1, Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

⁹⁰⁴ Letter from Negel Walsh to Hugh Goyder (May 25, 1983), P.1

⁹⁰⁵ “Minutes of Monitoring Meeting: Oxfam Office in Dessie” (April 6th, 1985), P. 1

⁹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, P. 1

Though both [Oxfam and SCF] recognize the JTO's strategies usefulness there is an ambivalence and uncertainty from Oxfam on its future roles in providing services and training, SCF/UK seem to have the freedom to make policies and decisions from the field office regarding JTO whereas Oxfam's decisions come from the head office. For SCF/UK the continuation of the JTO is no longer an issue and they plan to support, expand and strengthen its capacities. Indeed, it is viewed by SCF Ethiopia field office as a key contribution to support development projects, provide training in commodity and transport management and running efficient workshop⁹⁰⁷.

To summarise, centralised management remained the most salient feature of the management of NGOs in Ethiopia. This remained true even after NGOs regionalised their structures. The justification presented consistently by those who wanted to maintain the status quo was the efficiency and achievement of corporate vision through central management. The difference lay in the degree of centralisation within each NGO. In this regard, CCRDA was responsive in that it took some measures as a response to demands. This had to do with its accountability to the membership. ASE and Oxfam pursued rigidly centralised management as they were closely integrated with the structures of head offices. Cultural factors that fostered bureaucracy and hierarchy also influenced the management style of ASE.

5.2.3. Decentralisation of decision-making power and authority

There has been a shift from the centralised management to the decentralised management of NGOs in Ethiopia. Internal and external factors contributed to this. Debates within NGOs played an active role in the decentralisation of power and authority during the early phase that covered the late 1980s and early 1990s. During the next couple of years, NGOs were put under immense pressure due to a series of decentralisation measures by the government. Moreover, decentralised management by other NGOs induced international NGOs in particular to do the same. This section discusses the different phases of decentralisation that the selected NGOs carried out in Ethiopia.

5.2.3.1. The quest for decentralisation within NGOs

Decentralisation of power and authority derived from centralization during the first phase. The holders of power could no longer be the only decision-making bodies from the end of the 1980s. Power-holders reached where they should decentralise power and authority to alternative structures within their organisations. The way decentralisation came into existence differed from NGO to NGO. While members of the Executive Committee of CCRDA were willing to share authority with its Secretariat, the Management Committee of ASE was unwilling to delegate authority to other

⁹⁰⁷ Dessalegn et al, "Oxfam Country Review" (1990), P. 41

structures within the organisation such as regional offices. As a result, the delegation of authority came about through open conflict.

Towards the end of the 1980s, NGOs faced serious financial shortages. As the emergency situation had diminished, a number of donors diverted their aid to other disaster-prone countries in Africa. This led NGOs to compete for resources. NGOs like CCRDA that had easily mobilised resources now started to compete with each other. CCRDA stated that, "...it had become evident that CRDA [CCRDA] must compete with other agencies for the attention of donors...CRDA [CCRDA] will need to sell itself more aggressively to implementing members as a source of funds if it attract income from donors..."⁹⁰⁸. Through the Management Committee, the Secretariat started playing an active role in lobbying donors for financial assistance. This gave the Secretariat a degree of legitimacy to claim decision-making authority⁹⁰⁹.

Like the case of CCRDA, financial uncertainty undermined the capability of decision-makers within ASE. NOVIB and EZE used to fund ASE without seriously questioning the way the organisation was being managed. However, they came to know that centralisation had undermined the performance of the organisation. NOVIB began to argue for decentralisation. This was particularly true from 1986 on when ASE combined training with "macro" and "micro" projects. In order to assist ASE manage this programme, NOVIB contracted two advisors⁹¹⁰. The two advisors noticed that the headquarters did not sufficiently communicate with regional offices⁹¹¹. To make things worse, most of ASE's staff was concentrated at the headquarters. In a confidential memo circulated at the time, an anonymous observer revealed that:

It is surprising for a grassroots organization to have so many staff at head quarter level, and certainly at least half of them could be based in the project areas and be more effective. For example, Action Aid Ethiopia only has personnel and finance staff in Addis Ababa. Even the director lives in the central town of the project areas⁹¹².

The two advisors warned that in a situation where power and functions were concentrated at headquarters, this lack of communication put ASE at risk⁹¹³. Part of the problem was that the Executive Director failed to control the activities within the organisation. As a result, improper codes of conduct prevailed within ASE. Senior technical staff at the headquarters and some

⁹⁰⁸ CRDA, "Minutes of the Management Committee" (November 11, 1988)

⁹⁰⁹ CRDA, "Minutes of the Management Committee (December 26, 1988)

⁹¹⁰ *Ibid*, P.6

⁹¹¹ *Ibid*, P.7

⁹¹² "ASE: Some Comments" (1990), P. 2

⁹¹³ *Ibid*, P.7

regional coordinators became highly corrupt. The former Executive Director remembers that the coordinator of the Gojjam project coordination office was settled permanently in Addis Ababa, putting aside his official responsibility⁹¹⁴. He narrates also that technical personnel held senior positions in the structures for which they had neither the experience nor the educational qualifications. Moreover, office holders were tempted to embezzle money ASE had secured from donors⁹¹⁵. The Director lost control due to personal and family problems. Informants narrate that he had political problems with the military government. Moreover, his wife, who had gone to Europe to study, refused to return to Ethiopia, fearing for her life due to her Eritrean origin. As a result, he remained under strict surveillance by the government⁹¹⁶. The interplay between these factors finally led him to fly to Europe and the recently established Board of ASE came to realise that he would not come back to work⁹¹⁷.

The departure of the Director triggered competition for power within ASE. The Board confirmed the delegation that the outgoing Director had given to the head of the Finance and Administration Division⁹¹⁸. However, ASE lacked a clear personnel policy, which complicated the nomination process. To overcome the problem, the Board set out its own criteria to nominate an acting managing director. Some of the criteria were educational background, work experience, positions held at present and in the past. The Board referred also to a letter which ASE had submitted to the Ministry of Agriculture on January 21st, 1977 in which it stated list of criteria to appoint an assistant executive director. Surprisingly, the criteria reflected neither the status of ASE as it stood then nor were they measurable. The letter stated that for someone to be an assistant executive director, he/she should have experience in pedagogical materials preparation and a thorough idea of distance education. S/he should also have very good knowledge of the Ethiopian rural population, the ability to manage the whole organisation, and knowledge of ASE⁹¹⁹.

The Board studied the profiles of six members of the Management Committee⁹²⁰. Based on the criteria set, and due to his long experience in deputising, the Board appointed *Ato* Wold Gebreal to be the acting Executive Director of ASE. Those who were also nominated, as well as the staff who

⁹¹⁴ Informant, *Ato* Getachew Worku

⁹¹⁵ *Ibid*

⁹¹⁶ Informants: *Ato* Getachew Worku and *Ato* Alemu Gebrewold

⁹¹⁷ Letter from the Board of ASE to INADES-Formation (October 20, 1990), Archive of ASE in Addis Ababa

⁹¹⁸ *Ibid*

⁹¹⁹ *Ibid*

⁹²⁰ "Minutes of Extra-ordinary Meetings of ASE Board" (December 21, 1990)

stood behind those nominees, challenged the decision. They argued that *Ato Wold Gebreal* did not have the educational qualifications. They accused him also of corruption, authoritarianism and inefficiency. The Board of Director itself was accused of favouring *Ato Wold Gebreal*. They pointed to the friendship which the chairman of the Board had with *Ato Wold Gebreal*⁹²¹. The Board of Directors defended its decision. With regard to *Ato Wold Gebreal*'s education status, the Board concluded that his postgraduate degree in development studies qualified him to lead the organisation⁹²². The Board dismissed also the accusation that the acting managing director was corrupt, authoritarian and inefficient. The Board insisted that the accusations were, "...reflections of personal advantages and vested interests"⁹²³.

The Board realised that personal greed and desire for power motivated senior staff. In an assessment it made, the Board stated that, "...there is a struggle for power within ASE between members of the Management Committee"⁹²⁴. The Board noted that the ultimate reason behind the competition within ASE had to do with the centralisation of power for quite a long time in the hands of the ex-Executive Director. Concerning this, the Board stated that:

All management duties, i.e. directing, executing, administrating and controlling were entrusted solely to the Ex-managing director for quite a long time and with little delegation of responsibilities. Unfortunately this state of affairs has left a legacy of disruption in the management and the bad image partly reflected by the organization's current administrative and managerial activities. Instead of playing an exemplary role in standing up to what has been expected of him in meeting his duties and responsibilities, the ex-managing director has also taken observatory role while rules and regulations were violated in ASE⁹²⁵.

The employees of ASE opposed senior members of the Management Committee. This was because senior members of the Management Committee marginalised employees at the lower level. Asked why they did not like to consult staff at the lower level with regard to the affairs of ASE, two of the senior staff of ASE stated that, "...they would come up with silly suggestions"⁹²⁶. As a response, employees, many of which were at the lower level of the hierarchy within ASE, set up a Complaints Enquiry Committee that nominated its own candidates⁹²⁷.

⁹²¹ "ASE: Some...", P. 2

⁹²² "Summary Minutes of Extra-Ordinary Meeting of Board of Directors Pertaining the Petition of ASE's Workers Complaints Enquiry Committee against the Acting Managing Director" (February 4, 1992), P. 3

⁹²³ *Ibid*, P.3

⁹²⁴ *Ibid*, P.1

⁹²⁵ *Ibid*, P.2

⁹²⁶ "ASE: Some ...", P. 1

⁹²⁷ *Ibid*, P. 3

In the midst of the arguments within ASE (between the Board of Directors, senior management staff and employees) and CCRDA (between the Secretariat and the Executive Committee), a third actor emerged. The general membership of CCRDA supported the Secretariat and donors supported the employees of ASE. A consensus was reached within CCRDA and ASE that changes were to be introduced with regard to the distribution of power and authority. The next issue was the responsibility for the process of change. While it was easily decided within CCRDA, the issue with regard to the responsibility of the restructuring process within ASE remained problematic. The Secretariat was entrusted to study the decision-making process within CCRDA and submit a proposal. Within ASE, employees of ASE at the lower level were opposed to the role of members of the Management Committee in the process of change. The employees were concerned that they may not be consulted. Interviewed about their opinions, some of the staff at lower levels said that they would, "...only be able to see the organogram once it has been devised by the management team alone"⁹²⁸. Moreover, they believed that members of the Management Committee would work out the organogram in a way that would not challenge their own power. This was because the Management Committee was not prepared to lose power in any way. One of ASE's staff at the lower level was asked about this and his response was shocking. He commented, "It [the Management Committee] is like the Dergue [*Derg*, i.e. the military government]. How could you expect them to reform themselves, and lose power"⁹²⁹. Aware of the mistrust, and with a view to building up the confidence of the staff and the Management Committee, the Board promised that regular consultative meetings would be held⁹³⁰. Moreover, it took over the recruitment of the new Executive Director as well as restructuring of ASE⁹³¹. The Board contracted a consulting firm called Management Consultancy International (MCI) that studied how best to restructure ASE⁹³². Based on their findings, MIC produced an ASE Finance and Accounting Procedure Manual, a Cost Accounting Manual, a Material Management Manual, a Computer Operation System Manual and so on⁹³³.

This study by the consultant showed that the proposed restructuring within ASE was much more profound than the change proposed within CCRDA. The Secretariat of CCRDA focused on the

⁹²⁸ *Ibid*, P. 1

⁹²⁹ *Ibid*, P. 1

⁹³⁰ "Minutes of Extra-ordinary Meeting of ASE's Board of Directors" (August 1, 1992), P. 3

⁹³¹ "Minutes of ASE's Board of Directors Meeting" (August 20th, 1992), P. 3

⁹³² "Minutes of the Second Ordinary General Assembly of ASE" (November 28, 1992), P. 4

⁹³³ Letter from Ato Getachew Worku: Executive Director of ASE to Management Consultancy International (November 18, 1992)

decision-making process with regard to funds within CCRDA. The Secretariat proposed that a committee would be set up at three of CCRDA's departments. The Development Secretariat Committee would decide on development projects that cost up to Eth \$30,000. The Rehabilitation Secretariat would decide on requests for the purchase, supply and transport of seeds, tools and oxen up to Eth \$30,000 and The Material Aid and Relief Secretariat would allocate supplies from the CCRDA store and approve funds for the purchase and transport of supplies up to Eth \$30,000,⁹³⁴ while the Executive Committee would review and decide on all requests that cost over Eth \$30,000⁹³⁵. The Executive Committee accepted the proposal⁹³⁶. As a result of inflation, the amount of money on which those decision-making bodies could decide was increased in 1993. Thus, thereafter the three committees set up under the Secretariat could then decide up to Eth \$75, 000, while the Executive Committee could decide on projects that cost up to Eth \$200,000⁹³⁷.

The institution of decision-making on funds at various levels of the kind that CCRDA carried out was just an aspect of restructuring at ASE. In line with the recommendations of the restructuring study, regional coordination offices evolved into regional management offices with authority to manage their budgets⁹³⁸. However, the restructuring process was not solely to allow regional offices to manage their budgets; it created structures that could accommodate a wide range of functions at the regional level. The restructuring study pointed out that the organisational structure that had previously persisted was top-heavy, and the personnel distribution was to the disadvantage of the regional offices⁹³⁹. Moreover, the structures within the organisation did not support the orientation that ASE had adopted since the mid-1980s. For instance, though the organisation was engaged in project implementation, the Teaching Material Development and Production Unit (TMDPU) still featured prominently at the core of the organisation. It included the Women's Education Section, Agricultural Section, Audio-Visual and Printing Section⁹⁴⁰. The TMDPU became an obstacle to developing region-specific programmes⁹⁴¹.

⁹³⁴ CRDA, "Minutes of the Executive Committee" (January 12th, 1989)

⁹³⁵ *Ibid*

⁹³⁶ CRDA, "Minutes of the Executive Committee" (March 10th, 1991)

⁹³⁷ CRDA, "Minutes of the Executive Committee" (February 23th, 1993)

⁹³⁸ ASE, "1993 Annual Report", P. 2

⁹³⁹ ASE, "Integrated Rural Development Programme, 1993-1995: Evaluation Report" (Addis Ababa, September 1995), P. 86

⁹⁴⁰ ASE, "1993 Annual Report", P. 2

⁹⁴¹ *Ibid*, P.2

The basic change amounted to strengthening regional offices, with new posts created for decentralisation purposes, and a reduced number of staff at the headquarters. At the head office, the position of Programme Coordinator was created and five senior experts with different fields of specialisation were assigned under the Programme Coordinator⁹⁴². The core function of regional offices was put under the Technical Support and Extension Division, which coordinated the Forestry, Soil and Water Conservation Section, Water Supply Section and the Training and Extension Service Section⁹⁴³.

The restructuring study proposed new positions, personnel requirements, and placements, and recruitment⁹⁴⁴. The staff newly assigned to the regions argued that their placement in the regions would affect their socio-cultural lives. A committee chaired by the new Director responded that placement was done based on the qualifications and work experiences of staff, and that the process was meant to satisfy the interests of ASE⁹⁴⁵. A plea made by a finance officer who had worked in the head office to the Committee, and the response he got, shows the tension between the perspective of employees and the leadership of ASE. He protested against the socio-cultural consequences of being placed in Bale management office. The committee responded that:

በዝውውሩ ምክንያት በግል ኑሮዎ ላይ ችግር የሚያስከትልብዎ መሆኑን ገልጸው ያመለከቱ ቢሆንም፤ አዲሱ ተጠንቶ በቀረበው መዋቅር መሰረት ባለዎት የትምህርት ደረጃና ልምድ ሊመጥኑ በሚችሉበት የስራ መደብ ላይ የተመደቡ በመሆኑ ከዚህ ውጭ የተለየ አማራጭ ባለመኖሩ ያቀረቡትን ጥያቄ ኮሚቴው ያልተቀበለው ስለሆነ በአስቸኳይ ወደ ምድብ የስራ ቦታዎ እንዲሄዱና በአዲሱ ስራዎ ላይ ተገኝተው ሪፖርት እንዲያደርጉ አስታውቃለሁ።

Though you applied that the transfer would cause problem on your personal life, the Committee does not accept the request for the placement is made according to the study carried out on the new structure and thus I notify you to go to the new job and report⁹⁴⁶

Regardless of the staff turnover that resulted from the new placements, the restructuring process increased the staff profile of regional management offices and decreased the size of the head office staff. Prior to the restructuring process, two thirds of the staff (60 out of 91) had worked at the head office. After the restructuring, only 30 staff remained at the head office and the remaining 61 staff members were placed in regional management offices⁹⁴⁷.

To summarise, decentralisation of power and authority in the late 1980s and early 1990s was mainly an internal process, influenced to a certain extent by external factors such as financial availability.

⁹⁴² ASE, "Integrated Rural..."P. 87

⁹⁴³ *Ibid*, P. 89

⁹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, P.2

⁹⁴⁵ Negussie Hailu, "NGO Management...", P. 45

⁹⁴⁶ Letter from Ato Getachew Worku to Ato Alemayehu Afework (October 21, 1993), Archive of ASE in Addis Ababa

⁹⁴⁷ ASE, "Annual Report, 1994" (Addis Ababa, February 1995), P. 41

5.2.3.1. The government's regional policy and NGO decentralisation

In the 1990s, NGOs adopted the strategy of “participatory development“. This was partly in response to the altered political context, as for instance, the institutional environment in which NGOs operated saw major change in the 1990s. During the military period, NGOs had been coordinated centrally by the RRC in Addis Ababa⁹⁴⁸. The RRC was now decentralised and regional Relief and Rehabilitation Bureaus were empowered to coordinate NGOs in their respective areas. The decentralisation of the RRC was an integral part of the overall devolution of administration and line bureau functions⁹⁴⁹. NGOs were to be coordinated by regional Relief and Rehabilitation, and other line Bureaus at regional levels, and they started signing project agreements with these regional organisations⁹⁵⁰.

The decentralisation process was carried forward in the early 2000s. In 2001 the government began the decentralisation of power and functions to districts. The main goal of decentralisation at this time was to bring development efforts closer to the local community and to make service delivery more efficient and effective. Districts became the focal point of development planning and programme implementation. Each prepared and controlled its own budget, formulated its own plan based on the community's needs and managed its own programme⁹⁵¹.

In order to adjust to this institutional change, NGOs started to strengthen their regional offices. Even those NGOs that had pursued centralised management like Oxfam started to change the status of their regional offices. In August 1995, the Resident Representative of Oxfam pointed out that one of the changes Oxfam would consider had, “...to do with the government policy of regionalisation, which is now embodied in the Constitution”⁹⁵². Moreover, Oxfam started to evaluate its own management and its effect on the performance of regional offices. The Resident Representative pointed out that, “In Ethiopia support to POs [project offices] has been poor in the past with very little training and or institutional guidance”⁹⁵³. Different views emerged as to how to change the situation. Senior officers in Oxford were of the opinion that training could boost the

⁹⁴⁸ “Tour of the Ogaden: 14th-21st, April, 1975” (April 1975), P.2

⁹⁴⁹ ASE, “Integrated Rural...”, P. 10

⁹⁵⁰ *Ibid*, P. 10

⁹⁵¹ Dessalegn Rahmato, “The Voluntary Sector in Ethiopia: Challenges and Prospects” in Taye Assefa and Bahru Zewde (eds), *Civil Society at the Crossroads: Challenges and Prospects in Ethiopia* (Forum for Social Studies, Addis Ababa, 2008), P. 103

⁹⁵² Chris Mason, “Ethiopia: Annual Report 1994/95” (August 1995), P.1

⁹⁵³ Letter from Harriet Dodd to Cathy Taylor (May 25, 1996), P.1, Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

capacity of regional offices, and proposed new posts to be opened up in Oxford. However, Oxfam's officials in Ethiopia objected to the proposal. In a letter addressed to the head office, the Resident Representative stated that the creation of new posts in Oxford was insensitive, and pointed out that "The problem has arisen because of poor management of POs [project offices] by CRs [country representatives]"⁹⁵⁴.

In order to reduce the burden on the staff of its head office in Addis Ababa, Oxfam started to upgrade the status of regional offices. However, Oxfam pursued a cautious approach. Though they were involved in project implementation, regional offices had never yet taken financial as well as managerial responsibility. Oxfam, thus, saw the need to start consolidation of regional offices as a pilot project. Due to its historical connection with Wollo, Oxfam started to upgrade its office in Dessie to the North and North East Regional Coordination Office, responsible for overseeing Oxfam's programmes in Wollo, Tigray and Afar, where 70% of its investment was located. The office was delegated to accomplish two main duties. Firstly, it was supposed to manage Oxfam's multi-sector programme in the Delanta district. Secondly, the office was to coordinate the Relief Society of Tigray, Farm Africa in Tigray and the Afar Relief Association in Afar, which had received financial support from Oxfam. The office also took on responsibility to identify partner NGOs that could run projects with financial support from Oxfam. To that end, the Coordination Office developed into a Programme Office, capable of managing its own affairs including overseeing its own employees and managing its own budget. The office demonstrated in practice that it could manage its own affairs, including proper management of finances. A consultant wrote that, "The Dessie office is efficient in financial management"⁹⁵⁵. Senior staff of Oxfam went along with this assessment. One senior officer pointed out that the assessment was true especially, "...in handling the day to day transactions and in maintaining the routine posting of transactions"⁹⁵⁶. However, he pointed out also that there were gaps in the areas of analysing, reconciling and producing financial reports that met the donor requirement in time⁹⁵⁷.

Despite the apparent problems in relation to financial management, Oxfam's decision to devolve some responsibilities to its regional office was a response to the changing national political context.

⁹⁵⁴ *Ibid*, P. 1

⁹⁵⁵ John Rowley, "A Review of the Post of Regional Programme Coordinator in Dessie: Final Version" (January 1998), P. 1

⁹⁵⁶ "Memorandum" from Demmelash Getachew to John Rowley (December 18, 1998), P.1

⁹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, P.1

Other NGOs operating in the country responded to this change as well. CCRDA was one of these NGOs. The fact that the relief operation had diminished significantly caused the Secretariat to argue that the Executive Committee should focus on policy matters with a view to pushing the organisation towards long-term development. Thus, by the end of 1991 the Committee decided that, "...at least one Executive Committee meeting every three months be devoted to discuss policy issues"⁹⁵⁸. The government introduced a number of legislations to influence NGOs to reduce their relief orientation, which called for serious discussion about policy matters. Also, CCRDA had previously negotiated with the RRC and other line ministries in Addis Ababa. When the government decentralised its own offices, CCRDA found itself in a very critical situation. Having no regional offices, CCRDA found it difficult to fulfill its responsibility⁹⁵⁹. Thus, in November 1995, the Committee agreed that all meetings be divided into two parts: part one dealing with minutes and other routine matters while part two would deal with policy issues⁹⁶⁰. In a meeting held on September 17th, 1996, the Committee discussed the future direction of the organisation for the first time, and the members were satisfied with the discussion. The minutes of that particular meeting stated that "The committee appreciated today's meeting since it had time to discuss some policy issues"⁹⁶¹.

The Secretariat and the entire membership argued that the Executive Committee had to make policy deliberations its sole responsibility, leaving decision-making on financial matters to the Secretariat. A strategic planning exercise created a series of forums where this argument was put forward. Asked for their opinions, members pointed out that, "...the Executive Committee...involved itself on matters that could be handled by the Secretariat"⁹⁶².

The Executive Committee accepted these demands. A new Memorandum of Association was drafted that delineated a clear line of authority between the Executive Committee and the Secretariat. The Executive Committee came to have the authority to recommend policy issues to the General Membership, to direct and follow up the directions of the Secretariat in the overall management of the organisation and to recommend to the general membership full and associate

⁹⁵⁸ CRDA, "Minutes of the Executive Committee" (December 17th, 1991)

⁹⁵⁹ CRDA, "Minutes of the Executive Committee" (December 10th, 1996)

⁹⁶⁰ CRDA, "Minutes of the Executive Committee" (November 14th, 1995)

⁹⁶¹ CRDA, "Minutes of the Executive Committee" (September 17th, 1996)

⁹⁶² CRDA, "Strategic Plan" (Addis Ababa, December 1997), P. 13

membership of applicants⁹⁶³. The Secretariat emerged as a structure that had the authority to decide on various issues. The Secretariat was now authorised to, "...initiate policy dialogue on development issues relating to socio-economic issues at national and regional level..."⁹⁶⁴. Moreover, the Secretariat had the mandate to issues related to funding and material assistance in accordance with the appropriate guidelines⁹⁶⁵. Finally, the Executive Committee could no longer appoint the Executive Director who would be appointed by the General Assembly⁹⁶⁶.

5.2.3.2. Participatory development and NGOs decentralisation

Throughout the 1990s, concepts like "participation" and "partnership" gained wider acceptance among NGOs. Though they claimed to carry out "participatory" development, mobilisation of project participants for action had remained limited. There were a number of reasons for this. Firstly, NGOs' attempts to have free access to project participants were blocked by government officials. NGOs were, thus, bound to depend on the goodwill of local officials. Local officials who expected large-scale investment argued that mobilising the people was difficult because, "...there is not much done to attract residents"⁹⁶⁷. Secondly, project participants believed that NGOs could solve all their problems. The problem was serious in areas where food was distributed for free. An official of ASE who saw the situation in Wollaita advised his colleagues that, "We should encourage people to depend on themselves rather than external bodies"⁹⁶⁸.

Regime change in May 1991 built up the confidence of NGOs that they could manage "participatory development". Soon after the regime change, senior staff at Oxfam who anticipated governmental policy change to follow came to an agreement that, "Change in government policy ought to assist us to deal with developing a truly participatory approach with communities"⁹⁶⁹.

An important concept that was linked with "participatory development" was "partnership". Oxfam believed that "participatory development" could move forward when Oxfam responded, "...to local initiatives, rather than ourselves [Oxfam] to initiate responses"⁹⁷⁰. The kind of enthusiasm

⁹⁶³ CRDA, "Minutes of the Executive Committee" (June 9, 1998); "Memorandum of Association of the Christian Relief and Development Association" (August 1998)

⁹⁶⁴ CRDA, "Minutes of the Executive Committee" (June 9, 1998)

⁹⁶⁵ *Ibid*

⁹⁶⁶ "Memorandum of Association of the Christian Relief and Development Association, Article 11" (August 1998)

⁹⁶⁷ "Meeting with Kebelle Executive Committee" (July 20, 1988), P. 2

⁹⁶⁸ *Ibid*, P. 4

⁹⁶⁹ "Oxfam Ethiopia Senior Staff Meeting" (October 29th, 1991), P. 1

⁹⁷⁰ *Ibid*, P. 1

that developed within Oxfam was also apparent among those NGOs that had operated under the military regime. Soon after the collapse of that regime, ASE, which had remained under the influence of the Ministry of Agriculture, reaffirmed that the participation of project participants would be enhanced in the new political environment so that development could be sustained⁹⁷¹.

Though “participation” and “partnership” gained wide acceptance, their implementation by NGOs remained difficult. NGOs found out that changes in management that they had carried out were inadequate to move “participation” and “partnership” forward. For instance, ASE had decentralised some decision-making authorities and assigned a number of employees to regional management offices. However, a lack of capacity at the regional level challenged the decentralised process. A year after the decentralisation was carried out, reports came out that show that, “...regional offices don’t have full-fledged bookkeeping and they can’t properly follow their financial status against the annual budget”⁹⁷². ASE was thus engaged in building the capacity of regional offices by offering educational opportunities to employees; financing the higher education of some of its employees, some in institutions in Ethiopia, some sent abroad to pursue their MA and PhD⁹⁷³.

In the meantime, however, ASE realised that professionalisation could create a manner of technical orientation that to some extent undermined “participatory development”. ASE had sufficient experience that staff orientation towards professionalism could not help project participants to use their potential to change their socio-economic status. In a report produced in 1975, ASE expressed its concern about the technical orientation of its field workers. Thus, it suggested its field workers change their orientation. It stated that:

Agri-Service has repeatedly detected a tendency to teach, not to animate. And it believes that rural populations should be animated rather than taught or handled. In other words, real development comes when the people themselves become aware of their problems, seek ways themselves (of course, sometimes they need information) of overcoming them, decide on a course of action and carry it out. Once the population is on the move, spirit of development has come to life⁹⁷⁴

The organisation identified the same tendency towards the end of the 1990s. It argued that social and cultural considerations are equally essential ingredients for the smooth implementation of “people-centred” and “participatory” rural development programmes as professionalism⁹⁷⁵. The organisation thus considered how to reconcile professionalism with socio-cultural factors, toward

⁹⁷¹ “A Brief Note on Agri-Service Ethiopia” (1992), P.2

⁹⁷² ASE, “Integrated Rural...”, P. 90

⁹⁷³ Informants, *Ato Getachew Worku* and *Ato Amanueal Assefa*

⁹⁷⁴ ASE, “Situational...”, PP.21-22

⁹⁷⁵ Negussie Hailu, “NGO Management...”, P. 45

delegating much more power and authority to regional management offices so that they would run “participatory development”⁹⁷⁶.

Many other NGOs also changed their management traditions to carry out “participatory development”. The dilemma between “participatory development” and central management had been debated within Oxfam since the early 1990s⁹⁷⁷. Moreover, Oxfam, even more than national NGOs like ASE, was influenced by the global trend towards the decentralisation of power. The strategic review that gave guidance to the decentralisation of Oxfam described this trend as well as its implying its desired influence on Oxfam in the following way:

At a time when many organizations are promoting flattened hierarchy and multi-disciplinary teams to achieve the same ends, Oxfam's extensive hierarchy and cumbersome vertical reporting lines consume valuable management time and discourage cross- departmental divisional collaboration, and individual and team initiative⁹⁷⁸

Both Oxfam and ASE went through the decentralisation processes in a way that suited their situations. A comparison shows that ASE was ready to decentralise much more power and authority than Oxfam. ASE appraised the decentralisation that it had done in the early 1990s and came up with the conclusion that, “As opposed to the initial intention of decentralization...the organizational structure has given the head quarter...the task of providing technical back up and other general support services to the RPOs [Regional Programme Offices]”⁹⁷⁹. As a result, regional management offices depended on the Programme Coordination and Support Service department at the headquarters in Addis Ababa for administrative and technical support⁹⁸⁰. To readdress the problem, ASE dissolved the Programmes’ Coordination Department that had centralised its annual programme, budget and technical matters. Now it was replaced by one that became responsible only for programme formulation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes, annual planning and budgeting, and the preparation of periodic reports⁹⁸¹. This Community Training, Extension and Education Department came to manage the core activity of ASE, and took over some responsibility from the former Programmes Coordination Unit⁹⁸². Moreover, the division of power and functions between the headquarters and regional management offices based at the district level was also carried out. The core functions of the headquarters included policy and strategy development;

⁹⁷⁶ *Ibid*, P. 45

⁹⁷⁷ Caroline Vivienne Blackler, “Organizational Levels and Organizational Characteristics: Oxfam GB and the Disability Movement in Uganda” (PhD Dissertation, Political Science, 2008), P. 175

⁹⁷⁸ “Setting Course...”, P. 150

⁹⁷⁹ ASE, “Strategic Plan for 2000-2005” (February 2000), P. 36

⁹⁸⁰ *Ibid*, P.36

⁹⁸¹ ASE, “Organizational Structure and Staffing Requirements Studies of ASE” (Addis Ababa, March 2008), P. 1

⁹⁸² *Ibid*, P.2

programme formulation, ongoing and terminal evaluation; research and networking; fundraising and administration; the signing of project agreements with governmental organisations; capacity-building of programme management offices, and provision of printing services. Other functions included supporting project offices in conducting and analysing baseline surveys; the recruitment of project managers and those accountable to project managers; the provision of operational guidelines, internal and external auditing functions and fund raising⁹⁸³. The programme offices would manage finances (budget administration, maintaining accounts, audit preparation). In addition, they would have the following functions:

- ✓ Personnel recruitment except the programme manager and those accountable to the Programme manager;
- ✓ Prepare project proposals within the framework of the programme objectives under implementation as may be deemed necessary;
- ✓ Whenever necessary, revise the programme under implementation to fit with the changing situation;
- ✓ Conduct and analyze baseline survey;
- ✓ Networking at regional, zonal and district levels and
- ✓ Report preparation and submission to head quarters, governmental organizations and donors. Report to donors would be sent through the head office⁹⁸⁴.

Like ASE, Oxfam's head office in Oxford conducted a series of reviews in the mid and late 1990s. The aim was to bring a selection of decision-making powers closer to the site of programme implementation⁹⁸⁵. These new powers were considered to enable lower-level staff to play a more active role in defining programmes and projects within the policy framework that Oxfam called Strategic Change Objectives (SCOs)⁹⁸⁶. The new management structure was drawn up in such a way that the country offices came under the bureaucratic control of regional offices, which, in turn, would be accountable to Oxfam's office in Oxford⁹⁸⁷. To that end, Oxfam divided the areas in which it operated into eleven regional management centres. The Horn of Africa Regional Center, with its seat in Addis Ababa, came to be a sub-region of the Horn, Eastern and Central Africa Region with its seat in Kenya. Like any regional office, the Horn, Eastern and Central Africa Region came to have a strategic role in the international programme, supporting regional programmes designed to maximise the learning and impact of locally-based initiatives⁹⁸⁸. Regional management centres, on the other hand, would take corporate responsibilities including but not limited to:

⁹⁸³ ASE, "Strategic...", p. 70

⁹⁸⁴ ASE, "Strategic Plan...", p. 70; Negussie Hailu, *NGO Management...*, P. 45

⁹⁸⁵ Caroline Vivienne Blackler, "Organizational ...", P. 175

⁹⁸⁶ *Ibid*, P. 174

⁹⁸⁷ *Ibid*, P. 175

⁹⁸⁸ *Ibid*, P. 151

- ✓ Communicating Oxfam's corporate image and message, while establishing a distinctive regional profile
- ✓ Meeting agreed targets with the centre in key areas, such as programme development, strategic planning, financial management, communications, fund-raising etc.
- ✓ Operating cost-effectively against central benchmark⁹⁸⁹

The role of the centre became more focused and reduced, with the following tasks:

- ✓ to set strategic directions and allocate resources;
- ✓ to ensure quality through professional support and supervision;
- ✓ to coordinate resource-raising;
- ✓ to promote advocacy in the developed world;
- ✓ to coordinate responses to emergencies;
- ✓ to develop policy⁹⁹⁰

The rationale for division of power was presented in two ways, reflecting concerns about grassroots participation on the one hand and corporate management on the other. For instance, Oxfam's chair, Joel Joffa, portrayed the change in 2000/2001 as follows: "...by managing the programme this way, our input will be more accountable at the local level, and more able to respond to national and regional demands". The 2003 Oxfam's Partnership Programme Agreement with DFID emphasised that the new management aimed at, "...creating regional coordination, identity and consistency in programme delivery, elements which required a degree of top down control to achieve"⁹⁹¹. This last intention was reiterated by the 1998 strategic review of Oxfam. The Strategic review document stated, "This is not a call for another restructuring of Oxfam. The review is keenly aware that large scale reorganizations don't in themselves bring about the new ways of working or changed behaviour"⁹⁹².

The Horn of Africa sub-regional office came to have effective management over Oxfam's programme in Ethiopia. This had to do with inter-state and intra-state conflict in the region. Earlier, the Horn of Africa sub-regional office had held the mandate over the management of programmes in Ethiopia, Somalia, Eritrea, Sudan, and Djibouti. Addis Ababa was chosen to serve as the seat of this sub-regional office. Oxfam's Africa Director told the Ethiopian Ministry of Justice that, "Addis Ababa is best suited as the location for the regional office to serve Oxfam's Horn of Africa programme"⁹⁹³. However, the conflict going on in and between countries in the Horn of Africa

⁹⁸⁹ *Ibid*, P. 151

⁹⁹⁰ *Ibid*, P. 151-152

⁹⁹¹ *Ibid*, PP. 175-176

⁹⁹² "Setting Course...", P. 150

⁹⁹³ Letter from Brendan Gormley to Ato Woredewolde Wolde (February 1, 1998), Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

made the free movement of Oxfam's employees difficult⁹⁹⁴. As a result, the Horn of Africa office was concerned basically with Oxfam's programme in Ethiopia and it remained under the umbrella of Oxfam's Horn, Eastern and Central Africa regional office with its head quarters in Kenya.

Like any of its programme offices, Oxfam's programme office in Ethiopia came to have a great deal of power and authority. However, it exercised this power and authority in the framework of the Strategic Change Objectives (SCOs) set by Oxfam's office in Oxford. These Strategic Change Objectives aimed to promote the right to a sustainable livelihood, the right to health and education, right to life and security and right to say⁹⁹⁵. In the framework of these objectives, a governing structure was authorised to decide over policy. It has also been authorised to administer budget and its employees. The governing structure was composed of the Country Programme Manager and two of his deputies, as well as senior staff heading the three departments, namely long-term development, humanitarian intervention, and policy and advocacy. Programme implementation was the responsibility of the staff within Oxfam. However, staff were encouraged to engage with the governing structure. Concerning this, a document stated that, "The staff structure should play a positive role in policy and decision by the governing structure"⁹⁹⁶. The governing structure always advised the staff to make use of all the available opportunities to gather and process information in order to engage with the governing structure on policy and strategic issues⁹⁹⁷. To that end, the organisation created a number of forums where the staff and other stakeholders aired their views. To begin with, the staff at different levels started to participate in monthly management meetings and offered their views on issues they thought were important. Interviewed about this, the staff expressed that the monthly meeting assisted them to develop a sense of belonging at Oxfam⁹⁹⁸. Moreover, in 1998 Oxfam launched an annual conference in which a number of partner organisations, notably national NGOs funded by Oxfam; governmental organisations, donors and Oxfam itself participated. Issues of common concern were discussed and the governing structure within Oxfam in Addis Ababa passed decisions on important issues⁹⁹⁹.

⁹⁹⁴ "Oxfam GB, Horn of Africa: Regional Annual Report to SMT, 1998-1999" (nd), P. 1

⁹⁹⁵ *Ibid*, PP.4-6

⁹⁹⁶ "Oxfam GB Ethiopia Programme", *Proceedings of the Second Staff Conference* (June 13-16, 2004), P. 12

⁹⁹⁷ *Ibid*, P.1

⁹⁹⁸ *Ibid*, P. 9

⁹⁹⁹ Kuawab Business Consultants, "Oxfam GB, Ethiopia: Stakeholders Survey 2001/2002-In-Country Programme Research" (Addis Ababa, February 2002), P. 28

The decentralisation of Oxfam gave impetus to the delegation of power and authority to regional offices. Oxfam upgraded its four offices in the regions from project offices to Programme Coordination Offices. Thus, there were Programme Coordination Offices in Dire Dawa (coordinating programmes in eastern Hararghe), Jijiga (Somali), and Soddo (coordinating southern programmes). These offices could decide programme components in line with Oxfam's Strategic Change Objectives according to the budget allocated to them. They were also authorised to manage their internal affairs including finances¹⁰⁰⁰. In addition to their own operational programmes, these offices could oversee and assist the national NGOs that Oxfam funded. These national NGOs expressed their appreciation of Oxfam's flexibility. One of the studies conducted based on the views of the representatives of 12 national NGOs funded by Oxfam states that, "Oxfam is flexible in its budget utilization allowing partners to shift budget from one budget line item to the other when the need arises"¹⁰⁰¹.

5.3. Challenges to decentralised management

Though well-intentioned, the decentralisation process suffered from serious shortcomings. Firstly, though a big structure was put in place, there were limited staff with limited skill at the district levels¹⁰⁰². NGO staff were thus forced to get directly involved in project implementation, as opposed to the original plan of their providing technical back-up, and building the capacity of the staff of partner governmental organisations¹⁰⁰³. Moreover, regional programme offices of NGOs often found it difficult to carry out the advocacy work that had been decentralised to districts. An evaluation report shows that, "It is hard to imagine a situation where the relations between an NGO and regional government would be robust to allow criticism of national policies"¹⁰⁰⁴. This created a situation whereby NGOs centralised activities related to policy advocacy¹⁰⁰⁵. The second factor that challenged regional management offices is that they were unable to purchase the materials they needed to run their programmes as well as their organisations, because it was difficult to find items that met the required specifications. As a result, they delegated their head office to purchase what they needed from Addis Ababa¹⁰⁰⁶. The head offices set up Procurement Committees¹⁰⁰⁷. However,

¹⁰⁰⁰ Informant, *Ato Mesfin Tadesse*

¹⁰⁰¹ *Ibid*, P. 13

¹⁰⁰² Oxfam, "Oxfam GB Ethiopia Programme: Annual Activity Report for the Year Ending April 30th, 2003" (Addis Ababa, May 2003), P. 10

¹⁰⁰³ *Ibid*, P. 10

¹⁰⁰⁴ John Rowley, "A Review...", P. 8

¹⁰⁰⁵ *Ibid*, P. 8

¹⁰⁰⁶ Informant, *Ato Abeyu*

¹⁰⁰⁷ Informant, *Ato Abeyu*;

the procurement process that involved finance officers was complex and triggered frustration.

Concerning Oxfam's procurement system, an observer commented that:

An aspect of the Addis office is that internal procedures appear to have different departments regulating each other-thus instead of the Logistic department being expected to carry out its own monitoring by checking of ordering procurements etc., this is carried out by the committee system and checks by finance. It seems unnecessary to establish such a system for a day to day operational monitoring unless it turns out that each department actually is functioning as a corrupt cabal of mutual self-interest that is!¹⁰⁰⁸

5.4. Conclusion

A historical approach is of great relevance for understanding the management traditions within NGOs. It shows the changes NGOs have undergone in the ways they have managed their programmes. By looking at the examples of these three NGOs in Ethiopia, this chapter has explored the management systems of NGOs, and changes to them. The chapter has argued that both centralisation and decentralisation have existed within NGOs, however, the centralisation of NGOs has remained a bone of contention. NGOs pursued rigidly centralised management systems for more than two thirds of their existence in Ethiopia. A group of individuals holding key positions within the structures of NGOs used to "make and break things". Centralisation of power was initially preferred for the realisation of corporate vision as well as to carry out NGOs activities more efficiently. It was apparent also that NGOs leaders were influenced by organizational culture in Ethiopia that fostered hierarchy and bureaucracy. However, individuals within the NGOs who did not have real power eventually sought redistribution of power and authority. Although it was occasionally expressed, for some time, the demand for decentralisation remained latent within a number of NGOs such as ASE and Oxfam, whereas the centralisation of decision-making had been resisted by the general membership of CCRDA from the beginning. The Executive Committee was responsive to this demand. This was because the Executive Committee was accountable to the General Assembly. Thus, CCRDA was the first to start the decentralisation process, especially from the end of 1980s. The Management Committee of ASE turned down repeated demands for decentralisation. The sudden departure of the Executive Director brought the conflict into the open. The decentralisation that followed was a response to this conflict. It could thus be argued that decentralisation at the first phase was the result of internal dynamics.

Decentralisation was a continuous process. From the mid-1990s to the early 2000s, the government introduced a number of policies that affected NGOs. Moreover, it decentralised the RRC and other

¹⁰⁰⁸ Tony Taylor, "Logistic Assessment Report and Suggestions of Emergency Scale up: 2003" (February 3, 2003), P. 2

line ministries. This had profound impact on the management tradition of NGOs. NGOs such as CCRDA demarcated clear lines of authority between the Executive Committee, the Secretariat and the General Assembly. NGOs that had worked with governmental organisations in Addis Ababa were now to work with regionally-based RRC and technical governmental organisations. To that end, they consolidated the power and authority of regional offices.

In spite of a great deal of commitment, the decentralisation process suffered from serious shortcomings. The availability of human and material resources as well as the difficulty involved in certain activities such as advocacy at the district level created a situation whereby regional offices were bound to delegate some power and authority to their headquarters. The headquarters themselves were sometimes inefficient, especially with regard to recruitment of the staff, as well as the purchase of materials required in the regions.

Chapter Six

The impact of NGOs in Ethiopia

6.1. Introduction

The contribution of NGOs in Ethiopia is a contested subject. NGOs contend that they have supported the effort against poverty. NGOs support their argument by citing the fact that they mobilise 20% of the total foreign aid Ethiopia gets per year¹⁰⁰⁹. The figure they cite has been confirmed by the National Bank of Ethiopia, which has also confirmed that the total earnings NGOs attract are higher than the country's total earnings from the export of coffee, Ethiopia's largest exportable item. In 2006/07, for instance, fund transfers to NGOs were USD \$537.4 million while coffee earnings were USD \$424.2 million¹⁰¹⁰.

While their resource mobilisation is unquestionable, government authorities as well as individuals working with NGOs have argued that NGOs have failed to bring about substantial improvement in the livelihood of the communities they worked for. Informed by this assessment, government authorities and individuals working with NGOs have used strong words to describe NGOs. In his critique of NGOs, one government official dubbed NGOs "Lords of Poverty"¹⁰¹¹. Employees of NGOs, interviewed for this research, have offered similar critiques. One NGO employee who asked for anonymity said angrily that, "I would have been happy if NGOs had not existed in this country [Ethiopia]"¹⁰¹². His premise is that NGOs have been unable to bring about major change, despite their long years of existence¹⁰¹³. Even pro-NGO researchers have taken a similar position. Dessalegn is one of those who has expressed his disappointment about the contribution of NGOs. He stated that:

I believe the overall impact of NGOs, measured against the resources they have mobilized, is quite disappointing. Development projects run by many NGOs have done little to improve the livelihood of the communities concerned¹⁰¹⁴.

Assessment of the impact of NGOs has inherent weakness. It refers to neither specific matrix nor contexts. This weakness is apparent when we take into account the context in which NGOs in

¹⁰⁰⁹ "Open Letter" from CRDA et al to Meles Zenawi (October 21, 2004), P.1, Archive of CCRDA in Addis Ababa

¹⁰¹⁰ Dessalegn Rahmato et al, *CSOs/NGOs in Ethiopia: Partners in Development and Good Governance* (Addis Ababa, 2010), P.20

¹⁰¹¹ "Open Letter" from CRDA et al to Meles Zenawi (October 21, 2004), P.1, Archive of CCRDA in Addis Ababa

¹⁰¹² Informant, Ato MZ

¹⁰¹³ *Ibid*

¹⁰¹⁴ Dessalegn Rahmato, "Civil Society Organizations in Ethiopia" in Bahru Zewde, and Siegfried Pauswang (eds), *Ethiopia: The Challenges of Democracy from Below* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikaninstitutet and Addis Ababa: Forum for Social Studies, 2002), P. 108

Ethiopia started their operation. Most NGOs began their operations in Ethiopia during the famines of the 1970s and 1980s. When the famines diminished, NGOs shifted their resources to address the very factors that caused the famines. Some development-oriented NGOs had in fact already been running long-term development projects prior to the occurrence of these famines, and only when the famines occurred did they shift their resources to rescuing famine victims. However, reaching a conclusion that such NGOs failed to prevent the occurrence of famines in Ethiopia would be fallacious. This is because the famines were caused by a range of factors over which NGOs had little influence. Although they had little control over factors that created famines in the 1970s and 1980s, NGOs played a leading role in relieving famine-stricken people. When the famines of 1973-74 and 1983-84 had gone, NGOs shifted their resources to deal with what they considered were the root causes of the famines. This implies that relief and development do, in fact, co-exist in NGOs. It is, thus, logical to discuss relief, rehabilitation and development activities as a continuous process rather than as separate fields of action of NGOs. Only when we discuss these fields of action in continuum that we are closer to the role of NGOs in shaping community they worked for.

It should, however, be assumed that each famine was time/region specific. The southern provinces in which NGOs existed in large number were much less affected by food crises during the imperial period. In what appears to be a paradox, the region suffered from long-standing structural poverty, resulting mainly from the land tenure system. Stunned by the lack of development in the region, progressive government officials together with NGOs put in place efforts to address land shortages, and NGOs managed to secure the participation of project participants.

Ultimately, however, NGOs did not maintain this momentum. The development organisations of the revolutionary government on which NGOs depended pursued a top-heavy approach. NGO plans to increase their impact by reducing NGOs' reliance on these organisations were not successful. This had to do with the "dependency syndrome" that stemmed from free distribution of food challenging the participation of project participants. Then, however, both the famine and the unpopular policies of the military government attracted global attention. As a result, NGOs mobilised substantial resources, and saw some marked effects at the grassroots level, mainly as the result of their investments.

NGOs began to work to address the structural causes of poverty from the end of the 1990s on. They started to get involved in the formulation of policies concerning different sections of society. Above all, against a background of elections, NGOs educated the wider public to increase its demand-

making capacity. In the context of elections, NGO advocacy and the impact they had created had profound political implications. As a result, the government introduced the Ethiopian Charity and Society Proclamation (Proclamation No 621, 2009) that diminished the influence of NGOs. This chapter investigates the attempt of NGOs to address symptoms of poverty in Ethiopia throughout much of their existence. It also investigates how NGOs emerged as a meaningful social actor from the late 1990s on, capable of causing the public to demand their rights and how that influence deteriorated.

6.2. Participation

Research has shown that development is sustainable only when project participants can actively participate at every stage of the development process¹⁰¹⁵. Participation in this sense has been nicely summed up by Cohen and Uphoff. According to these authors, participation refers to “...the involvement of a significant number of persons in situations or actions which enhance their wellbeing e.g. their income, security and self-esteem”¹⁰¹⁶. The two authors make two distinctions with regard to participation, viz “development participation” and “political participation”. The first refers to the attempt to place more emphasis on decentralised development; the second has to do with electoral processes like voting, campaigning and lobbying¹⁰¹⁷.

Participation takes place in specific context. This changing context provides opportunities and obstacles to participation. This chapter investigates these opportunities and obstacles in three steps: first, it will look at the interventions of the Ethiopian state in rural society and economy and enquire as to their influence on the possibilities for, and interests of, the peasants to participate to change their status. Secondly, famines will be taken as a kind of focal lens through which the effects of governmental and NGO activities are made visible. The third step is to look at NGO interventions to address specific socio-economic problems through a project approach and to deal with the structural causes of poverty.

¹⁰¹⁵ Tegegne Teka, *International Non-Governmental Organizations in Rural Development in Ethiopia: Rhetoric and Practice* (Peter Land, Frankfurt am Mein, Germany, 2000), P. 72

¹⁰¹⁶ Cohen and Uphoff quoted in Tegegne Teka, "International...", P. 141

¹⁰¹⁷ *Ibid*, P. 65

6.3. The State, the society and the economy in the 20th century

6.3.1. The imperial period: Until 1974

The monarchical state system persisted until 1974. Haile Selassie was an influential figure from 1930 on, when he became the king of kings and henceforward held the authority to appoint all state officials¹⁰¹⁸.

During his reign, Haile Selassie also intensified the land tenure system, which impoverished the majority of the people. The land tenure system had previously had a communal character, in that farmers had usufruct¹⁰¹⁹. This communal character underwent drastic changes in the south, after its conquest in the late 19th century. The northerners who had conquered the south confiscated about two thirds of the land, which was quickly disposed amongst claimants from the north. The remaining land became state land, and land grants continued to be made, particularly after the liberation from Italian rule in 1941¹⁰²⁰. From liberation to 1960, 55, 338 *gašas* of land was granted¹⁰²¹. In the process, one third was divided among the indigenous population¹⁰²²; however, "...in most cases those lands were not distributed among members of the entire community but were shared by the newly made Ballabats [chiefs] or former chiefs and their relatives..."¹⁰²³

The unfair distribution of land created large number of tenants, "...[who] led a life close to or resembling serfdom"¹⁰²⁴. Tenancy and landlessness were widespread in the south. Towards the end of the 1960s, about half of the population of the region was tenants¹⁰²⁵, who led miserable lives as they had to pay to meet a wide range of obligations. Nega and Markakis have enumerated the range of tributes that each tenant had to pay, thus:

He [a tenant] was required to pay tribute to the landlords ranging from one-third to half of the produce. He was also obliged to pay the land tax amounting to one-tenth...Extensive labor service was demanded, far in excess of what was the custom in the north, as well as numerous other impositions unknown there...¹⁰²⁶

¹⁰¹⁸ Kiflu Tadesse, *The Generation: The History of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party, vol. 1* (Trenton, New Jersey, 1993), P. 9

¹⁰¹⁹ Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia: 1855-1991* (London: James Currey Ltd, 2002), pp. 71-72

¹⁰²⁰ John Markakis and Nega Ayele, *Class and Revolution in Ethiopia* (1978), pp. 23-24

¹⁰²¹ Bizuwork Zewde, "The Problem of Tenancy and Tenant Bills" MA thesis (AAU, History, 1992), p.11

¹⁰²² John Markakis and Nega Ayele, *Class and Revolution in Ethiopia* (1978), p. 24

¹⁰²³ Bizuwork Zewde, "The Problem...", p.5

¹⁰²⁴ *Ibid*, P.5

¹⁰²⁵ *Ibid*, P.20

¹⁰²⁶ John Markakis and Nega Ayele, *Class and Revolution in Ethiopia* (1978), p. 24

Thus, tenants found it unlikely to improve their agricultural productivity. In fact, they sometimes had to expend all their produce to fulfil these obligations, such that they were left with nothing to sustain themselves. In response, they began to migrate to urban areas in search of jobs¹⁰²⁷. Tribute payment in the south was so exploitative that even some land owners left their lands uncultivated. Hodson who visited some areas of the south and south-west reported that:

The districts of Kambata [Kämbata], Wolamo [Wällamo] and Baroda...are extraordinarily fertile and productive, but enormous areas are left uncultivated on account of the exactions of the Abyssinians...This inevitably tends to prevent the people from growing more than is essential for themselves¹⁰²⁸.

The socio-economic status of peasants was as bad in the north as in the south, albeit that, due to the *Rest* system, a northern peasant family might own a piece of land that it inherited from its ancestors, which made for fewer tenancies in the north than in the south. However, population pressure in the 20th century fragmented land holdings, as every member of a family claimed a piece of land. This population pressure was the result of the northern revival following the crises of the “great famine” of 1888–1889, and the Mahdist intrusions of the last quarter of the 19th century¹⁰²⁹. Moreover, as in the south, the peasants in the north were being exploited by local-level elites. The tendency of local officials to exploit the peasants was so strong that they frustrated the state’s endeavour to systematise tax administration. McCann stated that:

During the 1920s and 1930s...pressure on institutions for the assessment, collection, and distribution of taxes, as well as the judicial process, became a field for the clandestine accumulation of wealth by rural class who controlled political office. At all level, officials who participated in the political judicial and fiscal role of government squeezed extra revenue out of already overburdened producer population¹⁰³⁰

6.3.2. The military period: 1974–1991

The military government (1974–1991) that seized power in 1974 introduced the rural land proclamation on March 4th, 1975. The proclamation removed the economic basis of the old regime’s ruling class and redressed the highly unfair land tenure system, especially in the southern part of the country¹⁰³¹. This reform enabled every household to have access to a piece of land.

¹⁰²⁷ Lapiso G. Dälibo, *Ye Ityopya Ye Gebar Sere’atna Jimer Kapitalizem: 1900-1966 EC, in Amharic* (Addis Ababa, 1983 EC), p. 223

¹⁰²⁸ Arnold Hodson, *Seven Years in Southern Abyssinia* (London, 1927), p. 29

¹⁰²⁹ James McCann, “Household Economy, Demography and the “Push” Factor in Northern Ethiopian History: 1906-1935” (nd), p. 88

¹⁰³⁰ *Ibid*, 207

¹⁰³¹ Kiflu Tadesse, *The Generation: The History of the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Party, vol. 1* (Trenton, New Jersey, 1993), P. 209

Furthermore, the rent and taxes that the landlords had been extracting ceased. As a consequence, food production appears to have risen fairly sharply in the two years after the reform¹⁰³².

Regardless of the outcome of the land reform, class difference still persisted. The richer peasants who owned means of production (oxen and agricultural tools) benefited most from the land redistribution¹⁰³³. Richer farmers also held political power at the local level. They held key leadership positions of the peasant associations that implemented the land reform¹⁰³⁴. These political and economic elite formed classes on which the regime depended for making the peasant associations serve its political and military objectives. Soon after they were created in 1975, peasant associations ceased to be centres of local power and were turned, "...into subordinate extension of the Ministry of Interior"¹⁰³⁵. The peasant associations underwent a further transformation in 1977. This had to do with the ongoing war. As a result, Dawit tells us that, "The primary preoccupation of the state now became the recruitment of an army of hundred thousands to suppress this explosion"¹⁰³⁶.

Conscription of the peasants strained their relation with the governance structures. This relation deteriorated further from 1983, when military service became compulsory for males between the ages of 18 and 30, while those aged 30–50 were required to enlist for reserve duty¹⁰³⁷. Youths ran away every time they heard rumours of military conscription. In 1987, a group of Oxfam employees went to a village in Delanta in Wollo, where, as was everywhere the case, there was a rumour that government cadres would "hunt" youths for military training. The overall psychological condition of the people in rural Ethiopia is reflected in the report that they submitted, in which the Oxfam team reported that, "...people ran away when we appeared until we became known"¹⁰³⁸.

The massive involuntary relocation of rural residents in Tigray and Wollo, especially from 1984 on, and the villagization programme that followed, increased the resentment of rural residents and emboldened them against the peasant associations that served as instruments of brutality¹⁰³⁹.

¹⁰³² Christopher Clapham, *Transformation and Continuity in Revolutionary Ethiopia* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988), P. 48

¹⁰³³ Paul Kolemen, "The Politics of the Famine in Ethiopia and Eritrea" in Peter Halfpenny (ed), *Manchester Sociology Occasional Papers* (nd), P. 13

¹⁰³⁴ Teferra Haile-Selassie, *The Ethiopian Revolution, 1974-1991: From a Monarchical Autocracy to a Military Oligarchy* (Kegan Paul International, London, 1997), P. 162

¹⁰³⁵ Dawit Bekelle quoted in Paul Kolemen, "The Politics...", P. 14

¹⁰³⁶ *Ibid*, P. 14

¹⁰³⁷ Amnesty International, *Conscientious Objection to Military Service*, (London: February 1988), Annex 2, pp. 1-19

¹⁰³⁸ "NWRC/Oxfam Rural Water Programme, Wollo, Ethiopia: Briefing Paper" (January 1987), P.5

¹⁰³⁹ *Ibid*, P.4

Although they carried the burden of unpopular policies and practices, small-holding farmers did have limited opportunities to improve their production. This, again, was the result of the government's economic policy. The escalating cost of the civil wars compelled the state to press for an increase in its share of the agricultural surplus, which threatened to bring it into conflict with precisely that stratum of the richer class that controlled the peasant associations. The regime's solution to this dilemma was to set up the Ethiopian Marketing Corporation, which imposed quotas on smallholding farmers, and to promote the development of producers' cooperatives and state farming, so it could control the surplus more directly¹⁰⁴⁰.

In 1979, the formation of producers' cooperatives was defined as the basis for the transformation of Ethiopia into a socialist society¹⁰⁴¹. These could not be established, however, by mobilising the poor peasants – who potentially would have had the most to gain from them – for fear that this would undermine the political power of the rich and middle income peasants. Instead, rich and middle income peasants were encouraged to form producers' cooperatives via various financial incentives. Cooperative farms had two main privileges. Firstly, they had easy access to various state loans. To cite an example, of the loans provided by the AID Bank to the agricultural sector in 1985, the share of the private poor farmers was only 0.07%. The second privilege was that they could buy fertilisers from Service Cooperatives at lower prices than individual cultivators. Surprisingly, private farmers nonetheless contributed 90% of the country's food production¹⁰⁴².

The preference accorded to state farms was even more substantial. State farms covered approximately 3.7 percent of all cultivated lands and employed about 30,500 permanent, and 180,000 seasonal workers. Although state farms accounted for less than 5% of national grain production, in 1982, 80% of agricultural credit disbursed by the government went to state farms, which also took up 82% of the fertiliser imported in 1980/81. It was also to this sector that foreign aid was directed¹⁰⁴³. For the government, this policy was justified because it increased the surplus at the disposal of the state. Of the state's grain purchase in 1981/82, state farms provided 80% of wheat, 85% of maize and 60% of sorghum. What this figure shows, an Ethiopian writer concluded,

Is the strategic role that state farms have played in the supply of certain crops to key consumers such as government employees, the armed forces and certain segments of urban dwellers. Although this important functions has been accomplished at very high financial costs, it is

¹⁰⁴⁰ Paul Kolemen, "The Politics of ..." P. 14

¹⁰⁴¹ Tilahoun Haile, "A Report from Agri-Service Ethiopia to the General Assembly of 1979" (1979), P.5

¹⁰⁴² ASE, "Project Proposal of Action Oriented Training Programme Integrated with Rural Development Projects in Semien Omo, Misrak Gojjam and Bale" (Addis Ababa, 1990), P. 6

¹⁰⁴³ Paul Kolemen, "The Politics of ..." P. 15

important to remember that for states the meeting of certain political and economic targets at certain critical junctures are far more important than the consideration of the efficient allocation of resources¹⁰⁴⁴

While the government was favouring producers' cooperatives and state farms, production by smallholding peasants was declining. In 1978, it declined by 13% and in 1979 by 10% from the 1977 level¹⁰⁴⁵. The connection between these declines and the lack of investment was established. A report published by the Food and Agricultural Organisation in 1985, "...reveal[ed] that there was almost nothing done in the plateau where 92% of the population live"¹⁰⁴⁶.

To summarise, governments influenced the socio-economic lives of the rural poor to a large extent. The imperial and military governments created socio-economic structures that impoverished the poor peasants. This poverty manifested itself in the form of the famines that frequented the country. However, the regimes made the famines a political issue. The next section discusses the political aspect of famines in Ethiopia.

6.3.3. The Politics of Famine

Governments in Ethiopia have remained reluctant to admit the occurrence of famine. Concerning this, Mesfin Wolde Mariam has stated that, "...when crop failure occurs in vulnerable regions, famine very often is allowed to take its natural course without government interventions, until it was too late"¹⁰⁴⁷.

Whenever famine has occurred, government officials have underestimated its magnitude. In early 1973, a senior official of the imperial government gave an interview to the Ethiopian Television about the migration of destitute people to Addis Ababa. He began the interview by saying that, "Ethiopians have a right to movement"¹⁰⁴⁸. In riposte to rumours of famine, the official went on to say that, "...the exaggerated rumours seems to arise out of light-heartedness rather than seriousness"¹⁰⁴⁹. To make things worse, he blamed victims for having failed to inform their own local authorities about the droughts that occurred in their regions¹⁰⁵⁰.

¹⁰⁴⁴ *Ibid*, P. 15

¹⁰⁴⁵ Paul Kolemen, "The Politics of...", P. 16

¹⁰⁴⁶ *Ibid*, P. 16

¹⁰⁴⁷ Mesfin Wolde Mariam, *Vulnerability to Famine in Ethiopia: 1958-1977* (Intermediate Technology Publications, London, 1986), P. 25

¹⁰⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p. 44

¹⁰⁴⁹ *Ibid*, P. 44

¹⁰⁵⁰ *Ibid*, P.44

Government officials were in fact aware of the looming famine of the 1970s, as shown by an intensive exchange of letters between officials about the food crisis, particularly in Wollo, dating from 1971¹⁰⁵¹. When the famine reached its critical stage, the monarch himself stated that, “Rich and poor have always existed and always will. Why? Because there are those that work and those that prefer to do nothing. Each individual is responsible for his misfortune”¹⁰⁵²

Political factors were behind the underestimation of the famine. In early 1973, UNICEF compiled a report on the magnitude of the famine and approached government officials to ask for international assistance. The government rejected the proposal on political grounds. The Vice-Minister of Planning told a UNICEF representative that:

If we have to describe the situation in the way you have in order to generate international assistance, then we don't want that assistance. The embarrassment of the government is not worth it. Is that perfectly clear?¹⁰⁵³

While the government was refusing to ask for support to rescue famine victims, a lot of people were dying. While the official estimate of the RRC suggested that only 10,000 people died over the period from June to August, 1973, a UNICEF study puts the figure at between 50,000 and 100,000¹⁰⁵⁴.

The military government that took power in 1974 blamed the imperial government for failing to respond to the famine, and this became part of its propaganda to delegitimise Haile Selassie's government. To that end, the military government screened a film by Jonathan Dimbleby that showed horrifying pictures of famine victims, intercut with images of the comfort in which Haile Selassie I and his family had been living¹⁰⁵⁵.

Ironically, the military government did the same thing in the 1980s that the monarchy had done ten years ago. While the people of Wollo and Tigray were dying in 1983–1984, the military government was most concerned with propagating a positive image of the results of the Ethiopian revolution of 1974. The RRC insisted to the president of the Republic that the government had to make the famine public in order to mobilise international assistance. In response to this, however,

¹⁰⁵¹ *Ibid*, P. 40-42

¹⁰⁵² Gopalakrishna Kumar, "The Ethiopian Famines 1973-1985: A Case Study", *Working Paper 26* (Oxford, November 1987), P.10

¹⁰⁵³ UNICEF quoted in Alexander de Waal, *Famine Crimes Politics and the Disaster Relief Industry in Africa* (Indian University Press, USA, 2009), P. 107

¹⁰⁵⁴ Gopalakrishna Kumar, "The Ethiopian...", P.22

¹⁰⁵⁵ Wolde Giorgis, *The Red Tears: War, Famine and Revolution in Ethiopia* (Red Sea Press, Trenton, 1989), P. 260

the president argued that imperialist powers would use it as grounds upon which to mock the government's effort to build a strong socialist Ethiopia. Moreover, the government was planning to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Ethiopian revolution of 1974, and anything that would tarnish the ceremony was to be put aside¹⁰⁵⁶.

Foreign donors themselves were also not ready to assist the relief effort, as Ethiopia had firmly placed itself in the Soviet camp¹⁰⁵⁷. Thus informed by the ideological alignment of the Ethiopian government, western donors had turned down the repeated calls of the RRC for aid. The situation finally started changing towards the end of 1984 when massive relief aid started flowing to Ethiopia¹⁰⁵⁸. In the interim, however, one million people lost their lives¹⁰⁵⁹.

6.4. NGOs and relief operations

The famines of the 1970s and 1980s hit wide sections of rural society in Ethiopia. Having noted the horror at the grassroot level, NGOs conducted successful advocacy work that caused dominant actors to rescue famine victims. While the relief operation of the 1970s went relatively well, that of the 1980s was disrupted by wars and insurgency and counter-strategy measures associated with it.

6.4.1. The 1970s famine and the NGOs' response

6.4.1.1. Desperation and advocacy

Tigray, Wollo and Northern Shoa were hit severely by the famine of 1973–1974. 2 out of 4.2 million people in Tigray and Wollo were victims of the famine and 1.2 million people required immediate food assistance¹⁰⁶⁰.

In Wollo, where NGOs operated in larger number, the famine struck two different sections of the populace: Afar camel herders in the lowlands, and smallholding tenant farmers on the escarpment. Both groups were poor and marginalised and had been subject to the depredations of both the landowning class and the state, including the widespread confiscation of land¹⁰⁶¹.

¹⁰⁵⁶ *Ibid*, P. 191

¹⁰⁵⁷ Dessalegn Rahmeto, "Food Aid and Food Dependency in Ethiopia", *Miscellanea*, *Miscellanea* 2, IES, AAU (1986), P. 11

¹⁰⁵⁸ Dawit Wolde Giorgis, *Red Tears*, P. 200

¹⁰⁵⁹ *Ibid*, P. 23

¹⁰⁶⁰ CRDA, "Review of the Relief and Rehabilitation Programme" (March 1975), P. 2

¹⁰⁶¹ Alexander de Waal, *Famine...*, P. 107

The Awsa province, where the Afars were living, suffered much more than any other province. A primary document describes the agony in the region in the following way:

The people in this area are learning well the meaning of the word starvation as they see the thin, gaunt faces of adults, as they count without difficulty the ribs of children as they smell the carcasses of dead animals which litter the streets. Young people become old, three years old children look like babies of three months and babies are mere skeletons, once fit people are now carried on the back of the fitter ones, and old people lie and wait, hope and pray that someone will bring them food¹⁰⁶².

The number of people that suffered agony of the kind mentioned above was so large that it threatened the capacity of NGOs to respond adequately. In its report to CCRDA, the Red Sea Mission Team, an NGO described their resource constraints in relieving victims of famine in the Awsa lowland. The report stated that:

We did not actually reach the river as a number of Danakils [Afars] were waiting with their empty grain bags. Later we came to a standstill as 3000 Danakils confronted us, men, women and children. This was the biggest gathering we had seen thus far, but of course they knew we were coming and quickly news spreads in the Danakil areas. We wondered how far our bags of grain would last, it seemed so small with much great need¹⁰⁶³.

NGOs in different parts of Wollo were distributing their resources thinly. For instance, the Red Sea Mission Team started providing each person with one bowl of grain per week. Some of the people had refused to take their share on the grounds that the portions were too small. However, as the Red Sea Mission Team reported, "...this was the only fair way of assuring that each person received some grain"¹⁰⁶⁴.

Large numbers of starving people left the Awssa area for neighbouring Yeju province. The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekan Yesus (EECMY) admitted these and other people to its hospital in Woldia town. They were served bread at breakfast, and *nifro* at lunch and dinner¹⁰⁶⁵. Like the Red Sea Mission Team in Awssa province, the EECMY was threatened by the increasing number of famine victims. In response to this increase, an American volunteer, Cow Baur, is said to have sold all her property, including her car, to support the famished people. Because of this, people started calling her a saint¹⁰⁶⁶.

Like the Red Sea Mission Team in Awssa and the EECMY in Yeju province, urban residents took desperate actions to rescue famine victims. In early June 1973, famine victims got together in

¹⁰⁶² CRF, "Second Report of Christian Famine Relief Committee" (Addis Ababa, August 20th, 1973), P.1

¹⁰⁶³ *Ibid*, P.1

¹⁰⁶⁴ *Ibid*, P.2

¹⁰⁶⁵ Fantahun Ayele, "NGOs Relief Operation in Wollo: 1973-1986" (MA thesis, History, AAU, May 1994), P. 16

¹⁰⁶⁶ Berhe Bayene, *Bäsämén Ityopya Yätäkäsätäw Rehab: 1964-1966*, Amharic (Addis Ababa, 1983 EC), P. 83

Kombolcha town as they had heard rumours that food would be distributed there. When food was not forthcoming, many of them went back home, until only a few of them remained in Kombolcha town¹⁰⁶⁷. In order to support them, a committee composed of town volunteers was set up, and began distributing one kilo of flour per day to each adult. CCRDA donated Eth \$1500 to the committee to buy blankets. It also donated Eth \$5000 to build shelters to house the destitute people¹⁰⁶⁸.

The efforts underway were not, however, commensurate with the magnitude of the food crisis. Reports received by NGOs from different regions show that people were dying in large numbers. For instance, 50 people died in Kombolcha town in July 1973 alone¹⁰⁶⁹, and the death rate was higher in areas where access was impossible due to rugged terrain¹⁰⁷⁰.

A film screened in September 1973 was a landmark with regard to the relief operation. Shot secretly, with the involvement of NGOs, the film was aimed at putting pressure on the Ethiopian government, and donors to fulfil their responsibilities. NGOs had been lobbying government officials to admit the existence of famine and take concerted action, but government officials had repeatedly rejected the proposal put forward by NGOs to make the famine public, instead asking NGOs to increase their contributions. The government had likewise been ignoring calls to action by pressure groups such as university students¹⁰⁷¹.

NGOs that had lost all hope of convincing government officials began to consider ways to sensitise the international community to the famine. Minutes compiled by CCRDA played an important role in this regard. CCRDA had begun compiling detailed minutes of its weekly meetings and circulating them to Western embassies in Addis Ababa, which then sent them to their governments, while member NGOs sent the minutes to their respective headquarters overseas. The minutes thus circulated, conveyed the grim sense of spreading disaster, and journalists started engaging with CCRDA officials. One of these was Jonathan Dimbleby from Britain¹⁰⁷². Guided by CCRDA, Jonathan Dimbleby came to Ethiopia to report on the famine in early September 1973. The founders of CCRDA guided Mr Dimbleby as to which areas he should go to. Fr. Doheny, one of the founders of CCRDA, played a particular role in this regard. In his memoir, Fr. Doheny states that:

¹⁰⁶⁷ CRF, "Second Report of..." (Addis Ababa, August 20th, 1973), P.1

¹⁰⁶⁸ *Ibid*, P.1

¹⁰⁶⁹ *Ibid*, P.3

¹⁰⁷⁰ Haile Mariam Seyfu, *Yäḡedfya Zāmānat: Rehabna čänäfär, Yätarik Mastaweša* (Addis Ababa, 2005EC), P. 51

¹⁰⁷¹ Kevin Doheny, *No Hands But Yours: Memoirs of a Missionary* (Veritas Publications, 1997), P. 98

¹⁰⁷² *Ibid*, P. 102

When he [Dimbleby] arrived I told him where to go, who to meet, and how to get the story out to the world. He made his way to Dessie, the centre of the famine and met my friends the Capuchin Fathers, who brought him into the camps and showed him the real suffering¹⁰⁷³.

Mr Dimbleby used great caution in getting the film out of Ethiopia. He first passed through the security check in the airport with a film that did not have the real pictures on it. Having made sure that the security personnel did not monitor films, Mr Dimbleby told his assistant to pass through the security check with the real film that contained pictures of the starving people¹⁰⁷⁴. Thus by September 1973, the famine was no longer a secret. The film was screened with the title “The hidden hunger” through TMS and the story was picked up by a number of television stations around the world, showing the misery in Wollo in all its ghastly detail¹⁰⁷⁵.

The film shocked Ethiopians studying abroad and foreign donors. Ethiopian students shared their fellow citizens in Ethiopia what they had seen on TMS television. As a result, foreign donors and Ethiopians started to act to respond to the famine. Concerning the impact of the film on Ethiopians and foreign donors, an early publication of the RRC itself stated that:

የቴምስ ቴሌቪዥን ድርጅት ባልደረገ ጆናታን ዲምብሌቢ የ “ተደበቀው ርሃብ” የሚለውን ፊልም እንስቶ ዜናው ለአለም ህብረተሰብ እንዲናገር በማድረጉ የውጭ መንግስታት በጎ አድራጊዎችና ኢትዮጵያውያን ችግሩን ለመቆቆም እንዲሳተፉ አድርጎልኩ።

Because of the news broadcasted to the international community through a film known as “The hidden hunger” by Jonathan Dimbleby, a colleague of TMS Television, foreign government donors and Ethiopian participated in dealing with the problem [famine]¹⁰⁷⁶.

The film also put a great deal of pressure on the government to take more initiative in mobilising resources and coordinating relief operations. Concerning the impact that the film had on the imperial government, the same source quoted above stated that:

ቀድሞ የነበረው መንግስት የወሎው አልቂት ዜና በመስማቱና የችግሩም ከብደት ከቁጥጥሩ ውጭ ሆኖ ስላገኘው የእህል እጥረት ከሚቱ የሚባል በህዝባዊ ኑሮ እድገትና በማህበራዊ ጉዳይ ሚኒስቴር ስር አቋቁሞ ከውጭ የሚመጣውን እርዳታ ማስተባበር ጀመረ።

The old regime started coordinating the international assistance by establishing the Grain Deficit Committee under the Ministry of Community Development and Social Affairs as the news about the catastrophe in Wollo was circulated and as the problem grew beyond a manageable proportion¹⁰⁷⁷

The establishment of the Grain Deficit Committee was decisive in itself. This was because a number of NGOs called for a designated governmental office that would coordinate the relief

¹⁰⁷³ *Ibid*, P. 103

¹⁰⁷⁴ *Ibid*, P. 103

¹⁰⁷⁵ Dawit Wolde Giorgis, *Red Tears...* P. 260

¹⁰⁷⁶ RRC, “A Bulletin Dedicated to the Ethiopian Revolution of 1974” (1968 EC), P.7

¹⁰⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p. 7

operation. This was urgent largely because NGOs in Europe and the USA that had seen both the full extent of the famine and the shabby attempts of the government rushed into Ethiopia and opened offices to rescue famine victims¹⁰⁷⁸. The Grain Deficit Committee now directed NGOs towards provinces of Wollo such as Qobbo-Alamata, Kalu, Awssa and so on where people had been dying in large number¹⁰⁷⁹.

With massive deployment of food and non-food items, NGOs stopped the deaths. The Catholic Relief Service distributed \$ 23,572 worth of grain to the famine victims in Kobo, Alamata and Afar between 1974 and 1975¹⁰⁸⁰. Concern put a well-organised medical team in place in Qobbo on December 1st, 1973. By the end of 1974, the total number of volunteers that Concern had dispatched reached 43¹⁰⁸¹. Likewise, Oxfam started a programme in neighbouring Qalu province. Like Concern, Oxfam focused on medical services. The two medical teams that Oxfam deployed worked to diagnose those who were suffering most, and started feeding them with nutrient-rich foods¹⁰⁸². Moreover, Oxfam distributed 8 tons of Soyya and wheat flours, 1000 cartons of Faffa and 34 tins of edible oil in Addis Ababa¹⁰⁸³.

However, NGOs did not cover all of the areas that required assistance. The Grain Defisit Committee left these areas under the responsibility of local administrations. This was because the Committee did not have its own structures to coordinate the distribution centres in e.g. Wollo. Unlike the NGOs that were distributing aid to those who needed it, local authorities took the aid for their personal use or that of their relatives. In the summer of 1974, the Haile Selassie I Famine Relief Committee sent a group of faculty members to Lasta, one of the worst-affected parts of Wollo. Their report shows the frustration of the starving people about this corruption, stating that:

The people accuse the local authorities publicly that they use their offices and positions to enrich themselves at the expense of the famine stricken ones. The drought and famine situations is said to present a welcome opportunity for them to enrich themselves¹⁰⁸⁴

The same report shows that these local authorities either took grains and clothing for themselves and/or distributed them to those whom they favoured. On the other hand, they charged money to

¹⁰⁷⁸ *Ibid*, P. 98

¹⁰⁷⁹ CRF, "Second Report...", P.6

¹⁰⁸⁰ Fantahun Ayele, "NGOs...", P. 13

¹⁰⁸¹ *Ibid*, P. 14

¹⁰⁸² *Ibid*, P. 24

¹⁰⁸³ *Ibid*, P. 23

¹⁰⁸⁴ Haile Gebreal Dagne and Getachew Aweke, "A Report on a Famine Situation in Lasta" (Addis Ababa, June 1974), P. 17

register impoverished farmers for admission to relief shelters¹⁰⁸⁵. Famine victims complained that they were unable to gain admission, although they really needed assistance. An old man who had been denied admission to the shelters complained that, “I am old and tired. My family, my wife, and children are dead. I was wondering to be admitted to this shelter for three months, but I was not admitted. I would still like to be admitted and to be taken care of”¹⁰⁸⁶.

Life in the shelter was not as comfortable as might have been expected by those who asked for admission. The shelter population was not offered sufficient food or medical services. The medical service and food that each person got per day was only 21 cents worth of relief¹⁰⁸⁷. As a result, farmers in the shelter tended to ask to leave the shelter as soon their condition started showing improvement. They were encouraged in this by the rains that started in the summer of 1974. Asked about going back home, a farmer in a shelter in Gura Wurke in Wollo stated that:

We are eagerly waiting for the government for rehabilitation. What we really need is oxen and seed. Right now it is time for farming. We should be sowing sorgum and teff. We have already missed the Belg harvest, the time when we should have planted “shimbera” [chickpeas]. If we should also miss the Kremt [main rain], we will again be, helpless and dependent on the government for everything¹⁰⁸⁸.

This keenness to leave was in the interest of the government and of NGOs. The government had been encouraging local administrations to keep famine victims in their localities. Thus, when the rain started in the summer of 1974, the government quickly took to rehabilitating the people in the shelter. A study had been carried out on the number of oxen that farmers needed immediately. The study showed that farmers in Wollo needed 34,572 oxen. As soon as the rains started, 794 oxen were distributed; this marked the beginning of discharging people from the shelter, and it continued until all the people had left the shelter towards the end of 1974¹⁰⁸⁹.

NGOs obeyed the government. Once farmers had recovered from the famine, NGOs notified farmers that they could no longer carry out relief activities. For example, in April 1974, Oxfam told the RRC that from May 1974 it would no longer conduct any nutritional or medical activities in Wollo because the emergency period was over¹⁰⁹⁰. Likewise, CCRDA stopped its relief programmes and shifted to rehabilitation. Referring to this shift, the organisation stated that, “...one

¹⁰⁸⁵ *Ibid*, P, 17

¹⁰⁸⁶ “Relief Work, An Account of ENI Activities: Interview with Farmers” (Mid May, 1974), P.3

¹⁰⁸⁷ Atnaf Seged Yilma, “Ye Wollo Hezb Ahunem Endeterabe New i.e. The People of Wollo is still starved”, *Yezarytu Ityopya* (March 30, 1974), P.4

¹⁰⁸⁸ “Relief Work...”, P.1

¹⁰⁸⁹ Atnaf Seged Yilma, “Ye Wollo Hezb...”, P.1

¹⁰⁹⁰ Fantahun Ayele, “NGOs...”, P. 26

year and three months after being set up, CRC [Christian Relief Committee] is turning its energies more to rehabilitative programmes as a natural consequence to relief activities”¹⁰⁹¹.

Though it had diminished in Wollo, however, famine then occurred in the Ogaden. In November 1974, 72,000 people required relief assistance in the region¹⁰⁹². The RRC was unable to operate alone due to the seriousness of the famine. A team composed of employees from the Ethiopian Nutritional Institute and a journalist reported that, “...when we talk to people from the towns [Degahbur and Aware] they tell us that the drought problem is daily increasing. In Aware, for example, 3 persons were dead in the morning when we were there and 4 persons the other day due to famine”¹⁰⁹³. NGOs themselves reported the catastrophe that they witnessed as soon as they arrived in the area. Oxfam tells us, for example, that from two to five persons were dying per day in one shelter¹⁰⁹⁴.

The RRC together with the Ethiopian Red Cross Society, the Ethiopian Catholic Secretariat and Oxfam set up thirteen feeding shelters¹⁰⁹⁵. The NGOs received grain from the RRC and started distributing rations to the people in the shelters. Moreover, Oxfam, Red Cross and the Ethiopian Catholic Secretariat set up two joint supplementary feeding centres in Degahbour and Warder where 400 malnourished children were being fed and treated¹⁰⁹⁶. The relief programme improved the nutritional status of the shelter population. Four months after the programme was started, positive progress was visible with regard to the nutritional and medical status of the people in the shelter. Concerning the children, one of Oxfam’s documents stated that:

The diet is well accepted by them [children], though the endemic shortage of sugar has forced the supervisors to halve the sugar content-there was some fear that, with sugar being a very basic ingredient of the Somali dishes, this would cause a problem¹⁰⁹⁷.

The same progress was apparent with regard to the nutritional and medical status of able-bodied men. Mr Harper, who visited the Ogaden in July and August 1975, described how, “Generally speaking, the relief situation in the Ogaden appears to be soundly based. I understand that the RRC

¹⁰⁹¹ CRF, “First Report from Chrstian Committee to Relief and Rehabilitation Commission” (September 3, 1974), P. 5

¹⁰⁹² CRDA, “1977 Annual Report” (May 1977), P. 13

¹⁰⁹³ Yeshitela Zeleke, “A Trip to Hararghe Province: From November 9th-13th, 1974” (November 14, 1974), P. 3

¹⁰⁹⁴ “Report by Dr. Tim Lusty (June 1974), P.1

¹⁰⁹⁵ *Ibid*, P. 16

¹⁰⁹⁶ CRDA, “1977 Annual Report” (May 1977), P. 13

¹⁰⁹⁷ “A Report by Malcolm Harper of Oxfam on a Visit to the Ogaden: 26th July-August 2nd, 1975” (nd), P. 2

and the Red Cross medical teams cover almost all the shelters between them, assisted by Society of International Missionary, World Vision and others in some of them”¹⁰⁹⁸.

6.4.2. The 1980s famine and NGO relief operations in Ethiopia

6.4.2.1. Donor indifference, NGO advocacy and global sympathy

The relief operation in the 1980s took place during the Cold War when altruism was mixed up with global politics. As a result, international donors were initially indifferent to acting to rescue famine victims. The situation started changing when NGOs carried out extensive advocacy work. The NGOs’ advocacy created worldwide sympathy that influenced donors to act in rescuing famine victims in Ethiopia.

The military government noted that the absence of disaster preparedness had cost human lives during the famine that occurred in 1973–1974. To prevent further disaster, the RRC presented a proposal to donors to set up a national stock of food reserves in 1975¹⁰⁹⁹. The plan was to reserve 80,000 tons of grain over a period of four years. This was to support 3.72 million people for four months at the rate of 400 grams of cereals per day per person¹¹⁰⁰. After four years of hesitancy, donors started responding. In 1978, WFP donated 12,000 tons to the RRC to build up the stock¹¹⁰¹. Likewise, the Dutch government pledged 5,000 tons. The Ethiopian government also provided a budgetary sum of Eth \$5,000,000 to cover the cost of storage, preservation and half the cost of the transport of stocks¹¹⁰².

The effort to build up food reserve stocks was soon frustrated. In June 1978, the Ethiopian radio broadcasted an alert that 5 million people in Northern provinces faced starvation, and that 400,000 tons of food aid was needed. The response from the West was almost nil, despite a warning from WFP’s experts that Ethiopia was, “...one of the most likely sites for the world’s super-famine”¹¹⁰³. In November 1978, President Mengistu Haile Mariam publicly called the situation “frightening”, and the RRC claimed that some two million people were at risk in Wollo province alone. The RRC issued an alert for international food aid to counter the impact of “drought and war”. Little was

¹⁰⁹⁸ *Ibid*, P. 11

¹⁰⁹⁹ Shimeles Adugna, *Derqeina Rehben Lemequaquam Yetederegu Teretoch*, in Amharic (Addis Ababa, Forum for Social Studies, 2008), P.11

¹¹⁰⁰ CRDA, “General Membership Meeting” (December 5th, 1983), p.4

¹¹⁰¹ Shimeles Adugna, “Derqeina...”, P.11

¹¹⁰² CRDA, “General Membership Meeting” (December 5th, 1983), p.4

¹¹⁰³ “Ethiopia’s Famine: The Politics of Food Aid”, *Miscellanea* No 4 (nd), 51-52

forthcoming¹¹⁰⁴. The RRC published its annual report in February 1983, which showed that 1.3 million people were already in relief camps. By early 1984, this figure had risen to 4.5 million and by August 1984, 6 million people required emergency food. In late 1984, the total number of people at risk had risen to 8 million. 2 million refugees had already fled to neighboring countries¹¹⁰⁵.

NGOs were concerned about the indifference of Western donors. They thus started alerting donor governments to the magnitude of the famine and the need to act to save million of lives, especially in Northern provinces. In its appeal to the American government, the Catholic Relief Service (CRC) stated in May 1983 that:

More than 2 million men, women and children face starvation in the next months unless massive food supplies start arriving in the draught plagued region of Northern Ethiopia. Hundreds of thousands of people are already on the road searching for food¹¹⁰⁶.

In November 1983, Kenneth Hackett of the CRS stood before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Africa Subcommittee and told members of the Committee that because of lack of food, people had begun eating anything they could find in their localities. However, there was no substantial pledge¹¹⁰⁷.

SCF and Oxfam were doing the same job in Europe that CRS was doing in USA. In May 1983, Save the Children Fund invited a television crew led by Mike Wooldridge who reported on the looming famine, especially in Korem¹¹⁰⁸. Like SCF, Oxfam was engaged in bringing the magnitude of the problem to the international community through its monthly reports and press releases. Finally, a Oxfam-sponsored film made by Michael Buerk and Muhammed Amin moved the international community. Michael Buerk, a British journalist was contracted by Oxfam to go to Ethiopia and shoot a film. On October 23, 1984, Michael Buerk released the film that he had shot in Korem through the BBC. Its footage was subsequently shown by 425 of the world's broadcasting organisations with a potential audience of 470 million people around the world¹¹⁰⁹. This was followed by exposure on the front pages of newspapers, magazines, and radio bulletins around the world that publicised the catastrophe that was traumatising the Ethiopian poor. This publicity

¹¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, P. 52

¹¹⁰⁵ Jaap van Ginneken, "Collective Behavior and Public Opinion: Rapid Shifts in Opinion and Communication" (Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, INC publishers, New Jersey, 2008), P. 48

¹¹⁰⁶ CRS quoted in Dawit Wolde Giorgis, *Red Tears...*, P. 185

¹¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, P. 157

¹¹⁰⁸ Letter from Michael Harris to Guyder (May 13, 1983), Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

¹¹⁰⁹ Berhanu Engidawork, "Drought and Famine in Ethiopia and International Response" (BA thesis, Political Science, AAU, June 1987), P. 50

influenced global thinking so as to respond to the crisis¹¹¹⁰. Also, the wider public in Europe and USA started putting pressure on their own governments. This had significant impact on donor governments, which started donating their own massive food and non-food item relief to Ethiopia¹¹¹¹.

6.4.2.2. War, the relief operation and NGOs

The civil war challenged the relief operation in two ways. Firstly, relief shelters were targets of the ongoing conflict. This disrupted the emergency operations in which NGOs were involved. Secondly, the government relocated large numbers of people from the Northern provinces as a way of dealing with rebels. NGOs served as important channels through which food reached the people, in large part because donors were against the government that was using aid as a tool to implement its counter-strategic measures.

As soon as the RRC issued its report in February 1983, NGOs rushed into the Wollo, Tigray and Gonder provinces where the civil war was intense. NGOs thus took a great risk in doing so. In order to reduce the risk, NGOs agreed to operate together. Concerning the importance of acting together, NGOs agreed that, "...it would be better for NGOs to act together through CRDA [CCRDA] in assisting Mekelle [the capital city of Tigray], rather than the agencies [NGOs] acting independently"¹¹¹².

In early 1983, NGOs set up a joint supplementary feeding programme that started running well in Mekelle and Korem in Tigray, Ibbat in Gonder and many other places. Assisted by Oxfam, SCF set up a child feeding programme in Korem town. In August 1983, 613 children were getting nutritional and medical assistance and 261 children were under intensive medical and nutritional care¹¹¹³. Soon, however, diarrhea and measles started killing children¹¹¹⁴. With medical assistance from Oxfam, SCF started treating the epidemic and soon got the diseases under control¹¹¹⁵. SCF's employees had profound experience of managing emergency operations, as per one of Oxfam's officials comment that, "SCF are great at emergencies and poor at development in Ethiopia"¹¹¹⁶.

¹¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, P. 50

¹¹¹¹ Jaap van Ginneken, "Collective...", P. 48

¹¹¹² CRDA, "General Membership Meeting" (April 13th, 1982)

¹¹¹³ CRDA, "General Membership meeting" (August 1st, 1983), p.3

¹¹¹⁴ CRDA, "General Membership meeting" (August 1st, 1983), p.3

¹¹¹⁵ Letter from Hugh Goyder to Walsh (February 9, 1983), P. 1, Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

¹¹¹⁶ "Fax Memo" from Harriet Dodd to John Rowley (December 19, 1997), P.1, Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

As in Korem, NGOs started operating jointly in Gonder. In February 1983, NGOs flocked into Ibbat in eastern Gonder¹¹¹⁷. The NGOs that first arrived set up shelters for children. The feeding programme was not as systematic in Ibbat as in Korem. Two of Oxfam's medical officers who arrived in the region later were shocked by the way the children were being fed. One of their reports tells us that, "When we arrived [in Ibbat]....it was feeding a random sample of children of many areas from a small tent with no system of selection or registration"¹¹¹⁸. Oxfam stepped in to improve the way in which children in the shelter were being cared for. Fed with nutrient-rich foods, children could recover significantly¹¹¹⁹. Likewise, the distribution of main rations to famine victims saw also progress at the early stage. As elsewhere, RRC took the responsibility to distribute the main rations to able-bodied men both in the relief shelters as well as in the villages. Due to grain shortages, the RRC could only supply food containing 1,100 calories to each person. NGOs, notably Oxfam, argued with RRC officials that the amount was much less than the daily personal requirement and that RRC should increase the grain to at least 1,750 calories worth¹¹²⁰. The proposal was accepted. The distribution of the increased ration recommended by Dr Shears, Oxfam's medical officer, began in Ibbat on May 22nd, 1983¹¹²¹. Having observed that the RRC was understaffed, Oxfam contracted six school-leavers to assist RRC to distribute food to 15,000 people in May 1983. A great deal of work and responsibility was placed on the shoulders of those school leavers who proved to be, "....invaluable and worked efficiently and consciously throughout"¹¹²².

While it continued in major urban areas, namely Mekelle, due to the heavy security presence there, the emergency operations on the periphery of Tigray were disrupted by the civil war. Korem was the first to suffer from heavy attacks. In April 1983, Korem was ransacked by TPLF; the Field Director of SCF was kidnapped and taken to the Sudan. The relief operation that SCF had started was thus now disrupted, and famine victims were dispersed¹¹²³. However, the government soon rebuilt the relief shelters. This was because the government wanted to cause the starving people

¹¹¹⁷ "Report on Paul Shears Visit to assess and implement drought operation in Ethiopia: 14.03.83-8.4.83" (nd), P. 4

¹¹¹⁸ Hugh Goyder, "Report on Oxfam's Work in Drought Relief: March 14-28, 1983", p. 1

¹¹¹⁹ Report from RRC Gonder to RRC Addis Ababa (Sene 13, 1975)

¹¹²⁰ Letter from Oxfam to RRC Addis Ababa (27.04.83), Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

¹¹²¹ "Ethiopia Drought Relief Programme Update on Dr. Shears Report and Covering the Period 22nd May-10th June" (24.06.83), P. 3

¹¹²² *Ibid*, P. 1

¹¹²³ Michael Buerk, *The Road Taken* (Arrows Book, 2005), P. 285

stay in Korem in relief camps indefinitely. It also encouraged more famine victims to migrate to Korem, all of which was aimed at depriving TPLF of social support¹¹²⁴.

The government pursued an opposite policy with regard to relief shelters in Ibbat than they did in Korem, discouraging famine victims in Ibbat not to leave the shelter of their homes, while NGOs were trying to help the people to go home with rations. In their discussion with the regional RRC, NGOs realised that transportation to move food from Bahr Dar, Addis Zemen and Gonder to Ibbat was a major problem¹¹²⁵. NGOs pooled cash amounting to Eth \$200,000 to finance the transportation of grain to Ibbat¹¹²⁶. This did not work out. TPLF ransacked Ibbat town on May 25th, 1983 and took about 20 Ethiopian hostages connected to various NGOs. The RRC thus told NGOs that grain stores in Addis Zemen were the nearest point to which the people could travel to collect their ration. It took six days to travel from Ibbat to Addis Zemen on foot¹¹²⁷. Exhausted by the famine, the people were unable to travel, so NGOs under the auspices of CCRDA tried shuttling food using donkeys and mules. This did not work out either as the animals collapsed while travelling¹¹²⁸. In the meantime, regional government and party officials reported to the RRC that the shelter had been infiltrated by anti-government forces, and that, "The TPLF, EPLF [Eritrean People Liberation Front] and EDU [Ethiopian Democratic Union] were using the relief rations for their forces". Thus the regional Party Secretary, *Ato* Melaku Tefera, ordered the closure of the shelter. Then excepting the intensive feeding unit and warehouse, the shelter was burned down and the refugees were forced by the local militia to leave the camp. The shanty town composed of straw huts housing 20,000 people was completely destroyed¹¹²⁹.

Another aspect of counter-insurgency measures was the abuse of aid by the government to force the starving people, mainly those from Wollo and Tigray, to go to new settlements. Certainly, donors and NGOs contributed to this. Donors had long been arguing that the government would abuse food intended for the starving people. Concerning this, the former American ambassador to the United Nations, Jeane Kirkpatrick told reporters that, "The diversion of relief goods by a large number of people between the donors and the intended recipients is a very big problem

¹¹²⁴ Hugh Goyder, "Report on Oxfam's Work in Drought Relief: March 14-28, 1983" (nd), P. 1

¹¹²⁵ Norwegian Church Aid, Oxfam, Seventh Day Adventist Church-World Service, Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekki Yesus and Lutheran World Federation

¹¹²⁶ "Reports on Transportation of RRC Grain to Gonder Region" (nd), P.1

¹¹²⁷ Letter from Michael Miller to Goyder (October 1, 1983), P. 1, Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

¹¹²⁸ Letter from Michael Miller to Hugh Goyder (27th August, 1983), P. 3, Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

¹¹²⁹ Fantahun Ayele, "NGOs...", P. 98

in...Ethiopia”¹¹³⁰. Under pressure by the media, international donors started channelling their resources to the government. NGOs were in favour of this, believing that distribution of food was the responsibility of the RRC. This was the reason why NGOs had been assisting the RRC. In October 1982, CCRDA financed the transportation of unspecified amount of RRC grain from Addis Ababa to Tigray. It also supplied the RRC with foods, blankets, soap, and funds to construct relief shelters in Mekelle¹¹³¹. CCRDA also encouraged its members to support the RRC. Motivated by CCRDA’s assistance, Oxfam’s Field Director stated that Oxfam, “...will try and work through the...RRC”¹¹³².

However, placing trust in the government had profound consequences for the relief operation, as Oxfam’s experience shows. Oxfam placed excessive trust in the RRC and it expressed its appreciation in many ways. At a time when Wollo was imminently to experience tragic death rates in the next couple of months, upon visiting parts of Wollo in early 1983, Oxfam’s Senior Medical Advisor reported that, “...it does seem that at present a famine situation has been averted by the effective RRC grain distribution programme”¹¹³³. Oxfam only started taking serious food relief action towards the end of 1984, and this was due to the media influence¹¹³⁴. Up until that point, the supply of water had been Oxfam’s priority for their relief operation in Wollo, which had to do with the scant attention that the RRC gave to water. In early 1983, Oxfam had criticised the administration of the feeding shelter in Ibnat, saying that, “Supply of water to the shelter [was] not the priority of the shelter administration”¹¹³⁵. Oxfam supplied clean water to feeding centres run by NGOs throughout Wollo province¹¹³⁶. Reports show that Oxfam drilled shallow water wells for 42 feeding shelters in Wollo province¹¹³⁷.

However, the priority Oxfam accorded to water assumed that the RRC would provide food to the starving people in Wollo including Bora and Wogel Tena in Wadla Delanta district where Oxfam had set up supplementary feeding programmes. However, the RRC was manipulating food aid to force the people to go to new settlements. Oxfam was well aware that the people were receiving dangerously inadequate grain rations, but it had accepted the RRC’s argument that lack of trucks

¹¹³⁰ “Ethiopia’s Famine: The Politics of Food Aid”, *Miscellanea* No 4 (nd), 51

¹¹³¹ Letter from Libby Grimshaw to Walsh (October 4th, 1982), P. 1, Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

¹¹³² Letter from Goyder to Walsh (September 1, 1982), P. 1, Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

¹¹³³ “Report on Paul Shears Visit to assess and implement drought operation in Ethiopia: 14.03.83-8.4.83” (nd), P. 3

¹¹³⁴ Robert Dodd, “Oxfams Response to Disasters in Ethiopia and the Sudan” (nd), P. 124

¹¹³⁵ Paul Shears and Jenny Deakin, “Ibnat, Gonder: Relief Health Programme Report 1” (Ibnat, 22.03.83), P.2

¹¹³⁶ Robert Dodd, “Oxfam’s Response to Disasters in Ethiopia and the Sudan” (nd), P. 123

¹¹³⁷ *Ibid*, P. 123

made the transportation of grain difficult. However, this was far from the truth. By the time it realised the manipulation of food aid that was underway, Oxfam regretted that, "...more time was not spent enquiring into RRC distribution pattern in Wollo at that time and that detailed information was not gathered from the experience of other NGOs working in Wollo"¹¹³⁸.

The nutritional status of the people in Bora and Wogel Tena was deteriorating. As a result, families were starving their children in order to keep them in the supplementary feeding programme. A report documented the situation in the following way:

Supplementary food intended for the child was diverted to the rest of the family. Indeed, since children come off the programme if they gain weight, there is an obvious incentive to divert food to other members of the family and keep the child with in the category of that qualifies for help¹¹³⁹

The people travelled to nearby areas where they could get food. However, this often did not work out. For instance, in July 1985, at Bora where Oxfam was operating, a crowd of 2000 people who had walked over 15 kilometres were turned away from the store by militia men armed with rifles because there was insufficient grain to make a complete distribution¹¹⁴⁰.

In the meantime, the field staff of Oxfam threatened that they would resign unless Oxfam started distributing food to families. Oxfam thus imported 6000 tons of grain with which it started feeding the starving people in Bora and Wogel Tena¹¹⁴¹.

This supplementary feeding and grain distribution by Oxfam eventually brought the nutritional status of the people back to normal. In November 1985, 13,661 people were receiving grain from the shelters¹¹⁴². The number dropped gradually until January 1987 when there was no nutritional problem in the area at all¹¹⁴³. Because of this, Oxfam closed the Wogel Tena and Bora feeding shelters towards the end of 1986¹¹⁴⁴.

Oxfam got the grain it distributed to the starving people easily from donors who had noted the manipulation of food aid by the government. Donors started using all NGOs for distribution, regardless of the mandate for which they stood. CCRDA, the NGO coordination body and the educational organisation ASE were two of these NGOs. CCRDA received a report that showed that

¹¹³⁸ *Ibid*, P. 125

¹¹³⁹ *Ibid*, P. 58

¹¹⁴⁰ Robert Dodd, "Oxfam's...", P. 129

¹¹⁴¹ "July Meeting" (27 July, 1985), P. 1

¹¹⁴² "Oxfam Dessie: Minutes of Monitoring Meeting" (November 9th, 1985), P.1

¹¹⁴³ "Oxfam Dessie: Minutes of Monthly Meeting" (January 5th, 1987), P.1

¹¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, P. 1

people in Shoa and Sidamo in the south-west, “...were dying like flies”¹¹⁴⁵. NOVIB, CEBEMO and ICCO consigned 6000 tons of grain to CCRDA, with which it began an intensive feeding programme in November 1984, as well as distributing rations in three districts in Northern Shoa and one district in the Sidamo province¹¹⁴⁶. 208, 805 people came to depend on the food that CCRDA was providing in 17 feeding centres. By the time tensions emerged between CCRDA and its members about CCRDA’s mandate, and whether such activities exceeded it, the chairman of the Association spoke confidently, saying that, “CCRDA in doing all this [relief operation] was becoming rather successful”¹¹⁴⁷. CCRDA’s newly employed workers also showed a great deal of dedication. Fekerte tells us that, “...the dedication of Ethiopian and international team was instrumental in saving the lives of people who otherwise would have been at the risk of slow and tortuous death”¹¹⁴⁸. So, on the one hand, CCRDA directly saved this number of people. The negative side, however, was CCRDA’s direct relief operation challenged its capacity to coordinate the operations of its members. As a result, members argued that CCRDA should withdraw from the relief programme forever. Concerning the extent to which direct involvement stifled the coordinating capacity of CCRDA, a representative of SCF stated that

The administration of the programmes heavily over-stretched the physical capability of the Secretariat, but direct operational involvement had compromised CRDA’s role as an impartial coordinator and mediator. And has seriously undermined its credibility as an independent spokesman for NGO community¹¹⁴⁹

CCRDA soon withdrew from the relief operation¹¹⁵⁰. CCRDA had carried out the relief operation according to the assumption that saving human lives was to be the top priority of NGOs. The chairman of CCRDA told members that, “In principle CRDA [CCRDA] should not be operational but this should not be at the expense of the welfare of the people”¹¹⁵¹. This course was taken by other NGOs as well. One of these was ASE, which had considered itself to be a developmental organisation. Towards the end of 1984, however, project participants reached the stage where they could not attend ASE educational programmes. A NOVIB representative who visited Gamo Gofa and Bale was shocked by the agony of the people. ASE thus received 1500 tons of grain from

¹¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p. 2

¹¹⁴⁶ Agri-Service Ethiopia, “Annual Report: 1985” (April 1986), P.28

¹¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, P. 2

¹¹⁴⁸ Fekerte Belete, “The Participation of Christian Relief and Development Association in Relief, Rehabilitation and Development in Ethiopia” (BA thesis, Sociology and Social Administration, AAU, June 1987), P. 21

¹¹⁴⁹ “Memorandum“ from David Alexander (Save the Children Fund) to Chairman of CCRDA (nd), P.1, the Archive of CCRDA in Addis Ababa

¹¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*, P.1

¹¹⁵¹ “Memorandum“ from Ato Asrat Gebre to Members of CCRDA (October 11, 1985), P.2, Archive of CCRDA in Addis Ababa

CCRDA and distributed food directly to the starving people, mainly in Gamo Gofa and to some extent in Bale¹¹⁵². As stated earlier, CCRDA's excellent staff made the relief operation successful. One of the reasons for this was that CCRDA drew experienced medical and nutritional expertise from its own member NGOs, while ASE staff had limited experience with regard to relief operations. Concerning this, ASE stated that, "Its [ASE's] experiences in the field of relief activities have made the task [relief operation] arduous"¹¹⁵³. While it did manage to relieve a number of people in its operational areas, ASE faced a great deal of resistance from INADES-Formation. Considered itself as a "parent" of ASE, INADES-Formation was opposed to ASE's decision to engage directly in the relief operation. Especially as the relief operation was extended, INADES-Formation expressed its frustration, driving ASE to pull out of the relief programme. In a letter to the Executive Director of ASE, an official of INADES-Formation wrote:

You tell me that NOVIB asked your office to do something to alleviate the famine situation in Gamo region and that it detracted from your activities in training for some time. I would have thought that it was rather the job of NGOs specialized in relief operation to deal with the problem. This is the policy we followed in Chad when [it was] famine stricken¹¹⁵⁴.

6.4.3. Free gifts and disempowerment

Ethiopia received one of the highest levels of food aid from the Western world throughout the 1970s and 1980s. The table below shows the amount of food aid Ethiopia received from 1972–1973 to 1982–1983.

Table 9: Total cereal food aid to Ethiopia: 1972-73-1982-83 (in 000 tons)

1972/73	1973/74	1974/ 75	1975/ 76	1976 -77	1977/ 78	1978 /79	1979/8 0	1980/ 81	1981/82	1982/83
1.8	96.1	54.1	86.6	74.7	76.0	162.5	111.5	227.9	189.7	344.0

Source: Dessalegn Rahmeto, "Food Aid and Food Dependency in Ethiopia", *Miscellanea*, *Miscellanea 2*, IES, AAU (1986),
P. 10

¹¹⁵² Agri-Service Ethiopia, "Annual Report: 1985" (April 1986), P.43

¹¹⁵³ *Ibid*, P.6

¹¹⁵⁴ Letter from INADES-Formation to Ato Tilahun Haile (August 11, 1988), PP. 1-2, Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

According to an estimate, between January 1984 and the beginning of 1986, 1.7 million tons of food aid was pledged to Ethiopia to help feed the starving population, which in early 1985 numbered over 10 million¹¹⁵⁵.

As with any form of aid, donors had the power to decide not only the amount of food aid they would donate, but also the purpose for, and the channels through which this aid was to be delivered. Until early 1985, most of the food aid was delivered through the RRC and the Ministry of Agriculture¹¹⁵⁶. In early 1985, donors received reports from NGOs that the RRC were using food aid as an instrument to implement resettlement policies¹¹⁵⁷. As a result, donors started channelling their food aid through NGOs. This upset senior officials of the military government. The president of the Republic himself angrily asked the commissioner of the RRC, "...why it was not possible for donors to give aid directly to the Ethiopian government and leave the distribution to us"¹¹⁵⁸.

NGOs started distributing food and non-food relief items to the starving people in relief shelters and at distribution centres. By April 1985, there were over 45 shelters, 280 distribution centres and 150 feeding centres set up in the country¹¹⁵⁹.

The RRC attempted to enforce guidelines about the amount of food a person was to receive per week. The guidelines that the RRC had been applying since 1974 stipulated that a person whose age fell between 1 and 5 years was entitled to get 3 kgs of grains; those between 6 and 15 would get 7.5 kgs, and those over 16 would get 15 kgs per week¹¹⁶⁰. However, the RRC did not have the courage to force NGOs to adhere to these guidelines, afraid that pressing NGOs hard could cause donors to stop the flow of aid. The NGOs themselves would take any action of the RRC as a provocation, and they used to inform donors whenever this happened¹¹⁶¹. After a long period of indecision, in July 1986 the RRC addressed a letter to NGOs in which it stated that NGOs had to reduce the amount of food they were distributing to recipients¹¹⁶².

¹¹⁵⁵ Dessalegn Rahmeto, "Food Aid and Food Dependency in Ethiopia", *Miscellanea*, *Miscellanea* 2, IES, AAU (1986), P. 10

¹¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, P. 17

¹¹⁵⁷ Tony Vaux, *The Selfish Altruist: Relief Work in Famine and war* (USA and UK, Earthscan, 2001), P. 49-50

¹¹⁵⁸ Dawit Wolde Giorgis, *Red Tears*...P. 200

¹¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*, P. 228

¹¹⁶⁰ Letter from RRC, Wollo Province to World Vision et al (July 1985), Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

¹¹⁶¹ Dawit Wolde Giorgis, *Red Tears*... P. 242-243

¹¹⁶² Letter from RRC, Wollo Province to World Vision et al (July 1985), Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

The people in the shelter grew comfortable with the amount, as well as the quality of foods that they were receiving from NGOs. As a result, they refused to leave the shelters even after they had recovered from the famine. The then Chief Commissioner of the RRC wrote in his memoir that, “...the people who had recovered from malnutrition...did not want to go home. They tended to feel more secure and comfortable in the shelters than in the uncertain, grueling labor of tilling their land”¹¹⁶³

This “dependency syndrome” became very serious in some parts of the country, namely in Wollo. Some food recipients went to the extent of attacking and beating up NGO workers when they were forced to leave the shelter, such as happened when Oxfam was about to close one of its shelters in Wollo. The minutes of the organisation documented that, “One [Oxfam worker] from Tsehy Mewcha had been beaten up by some recently discharged recipients”¹¹⁶⁴.

NGOs sometimes went to great lengths to extend the time recipients could stay in the shelter. One of the more surprising reasons why they did so is well summed up by the ex-Chief Commissioner of the RRC, who said that:

Some volunteers [working for NGOs]....refused to cooperate with us in closing shelters. Work in the shelters had been the most fulfilling event in their lives; it had been exciting, a learning experience, and they regretted giving it up and going back to their usual jobs. It was too soon, they said, always too soon¹¹⁶⁵.

The comfort of recipients, coupled with their extended stay in the shelters had long-lasting consequences. One of this was the development of “dependency syndrome”. The dependency mindset gained ground to the extent that it came to feature in societal proverbs. Describing the relative generosity of NGOs over the government and RRC, one of these proverbs stated that:

ደርጉ ዳመና ነው፤
ደርጉ ዳመና ነው፤
ኮሚሽን ካፈያ ነው፤
የሚያጥለቅልቀው መካነ ኢየሱስ ነው።
The Durgue is cloud;
The Durgue is cloud;
The Commission [RRC] is drizzle;
The one that floods is Mekan Iyesus [an NGO]¹¹⁶⁶.

However, dependency was neither fully accepted, nor acceptable, as shown by other proverbs such as this one:

¹¹⁶³ Dawit Wolde Giorgis, *Red Tears*..., P. 243

¹¹⁶⁴ "Oxfam Dessie: Minutes of Monthly Meeting" (January 5th, 1987), P.1

¹¹⁶⁵ Dawit Wolde Giorgis, *Red Tears*, P. 243

¹¹⁶⁶ Haile Mariam Seyfu, *Yätedfya Zämanat: Rehabna čänäfär, Yätarik Mastaweša* (Addis Ababa, 2005EC), P. 179

ተው አይሆንም በሉት እጁ ለሰለሰ፤
ከባህር የመጣ ዳቦ እየገመሰ።
Tell him [a peasant] that his hands get soft
As he eats bread that comes from overseas¹¹⁶⁷.

To summarise, the food crises of 1973–1974 and 1983–1984 grew beyond the local capacity. Respective governments allowed each of these famines to take their natural courses, believing that reports about the famines would call into question their legitimacy. Western donors themselves who had assisted the imperial government handle the food crisis of the 1970s became indifferent largely due to the ideological orientation as well as the global alignment of the military period. Millions of people lost their lives as a result of the indifference of the imperial government in the 1970s and Western donors in the 1980s.

The catastrophes were reversed only after NGOs took initiatives. Having realised that these famines had grown beyond the local capacity to relieve them, NGOs brought the case to the attention of the international community. In so doing, they made use of the media, which created worldwide sympathy for the famine victims during both the 1970s and 1980s famines.

While the impact of NGOs' advocacy is unquestionable, their actual relief operations, especially in the 1980s, were influenced by the insurgency and counter-insurgency measures. Though they had initially failed to realise the government's manipulation of food to force resettlement that was an aspect of its counter-insurgency strategy, NGOs served as channels through which food reached the starving people, because their donors questioned the manipulation of food aid by the government. However, the way NGOs distributed food did not take into account the long-term effect of free-gifting. By feeding the starved people over a long period, NGOs ended up instilling a sense of dependency in some people, meaning, by dependency, an excessive expectation on the part of the rural population that NGOs would tackle their concerns alone. This added an unexpected dimension to the structural problems encountered by NGOs, which posed further challenges to their effort to mobilise project participants to act to address their socio-economic problems, and the changes that occurred in this regard from the end of the 1990s on.

¹¹⁶⁷ *Ibid*, P.181

6.5. NGOs and the challenges of sustainable development

6.5.1. Introduction

NGOs admitted that it has been difficult to reduce poverty in rural areas. NGOs have often been frustrated by the kind of poverty that they have witnessed, as one ASE report describes, stating, “Not only do these [deep instances of poverty] require a great deal of effort to bring about change, but they...sometimes lead to frustration”¹¹⁶⁸.

Land shortages and a variety of financial obligations peasants had to meet were a major cause of poverty in the southern parts of Ethiopia during the imperial period. Tackling these land issues was of key strategic importance in motivating people to become active participants in NGO projects, and efforts were made in this regard. Some government officials even took personal initiatives to address land shortage. Some NGOs also attempted to address land shortage by clearing forests and bringing those lands under cultivation. These efforts generated profound enthusiasm amongst project participants and NGOs exploited this enthusiasm to move their own programmes forward. Despite efforts made, and this early enthusiasm, land issues continued to have a stifling effect on the participation of a significant number of very poor project participants. Moreover, despite the rural land proclamation of March 4th, 1975 that the new revolutionary government issued, the initial public enthusiasm that NGOs had witnessed did not maintain its momentum. Those organisations of the new military government with which NGOs started operating pursued a top-heavy approach that ignored the perspectives of project participants. Project participants thus responded in ways that frustrated these interventions. The intentions of NGOs to increase their impact by applying “participatory” methods from the early 1980s on did not bring about much change. This was due to the fact that the free distribution of food of the early 1980s led project participants to ask for payment for their participation. Moreover, corruption at various levels stifled projects managed by NGOs and frustrated NGOs themselves.

NGOs enhanced advocacy for change from towards the end of the 1990s. This caused NGOs to identify the concerns of the society closely. To that end, NGOs created various networks that aired collective voices, actively participated in influencing the government to formulate pro-poor policies of various kinds. Above all, they sensitised the public to – and the public developed – its

¹¹⁶⁸ *Ibid*, P. 19-20

claim-making power, as was seen in the context of the national and regional elections that took place in 2005.

The main argument of this chapter is that while poverty in Ethiopia has entrenched structural causes, NGOs have expended much of their resources on addressing its symptoms, via short-sighted, project-based approaches. NGOs registered visible success from the late 1990s when they started working on the real causes of poverty. This was, however, stifled by the government. To continue with this argument, it will be discussed how a sectoral approach had been pursued up until the early 1990s, as NGOs enlisted specific rural populations for specific projects. From the early 1990s, joint efforts were put in place by NGOs in an attempt to create a better impact. This will be discussed here as a continuation of the sectoral approach.

6.5.2. Environmental conservation and agriculture

6.5.2.1. Land, participation and results

Agriculture is the mainstay of the country. Thus, agricultural development has been the top priority of governments and NGOs. The imperial government argued that agricultural development was crucial to eradicate poverty. In a speech that he made in 1955, Emperor Haile Selassie I declared that:

A country and a people that become self-sufficient by the development of agriculture can look forward with confidence to the future. Agriculture is not only the chief among those fundamental and ancient tasks which have been essential to the survival of mankind, but also ranks first among the prerequisite to the industrial and other development¹¹⁶⁹

The monarch's speech prompted the first planned intervention that began in 1957. This set the general context in which provincial governors put in place efforts to tackle socio-economic bottlenecks of development. Wollaita was one of these provinces that suffered from a serious land shortage created partly by high population. As a result, structural food shortage has remained a hallmark of the region¹¹⁷⁰.

Population pressure and hence land shortage have historical roots. Travellers in the early 20th century witnessed Wollaita's high population, noting also that farmers had started cultivating hillsides in the 1930s, indicating the growing shortage, then, of land¹¹⁷¹. The land tenure system

¹¹⁶⁹ Dessalegn Rahmato, *Development Interventions in Wollaita, 1960s-2000s: A Critical Review* (Forum for Social Studies, Addis Ababa, 2007), PP.4-5

¹¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*, PP.4-5

¹¹⁷¹ Dessalegn Rahmato, *Development...*, p. 6

during the imperial period contributed to this land shortage. A study conducted in Bolosso district in 1971 shows that 23% of rural households were tenants, 12% owner-tenants and 65% were land owners. This was also true of the other six districts of Wollaita province¹¹⁷².

Governors of Wollaita were concerned about the socio-economic problems of the rural population. *Ato* Germame Neway made the earliest attempt to tackle the shortage of land. This originated from his personal conviction that the economic bottlenecks could be solved only by the full participation of a population freed from exploitation and permitted, under wise leadership, to act in its own self-interest¹¹⁷³. However, this idea and its attempted implementation proved to have deep socio-economic and political implications that went far beyond its specific context. As a result, it was stifled in its bud. When *Ato* Germame started distributing government holdings to the landless, this sharply reduced labour supplies, causing local landowners to ask the monarch to remove *Ato* Germame from his post. Germame explained to the emperor that it had been his responsibility as governor to end the suffering of landless people in the province. Unable to openly criticise such public-spirited concern, Haile Selassie chose to transfer Germame to administer the pastoral Somalis of Jijiga¹¹⁷⁴.

Ato Germame's replacement, *Däjjazmač* Wolde Semaita, had similar concerns to his predecessor about the socio-economic problems in Wollaita. As a result, *Däjjazmač* Wolde Semaita carried forward certain of the efforts that *Ato* Germame had initiated. Differences did exist between the two governors: *Ato* Germame had a socialist perspective, thus, he had organised farmers into cooperatives. *Däjjazmač* Wolde Semaita, on the other hand, believed private ownership of land to be a key factor for development. He has continued to hold this position. In an interview that he gave, *Däjjazmač* Wolde Semaita asserted that, "Farmers should own their land in order to develop and protect it. Development is actually associated with owning more be it material or intellectual"¹¹⁷⁵. The second difference between the two governors was (thus) in the approaches that they pursued. While *Ato* Germame had started distributing government lands in a way that undermined the interests of the land owning class, *Däjjazmač* Wolde Semaita pursued a cautious approach, in consultation with the monarch. In his first tour of the province upon taking up his post, he visited the rural areas of Wollaita and was struck by the dense settlement of the rural areas.

¹¹⁷² *Ibid*, P.6,7

¹¹⁷³ Harold G. Marcus, *A History of Ethiopia* (California University Press, Berkeley, 1994), P. 167-168

¹¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*, P. 167-168

¹¹⁷⁵ ASE, "ASE's 30th...", P. 30

After consulting with the monarch, he came up with resettlement as a solution to tackle land shortage. He resettled landless peasants from the Wollaita highlands and the northern provinces at the Abela settlement in the Humbo lowland; the second resettlement site was at Bele in Kindo Koysha, involving mostly Wollaita peasants from the highlands¹¹⁷⁶.

Alongside reducing the shortage of land, *Däjjazmač* Wolde reformed the judiciary and administrative structures¹¹⁷⁷. He also provided Wollaita with a telephone service, electricity, banks and roads linking all the districts¹¹⁷⁸. A number of schools, clinics and several water supply systems were also constructed during his administration. A number of efforts were also put underway to improve agricultural productivity. For the first time, the agricultural extension service was put in place; new varieties of maize and other crops were introduced, along with the use of chemical fertilisers¹¹⁷⁹.

Like his predecessor, *Däjjazmač* Wolde Semait believed that the rural population had to participate to change their socio-economic status, and this was practically demonstrated; in fact many of the tasks mentioned above were accomplished through the active participation of the rural people of Wollaita. The participation of the rural people took two different forms. The first was financial contribution. Each household willingly contributed an amount ranging from Eth \$0.50 cents to one *Birr* every year towards the “development fund”. The money was scrupulously managed and used for the purpose for which it was collected. According to the records, a total of Eth \$1.22 million was raised through this means from 1963 to 1970, of which all except Eth \$ 45, 797 – i.e. only four percent – was used to pay salaries and per diems for essential staff. The second form of participation was that everyone was required to participate in the “development” work being undertaken, by providing labour and other assistance¹¹⁸⁰.

The rural people thus developed the confidence that they could improve their situation if supported by their leaders as well as development organisations. NGOs began their activities in this context, where people had already developed a great deal of enthusiasm. This created an opportune moment for NGOs like ASE. ASE stood to impart technical skills through education so that peasants could address their own development problems. Clearly, ASE did not stand to address the land shortage

¹¹⁷⁶ Dessalegn Rahmato, *Development...*, p. 29-30

¹¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, P. 28

¹¹⁷⁸ ASE, “ASE’s 30th...”, P. 27

¹¹⁷⁹ Dessalegn Rahmato, *Development...* p. 29

¹¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 28-29

and population pressure in Wollaita directly, however, ASE's agricultural education programme was welcomed by local authorities. This was because its programme was believed to complement efforts put in place to address the major land shortage and to develop the province. Concerning the complementary role of ASE, *Däjjazmač* Wolde Semait described how, "ASE added another dimension to the overall development effort when it started there in 1969"¹¹⁸¹.

The agricultural courses offered by ASE were well-received by project participants as well¹¹⁸². ASE carried out a number of preparatory tasks to ensure this, firstly by translating the agricultural course prepared by INADES-Formation from French into Amahric. This course had originally been formulated in a way that responded to the socio-economic realities of Francophone African countries. ASE believed that a literal translation of these educational materials would not be relevant to peasants in Ethiopia. It thus recruited Ethiopians who knew the socio-economic lives of the rural population to adapt these educational materials to the rural Ethiopian context¹¹⁸³. This was carried out successfully. Project participants themselves told ASE that the contents of the agricultural courses were of great relevance to their agricultural activities¹¹⁸⁴. The second task that ASE carried out was to tackle the challenge of illiteracy. Like elsewhere in the country, most project participants had low levels of literacy. In fact, the anti-illiteracy programmes of UNESCO and the National Army of Letters had resulted in some literacy amongst farmers in rural Wollaita. ASE, assisted by the extension agents of the Ministry of Agriculture, organised project participants into groups and identified literate farmers to assist illiterate members of the groups¹¹⁸⁵. Project participants themselves could also visit the extension officers of the Ministry of Agriculture whenever they needed assistance¹¹⁸⁶.

ASE registered these early positive outcomes, though the project had its own shortfalls that originated from structural bottlenecks. Like any educational venture, ASE's programme had dual effects. The first one was related to broadening awareness; the second was the acquisition of technical skills. ASE intended to make project participants aware of their value and that agriculture, in which they were engaged, was a worthwhile task. ASE thus told its project participants that,

¹¹⁸¹ ASE, "ASE's 30th...", P. 27

¹¹⁸² Informant, *Ato Alemu Gebre Wold*

¹¹⁸³ Akpak Studio, "Yaagriservis Ethiopia Ameseraretna Yewedfit Aqtachaw" (Agri-Service Ethiopia's Establishment and its Future" (nd)

¹¹⁸⁴ "Supplementary Note on Conclusion and Recommendation of Agri-Service Ethiopia (1974-89): Extract"(nd), P. 5

¹¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*, P. 5

¹¹⁸⁶ *Ibid*

“Farming is a noble occupation. Feeding others is certainly as noble an occupation as healing them, pulling out their teeth or clothing them”¹¹⁸⁷. Messages like this that reached project participants did indeed build up their confidence that their agricultural occupation was, in fact, a human invention that deserved respect. One of the founders of ASE who witnessed this change of attitude reported that, “...we could see as soon as ASE began to walk, that farmers’ steps were backed and their ambition enlightened through their becoming more conscious of their own value....of the real value of their own wisdom”¹¹⁸⁸.

The early success of ASE surely resulted from a structured educational venture wherein ASE fieldworkers were assisting project participants. Project participants not only engaged with ASE’s fieldworkers but also literate farmers assigned to help them as well as extension agents of the Ministry of Agriculture. Fascinating discussions took place between these semi-professionals (extension agents of the Ministry of Agriculture and fieldworkers of ASE) and project participants, however, project participants inevitably had a number of queries which were beyond both the ASE fieldworkers and extension agents of the Ministry of Agriculture. As ASE officials reflected, some of their questions, “...[were] not always easy to answer”¹¹⁸⁹. Some of these questions were:

- ✓ How can we distinguish the male papaya-tree from the female papaya-tree at planting time?
- ✓ Certain vegetable wither when the rainy season comes? Why?
- ✓ Why don’t mules reproduce?
- ✓ Why does the coffee tree dry up when we dig around its roots to pull out weeds?
- ✓ Why does it not rain in winter?
- ✓ How come some flowers are red, others are blue and still others yellow? Don’t they all eat the same food?¹¹⁹⁰

Though their numbers are not precisely known, informants saw project participants starting ventures of their own, assisted by the agricultural skills that they had acquired from ASE. This encouraged project participants’ close relatives and neighbours to start similar activities. For instance, *Ato Berhanu Seboka* became an ASE project participant in Wollaita in 1970. Assisted by the education that he received, *Ato Berhanu* started poultry production and cattle fattening. Concerning the overspill effect of ASE’s programme, he stated that, “The education I received from Agri-Service brought a change in my life and financial capacity. It had a multiplier effect on my family, relatives and neighbours”¹¹⁹¹. Vegetable production, poultry, and cattle fattening and bee-keeping were some of the activities that project participants started in Wollaita province. Cattle

¹¹⁸⁷ ASE, “Situational Report” (May 1975), P. 3

¹¹⁸⁸ ASE, “ASE’s 30th...”, P. 24

¹¹⁸⁹ ASE, “Situational Report” (May 1975), P. 23

¹¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*, P. 23

¹¹⁹¹ Akpak Studio, “Yaagriservis...” (2000)

fattening was the major venture which many project participants started up. However, their problem was that oxen grazed *wajima* (*Trifolium spp*) that kills cattle. ASE trained project participants how to deal with the problem. One informant explained how once upon a time, his cattle became sick after they had eaten *Wajima* grass. Their bellies swelled and they began to fall. He learned from ASE how to deal with the problem, referred also to the training manual he was given by ASE. He measured part of the bellies of the cattle and he pierced with an awl. As a result, the cattle were relieved and they started breathing well and stood up immediately¹¹⁹².

Ultimately, rich farmers were the prime beneficiaries of ASE. Whenever richer farmers who owned relatively larger areas of land were active participants in the ASE educational programme, tenants, the landless and small scale land owners either declined from the outset to become project participants, or dropped out soon after they were enlisted. ASE believed that illiteracy was a major factor that prevented peasants from being active participants, declaring that, “The high rate of illiteracy limits the number of subscribers”¹¹⁹³. ASE did not, however, note that illiteracy was highest among the poor farmers, whereas those rural residents who had sufficient land of their own had often attended the anti-illiteracy programmes of UNESCO and the National Army of Letters. Moreover, the land tenure system, as well as the tribute payments associated with it, also prevented poor farmers from being active participants of ASE’s programme. Like elsewhere in the south, poor farmers entered different forms of agreement with landowners. They either rented lands from the landowners or accepted sharecropping. These agreements forced poor farmers to commit a substantial part of their harvest to fulfil their obligations, and they were left with little of their produce as the price of land rent increased from the early 1960s on¹¹⁹⁴. This was the prime factor that discouraged poor farmers from being active participants of ASE’s educational programme. A document ASE produced in 1975 noted the reasons why the poor people had failed to participate in its educational venture. It stated that:

It would appear...to be a question of the consequence of certain constraints of a social and economic nature which have always burdened the life of this population and which the events of 1974 [the Ethiopian revolution] were to bring sharply to the fore¹¹⁹⁵.

¹¹⁹² *Ibid*

¹¹⁹³ "Supplementary Note...", P. 7

¹¹⁹⁴ Mirjam van Reisen, "Programme Evaluation 1989" (1989), P. 9

¹¹⁹⁵ "Supplementary Note...", P. 29

To make things worse, ASE imposed fees on project participants, based on the assumption that while all project participants were poor, they were not beggars¹¹⁹⁶. Though it did not state as much in any of its publications, ASE asserted that, "...the token fee is often reduced and sometimes overlooked completely and deliberately"¹¹⁹⁷. This was done to keep project participants in the educational programme. Though ASE thus pursued it with caution, the fee imposed discouraged poor project participants from attending the educational programme of ASE¹¹⁹⁸.

The poor farmers also declined to participate as ASE did not attempt to solve their major concerns. Whenever NGOs did introduce programmes that addressed their major concerns, even poor peasants demonstrated active participation. This was demonstrated in the case of Solidarité et Développements, which, financed by Oxfam, started a venture in Anger-Gutin in eastern Wollega that covered an extensive stretch of land conducive for agriculture¹¹⁹⁹. This pilot agricultural development project in Anger-Gutin involved the distribution of land to tenants and landless peasants. The project started with a small number of participants, settling 300 tenants and landless peasants who brought 160 hectares of land under cultivation. The enthusiasm of project participants to improve their status was impressive. On the other hand, the project refused to accept the applications of large numbers of tenants and landless people from Gojjam, Shoa, Wollega and Wollaita, for reasons detailed below. Commenting on the number of applications submitted on October 8th 1973 alone, the organisation stated that, "This morning, around 60 people applied for a place at the centre; they came from Wollega, Shoa, and Gojjam provinces. During the past months, applications to join the project have risen sharply. Yet there was no announcement that there would be place for new candidates"¹²⁰⁰.

Solidarité et Développements declined to accept the applications of large number of applicants. The organisation criticised the way settlements were being carried out in Ethiopia, usually in response to emergency situations. Solidarité et de Développements argued that the relocation of people was not, by itself, development. Development occurs, Solidarité et de Développements argued, "...when deeper-going and often expensive measures give the needed follow up to the first

¹¹⁹⁶ *Ibid*, P. 15

¹¹⁹⁷ *Ibid*, P. 15

¹¹⁹⁸ Mirjam van Reisen, "Programme Evaluation 1989" (1989), P. 17

¹¹⁹⁹ Zelalem Tefera, "State Sponsored and Self-initiated Resettlements, their Impacts on the Ecology of Resettlement Areas: The case of Angar Gutin in Eastern Wallaga" in Svein Ege et al (eds), *Proceedings of the 16th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies* (Trondheim, 2009), P. 882

¹²⁰⁰ "Anger-Gutin Project: Operational Report Covering the period from January 1972 to October 1973" (nd), P. 1

phase emergency settlement”¹²⁰¹. To that end, Solidarité et de Développement limited the number of project participants. The project argued that, “...many failures in such schemes in other African countries warns us to be extremely cautious with this type of settlement and to limit it to the strict minimum”¹²⁰².

The plan of Solidarité et de Développement to limit the number of project participants had two consequences. Firstly, project participants came to have a variety of privileges, namely housing, medical services, administration and so on. Project participants themselves were able to improve their production year after year, backed as they were by the project. Cotton, sunflower and Michigan beans were tried in 1971 and 1972 with a satisfactory result of 10.5 quintals per hectare of cotton, 24 quintals of sun flowers per hectare, and 23.5 quintals of Michigan beans per hectare. Production in 1973–1974 was even better than in the proceeding years¹²⁰³. Project participants had been concerned that the vergin land might not yield results. Thus, the earliest settlers had asked Solidarité et de Développement to pay them for the work they would be doing, as social security. Solidarité et de Développement agreed that the amount to be paid would be deducted from the income of the farm from crop production. In fact, project participants were able to generate income that exceeded the production costs¹²⁰⁴. The second consequence of the caution pursued by the project was that the news about the success of the project encouraged a great number of applicants. Turned down by Solidarité et de Développement, applicants now started their own settlements on the other side of the Anger-Gutin valley. Seeing the emergence of settlements, as well as the risks involved, the project reported that:

Some wild settlements in some corners of the project area has been noticed. The project staff is not in a position to prevent such wild settlements. However, it is felt to be dangerous because of the imminent danger of cattle trypanosomosis, social disorder, human disease and inadequate financing and technical possibilities to promote development¹²⁰⁵

6.5.2.2. NGOs, from optimism to pessimism

The revolution of 1974 brought with it a great deal of optimism. The land reform was one of the sources of this optimism. Conversely, the revolution brought to power a handful of junior military and non-commissioned officers who applied a top-heavy approach to tackle socio-economic

¹²⁰¹ *Ibid*, P. 27

¹²⁰² *Ibid*, P. 27

¹²⁰³ *Ibid*, P. 45

¹²⁰⁴ *Ibid*, P. 45

¹²⁰⁵ *Ibid*, P. 9

problems. As a result, the free participation that NGOs had, to a certain extent, experienced during the imperial period deteriorated soon after the occurrence of the revolution.

The land reform proclamation of March 4th, 1975 gave every household a piece of land. The reform had a far-reaching effect in the south where it released the peasantry from the extortionist rents charged by landlords which had taken between half and three-quarters of the peasants' produce¹²⁰⁶. In the north, the reform was implemented in only a few areas as most of the countryside was under the control of rebels, who carried out their own reforms¹²⁰⁷.

Landless peasants and tenants well received the land reform. NGOs themselves supported the reform, hoping that access to land would encourage project participants to participate in improving their conditions¹²⁰⁸. A set of measures planned by NGOs attest to their optimism toward increasing their contributions. ASE, which welcomed the revolution with a great deal of joy, planned a wide range of tasks with a view to increasing its contributions to project participants. One of its plans was that of diversifying its educational methods. The organisation argued that a comprehensive educational method could rapidly transform the habits and attitude of farmers more effectively than a single method. The organisation drew on experiences from other developing countries, stating, "Experience has shown in other developing countries that the diversification of teaching methods (institutional training of farmers, demonstrations, extension, group discussion, support by the radio, etc. makes it possible to rapidly transform the habits and attitudes of farmers"¹²⁰⁹. The second aspect of the plan was making available educational materials in the local languages of project participants. This was made possible by the Ethiopian revolution. Like governmental organisations, ASE had been using Amharic as the single medium of instruction. This had discouraged the participation of some project participants. The new government allowed that ten languages could be used for rural educational purposes. Thus, ASE translated its educational materials into Oromigna, Tigre and Wollaitigna¹²¹⁰. The third aspect of ASE's plan was to offer project participants a number of incentives. Its purpose was, "...to reinforce the motivation of the participants..."¹²¹¹. The last aspect of the plan was to increase visits to project participants. ASE

¹²⁰⁶ Fred Halliday and Maxine Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution* (Servic Filmsetting Ltd, Manchester, Britain, 1981), P. 99

¹²⁰⁷ Paul Kolemen, "The Politics...", P. 12

¹²⁰⁸ "Supplementary Note...", P. 7

¹²⁰⁹ *Ibid*, P. 8

¹²¹⁰ Mirjam van Reisen, "Programme..." , P. 6

¹²¹¹ "Supplementary Note...", P. 7

stated that, "...visits are moral boosters or incentives [for project participants] to continue, because a personal rapport is established between the organisation [ASE] and its subscribers [project participants]"¹²¹².

Certainly, there was no NGO in the country that was so responsive to the Ethiopian revolution as ASE, as indicated by its post-revolutionary plans. Though none so much as ASE did, other NGOs also responded to the optimism that prevailed during the revolution. Partly financed by Oxfam, Solidarité et de Développements was one of these. Solidarité et de Développements showed its commitment to terminating its pilot phase and thereafter to enlist as many settlers as its capacity permitted, for which it was promised support by Oxfam. In fact, the timing of the prevailing revolutionary optimism coincided well with the organisation's scheduled plan. As early as 1973, Solidarité et de Développements had stated that, "The objective of the second phase...is to dig deeper, to make the definitive move to real development and create all prerequisite services needed to effect larger scale development as from the middle of 1976"¹²¹³.

NGOs' plans to increase their impact went hand in hand with other prospects in the country. To begin with, the land reform resulted in marked improvements in the economic positions of peasants. The landless received land and, and the extraction of rent and taxes by landlords ceased¹²¹⁴. Secondly, the Northern provinces recovered from the 1973–1974 food crisis, due in large part to the fact that the region received sufficient rains in 1974¹²¹⁵. The agricultural product harvested the year after, in 1975, greatly diminished the emergency situation. A bulletin published by RRC two years after the occurrence of the famine tells us that:

በአሁኑ ጊዜ በወሎና በትግራይ ክፍላተ ሀገር በድርቅ ምክንያት የሚታየው ሁኔታ የዛሬ ሁለት አመት ከነበረው በጣም የተለየ ነው። ዛሬ በርሀብ ሳቢያ ወሎና ትግራይ የሚሞት ሰው የለም።

The drought condition in Wollo and Tigray two years ago is quite different from now; today, no one dies of hunger in Tigray and Wollo¹²¹⁶

Despite these factors that generated optimism amongst NGOs, the top-heavy approach taken by the government was damaging the prospects of project participants, and NGOs tacitly endorsed this approach until the early 1980s. From the mid 1970s, NGOs and governmental organisations worked on food security, after the food crisis of 1973–1974. The basis of this focus was the mid-

¹²¹² ASE, "Situational Report" (May 1975), P. 20

¹²¹³ "Anger-Gutin Project: Operational Report Covering the period from January 1972 to October 1973" (nd), P. 1

¹²¹⁴ Paul Kolenen, "The Politics...", P. 13

¹²¹⁵ RRC, "A Review of the Relief and Rehabilitation Programme" (March 1975), P.1

¹²¹⁶ "A Bulletin Dedicated to the Ethiopian Revolution of 1974", in Amharic (1968 EC), P.12

and long-term environmental and agricultural programmes that RRC prepared in early 1975¹²¹⁷. NGOs were involved in both resettlement and the environmental conservation efforts undertaken in drought-prone areas that were a part of the mid-term programmes. The RRC attempted to resettle people from famine-prone regions to areas where there was relative fertility, using raw force. The RRC started its forced resettlement programme in the Ogaden, in Hararghe province. The Somalis who lived in the Ogaden were pastoralists who had suffered in the famine of 1974–1975. In early 1975, when discussions between NGOs over the future of the shelter population in the Ogaden got underway, there were 40,000 Somalis in 11 relief shelters there. Oxfam, which was heavily involved in the relief operation in the region, proposed a rehabilitation programme should commence. As Oxfam's East Africa regional director, Mr Malcolm suggested, "...with the general condition of the camp improving the maximum effort must be switched to rehabilitation"¹²¹⁸.

A number of NGOs, such as CCRDA, the Red Cross Society, the Catholic Relief Service, and World Vision agreed with Oxfam's proposal. The RRC came up with a plan to resettle the shelter population, and NGOs offered material and financial assistance to make the settlement habitable. The plan was to settle the Somalis along the Wabi Shebele River, in Gode; Kelafo, Imi, Musthil and Burkur, however, these pastoralists were openly opposed to adopting the new sedentary way of life that was being proposed to them. The RRC tried to convince them, ignored their resistance, and continued with the plan. The ex-Commissioner of the RRC has written about what happened next, on August 16th, 1975:

Early in the morning some of the drivers who had been sleeping in their trucks near the shelter came rushing up to me in absolute shock. The camp was deserted. The Tukuls [the Somali shelter] had been quickly and silently dismantled and over 10, 500 people had vanished, leaving behind only the very old, the weak and sick – 234 people. There was something eerie in the way they had managed to reach a consensus and disappeared unnoticed by any of us. We learnt they had crossed the border into Somali¹²¹⁹

The resettlement that the RRC had tried to effect in the Ogaden had strong political motives. The Ogaden remained a bone of contention between Ethiopia and neighbouring Somali. The government had thus wanted (and failed) to secure the loyalty of the Somali. The ex-Commissioner tells us that:

The nomads posed a problem for a country attempting to develop its economic potential. Their wandering way of life made it impossible for us to educate them or to incorporate them into the work force of the nation. They were always on the move with no concept of time or place. They wondered with no sense of border between Somalia and Ethiopia. It was particularly difficult for

¹²¹⁷ *Ibid*, P. 5

¹²¹⁸ "Report by Malcolm Harper of Oxfam on a Visit to the Ogaden: 26th July to August 2nd, 1975" (nd), 10

¹²¹⁹ Dawit Wolde Giorgis, *Red Tears*, P. 284-285

our young revolutionary government because Somali claimed sovereignty over the Ogaden. If we were to demand loyalty from the nomads, then Ethiopia had to care for them, educate them, provide them with opportunities¹²²⁰

Despite its failures, resettlement continued with increased intensity. An indication of this intensity was the establishment of the Settlement Authority in February 1976, which took under its supervision 28 settlements that a number of organisations had been running since the 1960s, in which settlements, 12,990 households were living. These settlements tripled, and from 1976 to 1979 the number of households living in them grew to 20, 298¹²²¹.

The Settlement Authority criticised NGOs for settling only small numbers of settlers at too much cost, and subsequently began expropriating settlements that NGOs had previously been managing, such as that run by Solidarité et de Développements. The Authority criticised Solidarité et de Développements for the “luxury” it offered to just a very few settlers in the Anger-Gutin valley. The Authority thus terminated the work permit of Solidarité et de Développements, and Oxfam stopped financing the project. The Authority then launched large-scale and involuntary resettlement programmes in Anger-Gutin, mainly of people from Wollo and Tigray. In fact, some resettlers, mainly those from Wollo, said that they had accepted the government’s offer of resettlement. They mentioned the scarcity of farm plots and land degradation as factors for their acceptance, such that their resettlement was not forced¹²²². The majority of those settlers in the Anger-Gutin who came from Tigray, however, were coerced to resettle. One informant narrated that there had been neither drought nor land scarcity in Tigray to justify the relocation. The resettlement of the Tigrayans was, rather, carried out for political reasons, aimed at containing insurgent activities in the area¹²²³. As such, forced settlers from Tigray took every opportunity to escape the settlement. In response, the government placed militia and other armed personnel there, however, this failed to stop the high rates of desertion. One report shows that from 1978 to 1982, the desertion rate from the Anger-Gutin agricultural and settlement project was 62%¹²²⁴.

¹²²⁰ Dawit Bekelle quoted in Paul Kolemen, “The Politics...”, P. 282

¹²²¹ *Ibid*, P. 132

¹²²² Zelalem Tefera, “State Sponsored and Self-initiated Resettlements, their Impacts on the Ecology of Resettlement Areas: The case of Angar Gutin in Eastern Wallaga)” in Svein Ege et al (eds), *Proceedings of the 16th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies* (Trondheim, 2009), P. 884

¹²²³ *Ibid*, P. 884

¹²²⁴ Dessalegn Rahmeto, *Resettlement in Ethiopia: Tragedy of Population Relocation in the 1980s* (Forum for Social Studies, Addis Ababa, 2010), PP. 23, 41-42

The top-heavy approach and escalation of the anti-Western propaganda of the government towards the end of the 1970s bound NGOs to reduce their commitments¹²²⁵. Conversely, the government urged NGOs to increase their commitments to justify their existence. In this context, NGOs diverted their resources to financing environmental conservation effort that the RRC started in 1975 as part of the mid-term programme to boost productivity. Environmental conservation programme received attention by NGO leaders not only due to its alleged contribution to enhance productivity but also because it secured the appreciation of major donor organisations. This appreciation was again related to visible environmental conservation works carried out in post-1973-74 famine. Concerning this visibility, an official of Oxfam referring to the impression held by donors, reported that, "...Ethiopia is one of the few places where... [environmental conservation effort] is...successful"¹²²⁶.

Western donors provided grain and NGOs partly financed shipping grains to areas where the environmental conservation works were carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture¹²²⁷. In so doing, NGOs, including Oxfam, were of the impression that they effected visible changes. With enthusiasm, an Oxfam official told his colleagues that, "I agree that our contribution to these projects [environmental conservation] by clearing the bottle neck of local grain transport has been very useful and worthwhile"¹²²⁸. Certainly, Oxfam's contribution kept the environmental conservation effort going well particularly in Gamo Gofa province where the Catholic Church, a partner of Oxfam in the region, together with the Ministry of Agriculture followed the implementation of the conservation project. Stating the importance of Oxfam's support in Chench, Ezzo, Boreda and Gomaida in Gamo Gofa province, the Catholic Mission stated that, "This food for work will assist the families to have more food available through improvement in their areas of reforestation, terracing, irrigation etc"¹²²⁹. Oxfam agreed with the Catholic Mission, and thus financed the transportation of food from Arba Minch, the capital of Gamo Gofa province, to Chench, Ezzo, Boreda and Gomaida¹²³⁰. Although a comprehensive list of them does not exist, the role Oxfam's contributions kept the conservation efforts going. Recognising the role that a one-

¹²²⁵ Maggie Black, *A Cause for our Time: Oxfam the First 50 Years* (Oxfam, Oxford University Press, 1992), P. 258

¹²²⁶ Letter from Walsh to Goyder (January 18, 1983), Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

¹²²⁷ Letter from Gary Salole to Negel Walsh and Hugh Goyder, 5.3.83), P.1, Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

¹²²⁸ *Ibid*

¹²²⁹ Letter from the Catholic Mission to Oxfam GB (May 11, 1982), P. 1, Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

¹²³⁰ Letter from Oxfam Addis Ababa to Ministry of Agriculture (July 14th, 1982), P. 1, Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

off Oxfam grant of \$12,500 had played in 1982¹²³¹, for example, the Ministry of Agriculture stated that, “Had this not received your support a major breakdown would have occurred in the final but most important stage of implementation of the work”¹²³².

Environmental conservation works were, however, being carried out in a context in which the freewill of project participants was stifled as the environmental conservation project was used for a purpose for which it was not designed. The Ministry of Agriculture used environmental conservation work as a forum through which peasants were told about any new restriction imposed on them. For example, extension agents of the Ministry had to enforce quotas system that the Agricultural Marketing Corporation imposed on the peasantry. Also, extension agents collected taxes and implemented the unpopular resettlement and villagization programmes¹²³³. Rural Residents were also urged to participate in activities ordered by peasant associations. These activities undermined the agricultural activities of farmers. A survey of the time that peasants were to spend on activities other than their own farming was undertaken in the Dawi Rahmedo district of Wollo, where environmental conservation work was intense, stating in summary that:

On average, there are two meetings...6 hours each to be attended by everyone in the FA [farmer associations]. In addition there are extraordinary meetings for FA chairmen, vice-chairmen and officials called by the woreda [district] administrator and others for issues such as livestock vaccination, national army conscription, recruitment for cotton picking, grasscutting for villagization schemes... Since these officials, and the kebele militia, are called away from their land for these duties, the community are expected to work the land of the officials either as ordered, 6 hours per day, or on a rotation basis of 6 hours every week....Taken together with religious festivals, the number of days from the farm are considerable and certainly add up to more than the time available for the farmer to work on the land is, of course, even more important¹²³⁴

This hostile condition questioned the attainability of the objectives of the conservation programme. The programme was intended to assist project participants in food insecure regions get additional food. However, project participants reduced their commitment as the amount of grains that they were getting was, “...too low and they have to work too many days in order to feed the families...which prevents them from attending their fields properly”¹²³⁵. The programme also intended to disseminate techniques with which project participants would conserve their own

¹²³¹ Letter from MoA (Gamo Goffa) to the Catholic Mission (nd), P.1, Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

¹²³² Letter from the Ministry of Agriculture (Gamo Goffa) to Oxfam (December 8, 1982), p. 2, Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

¹²³³ *Ibid*, P. 88

¹²³⁴ “NWRC/Oxfam Rural Water Programme, Wollo, Ethiopia: Briefing Paper” (January 1987), P.4

¹²³⁵ “Problem Census in Wadla Delanta and Resulting Recommendations for the Future of the Agricultural Project” (1987), P. 2

farms. In what appears to be a paradox, farmers did not have the right to own land. As a result, they had no security to protect their own farms. In 1982, Oxfam sent out a consultant to evaluate an environmental conservation project in which it was involved in Southern Shoa and Wollaita. One encounter the consultant had with a project participant attests to the way rural residents looked at their farms. As reported by the consultant, “One farmer was hoeing steep land by stream, clods of earth rolling down and splashing in the water. What did he think of the problem of soil erosion? No problem he said he would get the pepper harvested before all the soil disappeared”¹²³⁶.

Unlike non-landowning private farmers, members of cooperatives developed higher level of security so that they took the initiative to apply the skills offered by NGOs. This was evident in ASE’s projects. A survey done in Sidamo in 1981 shows that 50% of ASE’s project participants applied contour ploughing, 47.6% implemented line sowing, 33.3% used improved seeds and 4.8% used modern methods of grain storage on their farms¹²³⁷. The survey cited above also shows that most of project participants who implemented these skills were members of producers’ cooperatives. Conversely, non-cooperative members did not have much interest to attend ASE’s educational programme. However, it was obligatory to attend the revolutionary government’s rural education programme, and ASE’s programme was considered to be part of it¹²³⁸. Nonetheless, by putting forward lame excuses, the majority of private project participants declined to participate in ASE’s programme. An evaluation carried out in 1982 described regrettably that, “ASE did not select its trainees. If more motivated people would have been selected, the impact might have been more”¹²³⁹.

6.5.2.3. The quest for a new approach and its failure

In the early 1980s, NGOs planned a new approach that, they argued, would motivate project participants. This section takes an overview of these plans and identifies factors that frustrated them. In the early 1980s, NGOs concluded that their programme had performed poorly. Their evaluations show that the environmental conservation works had suffered from a number of weaknesses. In its critique, Oxfam stated that, “The present system of Food for Work (FFW) is cumbersome, economically judged against wages, reliant on RRC food and encourages too large a

¹²³⁶ “Tour Report: Southern Shoa and Woliata” (nd), P.2

¹²³⁷ “Evaluation of the Adult Rural Radio Forum in Wolaita Province, Sidamo Region” (October 1981), P. 11-14

¹²³⁸ Marjam van Reisen, “Agri-Service Ethiopia: Programme Evaluation, 1989” (July 26th, 1989), P.20

¹²³⁹ *Ibid*, P.18

labour force”¹²⁴⁰. The organization, thus, designed a new conservation plan that slashed payment. The rationale was that payment dampened the self-help spirit of project participants. In early 1983, Oxfam stated that it wished to run a programme with a different approach, which, it was hoped, “...will encourage an approach to soil conservation which is participatory, avoids food aid, improves productivity and promotes agro-forestry”¹²⁴¹. Oxfam argued that this approach could be scaled up in the country. The Field Director of Oxfam stated that, “...we would be very happy to show anyone from the RRC how in practice we believe this can be done through a short visit to one of the sites where the Ministry of Agriculture is currently working”¹²⁴². To that end, Oxfam strengthened its organisation to reduce dependency on the Ministry of Agriculture. Most NGOs in the country strengthen their organisations to reduce their dependency on governmental organisations in rural areas. ASE, for instance, planned to carry out an even more radical restructuring of its organisation than Oxfam, in order to reduce its dependency on rural-based governmental organisations¹²⁴³.

NGOs reorganised project participants in their respective operational areas to implement their plans. However, food for work scheme that evolved since the end of the 1973-74 famine and free distribution of food during the relief operation of 1984-1986 caused project participants to ask for payment for the work they would be doing. This was pervasive in Wollo and Wollaita where the relief operation had been intense. Rural residents subsequently came to think of NGOs as distributors of free food. Prior to starting its water programme in the post-famine context, an Oxfam document describes how children too held the belief that NGOs were a distributor of biscuits, for example, in Wollo:

It is to be hoped that the new water programme manager in Wollo will not be haunted by the perturbing call of children on arrival at a new site when the name of Oxfam is heard or the symbol seen and the synonymous cry goes up: “Biscuit, biscuit!”.

The same was true in Wollaita. The Executive Director of ASE once went to visit Wollaita with a senior officer. These two persons, having personally witnessed the high expectations that project participants now held of ASE, recommended that:

We should encourage people to depend on themselves rather than external bodies. Since people have been provided [with] food stuff and other materials during the rehabilitation programme, the targets particularly in Wollaita province, Damot Gale region, expect ASE or other external body to bring them everything to solve their problems. They feel to be dependent on others.

¹²⁴⁰ “Wollo Rural Water Development Programme: Minutes of the Meeting Held on 15/09/86”, P.1

¹²⁴¹ Letter from Gary Salole to Negel Walsh and Hugh Goyder, 5.3.83), P.1, Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

¹²⁴² Letter from Nicolous Winner to Mikael Miller (nd), P.1, Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

¹²⁴³ “Supplementary Note on...”, P. 4

Thereafter, awareness of the situation should be created among them. Their attitude and mentality is to be changed to help them solve their problems¹²⁴⁴

NGOs started environmental conservation and agricultural recovery programmes in various parts of the country, including the Delanta, Wonberta and Shashemene districts, only to find it impossible to manage these programmes by mobilising project participants. As was always the case, NGOs were not sure when relief operations would end and development would begin. As a result, in early 1986, they were distributing food in the form of payments for work on the environmental conservation projects. By the time they decided to try and enlist people's participation in these efforts for free, NGOs faced profound problems. Conversations between NGOs and their project participants during this period reflect these difficulties. For instance, in early 1986, Oxfam's Field Director proposed that project participants should carry out environmental conservation works in Wonberta district without receiving food payments. Following the discussions with project participants, however, the Field Officer told the Director that, "At the moment if we stop giving food to do work like terrace, nursery, road construction,...the farmers will not be willing to do it by themselves without being paid..."¹²⁴⁵. The situation was much more serious in Delanta, which suffered from extreme environmental degradation. Concerning environmental conditions in Delanta, one report woefully described that, "...most of the woreda [Delanta district] is eroded due to floods and over-grazing and the fertility is very low..."¹²⁴⁶ Though they knew of the environmental degradation, project participants were not willing to participate without payment. Since 1974, environmental conservation based on "food for work" had been underway throughout Wollo. Most NGOs accepted payment as the only way to mobilise project participants. This posed a serious problem to NGOs like Oxfam which wanted to rehabilitate the environment through the active participation of project participants, while ceasing to distribute food aid. As Oxfam, bound to accede to the demands of project participants, reported back, "...there is a long history of FFW [Food for Work] in this area, and it seems unrealistic to expect that the practice can be dropped suddenly"¹²⁴⁷.

Oxfam was compelled to pay project participants. To make things worse, Oxfam incurred deficits, especially in the Wonberta district due to corruption committed by local officials. Oxfam's paradoxically naive approach contributed to this. Oxfam always argued that its strategic objective

¹²⁴⁴ "A Brief Report on the Field Trip to Gojjam and Sidamo Regions" (1987), P. 4

¹²⁴⁵ Girma Tilahun, "Report on Hararghe Region" (June-August, 1986), P. 13

¹²⁴⁶ Letter from Nigel Walsh to Marie Korner (13th July, 1988), P.1, Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

¹²⁴⁷ Report to Oxfam Africa Committee" from Tony Barnett, Africa Committee (July 21, 1987), P.3

was to help, "...the poor to see their predicament more clearly, building their confidence and supporting their initiatives so that they may be able to strengthen their position"¹²⁴⁸. Paradoxically, Oxfam believed that Service Cooperatives¹²⁴⁹ could be used as a channel to reach project participants¹²⁵⁰, even while the officials of Service Cooperatives were networked with senior party officials and engaged in embezzling resources, directly against participants' interests. Oxfam eventually realised the alignment between Service Cooperatives and party officials, reporting that, "They [Service Cooperatives] have become long arms of a government bureaucracy led by a powerful political party at the apex of state power....This had brought about the gradual separation of the office holders in the Service Cooperatives from the rank and file members"¹²⁵¹.

Self-interested Service Cooperative officials frustrated Oxfam's oxen credit scheme entirely. Oxfam had distributed oxen to peasants to rehabilitate them after the famine. The oxen credit scheme was formulated together with other components of the agricultural rehabilitation programme. The idea was that Service Cooperatives would give cash to project participants on a loan basis. However, Service Cooperative and party officials conspired to embezzle the cash. Oxfam financed four Service Cooperatives; one of these was Burka Telila SC. An audit report covering the period from May 21st, 1989 to October 6th, 1989 shows that this cooperative had a deficit of Eth \$35, 834.80 of which Eth \$ 22, 373.87 was unaccounted for, and Eth \$6, 883.41 was to be recovered from individual debtors of whom there was no available record¹²⁵². Each of the other three cooperatives that Oxfam financed also misappropriated approximately the same amount of cash as Burka Telila SC¹²⁵³.

Corruption was also committed within NGOs themselves. For instance, ASE received Eth \$6,660,550 in donations between 1985 and 1991. It registered deficits that amounted to Eth \$2,009,181 during this time period. The ex-Executive Director of ASE asserts that this missing cash was embezzled by senior officials of the organisation¹²⁵⁴.

¹²⁴⁸ Tesfaye Gebreigziabher, "Report on Shashemene Development Project: Eth-308" (December 1986), P. 5

¹²⁴⁹ Set up by peasant associations whose number ranged from three to ten, Service Cooperative is a form of organization during the military period that delivered service to peasants

¹²⁵⁰ Dessalegn et al, "Oxfam Country Review: Ethiopia" (June 1990), P. 13

¹²⁵¹ *Ibid*, P. 38

¹²⁵² Sisay Tekle, "A Report on the Register of the Farmers in Oxfam's Hararghe Programme Woberra Awraja Deder Area: Draft" (March 1990), 39

¹²⁵³ *Ibid*

¹²⁵⁴ Informant, Ato Getachew Worku

Corruption disrupted NGOs and/or their projects. In protest against the oxen credit scheme embezzlement, the Oxfam Project Manager resigned, disrupting the scheme even further¹²⁵⁵. The consequence of corruption within ASE was more serious. Aware of the scandal, in 1990, donors withheld their support, putting ASE and its projects at risk. This, however, was just one of the factors that challenged ASE's projects. In some parts of the country, ASE's programme had performed poorly. ASE had assumed that project participants would use their own resources to apply the knowledge and skills that they had acquired from ASE. In the post-famine context, this assumption failed to work out in Gojjam, Arussi and Sidamo. Project participants told fieldworkers that education alone was irrelevant and ASE was to provide them with resources with which they would implement their skills. Project participants pointed out what appeared to them to be a paradox. While they were being educated about environmental conservation, project participants had asked for seedlings, pickaxes and so on. Fieldworkers referred these requests to the head office, but, the situation remained unchanged because donors were unwilling to finance projects in these regions. The programme, thus, failed to register any meaningful change at all. An evaluation report stated that, "Regrettably ASE's achievements and the effect of its programme...don't seem to comply with its age or its stay in the areas"¹²⁵⁶. ASE reappraised its programme in 1989, consequently withdrawing from Arussi and Sidamo in 1990 and deciding to maintain the project in Gojjam alone¹²⁵⁷.

Conversely, ASE's programme performed much better in Gamo Gofa and Bale due to massive investment. There, ASE purchased and distributed oxen, seeds, fertilisers, utensils and farm implements to 35,066 project participants, in Gamo Gofa, Bale, Tigray, Hararghe, and Arussi¹²⁵⁸. These resources, together with the prospects of the new projects, motivated project participants to get involved¹²⁵⁹. In 1987 the organisation started forestry, soil and water conservation projects, mainly in Gamo Gofa in which project participants showed a degree of participation¹²⁶⁰. From 1987–1989, 2 millions seedlings were planted in community woodlots in the highlands as well as in the backyards of peasants in Gamo Gofa and Bale. The survival rate of these seedlings was

¹²⁵⁵ Dessalegn et al, "Oxfam Country Review" (1990), P. 24

¹²⁵⁶ Mulugeta Tamire et al "Reappraisal of the ASE Programme in Misrak Gojjam: 1987-1992 (Addis Ababa, 1992), P.3

¹²⁵⁷ ASE, "Integrated Rural Development...", P. 1

¹²⁵⁸ Project No, d.4, p. 103)

¹²⁵⁹ Informant, Ato Getachew Worku

¹²⁶⁰ ASE, "Annual Report: 1988" (Addis Ababa, 1989), P.10

impressive. A report tells us that, "...the performance of the planted seedlings has shown a reasonably high rate of survival"¹²⁶¹.

Likewise, ASE enlisted women in its income generating activities. 300 women in the Kutcha district of Gamo Gofa organized themselves to cultivate vegetables for sale¹²⁶². ASE built the Kutcha Day Care Centre in the same district, which admitted 120 children, relieving these women of the burden of childcare¹²⁶³. ASE also set up the Barera vegetable gardening and Adaba Oil Expeller Projects in the Adaba district of Bale province¹²⁶⁴. The projects, especially vegetable gardening, not only began enabling project participants to get additional income, but also motivated other non-project participants to start similar initiatives. A donor organisation's representative stated that, "I am very happy to see that, due to the women's group of Hasen Barera, other people in the peasants' associations start growing vegetable around their backyards"¹²⁶⁵. ASE fieldworkers, recruited from the residents themselves, played a pivotal role in advising project participants on the growing of vegetables. In 1990, ASE intended to expand the same type of programme to Gojjam. The proposal covered the years 1991–1994, but it was not effective because of the corruption that forced donors to withhold their money¹²⁶⁶.

Like ASE's programmes in Gamo Gofa and Bale, NGOs' massive investments in famine-prone areas improved the performance of agriculture and resulted in a number of environmental conservation efforts. While these efforts went well in Eastern Hararghe, they failed to bring about visible change in Wollo. The difference lay in both the amount of investment, and the local responses to NGOs' efforts. In Wonbera district, there were only a few operative NGOs, many of which were engaged in relief operations¹²⁶⁷. Oxfam was the only of those NGO's present that was tending to address the agricultural crisis. As a document tells us, "Unlike...others, Oxfam has been addressing deeper problems"¹²⁶⁸. Oxfam was trying to deal with the environmental degradation and rehabilitate the agriculture. In 1986, it distributed fertilisers, agricultural equipment, and oxen to project participants in five Service Cooperatives. This motivated agricultural activity. Asked

¹²⁶¹ ASE, "Project Proposal of AOTP Integrated with Rural Development Projects in Semien Omo, Bale and Misrak Gojjam: January 1991 to January 1994" (Addis Ababa, May 1990), P. 17

¹²⁶² Informant, Ato Getachew Worku

¹²⁶³ Marjam van Reisen, "Agri-Service ...", P.19-20

¹²⁶⁴ *Ibid*, P.19-20

¹²⁶⁵ Letter from R. Segbnou to Tilahoun Haile (nd), P. 1, Archive of ASE in Addis Ababa

¹²⁶⁶ ASE, "Integrated Rural Development...", P. 5

¹²⁶⁷ "Sisay Tekle, "A Report...", 31

¹²⁶⁸ *Ibid*, P. 31

about the role of this input of resources from Oxfam, one of the project participants responded he, "...could not otherwise planted"¹²⁶⁹. Project participants who planted were able to increase their agricultural production by 12%. The fertiliser and oxen were the main factor for this growth¹²⁷⁰.

Though it depended entirely on making payments to participants, the environmental conservation effort performed as well. A source tells us that, "impressive amount of terracing and bunding were done and forestry plantation sites developed on formerly denuded hill tops and sides"¹²⁷¹. To that end, a nursery site was developed at Lelisa and Legacheffe Service Cooperatives where 11 types of tree plants and 15 types of fruit tree seedlings were introduced. In 1987 alone, Oxfam distributed 800, 000 trees to the rural residents¹²⁷². An evaluation carried out in 1990 described the overall progress of Oxfam's environmental conservation effort and the role of project participants:

The interest by individuals on acquiring tree seedlings, the development of community forests along hill tops, the interest in new variety of fruits and vegetables crops, and the response to techniques of soil conservation and bunding indicate that inputs and new ideas into the household farming systems is still a viable strategy¹²⁷³.

Oxfam's programme in Wollo did not progress as much as that in Wonberta. A variety of factors contributed to this. Firstly, the famine had depleted the resources of project participants in Wollo much more than in Wonbera. Moreover, Oxfam selected Service Cooperatives that had suffered most from the famine, such as Gosh Meda, Chinga Chewkuter Service Cooperatives. As a result, project participants asked for a wide range of resource inputs, including fertilisers, oxen, seeds and so on¹²⁷⁴. However, Oxfam did not plan to provide all of these. A consultant who was overwhelmed with the profound needs of the region stated that, "I am afraid that to design projects at SCs level, unlike in other areas, may look like creating privileged islands"¹²⁷⁵. Though Oxfam did offer assistance of various sorts, such as seeds, its soil conservation programme dominated. This was aimed at enabling project participants to have food security and to recover their most fragile environmental resources. Like many NGOs, Oxfam started terracing, bunding and afforestation. The project faced three important challenges. Firstly, project participants were opposed to the fact that many of the hills were enclosed for soil conservation/afforestation, which denied rural

¹²⁶⁹ "Hararghe Survey: Summary of Reponses" (February 1986), p. 2

¹²⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p. 2

¹²⁷¹ Dessalegn et al, "Oxfam...", P. 34

¹²⁷² Girma Tilahun, "Report on Hararghe Region" (June-August, 1986), P. 7

¹²⁷³ *Ibid*, P. 23

¹²⁷⁴ *Ibid*, P. 16

¹²⁷⁵ Yakob Aklilu, "Some Indicating Points for Future Development Programme: Wollo"(July 1986), P. 16

residents access to their grazing land and water points¹²⁷⁶. Secondly, project participants were not satisfied with the amount of payment they received for the work they were doing. They argued that they had to work too many days in order to feed the families, which prevented them from attending to their fields properly. However, Oxfam found it difficult to increase the amount as the RRC strictly monitored the amount of grain received by project participants¹²⁷⁷. Thirdly, the project, which was started within the war zone, remained under threat from the advancing rebel forces. Ultimately, like all NGOs in the region, Oxfam left in 1989 because of the war, before any visible changes were observed with regard to the environment¹²⁷⁸.

To summarise, agriculture and environmental conservation programmes have been top priority of NGOs. NGOs recognised the importance of enlisting the participation of project participants, however the levels of participation were often compromised by structural factors. Though structural problems were quite apparent, the participation of project participants was quite forthcoming during the imperial period. This project participation that NGOs had experienced during the imperial period deteriorated during the next two decades. The top-heavy approach of governmental organisations was the prime factor for this. NGOs' plans to improve the situation were constrained by two factors. The first one had to do with the exaggerated expectations of the people that partly come from free distribution of food during the 1984-86 famine relief operation, and the second one had to do with corruption committed at various levels. Despite this, massive investments were made, NGOs were able to rehabilitate the performance of agriculture, particularly in Wonberta and Gamo Gofa, and Bale. They also carried out a number of environmental conservation efforts. In areas where their investment remained limited, however, their impact was also limited.

6.5.3. NGOs and water

Provision of water supply became an arena of interactions between NGOs, governmental organisations and project participants since the early 1970s. The three actors tacitly agreed that provision of water was a top priority in rural areas as only 10% of the rural residents had access to clean water¹²⁷⁹.

¹²⁷⁶ "Problem Census in Wadla Delanta and Resulting Recommendations for the Future of the Agricultural Project" (1987), P. 2

¹²⁷⁷ *Ibid*, P. 2

¹²⁷⁸ "Addis Staff Meeting Minutes" (October 16, 1989), P. 1

¹²⁷⁹ ASE, "Project Proposal of AOTP...", P. 8

NGO involvement in water works began in 1973–1974 to supply water to drought and famine hit regions. Their involvement by financing the governmental National Water Resources Commission which drilled water wells using sophisticated technology. This approach was considered worthwhile due to the severity of the drought. Oxfam was a pioneer in financing the NWRC. In 1974, Oxfam signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Commission. This was followed through by financial support from Oxfam, amounting to US \$15, 275 for conducting a study of water potential in Tigray and Wollo. The study was the basis for the water works that the Commission carried out in the two provinces in the post-famine period¹²⁸⁰. Oxfam also financed well-drilling projects in different parts of Wollo and Bet Mera town in Tigray, to the cost of Eth \$60,829¹²⁸¹.

The main reason for them to fund the NWRC was that NGOs did not have the capacity or experience to manage water works themselves. In March 1975, the Seventh Day Adventist and Catholic churches planned to carry out water works in a place called Tesa in Shoa. This was the first time NGOs had planned to manage water works of their own. As they had no experience, they asked CCRDA to look for water engineers. CCRDA duly contracted water engineers to advise on how to dig and cast water wells¹²⁸². In order to solve problems of this kind, Oxfam set up the Water Development Support Unit in 1975/76. However, the Unit did not have much capacity. Oxfam told NGOs that the Unit would assist with water works located within a radius of 150 kilometres from Addis Ababa, but the role of the Unit remained unfulfilled¹²⁸³. Firstly, the Unit did not receive sufficient budget, and thus depended technically on the Commission (NWRC). Secondly, the dilemma originating from the increasingly anti-Western and xenophobic attitude of the government caused Oxfam to downplay its commitment. The Unit reduced its activities until its dissolution in 1982¹²⁸⁴.

The famine that occurred in 1983–1984 revived NGOs' interest in managing water works. At this time, NGOs recognised that water works that did not enlist the participation of project participants would be costly and unsustainable. The drought condition appears to have an important been a major factor to motivate the people. Speaking of the seriousness of the water problem in the eastern

¹²⁸⁰ RRC, "A Review of the Relief and Rehabilitation Programme" (Addis Ababa, March 1975), P.17

¹²⁸¹ Ibid, P. 17

¹²⁸² CRDA, "1977 Annual Report" (May 1977), P.15

¹²⁸³ CRDA, "General Membership Meeting" (January 4, 1977), p.2

¹²⁸⁴ Maggie Black, *A Cause for our Time: Oxfam the First 50 Years* (Oxfam, Oxford University Press, 1992), P. 258

parts of Gonder, one observer tells us that, “Even in good years, water is very scarce at this time of the dry season, and people manage with what appears impossibly small amount [of water] or long distance to travel [to get water]”¹²⁸⁵. The seriousness of the water shortage is reflected in Oxfam’s statement that, “...we can [at least] ensure that the water they do find at the end of a long walk is of reasonable quality”¹²⁸⁶.

Project participants offered free labour, sand and stone to water works carried out by Oxfam in Ibbat in Gonder. The plan was to dig 30 water wells per year in the Ibbat district¹²⁸⁷. Coordinated by a water engineer, Oxfam built 8 water wells in May 1983. Encouraged by the participation, Oxfam committed itself to continue operating in Gonder, despite threatening security concerns in the region¹²⁸⁸. After repeated disruptions, Oxfam decided that the conflict made its water works too costly and it withdrew from the region. Concerning the positive impression it had made, Oxfam stated that, “On the positive side the needs are enormous and we have had much cooperation both from the local officials and from the people generally”¹²⁸⁹. Oxfam soon enhanced water works in Wollaita and Wollo where massive relief operations had been carried out¹²⁹⁰.

The first problem that Oxfam faced was how to start water development programmes. Oxfam had deployed water engineers and technicians who instantly installed water pumps to supply water to relief shelters in Wollo. In the post-famine period, Oxfam planned to upgrade this emergency water supply into a strategy of water development. In practice however, Oxfam found it impossible to build its water development upon the emergency water works. The organisation stated the difficulty in one of the documents, thus:

It has been a difficult task to begin a development programme out of an emergency water programme. In emergency work, supplies are installed quickly, with little time to assess what are the neediest areas or to involve the community [who at the time is starving anyway] in the work. Successful development work requires more time to establish a programme, and more time and staff to work with the community in identifying project sites and organizing community involvement. In retrospect, it would have been useful to have at least a 6-month lead time before commencing construction in order to properly establish survey and liaison work¹²⁹¹.

¹²⁸⁵ “Report on Paul Shears Visit to assess and implement drought operation in Ethiopia: 14.03.83-8.4.83” (nd), P. 2)

¹²⁸⁶ *Ibid*, P.2

¹²⁸⁷ “Ethiopian Bulletin No 4” (20th June, 1983), P. 1

¹²⁸⁸ Letter from Michael Miller to Goyder (October 1, 1983), P. 1, Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

¹²⁸⁹ Hugh Goyder, “Report on visit to Libo Awraja, Gonder Drought: February 15-16, 1984”, P. 2

¹²⁹⁰ “NWRC/Oxfam Rural Water Programme, Wollo, Ethiopia: Briefing Paper”, Appendix 1 (January 1987); Kiros Gebre Hiwot, “Report on Hand Dug Wells construction in Wollaita, Damot Gale Woreda” (December 1986), P.1

¹²⁹¹ Patricia F. Hotchkiss, “Wollo Water Programme (Ethiopia): Evaluation Report”, P. 13

The same was true with Oxfam's emergency water supply in Wollaita. Oxfam had relocated its staff from Gonder, initiated the emergency water supply by contracting lorries and soon started digging water wells in selected sites closer to relief shelters. Oxfam found it difficult to upgrade this emergency water supply, also, into a strategy of water development¹²⁹².

Oxfam thus dismantled emergency water equipment as relief shelters were closed¹²⁹³, and began instead developing reliable water resources, taking social factors and community needs into consideration. Project participants told Oxfam that water was, in fact, their perennial problem. Women and children used to walk up to six hours to fetch water in the western districts of Wollo¹²⁹⁴.

However, project participants who had received food and non-food items for free openly rejected free participation. Regardless, government authorities told NGOs to consider all labour as "community labour" (i.e. free and done by all)¹²⁹⁵. A district administrator in Wollo stated that he would, "force them [project participants] to work"¹²⁹⁶. District administrators instructed peasant associations to cooperate with NGOs by urging project participants to participate in water works. This created tension between district officials and peasant associations. When Oxfam's water project started in February 1986, Delanta district administrator found out that one of the chairmen of one of the peasant associations was not cooperative. As a result, he sent a letter, "...threatening to put him in prison if he did not cooperate"¹²⁹⁷. The chairmen in Wollo declined to cooperate largely because they were unable to get the consent of their residents. Rural residents told their chairmen that they had lost their properties during the famine and that they wanted to replace them by getting additional income. A source that documented the dialogue between two local level officials tells us that, "The chairman and vice chairman of kebele 014 would argue long and loud concerning the difficulties of organising voluntary participation, bringing up all the legitimate issues [issues project participants voiced]"¹²⁹⁸.

Oxfam sympathised with project participants and stood against the intention of government officials to force them to undertake free labour¹²⁹⁹. Oxfam, thus, proposed both paid and unpaid

¹²⁹² Letter from Sidamo province, Damot Gale district administration to Oxfam (23/11/78), P. 4, Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

¹²⁹³ "Water Equipment in Feeding Centres" from Stephen Llod to Hailu Wolde Senbet (December 31st, 1985)

¹²⁹⁴ Patricia F. Hotchkiss, "Wollo Water Programme...", P. 10

¹²⁹⁵ *Ibid*, P. 5

¹²⁹⁶ "NWRC/Oxfam...", P. 7-8

¹²⁹⁷ Patricia F. Hotchkiss, "Wollo Water Programme...", P. 24

¹²⁹⁸ "NWRC/Oxfam...", P.5

¹²⁹⁹ Patricia F. Hotchkiss, "Wollo Water Programme...", P. 24

and work. Unpaid work was the collection of sand and stones. Paid work was well digging and road construction¹³⁰⁰. Payment was initially made in grain, however, the price of grain got lower as NGOs made massive amounts of grain available for rehabilitative work, and as a result, project participants asked to get paid in cash. In September 1986, Oxfam started paying each project participant Eth \$3 per day¹³⁰¹.

Costs were high, especially for road construction. Wadla Delanta, Kalu and Borena were extremely mountainous, with difficult access to communities, which were often divided by very deep gorges containing seasonal rivers¹³⁰². Oxfam started its water works by building roads to have access to peasant associations in Wadla Delanta. As the cost was so high, road construction was stopped and Oxfam resorted to accessing project sites using mules, horses and donkeys¹³⁰³. In this way, Oxfam built 144 water wells in Wadla Delanta, Kalu and Borena in 1986–1989¹³⁰⁴. Oxfam also funded the Ethiopian Water Works Construction Authority (EWWCA) to dig water wells in the rest of Wollo¹³⁰⁵. Their relationship started during the relief operation, when Oxfam had donated a variety of spare parts to the EWWCA to facilitate water supply to relief shelters. Prior to the end of the relief period, Oxfam's officials had seen the importance of financing the EWWCA. As a senior technical expert of Oxfam reported, "We strongly felt that the fullest support of EWWCA is the most realistic method of reaching as many people as possible"¹³⁰⁶. After the emergency period was over, Oxfam and the EWWCA divided Wollo geographically between them to supply its water; while Oxfam focused on the areas discussed earlier, the EWWCA concentrated its efforts in the remaining nine provinces¹³⁰⁷. Oxfam observed that new settlements were favoured by the government, and so tried to direct its own resources towards those other areas that had been marginalised, and succeeded in doing so in Wadla Delanta, Kalu and Borena. Oxfam had hoped that the EWWCA would also focus on areas that were marginalised, but failed to influence the EWWCA to do so. As one Oxfam water engineer put it, "Oxfam would...like to see EWWCA put more emphasis on supplying good quality water to those smaller peasant communities who in the

¹³⁰⁰ *Ibid*, P. 5

¹³⁰¹ "Minutes of Monthly Meeting: Oxfam Dessie" (29.09.86), p.1

¹³⁰² Patricia F. Hotchkiss, "Wollo Water Programme...", P. 10-11

¹³⁰³ "NWRC/Oxfam...", P.3

¹³⁰⁴ *Ibid*, P.3

¹³⁰⁵ William Dick, "Dick William's Report 11 February to 21 April 1986: Confidential" to Jim Howard et al (March 2, 1986), P.2

¹³⁰⁶ Ben Fawcett, "Report on Ethiopia Water Tour, June 15-6 July 1985", P.7

¹³⁰⁷ William Dick, "Dick William's Report 11 February to 21 April 1986: Confidential" to Jim Howard et al (21.3.1986), P.2

past have tended to take a back seat in favour of larger settlements or areas easier of access”¹³⁰⁸. However, the EWWCA was a governmental organisation, and as a result, was driven towards digging water wells in new settlements as the government was determined to meet criticisms with evidence that the new settlements were operating very well. Thus, the EWWCA focused its attentions on settlements in Wollo. This played a particular role. Regardless of its rhetoric as to how new settlements were favoured, the government had neither made the requisite preparations nor had the resources to supply water. New settlements in the country were set up without due regard to the supply of water and other infrastructure¹³⁰⁹. Although it was not initially the intention of Oxfam, EWWCA, thus, came in and put things right. In most new rural settlements, as Mr Vaux relates in his memoir, “it [Oxfam] was the only aid agency active in the provision of water”¹³¹⁰.

In terms of cost, one third of the money was spent in payment for the labour offered by project participants. However, project participants have also said that they spent much of their wages on purchasing and contributing grain to the Agricultural Marketing Corporation. The Corporation imposed quotas on farmers requiring them to contribute grain, even at times when the Ministry of Agriculture and the RRC were appealing for food aid to relieve these same farmers¹³¹¹.

Oxfam’s water programme in Wollo influenced its water programme in Wollaita. After its initial attempt to enlist free participation in Wollo, Oxfam had accepted that it would have to offer payment as an incentive. Like in Wollo, Oxfam enlisted free labour for collection of sand, stone and other local resources and paid for well digging¹³¹². In this way, Oxfam completed 156 water points, i.e., three water wells in each of the 56 peasant associations in Damot Gale district between 1987 and 1991¹³¹³.

Like Oxfam, national NGOs such as ASE succumbed to the demands of project participants by providing payment. There were, in fact, differences between water projects of Oxfam and ASE in terms of timing, scope and scale and efficiency. While Oxfam’s water works went back to the early 1970s that of ASE started in the mid-1980s. ASE observed that severe drought caused water shortage in their operational areas and planned to carry out water works. However, ASE’s major

¹³⁰⁸ “Oxfam’s Wollo Water Programme: A Note by Dick Williams” (nd), P.1

¹³⁰⁹ “Oxfam/EWWCA Drought Relief and Development Water Programme: Wollo Administrative Region: Update Report No 13 to 31st January 1986” (2nd February 1986), p. 2

¹³¹⁰ Tony Vaux, *The Selfish...*, P. 62

¹³¹¹ *Ibid*, P.1

¹³¹² *Ibid*, P.153

¹³¹³ *Ibid*, P. 146, 154

donors NOVIB and EZE declined to fund ASE's planned water works in Gojjam, Arussi and Sidamo, even while ASE fieldworkers were educating project participants about the importance of clean water. Project participants asked ASE to dig water wells, questioning the relevance of education alone¹³¹⁴. NOVIB and EZE were, however, willing to fund ASE water works in Gamo Gofa and Bale, and so to that end, in 1986 the consulting firm SAWA was contracted to study water conditions in Gamo Gofa and Bale. The SAWA study showed that water shortage was a top priority in Gamo Gofa and Bale. However, donors then questioned the technical capability of ASE to manage water works. This, together with the sluggish procurement of construction materials from overseas, delayed these water works for quite long time. Two years after the study was carried out, ASE reported that, "The progress of RWS [rural water supply] activities was largely affected by the delay in the procurement of materials ordered from overseas, logistic problems and the terrains of the area of operation"¹³¹⁵.

In the meantime, ASE began recruiting a number of highly professional staff members whose task was basically to convince donors that the organisation could handle water works¹³¹⁶. ASE started water works in 1988. Offered grain, project participants carried out trench excavations, construction of access roads¹³¹⁷. However, the water works in Kotcha and Boreda were frustrated due to the outbreak of an epidemic. ASE together with local Ministry of Health staff transported the people for treatment and organised a vaccination campaign¹³¹⁸. Project participants strove to avoid contagion and it was difficult to bring them together. As a result, ASE employed day labourers to finish the Zefine water supply scheme and the Awesto Dana gravity scheme alone¹³¹⁹. Later, in the early 1990s, ASE built the Agamna water supply in Debay Telat Gen district in Eastern Gojjam. Altogether, these water works supplied water to 2000 residents. However, they were technically intensive and financially expensive to realise, as per an evaluation carried out in 1995, which says the following:

Although rather expensive, the large-scale gravity schemes in Semie Omo (Awesto Dana) and Gojjam (Agamna) are highly efficient, appropriate and commendable in that the most productive and reliable water sources was identified and made available for many peasant associations¹³²⁰

¹³¹⁴ Mulugeta Tamire et al "Reappraisal of the ASE Programme in Misrak Gojjam: 1987-1992 (Addis Ababa, 1992), P.3

¹³¹⁵ ASE, "Annual Report 1988" (May 1989), 11

¹³¹⁶ Informant, *Ato Getachew Worku*

¹³¹⁷ ASE, "Project Proposal of Action Oriented...", P. 68

¹³¹⁸ *Ibid*, P. 63

¹³¹⁹ ASE, "Annual Report: 1989" (Addis Ababa, November 21, 1990), P. 37

¹³²⁰ ASE, "Integrated Rural Development ...", P. 59

To conclude, NGOs in Ethiopia namely Oxfam and ASE, supplied clean water. The two NGOs began establishing water works at different times. Provision of water was Oxfam's earliest priority, whereas ASE started working on water supply towards the end of the 1980s. As it mobilised greater resources than ASE, Oxfam supplied water to peasant associations, mainly in Wollo and Wollaita. Conversely, national NGOs such as ASE supplied water to only limited number of rural residents in Gamo Goffa, Bale and to some extent in Gojjam. Financial investment was the decisive factor for the scope of water works. None of the NGOs managed to secure the free participation of project participants; project participants asked for payment for most of the work that they did. This resulted from the free distribution of food during their emergency operations. This led NGOs to pursue a technical/financial approach. Donors also contributed to this approach by causing national NGOs to be technically strong.

6.5.4. NGOs and Health

Unlike their agricultural, environmental conservation and water projects, NGOs registered much less success on health. NGOs argued that prevention was the best strategy to ensure the health of people. They also believed that prevention was cost-effective. In a statement that reflected the position of most NGOs in the 1960s and 1970s, ASE opined that, "In health, preventive health care can be taught, and this requires no great technical and financial inputs. Thus even by themselves, farmers can do something through learning"¹³²¹. The question here is how far this strategic intervention brought about any visible change in the level of health consciousness. Certainly, a number of socio-economic factors have stifled the impact of this preventative health strategy.

NGOs differed in project participant selection for health programme. While some of them enlisted selected section of rural society, others included all members of it. ASE exemplified this first group of NGOs. ASE, which pioneered preventative health care, identified women as project participants because of their decisive role in family life. The organisation launched a women's education programme that prioritised personal and environmental hygiene courses. While the programme was proceeding, however, ASE received complaints that women were being prevented by their husbands from attending the courses. The main reason for this was that women had to do a lot in their homes and on their farms. This influenced the women's education programme by causing drop outs. Due to this, ASE saw no change between project participants and non-project

¹³²¹ ASE, "Situational Report" (May 1975), P. 4-5

participants. An evaluation report conducted in 1975 stated that, ASE, "...could not see any impact from the home economics and hygiene programme; no difference was observed between domestic upkeep of participants and non-participants [in Wollaita and Hadyana-Kembeta]"¹³²².

In order to encourage women, ASE began engaging with men. This improved their attitude. ASE reported that there was, "Improvement in the family unit, closer links between husbands and wives"¹³²³. As a result, women were allowed to attend "face to face" training. Faced with the problem of illiteracy, ASE began to work via pictorial presentations; project participants were provided with series of drawings, and discussions took place from there. Other ASE fieldworkers who had been influenced by the extension agents of the Ministry of Agriculture in the revolutionary context applied the lecture method. The leadership of ASE told fieldworkers that, "Agri-Service has repeatedly detected a tendency to teach [women], not to animate"¹³²⁴. A Number of project participants told ASE's leaders that they were unable to cope with that approach. Providing appropriate responsiveness was also a major problem, as project participants often told the fieldworkers of ASE that they had serious health problems for which they needed treatment¹³²⁵.

Responsiveness concerned those NGOs operating in famine-prone areas as well. The NGOs such as SCF, Oxfam, and CCRDA contracted 14 medical personnel to work in 14 districts of Wollo, both to assess the health and nutritional status of the people and to educate them about how to make their environment healthy in order to control disease. However, this health and nutritional educational programme was of secondary importance to project participants who were hungry. The minutes of CCRDA document the experiences of one of the fieldworkers assigned to Wadla Delanta:

In Gazobelay [Wadla Delanta] the fieldworker spends his time trying to give advice to people about "good" nutritional practices. However, he admits ruefully, "this is somewhat difficult when the main complaint of the people is lack of food"¹³²⁶.

The priority NGOs accorded to preventative health care increased with the commencement of water works. In August 1983, Oxfam planned a preventative health programme in the Gonder region, "...preferably in the same areas where our [Oxfam's] water project will be starting"¹³²⁷. Due to

¹³²² Marjam van Reisen, "Agri-Service Ethiopia: Programme Evaluation, 1989" (July 26th, 1989), P.17

¹³²³ *Ibid*, P. 17

¹³²⁴ ASE, "Situational Report" (May 1975), PP.21-22

¹³²⁵ "Supplementary Note...", P. 29

¹³²⁶ "Christian Relief and Development Association 154th General Meeting" (3rd March, 1980), P. 17

¹³²⁷ Letter from Hugh Goyder to Miller (4 August, 1983), Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

insecurity, however, this was not realised in Gonder, but Oxfam did work to integrate health education into its water programme elsewhere, mainly in Wollo. To that end, Oxfam seconded a Community Participation and Promotion Officer (CPPO) who had been recruited and trained by the Ethiopian Water and Sewerage Authority (EWSA); NGOs could apply to EWSA for the secondment of a CPPO as long as they agreed to pay the officer's salary. It was supposed at first that the CPPO seconded to Oxfam would educate water project participants about general health. However, the topic was too broad to be covered by a CPPO. As a result, she was told to focus on the proper use and protection of water¹³²⁸. In July and August 1988, the CPPO organised separately-run health education sessions for women, men and children in the Gosh Meda and El Weha Service Cooperatives. The CPPO reported that project participants were more fascinated by the slide projector than the health education itself, the technology having diverted the attention of project participants¹³²⁹. However, the main factor that arose as in need of address was the priority that project participants accorded to water. Project participants accorded priority to *access to water* much more than *access to safe drinking water*. Worried by this, a Oxfam report described how:

It can be seen that the general trend is for less water to be collected from the well and springs [during the rainy season] than during the dry season. This is hardly surprising news, as most peoples' priority is to reduce walking distance, and if surface water is available nearer to their home then they will collect that....water quality is not a high priority for people, and our health education programme will take many years before it has much of an impact¹³³⁰.

Like Oxfam, ASE prioritised health education, influenced by the water works mainly in Gamo Gofa. As soon as health education started, an epidemic erupted in the region. ASE developed a project that included health care as one of its major components, including the construction of clinics. ASE donors outright rejected health programmes that included treatment¹³³¹, however, believing that this was the responsibility of the government¹³³². The situation in other operational areas such as Gojjam, Arussi and Sidamo was even worse. Project participants wanted the health educational programme to be supported by concrete projects. For instance, ASE trained project participants how to maintain personal hygiene. How, they enquired, were they to keep up their personal hygiene in the situation where there was no water in their localities? The organisation also trained project participants about the use of toilets to prevent diseases. They then asked for

¹³²⁸ Patricia F. Hotchkiss, "Wollo Water Programme...", P. 18

¹³²⁹ Gerry Garvey, "Oxfam/NWRC/RRC Wollo Water Programme Quarterly Report No. 5, July-September 1988" (nd), P. 5

¹³³⁰ *Ibid.*, P. 5

¹³³¹ ASE, "Project Proposal of Action Oriented...", P. 75

¹³³² Girma Bizuwork et al, "Feasibility Study on Project Proposal of Action Oriented Training Programme integrated with Rural Developmebt Project in Semen Omo, Misrak Gojjam and Bale" (Bonn, 1990), P. 13

resources with which to build toilets in response. Let alone creating impact, the repeatedly unmet demands of projects participants for concrete assistance, in relation to health care and other related issues shattered the image of ASE in the eyes of project participants, especially in Gojjam, Arussi and Sidamo provinces. An evaluation of the situation revealed the risk involved, stating that, “The cumulative effect of these and other similar reasons had and continue to have serious negative repercussion on the reputation and acceptability in and around the current operational areas”¹³³³.

To conclude, those NGOs that emerged in the 1960s applied a prevention strategy in an attempt to keep project participants healthy. However, it failed to register any tangible result, mainly due to the fact that project participants found it unresponsive to their situation.

6.5.5. NGOs and the sustainability issue

Sustainability was a major problem of NGOs in Ethiopia. Referring to the problem, a senior official of the government stated that, “NGO projects [in Ethiopia] have not been designed and implemented in such a way that their sustainability is ensured”¹³³⁴. This reflects the narrow, project-oriented perspective adopted by NGOs. Since their earliest interventions, NGOs have applied a project approach that, per project, has a clear beginning, middle and end and requires plans, contracts, budgets, reporting schedules and evaluations¹³³⁵. CCRDA, which was supposed to assist member NGOs to take longer term perspectives, stated in 1974 that:

The CRC [Christian Relief Fund, precursor of CCRDA] will not be in a position to carry costs that will be recurring unless the projects become self-supporting or unless a church or mission [NGOs] is prepared to carry its finance a minimum period related to the life of the project or unless a project becomes integrated with the national exchequer financing¹³³⁶.

Likewise in 1990 a team of consultants addressing Oxfam’s approach recommended that, “Oxfam should develop and feel comfortable with a long term perspective. [It should] move away from the ‘hit list’ project method to the development of a program of inputs and components that have been long range behavioral and attitudinal changes as well as short term material inputs and objectives”¹³³⁷.

¹³³³ Mulugeta Tamire et al, “Re-Appraisal of...”, P. 5

¹³³⁴ Phonex Universal, *NGO Forum: An Experiment in Dialogue* (Phonex Universal Press, 1997), P. 51

¹³³⁵ Deborah Eade and Suzanne Williams, *The Oxfam Handbook of Development and Relief, Volume I* (United Kingdom and Ireland, 1995), P. 21

¹³³⁶ CRF, “First Report from...”, P.6

¹³³⁷ Dessalegn et al, “Oxfam...”, P. 29

The project approach implied withdrawal from operational areas at any given time. With this in mind, NGOs did not fail to understand the value of transferring knowledge and skills to project participants. CCRDA kept reminding member NGOs that projects in which they were involved should, "...strive towards local self-reliance through a transfer of knowledge and skills to people [project participants]"¹³³⁸. NGOs accepted the advice offered by CCRDA, and they integrated this approach into their project proposals. For instance, concerning the objective for which its water programme was initiated, Oxfam stated that, "...one of the most important developments of this programme will be to spread the skills needed for the digging of wells with minimum supervision as quickly as possible amongst members of PAs [peasant association]"¹³³⁹. Likewise, ASE welcomed the transfer of skills and knowledge as the most important strategy to ensure the sustainability of its projects. ASE believed that its educational programme would impart the skills needed to sustain the projects that it had started in the period after the 1983–1984 famine¹³⁴⁰.

During the first decade of the military period, NGOs had believed that governmental organisations were structures capable of transferring knowledge and skills to projects participants. To that end, CCRDA was always urging its members that, "...close liaison be maintained...with the government at all level"¹³⁴¹. Governmental organisations very much welcomed NGOs as counterparts. However, they did so more out of organisational interests than out of genuine concern to tackle rural poverty¹³⁴². They showed interest in working with NGOs on condition that they would get financial and material support from them. Whenever NGOs declined to fund governmental organisations, their projects faced sustainability problems. In 1980, Oxfam funded a poultry project run by a cooperative in Gonder. A committee composed of representatives of Oxfam, the RRC, the Ministry of Agriculture, and the cooperative was set up. The Ministry took the responsibility to transfer the technical and managerial skills by training project participants about modern poultry. The cooperative monitored by Oxfam took financial responsibility. Gaining no financial incentive, the Ministry ignored the project that Oxfam planned to expand to other regions in the country. Oxfam was dissatisfied, informing the Ministry that:

There should be no further inputs from us to this project unless the ministry of Agriculture can give more time to it. Further requests for poultry projects elsewhere in the country should be

¹³³⁸ CRDA, "1977 Annual Report" (May 1977), P.5

¹³³⁹ "Final Report on Work in Gonder Region: August 14th-28th October 1983"), P. 4

¹³⁴⁰ Informant, Ato Getachew Worku

¹³⁴¹ CRDA, "1977 Annual Report" (May 1977), P.5

¹³⁴² Tegegne Teka, *International...*, P. 53

looked at carefully in relation to the technical advice available to the group wanting to start such project¹³⁴³.

The complex techniques that NGOs needed to carry out water works in particular caused NGOs to seek the partnership of governmental organisations. During the relief operation in 1983–1984, NGOs had installed water wells with mono hand pumps to supply water to relief shelters in Wollo and Wollaita¹³⁴⁴. Even after the relief operation was over, mono hand pumps continued to be the main technology to get water. However, there was no local capability to repair water works. A study conducted by Oxfam in 1987 showed that 50% of the 300 hand pumps in Wollo were not operational. The study shows also that the main problem had to do with lack of maintenance and inappropriate installation¹³⁴⁵. As a result, because water wells were often sealed off when pumps were fitted, the situation was now worse than before the well was improved¹³⁴⁶.

Oxfam tried to put three important things in place to better sustain water works. Firstly, Oxfam changed its water technique in 1988. Rather than mono hand pumps, it started using simple rubber buckets to extract water. A document reported that, “Previously, various more complicated technologies were used, but this has been abandoned in favour of the simpler, less expensive and more easily maintained rope and rubber bucket system...Hand pumps are no longer installed, as maintenance is extremely difficult in such remote communities”¹³⁴⁷. Secondly, Oxfam assigned a CPPO to establish water committees by enlisting project participants. The water committees that she set up were dominated by local government officials of the peasant, women’s, and youth associations. Oxfam was opposed to the presentation of such officials in the committee. However, that was just how things worked. Oxfam itself noted that, “All other community activities are organised in this way, and one can’t bypass the FA chairman”¹³⁴⁸. Thirdly, Oxfam encouraged the EWWCA to set up mobile crews to repair and maintain water wells. EWWCA responded that it did not have the budget. The EWWCA depended heavily on Oxfam. Oxfam was always against this dependency¹³⁴⁹. A senior official of Oxfam cautioned that, “I thought...that if EWWCA were given the impression that we were pulling out in – say – two years it would act as a spur to them

¹³⁴³ Letter from Michael Miller to Tony Walsh (23rd December, 1980), P. 1, Archive of Oxfam in Addis Ababa

¹³⁴⁴ Patricia F. Hotchkiss, “Wollo Water Programme...”, P. 11

¹³⁴⁵ “NWRC/Oxfam ...”

¹³⁴⁶ *Ibid*

¹³⁴⁷ “Wollo Rural Water Development Programme: Minutes of the Meeting Held on 15/09/86”, P.2

¹³⁴⁸ *Ibid*, P. 22

¹³⁴⁹ Oxfam’s Wollo Water Programme: A Note by Dick Williams” (nd), P.2

to put their houses in order”¹³⁵⁰ Thus though it proposed the establishment of mobile crews, Oxfam refused to provide financial support to the EWWCA.

The situation was similar in Wollaita. The Ethiopian Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (EWSSA) in Wollaita had a maintenance programme, funded by CIDA and UNICEF¹³⁵¹. Oxfam doubted the continuity of the programme, however, due to its reliance on donors¹³⁵². It thus contemplated training what were called “community pump maintenance people”. They were trained by UNICEF in Awssa town. However, Oxfam objected to the proposal on the ground that community pump maintenance people were urban-based professionals having nothing to do with rural residents¹³⁵³. Oxfam then came up with a proposal to provide a fairly small amount of additional support to the EWSSA maintenance system¹³⁵⁴. However, the support that the EWSSA was receiving from Oxfam was too small to maintain the 1500 water wells in 58 peasant associations in Wollaita that were installed by a number of NGOs¹³⁵⁵. The result was that by the beginning of 1990s, 40% of the mono pumps were out of use¹³⁵⁶.

Dependence on governmental organisations meant that grassroots structures did not emerge as an alternative. This was also because official governmental organisations were actively against alternative grassroots structures, as they would compete with them for resources. In order to assist project participants to subsidise their income, Oxfam included saving and credit services into its urban development programme in Addis Ababa. Residents expressed their joy when the scheme was started¹³⁵⁷. Oxfam informed residents that it could hardly enlist all residents due to budget constraints¹³⁵⁸. A committee was, thus, set up by residents to identify project participants by applying a list of criteria¹³⁵⁹. The Committee developed into a cooperative, recognised by the National Bank. Moreover, it started performing very well. 108 clients, many of whom were day labourers, could save Eth \$2, 939, an average of about Eth \$ 27.00 each over the period of six months¹³⁶⁰. The local administration was against this. Oxfam had discussed the credit and saving

¹³⁵⁰ William Dick, “Dick William’s Report 11 February to 21 April 1986: Confidential” to Jim Howard et al (21.3.1986), P.2

¹³⁵¹ “Memorandum” from Patrick McClay (4.12.1986), p. 1

¹³⁵² *Ibid*, P.1

¹³⁵³ “Memorandum” from Patrick McClay (4.12.1986), p. 2

¹³⁵⁴ *Ibid*, P.1

¹³⁵⁵ Tegegne Teka, *International...*, P. 170

¹³⁵⁶ *Ibid*, P. 171

¹³⁵⁷ “Summary of a Discussion held between Oxfam’s staff and household representatives” (August 8, 1988), P. 3

¹³⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p. 3

¹³⁵⁹ *Ibid*, P. 3

¹³⁶⁰ “Preliminary Report and Comments” (May 22, 1991), P. 14

scheme with the local administration. Government officials had told Oxfam that the administration was unable to satisfy the demands of residents, and that they wanted to increase the administration's income by increasing the capacity of the cooperative shops of the administration. Oxfam, however, told administrators that Oxfam would not finance governmental organisations. As a result, the administrators were waiting for opportune moments to show Oxfam that the credit and saving scheme would not work out. The cooperative started experiencing defaults¹³⁶¹. The administration had a Judicial Committee that used to adjudicate default cases. As a result, Oxfam brought two cases of default to the local administration. The Judicial Committee declined to see the case. One of the sources shows that this was part of their:

deliberate tactics to justify the kebele opposition towards the scheme when they suggested that the budget for house-hold loans should be added to the kebele [administration] income generation budget. They wanted to prove that our populations which are the poorest of the poor could not repay their loan¹³⁶².

The cooperative itself had internal problems. Firstly, some members of the committee were as corrupt as officials of the administration. As a result, as one of the sources shows, "...they have had to be pushed out"¹³⁶³ by Oxfam. Secondly, due to the criteria that it applied, Oxfam's project participants were mostly illiterate and lacking basic skills in accounting and management. A source that noted this problem stated that, "Part of the reason is that there is very little tradition of organisational leadership amongst poor urban people, and in part most clients are illiterate and poor"¹³⁶⁴.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, issues of national and civil stability put the sustainability of NGO projects into further question. In 1989, almost all NGOs withdrew from Wollo and Tigray, leaving behind their projects, due to the rapid advance of rebel movements. A year later, the "New Economic Policy" of March 1990 brought the tension between rural residents and the military government out into the open. Rural residents throughout Ethiopia demolished a variety of organisations. In some localities, the peasantry started also chasing out government officials and employees. Describing the situation in the Bolloso Sore district of Wollaita province, for example, an evaluation report documented that, "...many extension agents were chased out of the rural areas

¹³⁶¹ Gebreigziabher Dori, "Quarterly Report of the Oxfam Urban Project, Kebele 29, Kefetegna 4, Addis Ababa: Report Period 1st November 1989-January 31, 1990", P. 5

¹³⁶² *Ibid*, P.5

¹³⁶³ *Ibid*, P. 16

¹³⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 16

after the reforms were heard by peasants”¹³⁶⁵. The peasants were motivated by their grievances that arose from unpopular policies such as government cooperativisation, villagization, resettlement, etc. The dissolution of the rural organisations on which NGOs had based their projects put big question mark on their sustainability. With regard to Oxfam’s projects in eastern Hararghe, one of the sources described that:

This is a time of unpredictable change and transition. The collapse of the producer cooperatives, the slowdown and uncertain nature of the Service Cooperatives and even the PA structures themselves resulting in the loss of much of Oxfam’s inputs i.e. seed, credit, etc. means that Oxfam will eventually have to start from scratch in devising another strategy if it wants to stay in the area¹³⁶⁶

The dissolution of rural organisations affected all NGOs in the country, regardless of the nature of their projects. Though, it did not lose as much of its resources as Oxfam, above, ASE’s educational programme was frustrated by the confusion that prevailed in its operational areas. The peasant associations and Service Cooperatives on which ASE depended for mobilising project participants were dissolved and ASE reached the stage where it could not have any contact with its project participants¹³⁶⁷.

To summarise, grassroots structures did not emerge due to the influence of official governmental organisations. Part of the reason was that official governmental organisations presented themselves as the only structure capable of sustaining projects. However, they were more interested in gaining resources than in sustaining projects per se. From the end of the 1980s and into the 1990s, governmental organisations themselves started collapsing due to broader socio-political factors in the country, putting at serious risk the sustainability of the projects of NGOs.

6.5.5. NGOs and governance

NGOs picked up on the agenda of “empowerment” following the collapse of the military dictatorship in May 1991. Empowerment was intended to enhance human agency, including the expansion of individual capabilities and voices, enabling the poor to become active in socio-economic and political processes in the country¹³⁶⁸. Due to this, empowerment had profound political implication. This together with the participation of international NGOs during the “Cross-Border” relief operation of the 1980s caused the new government that seized power in 1991 to look

¹³⁶⁵ Dessalegn et al, “Oxfam ...”, P. 13

¹³⁶⁶ *Ibid*, P. 23

¹³⁶⁷ Mulugeta Tamere et al, “Re-Appraisal...”, P. 9

¹³⁶⁸ Dessalegn Rahmato, *The Peasant...* P. 233

at NGOs in contempt and suspicion. Senior government authorities argued that NGOs that encapsulated their activities by empowerment were driven by the interest of Western powers. In 1997, *Ato Meles Zenawi*, the Prime Minister himself commented that “I don’t think the activities of these organisations can be seen as being apart from the countries that claim to be donors”¹³⁶⁹.

Certainly, the conviction that NGOs were directed by donors underestimated the internal dynamics. Ethiopia’s monarchical rule and the military dictatorship that were both marked by highly centralised state power stunted the civic engagement of citizens. From the early 1990s, different sections of the society who organised themselves around a variety of issues showed a great deal of resurgence, motivated by a series of measures that the new government introduced. NGOs were in a position to closely observe this resurgence, and sought to sympathise with them. CCRDA issued a statement in a political tension that occurred following the 2005 elections in which it described how close NGOs were to the daily lives of citizens. This, the statement argued, placed NGOs, “...in a privileged position to witness the day to day living of communities, their feelings as well as their aspirations”¹³⁷⁰.

NGOs saw that the people sought not only financial and other inputs but also public space to have role in the socio-economic and political lives in the country. NGOs noted these aspirations partly due to a series of decentralization of power and authority that enabled their regional offices to approach the people closely. This process gained impetus in the early 2000s when NGOs carried out “constituency building” that intended to closely observe the aspirations of project participants and to mobilise them to realise these aspirations. Identification of these aspirations and mobilisation of the people resulted not only from the implication of the new strategic direction (empowerment), but also from the influence of political activists whose political background went back to the Ethiopian students’ movement of the 1960s and 1970s. These activists drew the attention of NGO leaders to governance. In its appeal to NGOs, the *Press Digest*, an Ethiopian weekly edited by prominent politicians in the opposition, namely *Dr Hailu Araya*, pointed out that NGOs’ attempt to address the symptoms of poverty was over, stating that addressing governance was a key agenda, “...if NGOs are to contribute to the...nation’s development process”¹³⁷¹. Likewise, another active participant of the Ethiopian students’ movement addressed a strong message to NGOs through

¹³⁶⁹ Phonex Universal, *NGO Forum*...P. 20

¹³⁷⁰ CRDA, “A Statement on the Recent National Elections in Ethiopia” (Addis Ababa, May 24, 2005), P.1

¹³⁷¹ Phonex Universal, *NGO*...P. 18

CCRDA, stating that Ethiopians remained poor due to poor governance¹³⁷². This person expressed also his frustration over the failure of NGOs to hold to account those government officials responsible for impoverishing the people. He stated:

በርካታ ምዕራን የተስማሙበትን የልማት ጽንሰ ሃሳብ ትርጉሙን በማስተማር ህዝቡ በልማት ባለመቤትነት መብቱ ተጠቃሚ እንደሚሆን ባለመደረጉ የህዝቡ የልማት መብት በጥቂት ፖለቲከኞች ሲረገጥ የትኛውም በልማት ተግባር የተሰማራ ድርጅት ከልማት ከእድገት ከተሳትፎ ደረጃዎች ጽንሰ ሃሳብ ትርጉም በመነሳት ሳይንሳዊ ትንታኔዎችን በማስቀመጥ የህዝቡን የልማት መብት መረገጣቸውን በማሳየት ከድርጊታቸው እንዲቆጠቡ ሲደረግ ማድመጥም ሆነ ማየት አልቻልኩም።

I did not see and listen to any development organization [NGO] that formulate a scientific analysis on the basis of the concept of development, progress and participation to prevent a handful of politicians denying the people their rights to development and oppressing¹³⁷³.

Certainly, call outs of this kind shaped the thinking of NGO leaders in Ethiopia. In his address to a meeting held in Addis Ababa, the Deputy Director of CCRDA, *Ato Akalewold Bantirgu* spoke of concerns of the kind stated above and argued that, “NGOs...[in Ethiopia]....need to focus on...policies and practices if they have to bring about a lasting change in the lives of the people”¹³⁷⁴.

NGOs’ intention to address governance problem was recognised by dominant actors in the early 2000s. The World Bank and the IMF negotiated with the Ethiopian government to recognise NGOs as a social actor, an advocate negotiating with the dominant actors in the socio-economic and political lives of Ethiopians. This set the context in which NGOs developed a great deal of confidence and enthusiasm to undertake a number of activities to negotiate with the Ethiopian government. One of these was the creation of new networks and coalitions and consolidation of the existing one. Until 1991, CCRDA was the only consortium of NGOs in Ethiopia. A couple of networks emerged in the early 1990s. In the 2000s, Pact Ethiopia took network creation as a key strategic objective to build up sufficient capacity in dealing with the government. The result was that, 25 networks and coalitions were operative on the eve of the 2005 national and regional elections¹³⁷⁵.

The networks and coalitions seized the opportunities offered by the preparation of the Poverty Reduction Strategic Paper (PRSP) to push forward their cause. NGOs noted that the PRSP was to

¹³⁷² Lā Radio Fana Yākereker Mādrāk Azāgaghe i.e. To Radio Fana Debate Forum Organizer” (December 23, 1997EC)

¹³⁷³ Letter from Ato Hassen Muhammed to Ato Kebedde Asrat (October 27, 1997), P. 1, Archive of CCRDA in Addis Ababa

¹³⁷⁴ Getachew Zike, “Proceedings of Workshop on Constituency Building” (December 16, 2003), P.1

¹³⁷⁵ Aster Birke, “Civil Society Networking and Coalition Building in Ethiopia: Challenges and Prospects” in Taye Assefa and Bahru Zewde (eds), *Civil Society at the Crossroads: Challenges and Prospects in Ethiopia* (Forum for Social Studies, Addis Ababa, 2008), P. 102

be prepared jointly by the government and NGOs. The government argued that policy formulation was the sovereign prerogative of the government. NGOs coordinated by CCRDA then started discussing issues to be included in the PRSP without the consent of the government. This, “...forced the government to allow a measure of participation”¹³⁷⁶. This suggests that the government no longer had monopoly over the formulation of policy matters. The PRSP document shows that the government became aware that poverty reduction required the participation of NGOs. Quoting the PRSP document, a joint letter that NGOs addressed to the Ministry of Justice stated:

መንግስት በዘላቂ ልማትና ድህነት ቅነሳ ፕሮግራም አማካይነት ልማትን የማፋጠን ድህነትን የመቀነስና ዲሞክራሲን የማጠናከር አላማወቅን በራሱ ተቋማትና ፕሮግራሞች ብቻ እንደማያሳካና ከሌሎች የልማት ተዋያን ጋር በቅርበት መስራት እንዳለበት መገንዘቡንና ይህም ቀደም ሲል ከነበረው የልማት ሂደቱን በብቸኝነት ጠቅልሎ ከመያዝ አመለካከት ተላቆ ከንግዱ ህብረተሰብና ከሲል ማህበረሰቡ ጋር ሽርክናን ወደ መመስረት መሸጋገሩን አመለካከት ነው።

The government realized that it could not accelerate development, reduce poverty and consolidate democracy through the intermediary of Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Programme with only its own organizations and programmes and that it realized the importance of working with other development actors and this shifts the tendency from the one that encourages monopoly of the development process to the tendency that encouraged partnership with the civil society and trading community¹³⁷⁷

This change of attitude was demonstrated practically. With the participation of NGOs and other stakeholders, the government formulated HIV-AIDS, population, and women’s affairs policies, and health and education programmes¹³⁷⁸. The government also expressed its dedication to implementing these policies, adding that the constitutional rights of citizens would be respected. Also, for the first time, the government officially allowed NGOs to follow up on the implementation of policies, and to advocate for the respect of the political and human rights of citizens¹³⁷⁹.

The positive attitude shown by the government led NGOs to raise an important issue of public legitimacy. NGOs felt that they required public legitimacy to advocate on their behalf. Motivated by this new, relatively liberal attitude of the government authorities, and concerned about their own legitimacy, NGOs, led by CCRDA and Oxfam, came up with the concept of constituency building. A study sponsored by CCRDA and Oxfam described the importance of constituency building in the following way:

¹³⁷⁶ Dessalegn Rahmato, “The Voluntary...”, P. 102

¹³⁷⁷ Letter from CRDA et al to Ato Assefa Kesito, Minister of Justice (November 22, 2006), P.1, Archive of CCRDA in Addis Ababa

¹³⁷⁸ *Ibid*, P.1

¹³⁷⁹ Dessalegn Rahmato, “The Voluntary Sector...”, P. 122

In order to be heard in their advocacy for democratic change, NGOs should have reliable and sound constituencies of some segments of the society. Therefore, it is important that NGOs should invest in cultivating and building their constituencies¹³⁸⁰.

Constituency, Oxfam argued, was about, "...membership and identification of firm groups of people within the society who share the mission and vision of NGOs/CSOs and come to its support in all respects"¹³⁸¹.

Certainly, not all NGOs took up the new direction, which had profound political implications. One of the questions raised while discussion on constituency building was underway was that of the mandate of NGOs. For a significant number of NGOs, constituency building was a task that political parties should carry out, and was not relevant for NGOs, who would address public concerns on an ad hoc basis. The proceedings documented their view:

NGOs are not political parties. As such, the only thing that they can do is generate discussions around, or lobby about, certain timely issues. And after those issues have been addressed, they may want to raise other pertinent issues, but they may have to do that with the backing of a different constituency. So why should they be expected to have a constituency on a permanent basis¹³⁸².

The majority of NGOs, however, firmly believed that constituency building is a key strategy to address the people's aspirations for good governance. A distinction is to be made here between national and international NGOs. Though they believed in tackling the bottlenecks of governance in Ethiopia, international NGOs unlike their national counterparts did not intend to enlist constituencies. Conversely, however, national NGOs' representatives argued that, "Constituency building ought to be taken up by all NGOs, not only by national NGOs"¹³⁸³.

However, constituency building did not proceed easily at the local level. This had to do with the way NGOs were perceived. The majority of people believed that NGOs were either guilty of embezzlement or agents of evangelisation¹³⁸⁴. This had an impact on NGOs' attempts to build up constituencies. In the early 2000s, ASE went to the Enbse Sar Medir district of Gojjam to design a project. Mapping began with a stick to scratch the soil to mark boundaries of the villages in which ASE planned to operate. While mapping was in progress, two clergymen stood up, drew their crosses from their chest pockets and showed them to the persons around. The process was stopped.

¹³⁸⁰ Horn Consult, "Constituency Building on Ethiopian NGOs" (Addis Ababa, November 2003), P. 7

¹³⁸¹ Getachew Zike, "Proceedings...", P.3

¹³⁸² *Ibid*, P. 3

¹³⁸³ *Ibid*, P. 14

¹³⁸⁴ Getachew Zike, "Proceedings of Workshop...", P.16

The two men told the team that, "... you know [that] our country and society belongs to Christians. If we use this stick and scratch the soil on Sunday our farm will be damaged by hail"¹³⁸⁵. This was because project participants had heard that ASE was an NGO set up by Catholics and its objective was to convert Orthodox Christians to Catholicism. A further problem was that project participants did not understand why ASE had asked for their participation. While the discussion was underway, a project participant wondered, "We are lay people, it is you who are educated. You know much. Why don't you draw the map and show us instead of killing our time"¹³⁸⁶.

As time went on, ASE established cordial relations with project participants, which enabled the organisation to articulate ideas of good governance, democracy, human rights and peace building. This was also a trend elsewhere in the country. In the early 2000s, 120 NGOs were registered by the Ministry of Justice to work on these issues among different sections of society. Also, 37 "advocacy and human rights" NGOs were registered in various regions, although no such organisations were reportedly active in Afar, Oromia, Tigray or Benishangul¹³⁸⁷. Relative to the size of the country, the number of NGOs working on good governance, democracy, human rights and peace building was small and hence their outreach was limited. This was particularly true in rural areas¹³⁸⁸.

Despite this, the NGO contribution in this role was highly visible. The national and regional elections of May 2005 set the context in which the NGOs' role was visible throughout the pre-election, election and post-election periods. The elections of May 2005 were different and in many ways quite an improvement on those of 2000. The reasons for this were many and varied, but among them was the active engagement of NGOs, which made an important contribution to the success of the elections. Evidence suggests that NGOs active in voter education programmes reached 10 million people in the period leading up to polling day, the great majority of whom were peasants in the countryside¹³⁸⁹. The election campaign became heated, due to the role played by NGOs and the opening of the media to campaign debates and opposition candidates. A massive grassroots interest in the elections that had not been apparent in 2000 was quite evident in 2005. The result was that a high level of voter registration took place throughout the country. Nearly 26

¹³⁸⁵ Abera Abebe, "Institutional Features of Participatory Development: The Case of Agri-Service Ethiopia, Enebe Branch Office" (MA in Management of Agro-ecology and Social Change, Wageningen University, April 2004), P. 34

¹³⁸⁶ *Ibid*, P. 35

¹³⁸⁷ *Ibid*, P. 80

¹³⁸⁸ Dessalegn Rahmato, *The Peasant...*, P. 269

¹³⁸⁹ *Ibid*, P. 270

million voters registered for the elections, of which 48 percent were women. This was at least 30% higher than in 2000. 90% of those registered turned out to cast their ballot on election day¹³⁹⁰.

During election day, CCRDA sent out 104 observers from different NGOs. They had been trained by CCRDA to observe the elections in Addis Ababa and the Oromia, Southern and Amhara regions. They observed the elections at 236 polling stations¹³⁹¹. In the urban areas where NGOs observed, the ruling party lost the seats. For instance, the ruling party lost all 23 seats in Addis Ababa. The situation started deteriorating when the Prime Ministry announced a controversial state of emergency, and became frightening when youngsters went out onto the streets against vote rigging. The set of measures that the government took thereafter reversed what had been significant advances. The enactment of the Ethiopian Charity and Society Act in 2009 was one of these measures, undertaken in response to the impact that NGOs and opposition politicians had created. While the draft of the proclamation was under review, Oxfam issued a document that rightly stated the rationale behind the proclamation. It stated that:

The draft CSO law can be interpreted as a reaction by the government to growing individual and community empowerment, and evidence that change can occur in non-coercive ways i.e. from bottom up, through peaceful advocacy of government and donors, by working with these actors, through building capacity and confidence so that people are able to participate and claim their rights¹³⁹²

6. 6. Conclusions

Poverty in Ethiopia has had structural causes. These structural causes have stifled the potential of project participants to act and address their problems. The land shortage, the populational pressure, taxation etc were some such factors during the imperial period. While NGOs could mobilise their project participants during the imperial period, this momentum could not be maintained as the military government set in place different structures and approaches that traumatised the rural population. The attempts of NGOs to improve the situation failed to bring about major change due to the dependency mentality that emerged from the relief operations as well as corruption. The success of some of the activities NGOs carried out in agriculture and environmental conservation, water supply and health care was mainly the result of financial investment that followed the flow of

¹³⁹⁰ *Ibid*, P. 270

¹³⁹¹ Outline of the Activities Undertaken by CRDA in Connection with the May 2005 National Elections and the Aftermath (nd), P.1

¹³⁹² Oxfam, "The Changes that Need to Happen in Ethiopia, and Oxfam GB's Role: Draft National Change Strategy (Addis Ababa, 2008), P. 15

resources in the context of the Ethiopian famine of 1970s and 1980s. The situation started changing when NGOs started working on the root causes of the problem. During this time, they addressed the governance issues that caused poverty in the country. This approach had its roots in the two famine periods, when NGOs carried out successful advocacy work that saved many lives. However, NGOs were unable to maintain the success that they registered in the early 2000s when they were involved in policy debate as well as mobilising the public for their rights due to the harsh reactions of the government.

Chapter Seven

General Conclusions

7.1. Review of findings

Ethiopia has been one of the poorest countries in the world. The country has suffered from frequent drought and famine since the 1960s. Successive governments have put in place efforts to develop agricultural productivity to tackle poverty. NGOs have complemented these efforts. However, there has not been a major breakthrough as regards the lives of ordinary citizens. A number of scholars have proposed possible explanations as to why efforts put in place failed to improve the lives of the majority of the people. This research studied development visions of a group of NGOs and their translation into action.

NGO leaders rightly pointed out the ultimate causes of poverty in Ethiopia. Like many NGOs elsewhere in the world, ASE, CCRDA and Oxfam were established and led by groups of individuals who had not only goodwill but also access to education and information. Access to education and information enabled these groups of individuals to broadly understand the environment where poor people lived and developed ways to improve their environment. The leaders of the three NGOs believed that the relationship between the governors and the governed was the ultimate cause of poverty and they intended to redress this asymmetrical power distribution by “empowering” poor people. Concepts chiefly of democracy drove NGOs from the early 1990s to envision an Ethiopia where human and democratic rights of citizens are respected. The analysis that looked at the causes of poverty through the lens of power relations has remained valid. The most unfair land tenure systems, emerging during the imperial period, and the highly authoritarian and exploitative structures of the military government were the basis to understand the nature of poverty in Ethiopia. Although the country has recently registered an appreciable macro-economic growth, the living standard of ordinary people has changed little following the collapse of the military period.

However, the translation of ideals that NGOs articulated was mediated by broad political contexts. This research has analysed how the three different forms of government Ethiopia has experienced over the last 50 years have looked at NGOs and their visions. Both the imperial and the military governments have shown time and again that NGOs could not take independent actions to advance their cause. NGOs were, thus, considered as a security threat. NGOs, for their part, distanced

themselves from anything that could provoke governments. Put differently, NGOs subordinated themselves to the policies of the different governments.

The retreat of NGOs from their radical ideals has raised a key issue related to their impact in practice. This study has assessed the impact that NGOs left behind. The fact of retreat from radical idea meant that NGOs left behind missed out the very cause that created rural poverty and that they focused on tackling only the symptoms of poverty. NGOs were, thus, overwhelmed and sometimes frustrated while they operated to address the symptoms of poverty. However, against this frustration, NGOs carried out a number of environmental conservation measures, some agricultural activities, and also water works (albeit these were carried out by project participants for pay).

The impact NGOs left behind saw an extraordinary momentum from the early 1990s. The new order that came into being following the collapse of the military government appeared favourable to NGOs. In this context, NGOs were drawn into debates on issues of national significance due to changes within themselves. These changes had two aspects. The “indeginisation” process aiming at increasing the Ethiopian representation in NGOs reached a high level in the mid-1990s due to the anti-foreign attitude of the government. A new generation of Ethiopians defined a new role for themselves, and improved the relations between NGOs that had remained tense due to competition for resources. Secondly, a series of decentralization measures created harmony within NGOs and brought their structure closer to project participants. The changes transformed NGOs from organisations providing goods and services to people in need to advocates of rights and interests. NGOs had advocated these already during the famines of the 1970s and 1980s, as indicated by some crucial media events. The film shot by Mr. Dumbleby in October 1974 in which NGOs were involved exposed the attempt of the imperial government to hide the famine. The anger that followed the film triggered the overthrow of the same government. Similarly, the film shot secretly by Mohammed Amin and Michael Buerk that NGOs sponsored discredited the military period and caused a global movement that brought in massive resources that rescued million of lives. The advocacy that NGOs carried out from the mid-1990s is a continuation of that earlier advocacy during the times of famine. A number of pro-poor policies were formulated in that period, with the inclusion of NGOs, signaling that state no longer had monopoly over the formulation of policies. This gained even more momentum in 2005 when elections took place. NGOs educated voters who later turned out in large number to cast their ballots, monitored the elections and protested against the repression during the post election violence. Thus, advocacy as well as its outcomes was a

function of changes within NGOs as much as it was a response to changes that followed the collapse of the military government.

NGOs were drawn into advocacy against the goodwill of the government. This could be learned from the reactions of the government. The government promulgated the Ethiopian Charity and Society Act in 2009 with an intention to depoliticise NGOs. In so doing, the government made its hostility against NGOs clear. This hostility can be traced back to the early 1980s when a number of international NGOs established relations with the TPLF, then a rebel organization. Many NGOs channeled massive resources through the Relief Society of Tigray, the humanitarian organisation of the TPLF, to rescue famine victims. Officials of the TPLF, in power since 1991, believed that NGOs could carry out similar subversive activities. NGOs' advocacy since 1991 gave government officials a proof that NGOs, in fact, could pose a threat to the regime. The government finally issued the proclamation mentioned above to frustrate NGOs.

The link between the actions of the government and the relation NGOs established with the rebels who now controlled this government calls for a historical approach. The present study has positioned NGOs within a more political or historical setting and explained how they related to the state, donors, project participants. Actors were identified on the basis of the influences that they exerted on NGOs and their activities. These influences were brought to light by investigating the interests, intentions, interpretations and strategies of those actors.

7.2. Wider implications of the results

NGOs are social actors that operate to tackle socio-economic and political concerns. In doing so, they interact with the state, with their donors, and with the project participants. It is only when we position NGOs in the midst of these actors that we understand NGOs and their efficiency and effectiveness with regard to development. This requires an examination into the perspectives and actions of actors that have interest in NGOs' activities. This study has done an inquiry into the multi-level relationships that NGOs established with all these actors.

Although this study has mainly focused on three examples, ASE, CCRDA and Oxfam, some conclusions may be drawn that have validity to NGOs in Ethiopia in general, and to those in countries with a similar history of centralised governance. As shown in the main text, the founding leaders of ASE, CCRDA and Oxfam GB analysed contexts in which they lived and acted accordingly to relieve poor people from the quagmire of poverty. To that end, NGOs mobilised

resources from foreign donors. This makes NGOs part of the aid channel and hence subjects them to influences that stem from the global development discourse. This discourse has provided NGO leaders with the lens through which they analysed the dynamics of poverty. However, it would be flawed to argue, as some authors have done,¹³⁹³ that NGOs are either opportunistic pretenders or subservient to foreign donors.

To conclude that NGOs are not actors in their own right simplifies the complicated relationships that exist between NGOs, on the one hand, and a variety of actors on the other. Before reaching a conclusion about the integrity and autonomy of NGOs, an investigation into the internal dynamics of NGOs should be made. The investigation that this study has conducted into ASE, CCRDA and Oxfam shows that they have considered in their analysis the unique context in which the poor people lived in Ethiopia. For instance, they have pointed out that the people could never count on local [development officials, as they were part of a highly centralised power hierarchy. This was part of the quest for democracy that NGO leaders aspired to especially from the early 1990s. This quest for democracy has remained strong in Ethiopia. Although it can be traced back to the student activism of the 1960s and 1970s, the quest for democracy in Ethiopia gained momentum since the end of the military regime in May 1991. This was due to the optimism that followed the collapse of the military government. The new government that seized power seemed willing to satisfy this aspirations. The endorsement of a new constitution in 1994 that emphasised the rule of law, free press, multi-party democracy etc was considered as indicative of the willingness of the new government to drive Ethiopia along a new path. All these encouraged a number of citizens to be active to advance their respective causes. It was more in response to aspirations of these citizens that NGOs aspired to democracy than to be subservient to donor organisations.

However, it would be equally flawed to underestimate the influence of foreign donors. The ideals of NGOs in Ethiopia coincided in principle with the changing interests of international donors. During much of the Cold War period, major international donors were interested more in frustrating the bond that some socialist countries established with the Soviet Union. As elsewhere in Africa, major international donors in Ethiopia went to a larger extent to influence the socialist regime of Ethiopia to cut ties with the Soviet Union. To that end, they used financial leverage. When it did

¹³⁹³ Carrie Meyer in Daniel Sahleyesus, *Non Governmental Organization in Ethiopia: Examining Relation between Local and International Groups* (Ontario, the Edwn Mellen Press, 2005), PP. 1-2

not work out, international donors channeled much of their resources through NGOs. The objective was to assist the rural poor people who suffered from drought and famine. The interest of international donors witnessed marked change from the early 1990s. With the end of the Cold War, international donors were interested to model the African states upon neo-liberal ideals. To that end, they sought to reduce the power of national African governments by promoting civil society, of which NGOs are a part. Until 2009, Western donors exercised their financial and political leverage to influence the government to tolerate NGOs to operate freely. Their influence on the government and the opportunity that this presented to NGOs should be determined. The first few years of the 1990s were a continuation of the imperial and the military periods as the transitional government set up in 1991 suffered from lack of legitimacy. Firstly, prominent multi-national political groups that had operated since the 1960s were excluded from the political process. Moreover, ethnic-based political parties such as the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) withdrew from the Transitional Government and resolved to continue the armed struggle. Proclamations of a free and independent press and judiciary were tempered by accusations of control and interference. Independent observations of election processes, although generally positive, were qualified¹³⁹⁴. Western donors, for their part, were concerned about grand reforms such as the privatisation of state enterprises and decentralisation. NGOs thus took the initiative themselves to enlist and network with Western donors to create an “enabling environment”. Thereafter, seizing the opportunity that the preparation in 2002 of the Poverty Reduction Strategic Paper by the Ministry of Economic Development and Cooperation offered, NGOs emerged as powerful new social actors.

It follows that the capability to analyse the nature of poverty, to understand the relationship between state and donors and the seizing of the opportunity that this relation created, to mobilise resources to advance their cause – all these qualify NGOs to be actors in their own right. As social actors, NGOs did have a certain amount of power to influence dominant actors such as the state. This influence, however, depended on contexts. Despite their visions that required NGOs to redress the power imbalance between the governing and the governed, NGOs had nonetheless provided inputs and techniques to assist project participants to solve their “felt needs” during the imperial and the military periods, i.e., treating symptoms rather than causes. Their endeavour to also carry out environmental conservation and agricultural activities, water development and to some extent health work during this time was commendable. However, poverty in Ethiopia has structural

¹³⁹⁴ Will Campbell, “The Potentials of Donor Mediation in NGO-State Relations: An Ethiopian Case Study” (nd), P. 14

causes, and NGOs, in the early 2000s, acted to tackle these structural factors by getting involved in policy debates on behalf of the poor. They also educated the general public about their rights, who in fact amply demonstrated their assertiveness. The visible impact of NGOs' activities to demand and get involved in policy formulations and to educate the public about rights, all this suggest that NGOs were social actors with a certain power to influence the course of change. Ultimately, however, NGOs have always remained subject to the domination of the state – at least in the case of Ethiopia. The government's promulgation of the Ethiopian Charity and Society Proclamation (No 621/2009) seems to show that NGOs previously had in fact a significant influence on the government, which the Proclamation served to curtail in large part. Thus, we may conclude that in countries like Ethiopia where the state dominates political life, NGOs have great difficulty to bring about the sustained development as stated in their visions.

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List of Informants

No	Name	Place of Interview	Date of Interview	Remark
1	<i>Ato</i> Amanuél Assefa	In his office At ASE, Addis Ababa	October 20, 2012	He joined ASE in 1992 and he had profound memory about ASE and its activities. He narrated events and activities not only in connection with ASE but also the trajectories of NGOs in the country. As a technical staff of ASE, he discusses well the modality of ASE's operation
2	Prof. Bahru Zewdé	Former office of Forum for Social Studies around the main Campus of Addis Ababa University	December 4, 2007	He is a professor of History at Addis Ababa University. He was one of the members of the first Executive Council of the Association for the Destitute. The interview that the researcher conducted with Prof. Bahru on December 4, 2007 is referred in this study
3	Gétačäw Minas	Lem Hotel, Addis Ababa		Active member of the Association for the destitute.
4	Mengisu Jänbäre	In his office in Färänsay Lägasiyon, Addis Ababa	September 2007	He served as vice president of the Association for the Destitute
5	<i>Ato</i> Abeyu	In his office At ASE, Addis Ababa	July 12, 2013	He is a junior staff of ASE. In his capacity as human resource manager, he knows the management aspect of ASE as well as the distribution of power and authority within ASE.

No	Name	Place of Interview	Date of Interview	Remark
6	<i>Ato Gétačäw Worku</i>	In a cafeteria around Bolé	June 12, 2013	He was Vice Minister of the Ministry of Agriculture. He is now a private business owner. He was the Executive Director of ASE from 1993 to 2013. As an executive director of the organisation, he was involved in many of the decisions within ASE and hence a good memory of events and activities that occurred during his tenure. Moreover, he is skilled in putting events in sequence.
7	<i>Ato Alemu Gebrewold</i>	Cafeteria of ASE, Addis Ababa	May 12, 2013	He is one of the founders of ASE who worked for ASE. He had good memory about the conditions of project participants. He also had good memory about the personalities of the founders of ASE.
8	<i>Ato Abate Worku</i>	In his office at CCRDA	November 29, 2013	He was employed as an assistant driver in 1992 and he narrated the activities in transport activities of CCRDS
9	<i>Ato Semu Terefe</i>	In his house around Askö in Addis Ababa	October 19, 2013	He served a number of NGOs, including CCRDA that is part of this work. He discussed the overall environment in which NGOs operated in Ethiopia

No		Place of Interview	Date of Interview	Remark
10	<i>Ato</i> Million Kebede	In his office at CCRDA	November 8, 2013	He narrates issues internal to CCRDA. He assisted the researcher to a larger extent
11	<i>Ato</i> Metiku Gebregirgis	In his office at CCRDA	November 21, 2013	He served CCRDA for two decades and in particular knows the relation the organisation had with the government
12	<i>Ato</i> Fikadu Bizuneh	In a Cafteria around Sedest kilo	November 10, 2012	He narrates wrongdoing within NGOs in some depth
13	<i>Ato</i> Sebsebe Sema	In his office at ASE	November 28, 2013	He served ASE in the last two decades and he remembers to some extent how ASE evolved
14	<i>Ato</i> Fantahun Alemu	In a Cafteria arounf Qedeste Mariam	November 10, 2013	He served a number of NGOs and discussed general issues especially the relation between NGOs and donors
15	<i>Ato</i> Elias Mamo and Zenash Ketema	In the office of Ato Elias	November 10, 2013	They reflected on the Ethiopian Charity and Society Act, representing the government
16	<i>Ato</i> Wolde Hawariat Gebre Selassie	In his office	November 8, 2013	He made brief remarks about the Ethiopian Charity and Society Proclamation as well as its usefulness as representative of the government.

DECLARATION

I hereby affirm that I have produced the thesis at hand without any inadmissible help from a third party or the use of resources other than those cited; ideas incorporated directly or indirectly from other sources are clearly marked as such. In addition, I affirm that I have neither used the services of commercial consultants or intermediaries in the past nor will I use such services in the future. The thesis in the same or similar form has hitherto not been presented to another examining authority in Germany or abroad, nor has it been published.

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Signature _____

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Date of Submission, April 2016