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REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES,
QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS AND
HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS: QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES
AND DISPLACED PERSONS

Assistance to refugees and returnees in Ethiopia

Report of the Secretary-General

1. In its resolution 45/161 of 18 December 1990, the General Assembly requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to continue her efforts to mobilize humanitarian assistance for the relief, rehabilitation and resettlement of returnees and the large numbers of refugees in Ethiopia.
2. At the end of 1990, Ethiopia was host to 790,000 refugees, comprising 385,000 Somalis in the east and 405,000 Sudanese in the west. The escalation of civil strife in Somalia since late 1990 has generated further influxes of Somali refugees and Ethiopian returnees into Ethiopia, bringing the total number of people receiving UNHCR assistance to 1.2 million as at the end of June 1991: 600,000 Somali and 400,000 Sudanese refugees, and 200,000 Ethiopian returnees.
3. In 1990 UNHCR programmes made progress in consolidating and strengthening relief assistance in both Somali and Sudanese refugees, particularly in the transport, water and health/nutrition sectors. Some 137,600 tons of food were transported and distributed during 1990. By the end of 1990 the malnutrition rate in all camps was under 5 per cent.

* A/46/150.

4. These achievements in 1990 were negated, however, by the new influx of more than 200,000 Somali refugees in the first quarter of 1991, following the collapse of the Siad Barre Government in Somalia. UNHCR responded to the influx by mobilizing existing resources available in the country and airlifting emergency relief items. The 1991 budgetary allocation for assistance to 1 million Somali and Sudanese refugees was subsequently revised upwards to \$76.2 million. However, the relief operation was again seriously disrupted by the intensified civil strife and the change of government in Ethiopia in late May 1991, causing additional suffering for both refugees and returnees. Many camp facilities, such as warehouses, offices, clinics, staff houses, vehicles and trucks were looted, destroyed and/or burned, and many refugees fled the camps. At the time of writing of the present report (end of June 1991), UNHCR, in coordination with other United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations was making every effort to re-establish the relief operation in the country.
5. Since the spontaneous return of some 200,000 former Ethiopian refugees from Somalia in early 1991, UNHCR has made every effort to assist the returnee caseload by providing an initial travel grant and a one-month food package to enable as many of them as possible to return to their areas of origin. Owing to insufficient food stocks in the country, UNHCR could not provide the initially agreed three-month food package and reintegration grant stipulated in the Tripartite Agreement.
6. In order to alleviate further hardship, UNHCR also tried to encourage as many persons as possible to move away from the Ethiopia-Somalia border. Returnees were found in three different locations: the south, south-east and east. In the south-east (Ogaden), returnees mingled with drought victims, making it extremely difficult to separate the two groups. Pending registration of bona fide returnees, UNHCR will continue to provide food to both the returnees and drought victims in the Ogaden until the situation has stabilized.
7. Since March 1991, some 11,500 returnees in the south and 3,855 returnees in the east have received their initial travel grant and one-month food ration, to enable them to disperse to their areas of origin. Owing to the lack of fuel, food and security in Ethiopia, the initial planning assumptions could not be implemented.
8. A cross-border operation from Kenya to Negele/Dolo and Suftu in the south is under way. Some 12,400 tons of wheat are expected to arrive in southern Ethiopia by the end of July 1991. The first convoy of 400 tons is expected on 4 July 1991. The first airlift of 800 tons of food and relief items to the Ogaden was completed on 1 July 1991. A second airlift of another 800 tons is under-way. As soon as conditions in Ethiopia allow, the remaining food and reintegration packages will be distributed to returnees at their reintegration sites. UNHCR is in close consultation with the World Food Programme (WFP) to make available the food required for distribution.