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## REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Assistance to refugees and returnees in EthiopiaReport of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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\* A/45/150 and Corr.1.

## I. INTRODUCTION

1. In its resolution 44/154, the General Assembly requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to continue his efforts in mobilizing humanitarian assistance for relief, rehabilitation and resettlement of voluntary returnees and large numbers of refugees in Ethiopia. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General, in co-operation with the High Commissioner, to apprise the Economic and Social Council, at its second regular session of 1990, of the implementation of the said resolution and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session.

## II. ASSISTANCE TO SUDANESE REFUGEES

2. The influx of Sudanese refugees into south-western Ethiopia continued at an average 4,400 persons per month and, by 31 December 1989, the total population in Itang, Fugnido, Dimma and Assosa was 384,989. During the first six months of 1990, there were an additional 13,764 refugees from southern Sudan, some 8,000 of this number arrived in June. However, the Assosa refugee camp was overrun by armed elements in January 1990, resulting in a complete evacuation of the camp. Most of the 41,000 refugees fled across the border to the Sudan. By 30 June, some 20,500 of these refugees had arrived at the specially arranged reception centre in Itang, some 300 km to the south. It is expected that these refugees will eventually be given more suitable long-term accommodation, probably within the Gambela region. By mid-July 1990, the total Sudanese refugee population in the western region of Ethiopia was 379,622, broken down as follows: 247,143 in Itang, 76,204 in Fugnido, 35,075 in Dimma and 21,200 ex-Assosa refugees temporarily settled in Itang. Although the majority of these refugees are males (70 per cent), the number of females among the new arrivals is considerably higher than in previous years. Most of these refugees, traditionally semi-nomadic pastoralists, now reside in the sedentary conditions dictated by the camp life. Humanitarian assistance to Sudanese refugees continued under the 1989 General Programme. UNHCR spent \$26.8 million on assistance to Sudanese refugees in 1989 with 75 per cent of this amount spent in the transport sector. In 1990 the allocation for Sudanese refugees is \$22.4 million with a similar proportion of expenditure anticipated under the transport sector.

3. Despite the financial difficulties experienced in the last quarter of 1989, the assistance programme for Sudanese refugees in western Ethiopia was sustained at an acceptable standard. Thus there was a further reduction in morbidity, mortality and malnutrition rates to levels below the standards set for rural communities in the tropical and subtropical regions of Africa. Generally, mortality rates were kept below 0.05 per cent while malnutrition rates among children under five remained below 12 per cent throughout the year. This positive result was mainly due to adequate supply of basic food, a relatively efficient transport and logistics system managed by the Gesellschaft fur Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) of the Federal Republic of Germany, which is the host Government's implementing partner. The expansion of storage capacity within and en route to the camps has also enhanced the buffer stocks.

4. The quality of drinking water remains a major challenge, particularly in view of the continued influx of Sudanese refugees. An emergency water supply system now operates in Dimma, while in Fugnido the number of operational boreholes in the camp increased from one to four. In an effort to provide an increased quantity of potable water, UNHCR started negotiations with UNICEF for the development of a comprehensive water supply system to meet the needs of the entire refugee population. This project will be funded from an Italian donation. Meanwhile, Africare has drilled, under contract, three out of an anticipated six boreholes in Itang.

5. Environmental health education, including malaria and vector control programmes was provided to refugees at regular intervals in all camps. Additional medical staff was provided by the Ministry of Health, which resulted in marked improvement in the health condition of refugees. Adequate numbers of refuse disposal pits were constructed, while household goods such as blankets, kitchen sets, jerrycans and washing soap were only distributed to the refugees in limited quantities. There was no significant supply of clothing or cloth to the refugees because of limited financial resources.

6. Some voluntary agencies, notably Radda Barnen and MSF (Belgium and Holland), made significant contributions to the community service, education and health sectors by assisting unaccompanied children and providing textbooks, teaching materials, sports equipment and constructing health clinics and the supervision of supplementary feeding centres.

7. Financial constraints have also prevented the expansion of relief-substitution activities. Nevertheless, attempts were made, successfully, to encourage the already established relief-substitution projects which included tailoring, shoe-making, carpentry, fishery and blacksmithing.

8. Programmes exclusively designed to benefit refugee women and children were not implemented because of severe financial constraints and the consequent reordering of priorities in favour of life-saving and life sustaining measures in the sectors of food, water, logistics and health. However, as women often bear the task of carrying water to their family shelters, the introduction of deep wells with hand or electric pumps and the addition of more storage tanks closer to their dwellings have reduced the distance they have to cover for this purpose. The introduction of wheat-flour into the general ration, whenever possible, and the provision of grinding mills when flour was unobtainable also reduced the need to pound the grain manually. The supplementary feeding programmes and mother-and-child health services were available for pregnant and nursing mothers and their children.

### III. ASSISTANCE TO SOMALI REFUGEES

9. A steady influx of Somali refugees into eastern Ethiopia continued throughout 1989. A mass re-registration exercise, carried out in August 1989 in the five camps hosting Somali refugees, showed a population of 324,808 persons. During the last quarter of 1989, a new camp near the town of Aisha was established to assist the new group of Somalis, who by the end of 1989 numbered approximately 10,000. The

total population being assisted in the six camps by the end of June 1990 was approximately 360,000 refugees; 140,000 in the Aware camps (Camabokar, Rabasso and Daror), 10,000 in Aisha and 210,000 in the two camps at Hartisheik. A second attempt to re-register all Somali refugees in March 1990 was not successful due to various technical and human factors, although screening of new arrivals now takes place on a camp-by-camp basis. Another re-enumeration exercise, which will rely on exchanging new laminated ration cards for old ones, is planned shortly.

10. Despite UNHCR financial constraints which severely affected the refugee assistance programme in Ethiopia in 1989, UNHCR, together with the World Food Programme (WFP) and non-governmental organizations such as CARE, Médecins sans Frontières, OXFAM and Save the Children Fund, helped the Government of Ethiopia make significant progress in several areas.

11. The closure of the Harshin camp and the movement of the population to Hartisheik B, the re-registration of the Somali refugee population, the introduction of a new food distribution system and the institutionalization of a supplementary feeding programme for all vulnerable groups, ensured that the basic needs of the refugees were effectively met. The most significant measure of progress was the degree to which the health status of the Somali refugees improved: malnutrition was reduced from 15 per cent in mid-1989 to 8.5 per cent in May 1990. In 1989, WFP contributed 63,452 metric tonnes of food worth \$US 16.5 million to Somali refugees. Despite concerted efforts to secure the total food requirements, however, there were significant shortfalls in 1989, mainly of nutritive non-cereal foodstuffs. WFP and UNHCR continue to collaborate to minimize these shortfalls but inadequate and irregular food supply threatens the gains made thus far in the health and nutritional status of the refugees.

12. Since the large influx of Somali refugees in mid-1988, an average of 800,000 litres of water have been transported by water tankers to some 210,000 refugees at the Hartisheik camps every day from Jijiga town wells, some 75 km away. After completing geological surveys in 1989, exploratory drilling is now taking place in the Jerrer Valley for a proposed piped water supply system for the Hartisheik camps. Until the Jerrer Valley water development project is successfully completed, probably in 1991, CARE will need to continue the transport of water from the Jijiga aquifer to Hartisheik. The assured capacity of this aquifer is still unknown and cannot be relied upon except as an interim measure. In Aware, refugees are totally dependent on rain water in earthdams and birkas for their water supply. Six earthdams have now been constructed to increase the quantity of water catchment. One water treatment plant has already been installed in Rabasso camp, and work is in progress to commission plants in Camabokar and Daror camps.

13. UNHCR spent \$34.2 million in 1989 on assistance to the Somali refugees in eastern Ethiopia, and provided \$6.2 million worth of food contributions to augment food provided by WFP. The current 1990 UNHCR budget is \$25.8 million for an increasing number of refugees. Although every effort is being made to be cost-effective, the financial constraints are affecting the scope and quality of the assistance programme for refugees.

14. For the Somali refugees, voluntary repatriation is the most realistic and desirable durable solution. However, until conditions conducive to the achievement of this objective are available in Somalia, the refugees will continue to require care and maintenance assistance in Ethiopia. The hostile physical environment poses insuperable problems for any attempts towards their local settlement.

#### IV. PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

15. The Administration for Refugee Affairs, a semi-autonomous body within the Ministry of Internal Affairs is the UNHCR's principal implementing partner in Ethiopia. This organization has the overall responsibility for the implementation and administration of refugee and returnee programmes in the country.

16. The number of non-governmental organizations and the scope of their activities increased significantly during 1989. In Itang and Fugnido, Radda Barnen, Africare and MSF (Belgium and Holland) now implement projects in the community services, water and health sectors respectively. In addition, the Government of Ethiopia appointed the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) to manage the Transport Operation for Refugees. GTZ is the main implementing partner for UNHCR in the logistics sector in western Ethiopia. A number of non-governmental organizations continue to assist Somali refugees in eastern Ethiopia. These include CARE and OXFAM (UK) in the water sector, Médecins sans Frontières (Belgium and Holland) and Save the Children Fund (UK) in health related services. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church contributes to, and implements projects in favour of urban refugees in Addis Ababa.

17. In 1989, WFP contributed 145,893 metric tonnes of food to the Ethiopian programme. WFP participates directly in the management of specific aspects of the transport and logistics through the UNHCR-financed Refugee Logistic Unit. WFP is currently exploring the possibility, with the Ethiopian Government, of expanding its role and responsibilities within an integrated transport and logistics system for refugees and returnees. UNICEF has also donated supplies and equipment to the refugee programme in 1989.

#### V. RETURNEES FROM SOMALIA

18. The Gedo-Sidamo returnee operation, which commenced in December 1986, is now in its final phase. By the end of July a total of 13,036 former refugees had returned home to Ethiopia under the auspices of the UNHCR. Of this number, some 4,704 returnees were reintegrated in southern Ethiopia during 1989, while 2,060 returnees have so far been reintegrated between January and July 1990. Cash grants were given to assist returnees to purchase livestock and other household items. In addition, 2,180 units of agricultural hand tools were distributed to returnees in order to support their farming activities. In order to ensure adequate provision of potable water in their home, community boreholes were completed and commissioned. The construction of health clinics is in progress in the home villages of returnees as a means of sustaining their health.

19. A donation of \$700,000 from the United States Government was used to launch the repatriation programme of 2,336 Ethiopians from Boroma, north west of Somalia. The funds were used inter alia, to establish a reception centre at Babile, with a total capacity of 500 persons. WFP has agreed to provide 246 metric tonnes of food for the returnees. Due to the security situation in north west Somalia, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has agreed to assist UNHCR in organizing and financing the transport and safe passage of the returnees from Boroma to Babile Reception Centre in Ethiopia. By the end of July 1990, some 1,212 returnees had been assisted with reintegration in the home areas. There are approximately 5,648 refugees who have been formally cleared by the Ethiopian Government for eventual repatriation. Subject to a concrete response to the special appeal, this group of persons should return home before the end of 1990.

20. In order to promote large-scale voluntary repatriation from Somalia to Ethiopia, a special appeal was launched on 16 March 1990. Some 107,000 Ethiopian refugees in southern Somalia have registered for voluntary repatriation and another group of approximately 60,000 persons currently residing in north-west Somalia, are expected to also register. The overall budget for 167,000 returnees is estimated to be some \$28.3 million over a two-year period. The rhythm of operations will depend, however, on the response to the appeal.

#### VI. FINANCIAL DATA

21. UNHCR's total expenditure for General and Special Programmes in Ethiopia in 1989 amounted to \$29,544,800. The approved General Programme appropriation for 1990 is \$52,136,800. For 1991, the initial projected expenditure for General Programme amounts to \$44,902,100. Expenditure levels for Special Programmes in 1990 and 1991 will be determined in view of contributions received.

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