

THE SSE PROGRAMME

**Linking Relief and Long-Term Development Activities in NGO  
Projects of the SSE Programme  
in Mali, Eritrea and Ethiopia**

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## Reading this report

The report consists of three major parts, dealing with three aspects of the issue of linking or, rather, integrating relief and development in the SSE program: Theory, framework, and actual efforts.

Chapter two reviews recent thinking around the issue, and outlines an approach for integrated efforts.

Chapters three and four deal with conditions relevant to the discussion of whether integrated approaches should be pursued within the SSE context (or the Dryland Coordination Group context): Chapter three presents features of sociopolitical and policy conditions in the SSE countries. Chapter four looks at the scope for integrating efforts, considering project area conditions as well as administrative and economic issues.

Chapter five is a review of SSE NGOs' project and program experiences and thoughts on integrating relief and development.

A summary of the major points made throughout the report is presented in chapter six, along with conclusions on these issues. This chapter thus constitutes an executive summary of sorts. For greater detail, the reader is referred to concluding remarks at the end of chapters three, four, and five.

It should be noted that the statements made by sources in this report are not quotes. They are based on notes from my summaries of conversations with my sources. The responsibility is thus mine for any errors in opinions or factual information attributed to these sources.

## Abbreviations

CARE	CARE Norge
CFW	Cash for work
CVN analysis	Capacities, vulnerabilities and needs analysis
DF	Development Fund (Utviklingsfondet)
DCG	Dryland Co-ordination Group
EU	European Union
ERA	Eritrean Relief Association
ERRA	Eritrean Relief and Rehabilitation Agency
EWS	Early warning system
FEWS	Famine Early Warning System (USAID)
FFR	Food for recovery
FFW	Food for work
GIEWS	Global Information and Early Warning System (FAO)
IGADD	Inter-Governmental Authority on Drought and Development
IMF	International Money Fund
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Norway)
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
NCA	Norwegian Church Aid (Kirkens Nødhjelp)
NGO	Non-government organisation
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NPA	Norwegian People's Aid (Norsk Folkehjelp)
NPDPM	National Policy on Disaster Prevention and Management (Ethiopia)
PFDJ	People's Front for Democracy and Justice (Eritrea)
PSMF	Pastor Strømme's Memorial Foundation (Pastor Strømmes Minnestiftelse)
RB	Redd Barna (Save the Children Norway)
RRC	Relief and Rehabilitation Committee (Ethiopia)
REST	Relief Society of Tigray
SADS	Suivi Alimentaire Delta Seno (EWS, Mali)
SAP	Système d'Alerte Précoce (EWS, Mali)
SCF	Save the Children Fund (UK)
SG 2000	Sasakawa-Global 2000
SSE	Sahel-Sudan-Ethiopia Programme
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Program

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## **1. Introduction. The background and mandate of this study**

Sustainability, including the minimisation of local dependency on future aid, is an SSE program principle. However, critics, notably the 1992 Cowiconsult evaluation of the SSE program, have pointed out that the frequent use of food distribution schemes like food aid and food-for-work is a serious constraint to achieving sustainable development in this respect. This mode of implementation has been termed "long term relief" rather than development, and critics have pointed to various problems resulting from this approach, such as dependency and production disincentives in target communities.

Such criticism has made NGOs wary of the use of food provisioning interventions. There is considerable concern over issues like how to deal with and avoid food distribution-induced dependency in areas with permanent food deficits, and whether the same institution should do relief and dependency. There is also a very real concern, in the field as well as in the board room, that development efforts will be undermined if additional or what is seen as contradictory responsibilities are to be taken on. However, as a consequence of this reluctance, NGOs may find themselves in an awkward position due to their not addressing very central and at times pressing problems of need. Particularly at times of increased stress and in situations of impending famine, this may result in the undermining of local good-will and NGOs' own development efforts alike.

Many of the projects funded through the SSE program started as relief projects in food deficit areas. Thus sites and activities were picked on the basis of need for food, and food aid and food-for-work were often central means of implementation. As projects entered the SSE program, implementation strategies have been adjusted towards more long-term development projects. However, the fact remains that until the natural resource base has been rehabilitated to a level where it can support the population, it will be impossible for the target communities to exist without some form of input to cover basic needs. The more or less constant food deficit in many areas has necessitated a continuation of food distribution schemes as substantial shares of many projects, although a transfer from direct food distribution to cash for work (CFW) and food for recovery (FFR) schemes has ensued in many projects following the Cowiconsult report. There is now an increased focus on local responsibility, competence building and long-term thinking. However, the troubles of reconciling this approach with the indisputable need to continue some form of material input assistance make themselves felt in all phases of project work.

In an SSE seminar held 28 September 1995, the need to have a common strategy on development work in food deficit areas was emphasised. Noragric was given responsibility for developing such a strategy. A theoretical analysis of the issue has been carried out, and together Noragric and the NGOs have reviewed lessons learned from project activities. These reviews have provided the basis for discussions on linking relief and development activities closer together, in order to reduce dependency on food aid and food-for-work as well as contribute to the development of local awareness and systems of disaster preparedness. This report presents the theoretical analysis, the reviews, and summarises the discussions so far. Hopefully, it will serve as a tool for Noragric's and the NGOs' further joint efforts to forge a strategy.

## 2. Theoretical analysis and conceptualisation of issues involved

### 2.1. The conventional approach

The notion of linking relief and long-term development activities has traditionally had few followers in development thinking. The two fields have generally been seen as responses to different situations and/or phases of need, requiring different or even incompatible approaches, activities, and modes of organisation. This view is rooted in a conceptualisation or paradigm of change as an ordered, linear, and predictable process towards a set goal. Change in poor countries is thought of as a process from a state of poverty and destitution through various development stages towards a state of prosperity. In other words, change equals progress. The different forms of assistance or input required correspond to the different development stages, and are thus seen as discrete entities. This concept is illustrated in the figure below:

Poverty	Progress	Prosperity
Relief	Development aid	

Emergencies are seen as momentary setbacks to the development process, requiring relief and/or rehabilitation assistance to restore the pre-emergency condition, after which the development process continues from where it left off. The causes of poverty and their effect on the process are not taken into consideration. The causal analysis is simple and unilinear. (Oxfam 1995)

Emergency	->	Set-back	->	Restoration of previous condition	->	Development
		Relief	->	Rehabilitation	->	Development aid

Activities, approaches, and structures of conventional relief and development have been designed in accordance with this line of thinking. The objective of conventional relief is to save lives. It addresses short-term basic needs through large amounts of material inputs in standardised large-scale operations focusing on efficient logistics, and thus tends to be short-term, top-down, rigid and donor-dependent in its structures and approaches. The objective of development aid is to promote positive social and/or environmental development through addressing complex and situation-specific issues requiring more long-term, progressive, decentralised, and participatory approaches and structures. – Rehabilitation (or disaster mitigation) is seen as a connecting or intermediate phase between relief and development – one of restoration to the pre-emergency condition, after which development work can resume more or less from where it started. (Oxfam 1995, Maxwell and Buchanan-Smith 1994)

### 2.2. Why link relief and development?

In recent years, the scale and complexity of problems addressed by both relief and development assistance have demonstrated the shortcomings of this paradigm. Instead of approaching solutions to or even checking the poverty problem, development assistance is facing a situation of escalated deterioration of livelihood systems and poverty increase, due to multiple pressures eroding the subsistence bases of communities (e.g. population growth, structural adjustment, political instability, droughts, HIV/AIDS, and resulting degradation of the resource base). (Frankenberger 1996) Meanwhile, emergencies have grown in number and intensity, and their causes and effects



are increasingly complex and difficult to deal with. They often produce or catalyse changes so profound that a restoration to pre-emergency conditions is neither possible nor desirable, and post-emergency development work becomes increasingly difficult. (Oxfam 1995) Furthermore, the funding situation is deteriorating, especially regarding development aid: Ever increasing proportions of shrinking total aid funds go into relief and emergency aid – that is, a dual erosion of development funds is taking place. (Maxwell and Buchanan-Smith 1994, Sørvald 1995) It is increasingly clear that these developments cannot be seen in isolation from each other, and that the conventional approach cannot provide adequate solutions.

In particular, a growing number of “permanent emergencies” particularly related to drought-prone areas, like the SSE countries, has led to a re-examination of old truths. In such areas, poor people live with a constant risk of crisis, reflected in their livelihood strategies and plans. An understanding and recognition of the complexity and diversity of livelihood strategies under these circumstances requires more complex and dynamic concepts and models of change and development than what has been outlined above. People face a structural or chronic food deficit, where immediate food needs coexist with the need for rehabilitating the basis for self-sufficiency, and the need for development of new institutions, capacities, and livelihood sources. Under such circumstances, a compartmentalisation of relief and development becomes counterproductive and artificial, not least to the poor themselves. (Scoones and Thompson 1994, Frankenberger 1996, Oxfam 1995, Maxwell and Buchanan-Smith 1994)

There is an increasing interest in trying to coordinate or unite, “link”, development and relief work. It is believed that a coordination of efforts and resource use will result in a reduction of the need for relief assistance through risk-sensitive development work, while relief will contribute to development instead of counteracting it. “... the sharp division between relief and development is becoming unsustainable, as emergency needs increase and as the experience of living with high risk becomes ever more central to poor people themselves. Linking relief and development finds itself forced onto the agenda.” (Maxwell and Buchanan-Smith 1994:3)

### 2.3. Paradigms of change

If we are to discard assumptions about the linear nature of change, progress and development, they must be replaced by new and more fruitful ones. It has been suggested that chaos and systems theories have something to contribute to development thinking in this vein (Oxfam 1995).

For example, systems theory may provide a more dynamic and sophisticated understanding of complex change and development: Change is influenced by the interdependence and often complex mutual feedbacks between several elements in a system or situation, and is not a result of unilinear causality. Moreover, knowledge on the dynamics of negative and positive feedback loops (counterbalancing feedbacks leading to stability and multiplying feedbacks leading to change, respectively) may help agents to anticipate the potential impacts of situations, and to adapt to circumstances that vary rapidly and unpredictably. Chaos theory may also contribute to a better understanding of the nature of emergencies and crises, as well as to an understanding of change

as a complex, diverse, and unpredictable process – as experienced by poor people in marginal, disaster-prone areas.

Such inputs may provide development and relief agents with a more profound understanding of processes of change, and of their own role in them: Rather than external entities, they are integral elements in a system, influenced by as well as influencing other elements in a continuous process. They may thus consider their influence on causality and processes determining a situation, rather than merely dealing with events in a reactive manner. (Oxfam 1995)

This non-linear, dynamic, complex, and feedback-oriented model of change does not involve a compartmentalisation of relief, rehabilitation and development assistance in accordance with certain phases of progress. Rather, it sees these modes of assistance as mutually reinforcing ways of assisting people in overcoming crises and sustaining their livelihoods (Oxfam 1995); i.e. as integrated elements of a common approach, with common fundamental principles and ultimate objectives.

#### 2.4. Towards a conceptual framework

This understanding of change is prevalent in recent literature on conceptual frameworks for understanding food and livelihood security, on the problem of permanent emergencies, and on linking relief and development. That said, terms and conceptual frameworks used in these discussions proliferate. They may even confuse: Similar terms have been used for different concepts, and vice versa.

One of these terms is “disaster” (or “emergency”). Most of the discussion has focused on sudden onset, dramatic (“loud”) disasters, while “silent” or “permanent” emergencies associated with extreme poverty probably affect more people – only about 10-15% of all hunger arises from crisis-caused famine (Speth 1993). 1.3 billion lived in absolute poverty in 1992 (Frankenberger 1996), and the number of people with incomes of less than \$1 per day appears to be growing almost in every region of the world (UNDP 1997). Moreover, many “loud” emergencies are rooted in poverty (Oxfam 1995, Maxwell and Buchanan-Smith 1994, UNDP 1997). Maxwell and Buchanan-Smith’s (1994) classification has four major types of emergencies, covering both “loud” and “silent” ones:

- 1) Rapid-onset emergencies, causing usually temporary crises (e.g. earthquakes, floods)
- 2) Slow onset emergencies triggered by natural disasters, usually not exceeding a couple of years in duration (e.g. drought)
- 3) Permanent emergencies with widespread structural poverty, more or less permanent welfare and continual food relief needed
- 4) Complex political emergencies, associated with internal conflict

Type three is the prevailing emergency type in the SSE countries; indeed, the objectives of the program are to address its causes and symptoms in these areas – food/livelihood insecurity and environmental degradation. Food and livelihood insecurity are core problems not only of permanent emergencies but of all the emergency types. Thus, in order to address emergencies effectively, it is of vital importance to understand the nature of the problem of food insecurity. (Longhurst in Maxwell and Buchanan-Smith 1994)

Again, there are competing terminologies and paradigms. Table 1 shows a summary of terms used for conceptual frameworks for crises. The table should only be read vertically as four lists of terms, but the lists refer to the logical progression of the conceptual framework outlined below:

*Table 1. Overview of terms used for conceptual frameworks for crises*

Events/ processes	Household state	Determinants of potential impacts	Outcome after the event
Hazard	Capacity	Vulnerability	1. Winners who profit
Shock	Entitlement	Exposure	2. Enduring households who are unaffected
Stress	Net assets	Resilience	3. Resilient households who have coped back to where they were before (screws, cycles)
Risk	Insurance strategy	Sensitivity	4. Fragile households who are worse off/ ratchets/ spirals/ adaptation
	Coping ability		
	Capability	Potentially	

(Source: Richard Longhurst in Maxwell and Buchanan-Smith 1994:20)

These conceptual frameworks take as their point of departure poor people's household and community level risk management. The poor acknowledge life's uncertainty and expect difficult periods, and try to plan to minimise the impact of these difficulties or risks. At difficult times, a certain set of "coping strategies" come into play – survival skills additional to their general ones, and used as temporary responses to declining access to food. Risks, shocks, hazards, or stresses come in many shapes, affecting households in different ways. They are responded to or managed by using certain resources which the household commands (entitlements, net assets, insurance strategies, coping abilities/strategies, capabilities, or capacities – some of these terms refer mainly to material resources, other include relational and attitudinal resources as well).

Households facing a decline in entitlement to food generally find that their response activities, or coping strategies, become progressively more demanding on their resources with time and/or severity of the decline. This process is often categorised in three stages. The first stage is one of insurance mechanics/non-erosive coping, e.g. adjusting their diet. At the second stage, people's survival skills are taxed in an (irreversibly) depletive or erosive way, such as the selling off of productive assets. At the third stage, they have exhausted their coping strategies and are destitute and non-coping, resulting in e.g. distress migration, dependence on relief, or starvation. (Nyborg and Haug 1995, Maxwell and Buchanan-Smith 1994)

Households differ in their ability to manage setbacks, i.e. their vulnerability to them. This is reflected in the third and fourth column of table 1. Some (enduring households) may be unaffected by a shock (or even profit from it!), while others may be affected and go through a stage of transitory food insecurity, but recover and maintain long-term household food security (resilient households). A last group may be pushed into irreversible decline as a result of the hardship (fragile households). They may experience not only

transitory, but permanent food insecurity, their coping strategies becoming permanent (adaptive strategies). This entails a deterioration of their range of productive activities and thus their range of food entitlements. – The outcome of a stress situation thus depends on the state of a household's pre-shock entitlements and capacities (determining the range of coping strategies available to them, including those defined by institutional/power relations and social relations of production), as well as on the amount/severity of stress, risk, or exposure they are subjected to. (Nyborg and Haug 1995, Maxwell and Buchanan-Smith 1994)

Food security is a component of livelihood security – adequate and sustainable access to resources needed for meeting basic needs (e.g. food, potable water, housing, health and education facilities). Since resources are acquired and needs met through household production and consumption, the household is the unit of analysis and the concept is generally referred to as household livelihood security. – Needs are met through the pursuit of a combination of on- and/or off-farm activities, providing a range of procurement strategies and entitlement sources for material resources like food and cash (Frankenberger 1996). A household's ability to offset risks and recover from shocks depends on its allocation of these resources. If a household manages to recover from shock without losing its capacities, and can provide livelihood opportunities to the next generation, its livelihood can be defined as sustainable (Chambers and Conway 1992). Differences between households regarding food security, outlined above, reflect differences in household livelihood capacities in the material, organisational, and attitudinal realm (e.g. legal, political, and social position) as well as household vulnerabilities to income, health, and food insecurity (Drinkwater and McEwan 1992, in Frankenberger 1996).

The relationship between food security and livelihood security is complex. Food security, as one of several aspects of livelihood security, has to be balanced against other aspects in accordance with competing needs for asset preservation, income generation, and present and future food supplies. In stress situations, other needs will often have priority over short-term food security due to their greater potential returns in the long run. The scope for manipulation, however, depends on resource availability and allocation. Households with few resources will be forced to spend a comparably greater proportion on food than households with more resources. Accordingly, the more of its resources a household spends on food, the more vulnerable it is to food insecurity because there will be a correspondingly smaller scope for manipulating resources used to meet other needs. (Frankenberger 1996)

In many parts of the world, it is normal for difficult situations to occur periodically, and to be coped with. It is when people's and society's capacity to cope with difficulties is exhausted that such situations escalate into disasters (Adam in Field 1993, Maxwell and Buchanan-Smith 1994). The growing number of such escalations is due to the combined impact of poverty and environmental problems: People's vulnerability increases as their livelihood security and range of coping strategies, eroded by growing poverty, are subjected to increasingly frequent and intense shocks (Maxwell and Buchanan-Smith 1994, Anderson and Woodrow in Field 1993). Their vulnerability, their food and livelihood insecurity, has become permanent and structural.

## 2.5. A unified approach to aid and assistance – principles for co-operation

Addressing these grim realities – combating permanent emergency conditions, poverty, food and livelihood insecurity, and natural resource degradation – requires that simultaneous attention be given to long-term capacity building and reduction of vulnerabilities and to short-term material needs. Relief assistance focusing strictly on needs, material inputs, and short-term goals runs the risk of undermining people's existing capacities and increasing their vulnerability and dependence on future aid. Similarly, development assistance which only addresses vulnerabilities, which does not consider the risk of shocks or involve disaster preparedness and risk protection, is itself vulnerable to shocks and lacks a cornerstone in its efforts to prevent future emergencies. (Anderson and Woodrow in Field 1993, Maxwell and Buchanan-Smith 1994, Oxfam 1995) Development has been defined as a process through which people's vulnerability to crises (material/physical, social/organisational, psychological/motivational) is reduced, and their capacity to cope is increased (Anderson and Woodrow 1989, Adam in Field 1993). The agenda for all interventions should thus be the strengthening of capacities and reduction of vulnerabilities on different community levels and in different realms of human existence.

The operationalisation of this approach may be guided by the following principles for intervention design, management, implementation and evaluation. In accordance with the underlying paradigm of focusing on local people and their capabilities, powers, and realities, the principles may be referred to as principles for co-operation.

- Any intervention must build on a *capacities, vulnerabilities, and needs (CVN) analysis* of the current situation in the local area, including an analysis of factors involved in creating the current situation. The conceptual framework outlined above should be used – the system perspective and the concepts of food and livelihood security, coping and vulnerability. The analysis should cover social and psychological as well as physical aspects of the situation. To identify the most vulnerable groups, not only the general situation but also differences between social categories and groups (age, gender, class, caste, religion, etc.) and levels of social organisation (e.g. household, hamlet, village) should be mapped. The analysis provides a tool for dealing systematically with complex and potentially confusing information. It facilitates the development of an effective approach, linking the provision of immediate assistance to desired long-term outcomes in a sequence of activities which is logical in terms of local needs, capacities, and vulnerabilities. (Anderson and Woodrow in Field 1993, Oxfam 1995) Figure 1 shows a capacities, vulnerabilities, and needs analysis matrix (not disaggregated in terms of social categories, groups, or organisation levels).

Fig. 1. Capacities, vulnerabilities, and needs (CVN) analysis matrix

	Capacities (potentials)	Vulnerabilities (constraints)	Needs (inputs)
Physical/material <i>What productive resources, hazards, and skills exist?</i>			
Social/Organisational <i>What are the relations and organisations among people?</i>			
Motivational/Attitudinal <i>How does the community view its ability to create change?</i>			

(Adapted from Anderson and Woodrow in Field 1993:134)

The analysis captures physical and material aspects of the situation as well as the less tangible aspects of what makes one group of people stronger or weaker than another in the face of crisis; for example what forms of social organisation they have and what are their motivations to act together. These factors vary according to aspects like gender, age, socio-economic status, and cultural or ethnic identity within the affected population. The analysis must map these variations, as well as factors in the relations between social groups or categories which constitute potentials or constraints to their respective capacities and vulnerabilities. Changes over time need to be captured – the analysis should be dynamic, including significant past conditions, and it should be continual, i.e. the system used for monitoring conditions in the project area should provide updates. Project design and resource allocation should be dynamic and responsive to changes in these conditions. (Anderson and Woodrow in Field 1993, Oxfam 1995)

- Any type of assistance has to be *capacity-building*, i.e. it has to build on and encourage existing capacities in all realms and strengthen them. This means using local resources and production capacities to meet local needs to the greatest extent possible, as well as strengthening local organisational and decision-making abilities and the local sense of power and purpose (Anderson and Woodrow in Field 1993, Oxfam 1995). – Individual and collective *empowerment* – awareness of injustice and capacity to bring about change – should be integral to efforts to strengthen local capacities. The problem of poverty is intimately linked to inequitable distribution of assets, and development interventions trying to be politically neutral, to ignore local or wider power relations, or to operate without reference to the economical context may well serve to disempower the weak and vulnerable they set out to help by contributing to perpetuating disempowering processes and structures. – Empowerment requires sensitivity to the priorities, needs, and realities of the powerless. It also requires an arena for them to make decisions affecting their lives and act on them – to do things for themselves instead of having things done for them. In other words, it requires a participatory orientation (Oxfam 1995).
- *People's participation* can enhance the efficiency and sustainability of all types of interventions through empowerment, capacity building, reduction of vulnerabilities, sound resource use, accordance between intervention activities and local priorities and needs, and the promotion of democratic processes both locally and in a wider setting.

However, participation can take many forms, from manipulative, passive and consultative forms (little or no input of views, limited or no influence/control in decision-making process) to interactive or self-mobilising forms (considerable control and input in decision-making process, independent initiation of action). The positive processes listed will be feeble at best without a level of participation where those affected by a decision have influence in shaping it, on their own terms. (Pretty 1995, Oxfam 1995) Internal conflicts of interest, differences in priorities and needs, and incompatibilities must be acknowledged, but the interests of the vulnerable groups should have first priority and special care should be taken, especially in controversial issues, to allow their voices to be heard and given notice. – A high level of local participation, where poor and marginalised people have influence at all stages in activities and projects, from planning to evaluation, is demanding. It may involve disruptions and challenges, false starts and ruts, and it can be time-consuming and difficult to evaluate. On the part of the intervention agents, it requires a high degree of flexibility, ability to let go of control, and awareness of the fact that there is never just one right answer or solution. However, it is all but impossible to achieve sustainable capacity building, empowerment, and reduction of vulnerabilities without real local participation and a local feeling of ownership of intervention processes and results. (Oxfam 1995)

- The issues and conditions addressed through the SSE program are complex and diverse, and development processes are thus bound to be unpredictable. Divergence, dilemmas, and unexpected changes and problems are likely to occur. This is the nature of a complex system with multiple feedbacks, where change is the only constant. Interventions need to be characterised by *flexibility*. Any policies and procedures which close down future options, or reduce the scope for re-interpretations in the light of new information, should be avoided. Capacity to respond to change requires capacity to change with it. This becomes even more important in participatory processes, which involve greater diversity and divergence and are thus less predictable than non-participatory processes. Flexible approaches also allow for dynamic, harmonised, creative, and tailor-made combinations of relief- and development-type interventions. (Oxfam 1995, Maxwell and Buchanan-Smith 1994)
- *Acknowledgement and awareness of local context* is a prerequisite to utilising these approaches, and thus to effectively addressing the issues of food insecurity, vulnerability, poverty, and erosion of the natural resource base. Any one project site and population has its unique material, social and cultural features, and its particular constellations of capacities and vulnerabilities require local solutions tailored to local conditions. Interventions thus need to consider the specific features of the local context.
- Another prerequisite is *decentralisation*. Awareness of local context, a flexible and creative management at project level, and local participation cannot be achieved through central planning and management. Central authorities, situated away from the community, cannot have the same understanding and knowledge of local conditions, needs, capacities and vulnerabilities as on-site staff and the local population have, and cannot respond to and be part of local changes in the smooth, timely, and locally appropriate way that those situated in the project area are able to. Furthermore, central planning limits local influence and power, inhibiting empowerment and local competence and capacity building. (Oxfam 1995,)
- In recognition of the long-term nature of permanent emergency-related activities, as well as to ensure a firm commitment to long-term sustainability of results, a *long-term perspective* is necessary in all types of interventions. This is due to the relationship between needs and vulnerabilities: Needs are merely symptoms of an unsustainable condition; they can and should be met in a timely manner and as far as possible through

a capacity-building approach, but this will only result in short-term improvements of the situation of the vulnerable. Addressing the basic and often endemic causes of the unsustainable condition – the vulnerabilities – involves dealing with much more complex issues with political, social, cultural, ecological, psychological, and economical implications, requiring stable inputs, resources and efforts over time. The key is mutual reinforcement – long-term effects of any aid intervention should be considered, and care should be taken that long-term sustainable development is promoted and supported, not undermined. (Oxfam 1995, Maxwell and Buchanan-Smith 1994, Anderson and Woodrow in Field 1993)

## **2.6. The challenge of linking relief and development**

The principles presented above are widely used in development activities, but have generally not been associated with relief interventions. The implications of links in terms of needed changes are thus more profound concerning relief activities. Some of the principles may be difficult to balance against the need for immediate action, like the principles of CVN analysis and of long-term planning. Others may be difficult to reconcile with current planning models and administrative and institutional set-ups, like those of decentralisation, flexibility, and people's participation and empowerment. However, these principles also pose challenges to development – in particular, related to risk sensitivity, and to an integrated approach to addressing immediate needs as well as vulnerabilities.

The terms relief, development and rehabilitation all refer both to a micro level concerning concrete activities, and to a macro level concerning national and international structures and systems set up to carry out these activities. The scope and nature of possible linkages are not the same on the micro and macro levels. The following is a discussion of the scope and feasibility, challenges, and obstacles of creating links, on the micro (activities) level as well as on the macro (system/structure) level.

### *2.6.1. Relief: An ally for development*

The long-term effects of relief aid depend more on how than on what aid is given. The greatest challenge posed to relief institutions and activities is thus to balance speed and logistic efficiency against the principles for co-operation. In general, relief aid would improve with a shift to a more inclusive definition of its modus operandi, not limited to relief inputs but also including more dynamic "both-and" concepts like "relief production", "relief income generation", "relief education and training", and "relief awareness-raising" where these types of activities are needed (Oxfam 1995, Maxwell and Buchanan-Smith 1994). In accordance with this line of thinking, early interventions should be promoted, in order to preserve livelihoods or safeguard development assets. Relief also has a role in providing financial aid to governments to help stabilise the macro economy. (Anderson and Woodrow in Field 1993, Maxwell and Buchanan-Smith 1994, Oxfam 1995)

Partnership is a good way to achieve this. Relief structures and systems should be integrated into existing national, regional and local ones to the greatest extent possible without jeopardising efficiency and timeliness. Permanent links should be established with relevant institutions, to enable mutual capacity building, preparedness, and information needs. Such institutions can be identified through a CVN analyses of national and regional institutions in relevant areas.



Local institutions should be responsible for primary action against all forms of shocks. Preferably, local government should be equipped and trained to deal with emergencies themselves, in co-operation with and using resources from existing line ministries. If existing local and/or national government institutions are not strong enough to handle this responsibility, it can be handled by NGOs working closely with local institutions, in a capacity-building manner enabling them to eventually take over. Any distribution mechanisms chosen should build capacities, and should be participatory, gender-sensitive, and appropriate to local culture and society. (Anderson and Woodrow in Field 1993, Maxwell and Buchanan-Smith 1994, Oxfam 1995)

Relief systems need to be made more flexible with respect to both funding and planning, to allow for greater decentralisation and local participation. This is particularly important in the cases where partner institutions have not been identified or are not able to carry out interventions (unaided). In these cases, greater operative responsibility lies with relief structures, and thus also a greater responsibility for the sustainability of the intervention. Capacity building and reduction of vulnerability become integral aspects of the agenda of such interventions. This requires not only development expertise from the relief agent, but also an ability to compensate for initially inadequate information and local capacity through participatory planning and second-stage budgeting. Moreover, participatory mapping of material and organisational capacities should start immediately, and these capacities should be utilised in the procurement of material inputs, as well as in the design and implementation of their distribution. (Anderson and Woodrow in Field 1993, Maxwell and Buchanan-Smith 1994, Oxfam 1995)

Relief activities can strengthen development activities, e.g. through the use of FFW or CFW to increase income and reduce vulnerability in the future. Food distribution should, to the greatest possible extent, be carried out using food from local, regional or national sources, to stimulate these markets. Existing distribution systems should be strengthened e.g. through putting food on local markets and using cash-for-work (CFW) schemes to enable people to buy it, or by distributing food-for-work (FFW) or relief food through local institutions with local distribution principles. One example is using CFW to improve infrastructure or for environmental rehabilitation, while marketing relief food to stabilise prices and generate cash to pay for public works. This point is discussed further in the next section. Access to food should be local, allowing people to stay at home and work to improve their own food production instead of having to travel to feeding centers. (Anderson and Woodrow in Field 1993, Maxwell and Buchanan-Smith 1994, Oxfam 1995)

Measures like these require sufficient pre-planning and administrative capacity, and also surplus labor capacity in the community. They have to be initiated before people get too weak to work, and there has to be a parallel scheme to help those who cannot participate in CFW or FFW activities, like the old and sick, and women with small children. Any lasting infrastructure developed through food-provisioning activities, such as health centers or water sources, must be sustainable in the long run. (Anderson and Woodrow in Field 1993)

In Tigray, Ethiopia, REST has developed an interesting approach to food distribution called "food for recovery" (FFR). It has developed from FFW, but is based on the principle of working according to capacity and receiving according

to need; community members work on projects, and themselves distribute the bulk food they receive in pay, according to household needs. (REST 1993)

### *2.6.2. Development: An integrated vulnerabilities & needs approach*

Development work should not simply come to a halt at times of crisis and await their passing. In the same way as relief strategies for meeting crises must address fundamental development through increasing capacities and reducing vulnerabilities, development strategies must address immediate needs through a crisis preparedness. The challenge is twofold: Reducing the frequency and intensity of shocks, and reducing their impact by reducing vulnerability and building capacities to handle them. (Anderson and Woodrow in Field 1993, Maxwell and Buchanan-Smith 1994)

Measures to reduce shock frequency and intensity include not only preventive measures e.g. related to land rehabilitation, but also preparedness measures. These include food security monitoring linked to defense plans, which are triggered at certain conditions and phased out when the monitoring shows that these conditions no longer prevail. Emphasis should be on curbing dire effects through early interventions, e.g. in the form of distribution of additional livestock fodder or through short-term CFW schemes. – In addition to shocks deriving from natural conditions, many shocks are related to policy, such as market changes, state politics, war etc. Policy measures, e.g. tax increase cuts or price stabilisation, could thus also be appropriate. (Maxwell and Buchanan-Smith 1994)

Measures to reduce shock impact should address all aspects of livelihood security – aspects like agricultural and other income-earning capacity, protection of assets, and promotion of health and potable water, in addition to food security. The following are examples of important measures:

- Farming systems development to protect poor households from lower production, as well as from the impact of higher food prices or deteriorating terms of trade between food bought and goods sold. This can be done by modifying their production systems, e.g. through environmental protection, agri-diversification, investing in irrigation, or drought-proofing agriculture
- Diversification of income-earning opportunities, through increasing activities in non-agricultural sectors and increasing household access to non-farm income-generating activities
- Redirecting resources from high-potential areas to low-potential areas; from the less to the more vulnerable, to increase their asset base, income, and long-term livelihood security as well as their access to health and education facilities, potable water, infrastructure, and markets
- Macro-economic stabilisation to offset the negative effects of drought on production, foreign exchange rates, price levels, and government revenues and expenses

(Maxwell and Buchanan-Smith 1994)

Many of the measures mentioned are integrated in normal development work both on the macro and micro level; others are macro (policy) measures to be implemented by national governments and/or major donors and NGOs. The most important micro-level measures are those related to integrating preparedness and defense measures into the portfolio of activities, integrating

simultaneous short- and long-term responses, and thus allowing immediate needs to be met in conjunction with long-term activities. NGOs should build contingencies into their projects, and monitor the food security situation. This will enable them to stay prepared and be able to warn in case of a crisis, as well as to adapt to phases where a greater emphasis has to be put on relief-type activities to prevent erosion of household productive assets. In stress situations, project resources are temporarily re-allocated with a greater emphasis on stress-management activities, and previous commitments thus have to be temporarily redefined. This requires flexible and decentralised management and decision-making. (Oxfam 1995, Frankenberger 1996)

A word on food provisioning: Its use in a development context has been controversial. Critics have rightly pointed to dependency and disincentive problems. However, these problems reflect problems in the planning and implementation of interventions, rather than the interventions as such. There is evidence (Maxwell et.al. 1994, Bush 1995) that with careful project design, disincentives can largely be avoided. Food distribution schemes can be assets to projects, provided they are carried out in a manner which is in accordance with the principles for co-operation suggested above. For example, employment-based food security safety nets, where public works with a high demand for labor are initiated at times of low food security, are being successfully tried out in Ethiopia. Despite many trade-offs and "dead-weight losses", they seem to be effective instruments for establishing a more developmental and institutional approach to addressing food insecurity in environments of imperfect information and high drought vulnerability. (Herbinger et.al. 1993)

### *2.6.3. Rehabilitation and disaster mitigation: Where relief and development meet*

The terms rehabilitation and disaster mitigation generally refer to activities to lessen the impact of crises, protecting livelihood security to assist in recovery of productive assets or prevent their erosion, preferably through equitable social and economic development which builds on people's strengths and addresses the causes of their vulnerabilities. (Oxfam 1995, Frankenberger 1996) The whole SSE program, which addresses an area exposed to a permanent emergency, can thus be defined as a rehabilitation program.

Rehabilitation is not necessarily a return to status quo; particularly not in situations where an emergency has brought great changes and such a return is neither feasible nor, often, wanted. On the macro level, rehabilitation thus offers a chance of poverty reduction and overall output gains, and should be integrated in national macro-economic planning and policy and into existing activities and institutions. Rehabilitation measures could include food until harvest, agricultural inputs, user rights to land, restoration of infrastructure, short-term employment, and restoration of market access. (Oxfam 1995, Maxwell and Buchanan-Smith 1994)

In terms of activities, there are no specific rehabilitation or disaster mitigation activities readily distinguishable from those of the other modes. Rather, what sets this mode of interventions apart from the others is the integration of development and relief activities – indeed, they become inseparable from each other under conditions of rehabilitation and disaster mitigation. (Oxfam 1995)

There is thus some potential for linking relief and development, at least on the micro level, on this common ground.

This approach has real and potential constraints. A real one is related to current funding conditions: Rehabilitation activities are often not eligible for funding either through relief or development funds. A potential constraint concerns macro-level integration – the efficiency and sustainability of interventions, and the overall use of resources within the field of aid and co-operation. It is important that there is a real integration of existing relief and development systems and structures through rehabilitation, and not a mechanical one, where rehabilitation is defined as a separate, third field with yet another set of structures and systems. This would not promote more efficient, appropriate and sustainable support and co-operation. Instead, it would result in a more muddled field with more actors, less efficient resource use as more of the finite available resources go into management, co-ordination, etc., and thus an even more restricted funding situation.

New planning models suggested for linking relief and development are based on principles of integrated but decentralised processes, diversified and experimental approaches, iterative flexibility, focus on action over planning, and addressing the need for new modes of organisation in multidisciplinary team work. Government departments and aid agencies should thus be planners, facilitators and mobilisers rather than decision-makers and resource controllers. (Maxwell and Lirensio, Green and Mavie in Maxwell and Buchanan-Smith 1994)

As a summary of the major points made, Box 1 presents some guidelines for a framework of combining relief and development effectively.

*Box 1. Programming decisions and principles for relief and development, based on 41 cases (Anderson and Woodrow 1989).*

#### ***Programming decisions***

1. To do nothing is better than to do something badly. Agencies should not intervene in a disaster situation unless it is to support local capacities.
2. There is no such thing as relief projects that are neutral in terms of development. They either support it or undermine it.
3. Indigenous agencies are in a better position to respond developmentally to a disaster than outside agencies. Outside (Northern) agencies that are already working in a country are better able to respond than those that enter to deal with the emergency.
4. Agencies that identify themselves as development agencies that do not normally deal with relief can, nonetheless, decide to provide creative relief in an emergency, especially in locations where they are already engaged in development work.
5. Development agencies that work in areas prone to disasters (droughts, floods, earthquakes, strife and war) should understand the need not only to anticipate the effects of disasters on their development work, but also to address people's vulnerabilities to disasters through their development work.

#### ***A Relief Principle***

Relief work should be held to development standards. Thus, every disaster response should be based in an appreciation of local capacities and should be designed to support and increase these.

*Cont. on next page*

### ***A Development Principle***

Development work should be concerned with long-term sustainability. Thus, every development program and project should anticipate and be designed to prevent or mitigate disasters. Thus, they should identify and address the vulnerabilities of the people with whom they work and ensure that these are reduced over time.

### ***Relief/ Development Principles***

1. Both relief and development programs should be more concerned with increasing local capacities and reducing vulnerabilities than with providing goods, services, or technical assistance. In fact, goods, services or technical assistance should be provided only insofar as they support sustainable development by increasing local capacities and reducing local vulnerabilities.
2. The way that such resources are transferred must be held to the same test.
3. Programming must not be solely preoccupied with meeting urgent physical/material needs, but must integrate such needs into efforts that address the social/organisational and motivational/attitudinal elements of the situation as well.

## **2.7. Issues and problems related to linking relief and development**

### ***2.7.1 Feasibility and necessity***

The scope for and feasibility of linking relief and development depends on the nature of the disaster, and on different aspects of the national and regional setting (e.g. food security situation and government commitment to its improvement, economy and liberalisation, state capacity and political stability). In some situations, a link is not necessary. In others, it can be useful, provided that interventions are chosen to suit the characteristics and capacities of the country or region concerned. Problems and conditions in the project areas strongly suggest that an integrated approach is necessary in the SSE context. The issue of feasibility is more complex, and is examined in greater depth later in the report. But there is interest among the NGOs, there are funding possibilities, and several features of the situation in the SSE countries suggest that it is more conducive to comprehensive approaches than it has been in the past.

An important constraint on feasibility concerns a dilemma of sustainability: When choosing project areas and interventions, agents must consider to what extent an area can realistically support current and future populations, and what is the potential for enhancing its carrying capacity. In the long run, is the livelihood of the population going to be sustainable? If not, what will the consequences be to the work done in the area? Will its potential carrying capacity only allow for a smaller population, or for partial self-sufficiency in a population of the current size? Does this mean that a scheme of partial permanent welfare should be developed? Another option might be to move people out of the area, but do they want to, and are there other places available to receive them? How should such interventions be designed – what criteria should be used to determine resource allocation, how to motivate relocation? Some (Buchanan-Smith and Maxwell 1994:11) hold that the dilemma may be whether to recognise explicitly the need for some kind of permanent welfare system (where funding problems are likely to ensue), or to carry on in relief mode, trying to fulfil certain development objectives at the same time. – Can and should SSE efforts go into these types of work? On the other hand, is it in line with the SSE vision and objectives to withdraw from the areas which clearly are in most dire need of outside assistance?

### *2.7.2. Administrative and management issues – institutional problems*

The interest among donors to link their relief and development efforts is increasing, but the constraints are severe. One important institutional problem is related to funding. Funding is a political tool both in donor and recipient countries, and there are vested interests on all sides regarding how funding should be organised. Internationally, and also in Norway, donors maintain a rigid separation in their aid policies between relief and development. The use of emergency funds is severely (unnecessarily?) restricted, and the administration of funds is over-centralised, with insufficient power in local and regional bodies. There is also a trend of stagnation or decline in overall budgets, coupled with an increase in the proportions used for emergencies. Relief, due to its greater visibility, seems disproportionately significant and attracts corresponding amounts of interest relative to development and rehabilitation. The fact that relief money has fewer strings attached in terms of eligibility, and is easier to get, reinforces the distinction between the intervention types. This results in a tendency, in order to get funding, of designing interventions more as pure relief interventions and less as interventions also appropriate for longer-term development. Moreover, to the many donors working on increasing their profile in emergency work, the incentive to blur the distinction between relief and development activities is weakened. Rehabilitation is the most difficult type of intervention of all to finance; especially in countries not eligible for development aid. (Maxwell and Buchanan-Smith 1994, Sørvald 1995)

Other constraints stem from the fact that organisational cultures are very different in development and relief organisations, and that in both camps there are forces with vested interests in keeping the distinction between the two intervention types. (Maxwell and Buchanan-Smith 1994)

These are macro-level obstacles and difficult to deal with. Ideally, there should be a greater flexibility in resource allocation between development and relief – e.g. through setting aside funds for rehabilitation/ disaster mitigation as a common-grounds platform. Institutional structures should be more decentralised, flexible, and bottom-up.

In the recipient countries, the biggest institutional problem is the capacity of the state. Institutional arrangements are often inappropriate and too rigid to accommodate linked efforts. Budget capacity is low, and inputs to high-potential areas make more sense in terms of national economy than inputs to disaster preparedness. Planning capacity is weak and planning horizons are generally short-term. Institutional resource allocation is not flexible enough to be shifted according to changing needs. Due to such deficiencies, indigenous institutions often have great problems in holding their own against large, autonomous, externally-funded relief operations with parallel structures, which further erode their capacities. It is unlikely that these deficiencies will be overcome in the short or medium run. (Maxwell and Buchanan-Smith 1994)

Given that most of the constraints mentioned so far are macro-level constraints, the scope for linking relief and development seems greater at the meso and micro level. However, the state can provide material and political conditions under which institutions closer to the ground (at regional and local levels) can react. Although there are great national, regional and local variations in capacities of civil institutions as well, civil capacity for dealing with drought on the micro or meso levels may well be better developed than state capacity. In

many cases, it is advisable that priority be given to strengthening these capacities further. – Concerning relationships between state, civil society institutions, and foreign NGOs, the latter’s capacity should not become the answer to institutional constraints. In partnerships with civil society institutions, NGO capacity should certainly not be confused with responsibility in competition with the state. For sustainability and accountability reasons, the state should not be by-passed or sidelined. (Davies in Maxwell and Buchanan-Smith 1994, Oxfam 1995)

### *2.7.3. Trade-offs and costs involved*

There are limits, trade-offs and priority choices involved in efforts to link relief and development. These include financial and administrative costs, as well as opportunity costs of disaster preparedness versus other forms of relief or development work. Some examples: Inputs to stabilise agricultural production in low-potential areas can give greater returns if spent in high-potential areas. Relief activities integrated in development or rehabilitation work may delay implementation and reach only a fraction of the population in need, thus be a more costly form of intervention than “pure” relief interventions. Emergency reserves have opportunity costs in terms of consumption or investments foregone. Also, existing development institutions used to implement relief programs may become overloaded and their work will suffer. Are additional inputs required by comprehensive approaches justified?

Costs and trade-offs have been little explored, and more research on issues like these is needed. For example, it is clear that the additional inputs required in low-potential areas compared to high-potential areas can be justified if the shocks are frequent enough to make relief costs higher than the inputs. However, more attention should be given to the long-term returns from integrated interventions compared to returns from other forms. Also, there is a need for more experimenting and monitoring of comprehensive approaches, to gain experience on what works and why. (Maxwell and Buchanan-Smith 1994)

### **3. Conditions in the SSE countries: Constraints and potentials to integrated approaches**

This chapter looks at the framework for the SSE NGOs' work on achieving comprehensive and integrated approaches to reduction of vulnerabilities and capacity-building. It reviews relevant historical and political conditions, policies and state activities in the different countries.

The SSE program area includes Mali, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Sudan. Sudan is not included in this report. The program was launched in 1985 as a response to the Sahel drought disaster, to channel Norwegian assistance to areas affected by severe drought, poverty, and environmental degradation. The SSE program objectives are to improve local food production and food security, and to rehabilitate the natural resource base. The program principles are sustainability (minimised dependence on future aid), recipient orientation, poverty focus and a specific orientation towards women.

The program's project areas are in many respects marginal. People are almost exclusively involved in subsistence agriculture and animal husbandry for their livelihoods, under harsh conditions with great climatic fluctuations between years. The scope for accumulation of food or other forms of reserves is modest, and people have few possibilities for compensation in years when production fails. Geographical remoteness and poor infrastructure makes marketing difficult in many cases. Poverty is widespread. A characteristic feature of the Sahel is the concomitant presence of a range of production systems, from sedentary agriculture via agropastoralism to pastoral nomadism. Competition for natural resources and conflicting resource management systems thus give rise to a range of conflict situations and complicate the task of co-ordinating natural resource management and use.

Development of innovations involving the scientific research and extension community is primarily oriented towards the sedentary population; to a modest degree towards nomads and their interests. At present, the major potential for production increase thus appears to lie in crop production, especially in areas with access to irrigation water. Nomads' adaptations to the marginal resource base are efficient, but development agents have been able to contribute little towards additional growth in productivity or feeding of additional mouths. Numerous interventions aiming to increase the output of animal husbandry among nomads have failed.

In the 1970s and 1980s, recurring droughts (major ones in the early 1970s, 1983-85, and 1987-89, of which the two former had the most devastating effects) and political instability have exacerbated the situation. Population increase and/or resource degradation has led to increased pressures on the natural resource base, rendering the populations more livelihood insecure and more prone to competition and conflicts over resource access and control. Most project areas were at the time of program initiation structurally food deficient, i.e. unable to support the population with food throughout the year.



### 3.1. Recent history and political background – a brief summary

#### 3.1.1. Mali

A former French colony, Mali achieved independence in 1960 with Modibo Keita as the first president. Mali sought to establish considerable independence from France, introduced its own currency and closed down French military bases. The socialist government planned state-led development and industrialisation of the country through a series of five-year plans, but failed. Following diminishing public support, numerous challenges by students and labor organisations, and tension within the government, Keita was overthrown in a military coup in 1968. Lieutenant Moussa Traoré became president in 1969. Although not well organised, there was opposition to his government also within the army, and there were some coup attempts during the 1970s. A party, the *Union démocratique du peuple malien* (UDPM), with a trade union, women's and youth organisations was established in 1979. Students formed a separate organisation, *Union nationale des étudiants et des élèves du Mali* (UNEEM) and in the early 1980s there was considerable student unrest. It was brutally crushed, which led to the foundation of the *Jamana* co-operative in 1983, a focus of dissent which published the newspaper *Les Echos* from 1989. Economic and political conditions deteriorated, there were droughts and continual food shortages, and support for the government dwindled. From 1989, a broad coalition of social and political groups demanded a multi-party system. Mass demonstrations became commonplace. Following violent government responses with over 100 dead, the army rebelled. Led by Lieutenant-Colonel Amadou Toumani Touré, they ousted president Traoré in March 1991. A transitional council led by Touré but including opposition leaders was established, and multi-party elections were announced in 1991. A low-level conflict between the army and autonomist Tuareg and Arab fighters in the north delayed the elections until 1992, when a National Pact was signed. The *Association pour la démocratie au Mali* (Adema) won. The presidency of Alpha Oumar Konare has been one of crisis management: an urgent economic and fiscal situation, tension within his government, his party and with the opposition, student riots, and criticism from all sides as results failed to materialise. (EIU 1996; CARE; AfricaNet; Index on Africa; CIA; Houston Festival Foundation)

At present, things are looking somewhat better: Mali is one of the five fastest-growing economies in Africa (FAO), and although they still receive food aid, their dependence on it is much more modest than that of Ethiopia and Eritrea (FAO). The government has aggressively liberalised markets, disengaged the state from the economy and promoted the public sector since 1986. However, the north is still economically dislocated. – Mali is now undergoing decentralisation and democratisation processes which involve transfer of power and resources to regional and local levels of government (CARE, NCA). There is thus currently a lot of activity and work in the field of local institution- and competence building (NCA).

#### 3.1.2. Ethiopia

Ethiopia, apart from a period of Italian occupation in 1936-41, has not been a colony. It has, however, had its share of strife and suffering. Its emperor Haile Selassie annexed Eritrea in 1962, triggering a thirty-year guerilla war. There were also peasant revolts over land issues, corruption, rampant inflation and unemployment, famine toward which the government was indifferent, and a

war with Somalia. The emperor was overthrown by the Derg, a coalition of army and Marxist groups, in 1974, followed by three years of acute conflict within the military as well as throughout the country. In 1975, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) emerged in Tigray. A series of violent internal power struggles in the Derg, including the elimination and persecution of its civilians and their organisations, brought Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam to power in 1977. Under his rule, Ethiopia was transformed into a Marxist-Leninist state. Intellectuals and educated people fled, a series of ambitious reforms including land nationalisation were launched, and the regime controlled the citizens through a hierarchical network of associations and the paraphernalia of large-scale socialist organisations. (Oxfam WWW, EIU 1996)

In the latter half of the 1980s, Mengistu was losing ground in the war against Eritrea and Tigray, despite drafting and Soviet military aid. In 1990, TPLF joined forces with rebel groups from other regions and with the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) from Eritrea, forming the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), which toppled the Mengistu regime in 1991. An EPRDF-dominated transitional government was installed and the planning of elections began, and Eritrea was granted independence. Extensive economic reforms were implemented, and a new constitution was drafted. The interim government also implemented a devolution to nine regional states, along ethnic lines. Following four years of transitional government, elections were held in mid-1995, and a federal republic was proclaimed. (Oxfam WWW, EIU 1996, Index on Africa, CIA)

TPLF enjoyed a remarkably high popularity and general support level in Tigray, and still do, largely due to their crucial role in helping the population during the war and to their participatory ideology. Morale has been and still is very high in the population of Tigray as well as within the organisation. The engine of development is the baito system, a system of local government which grew strong during the war. (NPA, DF) However, the regime is by no means uncontroversial in the rest of the country. Other parts of the country do not share the Tigray experience of emergency and war, and their cultures and social structures differ. Schisms with heavy historical and ethnic undercurrents have made it difficult for the government to transplant the ideology, party, and agenda to other parts of Ethiopia with similar success. There is tension with the intellectuals and the traditional ruling elite, the Amharic, as well as with other ethnic groups, who resent what they see as monopolizing of resources, positions, and power – e.g. reports of tendencies to try to concentrate food to Tigray areas (CARE, NCA, RB). Moreover, the government has inherited some thorny issues from the past, such as land tenure and state farms (CARE). The decentralisation process is controversial, and is accompanied by and to some extent offset and eroded by an increasing level of government control – local levels are allowed to implement measures, but it has proved hard for the central government to let go of policy and decision-making power. There are widespread claims that the establishment of the regions is a 'divide and rule' strategy. Criticism of the human rights situation in Ethiopia is also on the rise. Part of the press is fiercely critical, and the government has tried to repress both press and urban opponents. (Oxfam WWW, EIU 1996, Index on Africa, CIA)

### 3.1.3. Eritrea

After Italian rule from the late 1800s to the second world war and British rule from 1941 to 1952, an autonomous Eritrea federated to Ethiopia was created. Ten years of uneasy federation and the gradual curtailment of Eritrean autonomy followed, prompting the emergence of ELF (the Eritrean Liberation Front). Eritrea was annexed by Haile Selassie in 1962, and civil war began. ELF was loosely organized along ethnic and regional lines, and not efficient. Following an influx from the mid-sixties of young people attuned to African nationalism and Arab socialism, policy divisions and dissenting splinter groups emerged. In 1973, these regrouped to form EPLF (Eritrean People's Liberation Forces, in 1977 renamed a Front). EPLF stressed the social aspects of liberation and revolution, and placed emphasis on social improvement e.g. through land reforms in the areas they controlled, programs for political and other education, health, literacy, and economic self-sufficiency. Care was taken to incorporate all ethnic groups. – Conflict between EPLF and ELF hampered the nationalist movement for much of the 1970s, but after intensified fighting in the 1980s, EPLF joined forces with EPRDF and won the war in 1991. EPLF declared a provisional government for a four-year transition period, initiated the drafting of a constitution, and the forming of the Eritrean National Assembly. Independence from Ethiopia was granted in 1993 following a referendum in which 99.8% of the population voted for it. Isaias Afewerki from EPLF was elected president by the Eritrean National Assembly. Regional and local council elections were held, as well as seminars and conferences on the constitution. The administrative structure of the country was revised. In 1994, a move to a more pluralist system was confirmed, but not until a law on political parties is passed. The ruling party changed its name to the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ). (Oxfam WWW, EIU 1995, Index on Africa, CIA)

Eritrea's achievements since independence are impressive. The monolithic nature of the PFDJ government has led to increasing centralisation and control, also of information, during the two past years. There is some tension due to this control and to problems connected to the scarcity of material benefits, like housing and jobs. (EIU) However, the human rights situation is generally good. Regional elections have been held in preparation for general elections of a National Assembly and president, which are expected to be held in late 1997 or early 1998. Ratification of the new constitution is expected to take place soon thereafter. (US Dept. of State, World Fact Book)

There have been incidents of violence from groups, apparently with support from Sudan, opposing the current government. These include ELF and Jihad groups. Apparently, the groups attempt to destabilise Muslim-dominated lowland areas and stir up tension towards the government in repatriate groups coming back from Sudan. Pastoralists have been seen as potential security threats by the government, due to their mobility which renders them less susceptible to control, their Muslim faith, and their links to Sudan (they migrate across the border with their animals). The pressure for their sedentarisation has increased. This tension has geographic, ethnic and religious aspects as well. (NPA, EIU)

### 3.2. Policies and activities - general traits

#### 3.2.1. Food policies

1996 was a good agricultural year, especially in Ethiopia which had exceptionally good weather conditions and a record harvest, and was able to provide relief food to Kenya (FAO). Eritrea has the lowest national food self-sufficiency, their 1996 production was only about 30% of their need and food aid was 40%. Mali has almost achieved national food self-sufficiency; their import requirement for 1996/97 was 4% of their total need, of which 1,5% was food aid, and this is about normal. Ethiopia's 1996 production was 170% of normal and covered all their needs (normally they cover about 60%). (FAO) Official optimism is considerable, but this year there has been a decline in the area planted and weather conditions have not been as favorable. Moreover, there is now a difficult food situation in several areas, with a state of emergency declared in the eastern and southern parts of the country. (FAO) At the end of August 1997, Ethiopia appealed to the international community to provide about 150, 000 metric tons of emergency food assistance (Addis Tribune). There is concern and criticism among NGOs and others over state optimism – they claim that food self-sufficiency remains a long way off (Desta 1997).

Local food security in marginal regions is also a more distant goal – in most cases, these regions stand little chance of becoming self-sufficient with food in the foreseeable future with current technology. Food distribution and local access to food are thus as crucial with respect to food security as national food self sufficiency.

All the three SSE countries strive to increase their food production and be self-sufficient with food – national food self-sufficiency is seen as the key to food security. Their strategies differ, but have in common their commitment to a comprehensive, state-of-the-art system of technology transfer, SG 2000. A range of African countries have adopted this system. Ethiopia has already been active for some time, and initiatives are forthcoming in Mali and Eritrea. The SG 2000 system aims to defeat food insecurity and poverty in sub-Saharan Africa through programs to bring the latest science-based crop production technology to poor farmers. Transfer happens through demonstration on contact farmers' plots and storage facilities. Food production, storage, processing and marketing are addressed, as well as local input availability (including seed production) and establishment of farmers' associations and self-help credit services. Education and motivation of extensionists is integrated in the program, as well as collaboration with regional universities and economic policy improvements. Implementation is carried out by state institutions, and government collaboration and commitment to agricultural development and to "doing what it takes" is required. (Øygaard 1997)

The system is comprehensive and addresses certain crucial aspects of agricultural production, it works from within existing structures, and it links international and national knowledge and experiences from research, extension, education, and administration together. Substantial production increases as well as other improvements in farmers' situation are claimed, but these claims are not uncontroversial, and no formal evaluation has been carried out yet. The system is squarely rooted in the technology transfer mode of agricultural development – the efficient knowledge and experience exchange seems to include everyone in the agricultural production system except the farmers, and

local knowledge does not seem to be given much attention. Moreover, the technology offered is strongly based on external inputs.

There appear to be some sustainability problems tied to the approach: Insufficient understanding of the complexities and diversities of local farming and livelihood systems, failure to use their expertise and take them as the point of departure in development efforts, and introduction of high-input technology which may not be adjusted to local agroecological conditions or input/output price relations. Such approaches have proved to bring short-lived benefits and long-term problems in the past. Moreover, the high inputs requirements suggest that this is an approach which will be most useful to the wealthier segments of the rural population, and to high-potential areas. Its direct benefit to those vulnerable to food insecurity is questionable. Given the poor infrastructure and modest marketing possibilities in these areas, the indirect benefit in terms of more and cheaper food on the market is also questionable. If SG 2000 is to be the answer to food insecurity, a prerequisite is thus that infrastructure and distribution of food put on the market is also addressed.

### *3.2.2. Food distribution*

Another common trait in the SSE countries' policies is their ambition to address food needs, while minimising food aid dependence. They all aim to do this through state-coordinated food distribution.

### *3.2.3. Preparedness and monitoring*

The timing of food inputs will be guided by early warning systems (EWS) of food situation monitoring. These systems are designed to help decision-makers in government, state institutions, and development agents stay better informed about food security status. Thus they can keep better prepared for periods of acute food insecurity, and better able to intervene early and prevent a crisis. The systems differ in scale (from global via regional and national to subnational systems) and in the type of information they are designed to provide. National and international systems can provide simple deficit assessments to busy decision-makers. They tend to rely on a small range of indicators (food production and supply data, climatic data) which are easy to manage and analyse, and which lend themselves to comparison between areas and people. Their limitation is that their data only relate to supply, whether people have access to the food which is available is rarely addressed. Sub-national or local EWS are often community-based and use the wider range of indicators which local people use in their situation assessments. They are thus able to capture the complexities and diversities of local livelihoods and food security situations. Their limitation concerns replicability and scaling up – their indicators and the information generated is specific to their area and context, and cannot be moved wholesale to other locations. The challenge is to design a system which is workable on a large scale and still includes indicators which reflect the diversity and complexity of rural livelihoods, giving national decision-makers more appropriate information to compare geographical areas and launch national appeals. (Buchanan-Smith 1991, 1996)

Apart from the global GIEWS system run by FAO, the food situation in the SSE countries is monitored by several different early warning systems. Mali and Ethiopia are monitored by USAID's system FEWS, and Ethiopia and Eritrea are monitored by the regional system IGADD. These systems are all supply-oriented, although FEWS uses some socioeconomic data, and they are not

community-based or participatory in their analyses – GIEWS uses secondary data, FEWS works with secondary sources and satellite imagery, and IGADD uses national EWS reports and data from their remote sensing unit in Nairobi (Buchanan-Smith 1991).

A consortium of donors has established SAP (Système d'Alerte Précoce), which monitors Mali and is used by some of the SSE NGOs. SAP is basically food aid- and supply-oriented, but has socioeconomic indicators and use some qualitative data. Data are collected by lowest-level state administrative units. In Mali, there is also the subnational system SADS (Suivi Alimentaire Delta Seno), run by Save the Children's Fund for areas around Mopti. This system is bottom-up, people-centered and food security-oriented, aiming to monitor access to food, to identify coping strategies which can be reinforced, and to boost resilience. It uses a range of qualitative and quantitative indicators for this, and has a decentralised, flexible and mobile approach. The system is designed to be complementary to SAP and to concentrate on issues of structural food deficiency (Buchanan-Smith 1991).

During the war, both REST and ERA had good informal monitoring systems based on local baito reports. These systems, although famine-oriented, were highly participatory, decentralised, and locally oriented. Local RRCs (relief and rehabilitation committees), part of the baitos, monitored local supplies and food aid needs through qualitative data with quantitative back-up data, identified beneficiaries in co-operation with local population through general meetings, and managed the relief assistance. Higher-level RRCs coordinated the efforts (Buchanan-Smith 1991). Ethiopia and Eritrea have been able to draw on experiences from these systems, and the baitos are still the backbone of their systems. (Buchanan-Smith 1996)

The SSE NGOs' comments on EWS appropriateness and their use of them in their projects are generally negative. Concerning Mali, NCA and PSMF both comment on the SAP system that it is too general and large-scale to detect the small-scale local variations and "drought pockets" which are relevant in their settings. CARE and Redd Barna report on the Ethiopian system that it seems to work best in the North (Tigray) and that they don't use it much in their projects. The Eritrean system is not mentioned. The reason may be the NGOs' non-operative status, and the fact that distribution of food is no longer done through development projects in Eritrea, food shortage responses are all carried out by ERRA.

#### *3.2.4. Food distribution organisation and the roles of the actors*

The success of state-coordinated food distribution depends on state capacity to integrate the distribution into ongoing activities, and to coordinate actors involved in development or relief work to ensure that the distribution is timely and appropriate. Moreover, reducing vulnerability to shocks must begin with local conditions. Sufficient competence and capacity not only at government level, but also among state and civic institutions on district and local levels, are prerequisites to enabling the state to craft an approach to food security and rural development where relief and development are integrated.

This is quite a challenge. There is a capacity gap between the country's own institutions and foreign organisations involved in development or relief work. The latter have often competed with the national states for responsibility.

Curbing this tendency is one reason for the state coordination of activities. Ethiopian and Eritrean governments also handle most or all of the implementation, and run their own preparedness activities through their EWS. As for the role of the SSE NGOs in relief activities, it is reduced to contributing to implementation in Mali, and to virtually nothing in Ethiopia and Eritrea. Some foreign agents are still involved in food purchase as well as implementation, however. DF are sceptical towards a new EU policy on relief food purchase, implemented in Tigray – they commission local food dealers whose purchases inflate prices, thus increasing the income of those well enough off to sell a surplus while weakening the purchasing power of those who have to supplement their own food production. NPA criticise the World Food Program (WFP), who have been known to ruin years of self-sufficiency achievements painstakingly made in development projects by dumping food in their areas.

These cases illustrate that the need for coordination is great – and possibly that big foreign agents can be quite a handful for a national government. EU's food purchasing activities also demonstrate how efforts to improve the macroeconomic situation (boosting national/regional markets) may have a detrimental impact on local livelihood security.

Closer national control may result in better coordination of efforts – both between different agents and between relief and development activities. At a time when food aid activities are reduced among donors and foreign agents, and sustainability is increasingly becoming a concern to them, government coordination and implementation seems to be a change which is in principle welcomed by all. While this approach has great potential, state relief coordination does not mean the end of sustainability problems. If the state sees relief and development activities as separate, or if the coordinating capacity in any of its institutions at the national, regional or local level is insufficient, clashing policies and greater coordination problems between relief and development actors may ensue. This may lead to even greater dependency problems. Development agents will have fewer possibilities to address these if they are not involved in relief work.

There are signs of good intentions. Concerning integration with development activities, Mali and Ethiopia signal that decentralised and integrated approaches will be developed. Hopefully, this means that local institutions, and hopefully poor people themselves, will have a prominent role in monitoring, needs assessments, planning and implementation of food distribution. However, the EU case is an example that sweeping, large-scale, centralised activities are still being initiated. The crucial factors in the success of state-run food distribution will probably be whether the considerable state capacity needed at all levels exists.

### **3.3. Policies and activities - country overviews**

The following is an analysis of the countries' policies and practices in terms of reduction of vulnerability to shocks. Attempts to obtain the countries' food policy documents met with no success. Most of the information on their policies derives from other sources, and it is not comprehensive. This affects the quality and precision of the analysis, but according prudence in conclusions has been strived for. – This section also reviews state activities on food distribution through a presentation of the NGOs' experiences with and views on them.

### 3.3.1. Mali

#### *Policy*

Mali's food policy is based on two central objectives: Decentralisation of the government administration and disengagement of the state, encouraging the private sector. The major elements in the policy for the rural sector are food security, diversified and intensified production, assured access to productive resources for women, and environment protection (CARE Mali Country Overview) – commitment to natural resource management has been demonstrated by a national action plan for follow-up of the Desertification convention (CARE). Food security is monitored for crisis preparedness, and food distribution is organised as follows: In case of a limited food shortage, grains will be released from the government-controlled grain stores and sold on the market. In the event of a serious food crisis, there will be free food distribution, coordinated by the state. Civic and foreign institutions will assist in implementation as required in their areas of operation. The approach aims to prevent famine and thus avoid large-scale relief operations.

In terms of food security and shock/vulnerability minimisation, the policy has the following merits: Both resource rehabilitation and the policy measures of decentralisation and guaranteeing women productive resources (does this include land?) may contribute to the reduction of shock frequency and intensity in vulnerable households. Early interventions through releasing grains on the market to keep prices and supplies stable will also help reduce shock frequency and intensity, although access can be a problem to the most marginal and vulnerable households, those who don't have the funds to buy grains if their own crops fail. They may need more direct support. There is also the problem of level of geographical detail in monitoring and triggering such measures – e.g. interventions may be needed in "drought pockets" although there is no general food shortage in an area. – Shock impact appears to be addressed mainly through the policy element of production intensification and diversification – that is, if these production changes aim to strengthen farming systems and livelihood security through diversification of household income sources to the poor. It is not clear what measures this policy element comprises, however – whether food production is to be increased through developing subsistence farming systems and livelihoods, or through focusing more on cash-crop production with high inputs. In the latter case, concerns rise of local shock impact minimisation, as well as of local access to the food produced.

#### *Food distribution activities*

The NGOs have different views. CARE feels that on the whole, the system works, although there are details which need to be improved. NCA and PSMF are more critical. They are much in favor of the principle of state-run food distribution, but question the way it has been carried out in Mali. According to them, Mali was previously (under the non-democratic government) restrictive on food distribution; under the current government, the distribution strategy is not clear and seemingly not satisfactorily implemented. It often seems to consist in dumping whatever amounts they get from WFP, with little concern for need.

#### *Decentralisation, state capacity and sustainability*

The NGOs inform that back when their projects were initiated, they were basically allotted a project area to be "theirs", where they have up to the present



been left to do largely what they wanted within the limits posed by national legislation, policies, and resources allocated to the project area. Their appreciation of the freedom of action and ability to shape conditions in the project area has been mixed with some frustration with the lack of government involvement. Their views on the current decentralisation policies and activities draw on this experience. They support it, but have some concerns that greater local autonomy may not be accompanied by closer ties between levels of state institutions. This may allow for conditions where national and local activities and priorities exist alongside each other without being properly connected or pulling in the same direction. Apart from the problems related to coordinating comprehensive national efforts under such conditions, there are the related problems of accountability and sustainability.

In areas where local-level administration and other institutions have the competence and capacity to run food distribution in a proper manner, decentralisation seems to have been an advantage locally. PSMF reports that in their project area, the local development committee is responsible for food security, and will, in the event of food aid need, be the local co-ordinator of interventions. They obtain information from the regional governor on food distribution activities initiated, and take autonomous responsibility for filling the gaps. The development committee has a good understanding of sustainability aspects of food distribution, and are able to integrate food aid into present activities. – A lot of PSMF's time and efforts have been put into a comprehensive development plan emphasising famine prevention through early interventions. PSMF has co-operated closely with the state and local authorities on this, and appear to have been instrumental in achieving this good local capacity.

Foreign development agents may, as PSMF did, play a vital role in local capacity-building. But if there is not sufficient coordination with and involvement from the state, they and their local partner institutions may turn a project area into a state in the state, local institutions feeling more accountable to the project's development agent than to their state counterparts at higher levels. When the project phases out, good local systems may prove very fragile if not understood and supported by higher-level institutions. Local success stories may turn into failures, in spite of favorable local conditions, if there is no system of support, no feeling of ownership and commitment, and insufficient competence and capacity at higher levels. The potential problems are compounded in situations where different development agents have worked out systems in different project areas, without establishing links, communication, and compatibility between them. Mali may end up a patchwork of different institutional and capacity situations, with national institutions poorly equipped to forge them into one system without sacrificing much of what was achieved in each local area in the process.

### *3.3.2. Ethiopia*

#### *Policy*

Ethiopia has been working on a food policy since 1994, scheduled to be ready by November 1996. The government has not been very active in seeking foreign development agents' input underway, although UN, USAID, and EU have been involved some. The SG 2000 system is integrated into the policy, which will also be integrated with the National Policy on Disaster Prevention and Management

(NPDPM). This program includes an ambitious effort to decentralise the national early warning system, combining indicators to measure large-scale conditions like climate and food supplies with indicators to monitor local-level livelihood and food security conditions. The government is very concerned about food aid dependency, and want to tighten their control over food distribution by assuming the responsibility for all of it – to play a key role in implementation as well as to coordinate activities (CARE, NCA, RB).

This policy may contribute to the reduction of shock frequency and intensity, depending on the manner of its implementation. The trend of centralisation of decision-making power may constitute an impediment to local, community-based food distribution which is integrated with development activities. Deforestation and land degradation in Ethiopia have been massive, and there is dire need for natural resource rehabilitation. Insufficient information about policies on this has been obtained for any assessment. The shock impact reduction potential of the policy is also difficult to assess – it depends on what type of technology will be focused on by SG 2000 and the government. Drought-proofing technology and diversification of the household income base are what is needed, along with policies allowing for secure access to means of production. The land issue is crucial here – this needs to be resolved.

#### *Food distribution*

CARE has some qualms about how effective the state-run model will prove to be, in view of the general trend of decision-making centralisation and control. How flexible and specific will the system be in addressing the often very small pockets of hunger? How will food distribution work affect development efforts in local communities – to what extent will there be ambitions or ability to achieve integration and mutual reinforcement between the two activity areas? Will there be competence, resources, and power at each level, as well as good enough co-ordination between levels, to allow for this? A lot seems to depend on how the new EWS turns out and how response to the system's recommendations will be handled.

DF reports that in Tigray, the REST EW and response system is still in place: Assisted by REST as a mediator of funds, local baitos monitor, target, purchase and distribute food aid. The means of distribution is in some cases direct, but mostly through FFR schemes. The work is distributed for one day at a time; it is broken down into little responsibility areas which are given to units of 12 people. The units decide how much of the day they need to complete their task. On completion, those who are eligible to get food receive it. Many work for free, because the results of the communal works are seen to be beneficial in themselves. This model has proved very efficient in meeting needs, and the great degree of baito control (REST merely providing logistic assistance) has contributed to minimising dependency problems. It is this success which the Ethiopian government wants to replicate in other regions through their new system.

#### *Government involvement, control, and decentralisation*

NGOs working in Ethiopia have noted an increased level of government interest in their activities. Redd Barna reports that during the initial period of the new regime, they were left alone with their local partners, and the government kept out, much like in Mali. The current increased government involvement – they are very interested in participating in NGO activities although they lack

resources – is appreciated by the NGOs. However, it can be difficult to reconcile their agenda with that of the government. For instance, the government would like material and technical inputs, while NGOs are trying to get away from handouts and technical inputs and to focus more on partnership and capacity-building, and even on advocacy, which is sometimes seen by the government as interference. Both Redd Barna and CARE feel that the government wants to keep more control on foreign agents' work, but are not sure what the consequences will be to their activities – especially concerning local initiatives, capacity building and influence. For example, CARE wants to promote links between local and national institutions and knowledge systems, but are not sure how much local initiative the government will allow.

Some NGOs are concerned that the current decentralisation process will stop at the regional government level. This is both for reasons related to control and capacity. Lower-level institutions' capacity and competence levels differ from region to region. Moreover, personnel posting shifts is a problem – there is a tendency that once relations have been established with someone in an office, they disappear to a post somewhere else and one has to start over. In addition to making co-operation and coordination more difficult, this practice may erode institutional capacity, e.g. through institutional amnesia.

Conditions in Tigray are quite different. The tension and mutual suspicion which is complicating processes and threatening stability in other regions appears to be virtually non-existent here, and community-based participatory processes are strong and sustained by close co-operation between administrative, civic and research institutions. The close ties between the national government and Tigray, notably through REST, are important reasons for this. The government may draw on REST's substantial experience in participatory relief distribution integrated with development or rehabilitation activities.

### *3.3.3. Eritrea*

#### *Policy*

Eritrea's food and agriculture policy has focused its ambitions for food security on high-input cash crop production, sedentarisation of pastoralists and commercial farming. However, there is an increasing acknowledgement of the economic significance of the pastoralist and subsistence agricultural economy (NPA). Eritrea has a comprehensive new national environment plan which addresses natural resource rehabilitation, its major implementation form is through community-based structures and local participation. Like Mali and Ethiopia, Eritrea has a disaster preparedness profile to its food security policy, but addresses food aid dependence in a more radical way than the two other countries: One has decided to do away with food distribution altogether and to monetise virtually all food aid through CFW and price monitoring and control, marketing food reserves when food prices get too high (NCA, RB). Direct aid will be reserved for those unable to work. The government has reserved the responsibility for implementing food distribution for ERRA and state institutions.

The policy thus addresses all the major fields which may contribute to a reduction of shock frequency and intensity: resource rehabilitation, disaster preparedness and early interventions. The resource rehabilitation plan looks promising, and there seems to be commitment on the part of the government to

create a locally based approach. The restrictive approach to direct food aid also has its merits. In view of the general trends of top-down centralised approaches in Eritrea, there may be some cause for questioning implementation, however – will timely, locally oriented, and well integrated activities result?

A decrease in shock frequency and intensity requires a continuing focus on the needs and contributions of pastoralists as well as subsistence agriculturalists – the most vulnerable and food insecure groups. Similarly, a strengthening of the livelihood security and farming systems of these groups is crucial to a minimisation of shock impact. To what extent will this be achieved?

Apparently, SG 2000 is expected to play a crucial role in this respect – the impact remains to be seen.

#### *Food distribution, centralisation and coordination of activities*

The Eritrean government, like the Ethiopian one, has made efforts to create a food distribution approach which addresses local needs in a locally appropriate way, e.g. through decentralised monitoring routines involving local institutions (baitos). However, the SSE NGOs note that the decentralisation of implementing responsibility has not been matched by that of decision-making responsibility. This complicates efforts to integrate relief and development activities. For example, DF note that in the past, they have used relief funds from MFA in their Eritrean projects. They have stopped doing this because they find that conditions in Eritrea do not allow for integrating relief activities into development projects, or for letting the local population purchase, target, and distribute the food. With this approach blocked, DF have chosen not to have relief-type activities in their projects.

Insufficient decentralisation of power may result in tension between levels of state institutions, as lower levels may disagree with policies and directions from higher levels. (NPA) It is also a challenge to ensure the involvement and cooperation of all stakeholders in the implementation of state agricultural policies. CARE, NPA and DF report some tension between MoA, agriculturalists, and pastoralist communities in their project areas over such issues, which is compounded by repatriation of refugees.

#### *State accountability, capacity, and foreign input*

The current government has been concerned from the start with not letting foreign actors take control over how the country develops. They have accepted only funding and backstopping support from outside and have themselves taken care of implementation and operational roles. This is an interesting and in many ways sound policy. It has proved a strain on relations between the Eritrean government and some foreign agencies, however – what is perceived as too harsh demands have antagonised certain would-be assistance givers. (NPA)

As a foreign development agent, it can be difficult to find a way to contribute. Funding is appreciated, other forms of input less so (RB). There are those who feel that Eritrea might achieve even more with a greater interest in dialogue with other countries and in learning from others' experiences. Furthermore, in a country where one is dependent on state institutions for project implementation, competence and capacity restrictions in these institutions make themselves acutely felt, and it can be difficult even to keep track of how donated money is spent, and of project activities and achievements (NPA, DF). Regional differences in competence level, posting shifts, and institutional amnesia are

problems one has to contend with. In general, however, a process of change at the pace of state institutions may prove to be more sustainable in the long run, even though results in the short run may be more modest than they would have been if foreigners had been allowed greater involvement and more operative responsibilities.

#### *3.3.4. Constraints and potentials in national frameworks – concluding remarks*

Firm conclusions based on these short and sketchy outlines would not be prudent, but two major points can be made.

- Policies address reduction of shock frequency and intensity through preparedness and early interventions. Rehabilitation of the natural resource base also appears to be given priority. However, food provisioning activities are not always carried out in accordance with good practice.
- There is not enough information on policies to assess whether reduction of shock impact is sufficiently addressed. All the countries appear to be committed to eliminating food insecurity, but national production increase and food self-sufficiency appears to be their primary strategy. With the poor infrastructure and the many poor subsistence producers in the most food insecure group, they may well find that even with national food self sufficiency, the threat of famine will by no means be eliminated. Unless distribution, poverty reduction and local access to food are addressed specifically, the policies will probably primarily benefit high-potential agricultural areas and better-off farmers.
- State institutions' capacities are often insufficient. Budget capacity, continuity, manpower and competence, coordination and contact between levels or sectors are among the areas where constraints make themselves felt.

These two aspects converge in different ways, resulting in different constraints and potentials. Mali has initiated a very interesting process of local capacity-building and decentralisation. Foreign agents may make an important contribution here, e.g. in local institution-building. The danger lies in insufficient central follow-up. Eritrea, and Ethiopia both appear to have clear and comprehensive ideas about their directions, and coordination of efforts is given high priority in the shaping of policies, but there is a concern that decentralisation will not be carried far enough. Eritrea's capacity problems so far appear more acute than those in the other two countries, due to depletion of material and human resources during the war. Moreover, their workload is comparatively larger because the state handles all project implementation itself, and non-operative foreign agents' ability to complement state efforts are also more modest.

State competence and capacity building, both at local and higher levels, is an area in which SSE NGOs could make a vital contribution towards sustainable reduction of vulnerabilities. Institutional cooperation with and relations to national academic, political and executive institutions are already part of NGO activity profiles. Bringing issues up for discussions with these national institutions is probably the best way to enhance the great potentials in the policy and activities framework within which the NGOs work, and to find ways to deal with constraints.

## **4. Other issues related to linking relief and development in the SSE context**

In this chapter, we return to some of the issues identified in chapter 2.7, elaborating on them in terms of SSE conditions.

### **4.1. Feasibility and necessity**

There is no doubt that integrated approaches to development and relief are necessary in SSE program areas, due to their structural food insecurity and natural resource degradation. Several features in favor of their feasibility, both concerning political stability, SSE NGOs' approaches and competence, and national policies on addressing food insecurity and relief in unorthodox ways, have been mentioned. Major constraints identified are capacity constraints and centralisation.

A different type of constraint is related to project areas' scope for improvements. The resource base in some project areas is, according to the opinions of NGOs working there, too poor for them ever to become self-sustained without interaction with higher-potential areas (work migration, income diversification, trade), unless a radical redistribution of resources takes place. In chapter 2.7.1, the issue of sustainability under such conditions was raised. In terms of SSE program principles, this is a dilemma of sustainability versus poverty focus. Which principle should have primacy? What strategy should SSE employ in areas which have little or no chance of ever becoming self-sufficient? Should such areas be avoided? Should feasibility criteria be defined to prevent SSE engagement in areas which fall below a certain minimum potential for improvement? Conditional involvement requires an initial assessment of every area's potential – a complex exercise, since local features as well as effects of external conditions, like national and international policies, infrastructure, and other factors affecting the relative magnitude of costs and trade-offs, are involved. Or is it possible, through a combination of promoting seasonal and/or permanent out-migration with shock reduction activities duly addressing off-farm income, to establish livelihood security even in the most marginal areas?

The labor division involved in state-run food distribution has relieved SSE NGOs of some concerns related to getting stuck with never-ending relief commitments. The dilemma of determining whether it is worthwhile to invest resources in areas with little chance of becoming self-sufficient, remains – a dilemma of trade-offs and costs.

### **4.2. Trade-offs and costs**

Do the outputs justify the inputs? There are trade-offs related to the opportunity costs of integrated approaches and disaster preparedness versus other forms of relief, as well as to resource use in high-potential versus low-potential areas.

The latter issue has been a topic for discussion in SSE NGOs: To what extent should development resources be invested in low-potential, marginal areas which may never become self-sustained. NGOs' reports reason that high-potential areas will more easily generate commercial inputs, and that low- and high-potential areas may both grow through exchange of labor with other resources. Moreover, marginalisation and poverty is always closely related to

inequitable wealth distribution, and thus has a political and moral side – one has a moral obligation to support the poorest and most marginalised people, and there is potential for growth in achieving greater equity.

Concerns about integrated approaches versus “pure” relief are primarily related to cost, timeliness, and coverage relative to need. Comprehensive integrated approaches are indeed costlier than pure relief in the short term, but not necessarily more so than the combined costs of pure development and relief efforts. Long-term costs could indeed be lower. Timeliness, targeting and coverage should, with a proper preparedness and defense system, be better than through pure relief, because needs are addressed through local early intervention.

Another concern is about overloading development institutions’ limited capacity through allocating to them the tasks related to food provisioning. Institutional management capacity and competence constraints have been discussed earlier. This appears to be a far more serious and relevant concern in the SSE context than costs, involving most institutions at all levels in the SSE countries. Improving this situation is a prerequisite to an efficient and appropriate integrated approach to relief and development, not least because inappropriate management of such an approach may have a detrimental effect on cost efficiency, timeliness, and coverage. SSE NGOs should see this as a crucial task.

#### 4.3. Funding and organisation

##### *Funding*

The SSE program is coordinated and managed by MFA, and administration of the agreements with NGOs has been carried out by NORAD. Funding commitments from NORAD are fairly long-term, provided that projects progress and report according to plans and agreements. The program does not have a relief component, and separate funding is therefore required for relief activities.

Norwegian state relief funds are administered by MFA directly (Politisk avdeling), and are designated for humanitarian aid in disaster situations. The funds primarily go to acute interventions (e.g. food, shelter, medication), but funding for preparedness and prevention is also possible, as well as for follow-up of rehabilitation interventions in the first few years after an emergency (e.g. reconstruction, agriculture). The idea is to reduce people’s vulnerability to allow them to withstand a future shock in a better way. Local and regional resources are to be used in rehabilitation as far as possible, to increase development effects of rehabilitation efforts. The time perspective is normally two years, after which activities should be funded in other ways. Funds are distributed annually and applications must also be submitted annually.

However, this does not mean that eligibility for funding ceases after this period. In connection with permanent emergencies, there are examples of relief support granted to the same activities for several years in a row (Sørvald 1995).

There are thus two different sources of funding to integrated approaches involving food provisioning, with different structures and sets of professional considerations. There is little coordination or overlap. One example is that opinions on what is a project worthy of funding differ. Some projects supported with relief funds have to be terminated in spite of NGOs’ wishes to continue them, because they are not granted development funds. Another example is the

difference in funding time frames. It has been argued that funds either in the relief or the development budget should be earmarked for rehabilitation and/or "permanent emergencies" (structural food insecurity), but it is difficult to decide where these funds should be taken from, who should manage them, and what relative weight should be given to the professional funding criteria of relief and development. For example, more long-term funding commitments would be a problem to MFA because relief funds needed for immediate emergency action would be tied up. NORAD would see an inherent long-term commitment in relief interventions outside areas where Norwegian development aid is concentrated, as problematic. (Sørvald 1995)

In a report on administrative potentials and constraints to linking short-term and long-term assistance (Sørvald 1995), statements from NGOs interviewed can be summed up as follows: NORAD's funding guidelines have a long-term orientation, those of MFA have a short-term orientation. Their guidelines differ and even conflict, which complicates co-operation, transition arrangements, and combination funding, e.g. through a modest scope for flexible use of funds for such purposes. Information and coordination routines between NORAD and MFA are also inadequate. The NGOs want a unified and holistic approach to all forms of assistance. Different guidelines, administrative structures and professional cultures may constitute a constraint to such a coordination, it is noted. The report concludes on the same note. It recommends a strengthening and coordination of professional competence in development thinking in both funding institutions, particularly related to the roles of and relationships between relief and development assistance. This may create a common ground from which to forge a coordinated system for assistance funding, allowing for transitory and integrated approaches. There is an increasing awareness of the merits of such an approach in both funding institutions, and an interest in discussing how it can be achieved.

The consequences of the uncoordinated funding situation do not seem to be acutely felt within the SSE program. However, not all the NGOs who reported on it (NCA, RB, NPA and DF) are equally happy with the system.

NCA and Redd Barna have good experiences with both SSE and MFA. NCA reports that at least within the SSE context, both sources have shown that they understand and approve of NCA's simultaneous and integrated approach to relief and development work. They thus feel that funding conditions are rather stable also concerning MFA, even if they have to apply annually. Redd Barna initially received criticism from MFA for their integrated "long-term relief" approach, but an MFA field trip to the area resulted in a more favorable view and increased relief funding.

NPA and DF express a different opinion. Their criticisms are similar to those referred to above. They find that the lack of coordination between NORAD and MFA makes itself felt in the transition phase from relief to development, and that the division of relief and development funds is hopelessly inefficient in areas with a structural food deficit. They are frustrated with having to justify to MFA that relief funds are needed in the same area year after year. NPA find it problematic not to be able to have long-term plans on food provisioning because they only have short-term knowledge of their relief funding situation.



DF would like to see a mapping of places with a structural food deficit, and an earmarked lump sum should go to relief activities in these areas every year. Relief funds to SSE areas should be attached to SSE projects. The funds could stay with MFA, but should be earmarked for rehabilitation or integrated "relief for development".

A few remarks follow concerning funding requirements to the integrated approach to relief and development suggested in this report. The problem of uncoordinated funding is serious enough in cases of rehabilitation as a transitory phase from relief to development. It becomes acute in cases of structural emergencies, requiring a convergence of relief and development throughout a long-term intervention, with unpredictable fluctuations in the relative emphasis on relief and development. The flexibility and long-term commitment required for timely but sustainable responses to food insecurity cannot be achieved without a stable, secure, and professionally consistent funding arrangement.

Under such an arrangement, integration of all relief and development resources is not necessary, but a funding category for long-term rehabilitation projects in structurally food insecure areas should be established. For projects like these, NORAD and MFA (possibly through a body with representatives of both institutions) should provide a coordinated package of relief and development funds. There should be common or compatible professional guidelines and requirements, and common time frames, ensuring that a real convergence can be planned for and implemented with a long-term perspective and in a flexible way.

#### *Organisation*

Norwegian political authorities and funding institutions want NGOs to consider their comparative advantages and to concentrate their efforts in the areas where these advantages are the greatest. A specific example has been that NGOs should not do both relief and development work.

Linked efforts may be quite possible through close co-operation between NGOs specialising in different fields. However, this requires a shared underlying philosophy and understanding of the situation in the project areas, shared or compatible institutional and administrative set-ups, and permanent stand-by teams of staff from both relief and development NGOs. Even so, the simplicity and overall feasibility of achieving a seamless and smooth approach is probably greater if one organisation involves itself across the continuum of activities. The SSE NGOs have considerable experience in both relief and development work as well as extensive experience from and familiarity with the project areas. These are indispensable assets to a comprehensive approach, can may in themselves thus constitute a comparative advantage.

## 5. Addressing food insecurity through SSE – NGOs’ project experiences

### 5.1. Relief and development - a brief history

#### 5.1.1. *Background*

All the SSE NGOs’ initial activities in the SSE countries were in response to relief need due to the emergency in the wake of the 1983-85 Sahel drought. NCA and PSMF were asked to take part in joint efforts, led by UNICEF and the Santal Mission, respectively. Redd Barna and CARE established their own organisations in Mali and Ethiopia, respectively, whereas NPA and DF collaborated with each other and through a consortium of agencies coordinated through ERRA and REST. NCA participated in the same consortium.

Activities during the initial period were largely restricted to relief interventions. Still, all NGOs had longer-term commitments from the start, or at least from early on, arising from a realisation that due to the structural poverty in the area, development efforts would have to be made to prevent a repetition of the disaster. The launching of the SSE program in 1985 provided a framework for a greater focus on development activities, starting around 1986. There has since been a gradual shift away from typical relief activities like food distribution, through FFW varieties to CFW. Concomitantly there has been an increasing emphasis on development activities of various kinds, mostly involving agricultural and livestock production as well as soil and water conservation.

The SSE program was the result of a government initiative at ministerial level. The idea was to try to establish a permanent way out of the disaster-prone situation through development efforts. Program goals, objectives, and major activity areas were identified according to a focus on poverty alleviation. NGOs involved in relief work in the SSE countries were invited to create development projects. Many considered the program a good framework for their ambitions and subscribed to program goals and objectives, and projects were adjusted or started in order to pursue them.

The challenge of doing development work in a post-disaster setting, and in a generally structurally food deficient area, proved a tough one. A clean break from relief was not possible. However, long-term effects on self-sufficiency and sustainability had not been duly considered during the relief phase, whose interventions had thus been inconsistent with those now being launched. In short, the legacy of handouts now presented itself to the NGOs, the dual challenge of saving both people’s lives and their livelihoods involving a demanding balancing act between death and dependence.

#### 5.1.2. *An integrated approach*

In the search for a way out, NGOs reasoned that development work would not be possible if people were without the resources (food) to remain in their homes and plots, and that securing their ability to do so through interventions to prevent migration would have to be an integral component of project interventions as long as there was a structural food deficit. The scope of this component should then be gradually reduced, and finally eliminated, with the emergence of the results of resource rehabilitation and food security interventions.

An integrated approach was soon widely employed, with a mix of SSE and MFA funds. Some NGOs gave some direct food handouts in drought pockets according to acute needs. However, most of the food distribution activities were designed to support development activities through FFW (and later CFW in some projects). The scope of the FFW activities varied temporally and spatially, according to local food supplement needs. The activities were integrated with development efforts – they were timed to avoid keeping people away from their farm work, and promoted resource rehabilitation and/or food security. Activities ranged from grain stores, well digging, pest control measures, and irrigation systems improvement to terracing and construction of other soil and water conservation structures, afforestation, and planting wild fodder and food plants. Keeping wheels turning by having people do normal agricultural production work in their fields as a FFW activity was another approach. REST in Tigray developed their own FFR approach, which has been mentioned earlier in this report.

### *5.1.3. Criticism and revisions*

The amount of work done through these schemes is quite colossal, although in some instances the lasting effects of the tasks done, or their sustainability without the FFW input, might be questioned. And the integrated approach was not uncontroversial. A major conclusion of the 1992 COWIconsult report was that due consideration had generally not been given to issues of sustainability, and that most projects had not been well enough planned and were fraught with dependence problems. Similar scepticism had been voiced as early as in 1989 by Henk Breman, a specialist from Center from Biological Research in Wageningen, the Netherlands, at an SSE seminar in Mali (CARE). He warned of a lack of local ownership of ideas and processes, a tendency to address symptoms rather than causes of problems, and a propensity for free handouts. How to promote or at least not erode self-sufficiency was vaguely addressed in the projects, if at all, and plans for phasing out were equally vague or non-existent, he felt.

There were mixed feelings about the criticism, within as well as among the different NGOs. There was some frustration at the lack of credit received for the results one had after all achieved, under difficult conditions, with little experience and an ambitious task, and the necessity of food distribution and an integrated approach were stressed. However, it was also acknowledged that there was merit in the criticism, and some NGOs (NCA, RB) were already in the process of disentangling themselves from structures with big operational expatriate-dominated representations in project countries, and shifting to a partnership approach. The report also resulted in discussions with NORAD on the issues raised, and considerable changes ensued. FFW components were greatly reduced or disappeared, handouts were replaced by credit, partnership approaches were adopted more widely, and transfer of responsibilities and capacity building were given more consideration.

The present situation is characterised by the reduction of FFW and food handouts, and the emergence of CFW in some projects. Structural food security still prevails in several project areas, allowing for yearly and seasonal fluctuations, and some form of food or other supplement is still considered necessary. The reported trend is a gradual reduction of food needs, however. Dependence problems are also reduced, according to the reports, but have not disappeared. The major dependence problem reported is related to combining

food distribution or FFW/CFW with long-term interventions. Current status on this issue differs. In most projects, food provisioning components have been stopped or channeled through local partners (e.g. local baitos assisted by REST in Tigray; local development committees in Mali; ERRRA in Eritrea), but they remain part of the activity profile in some projects. Some NGOs feel that dependency problems have been minimised through this approach. Others do not share this experience.

## **5.2. Vulnerabilities, capacities, and shock reduction**

The SSE NGOs have summarised the lessons they have learned through their more than ten years of combating food insecurity through SSE. They have provided a wealth of information and views on various aspects of the issues. This chapter presents an attempt to analyse their contributions in terms of the approach for linking relief and development which was presented in chapter 2. All the micro-level elements and measures of the approach are appropriate to project settings and are thus relevant in the analysis. Macro-level measures will only be commented on here to the extent that NGOs co-operate and discuss these issues with policy-makers. Information on the different elements will be presented, followed by some conclusions.

### ***5.2.1. Preparedness and defense***

#### ***CVN analysis and monitoring***

Most of the SSE projects were initiated based on insufficient information. Needs assessments and project planning were more frequently based on short field trips than on participatory baseline analyses. NGOs often realised this deficiency later on, and compensated it through later studies and project revisions. Their efforts were reinforced by the 1992 evaluation and debate, and by NORAD inputs following it. One may say that the first years were a trial and error period from which a workable approach gradually emerged. However, some projects are still grappling with sustainability problems deriving from their initially insufficient understanding of the conditions they addressed.

Project monitoring and evaluation is of course a component of every project, although sometimes inadequate due to partners' insufficient reporting capacity (NPA, DF). Project output data are usually readily available, impact data apparently less so. Some NGOs (RB, CARE, PSMF, DF) have worked to develop indicators for monitoring project impact, emphasising food security. Moreover, there are often, especially among projects with food provisioning components, good informal systems of food security monitoring through reports from local institutions. Initiation of provisioning activities is based on these reports. However, none of the NGOs can to date muster a systematic approach to food security monitoring for measuring project impact, monitoring fluctuations in food needs, and adjusting activities. The information they receive from EWSes covering their areas is also of limited use in these respects.

#### ***Decentralisation and awareness of the local context***

The COWIconsult evaluation report concludes that projects were designed through a blueprint rather than a process approach, that there was limited sensitivity to local socioeconomic diversity, and that community participation, especially in project design and management, was limited. Projects were often not sensitive to the real needs and conditions of the communities, it was stated.

The NGOs themselves also report that information about conditions in the project area was often insufficient. There have been cases of taking something that worked in one area and importing it wholesale to another, only to have it fail because relevant conditions differed. However, they claim a very different present agenda and emphasis. They report to have understood the importance of knowledge development in accordance with local realities, and they emphasise the strengthening of local knowledge and traditions, social structures, technology, infrastructure, and food security strategies, rather than introducing new ones. They try to capitalise on and reinforce the valuable local knowledge which they find both in the general public and in local partner institutions (NCA), and to strengthen local institutions, traditional or newer. These may play a pivotal role e.g. in local resource management and food provisioning. For instance, NGOs in Mali work through local development committees where the local population and government are both represented and co-operating (CARE, PSMF). The NGOs state that local mobilisation, ownership and responsibility are vital to project results and sustainability (DF, PSMF), and focus on their role as process catalysts and facilitators and on local initiation of activities (CARE).

The NGOs all work through partners. Their understanding of and commitment to these principles may vary. This affects project realities. Partnership experiences will be dealt with in greater detail later.

The NGOs appear to have extensive knowledge of their project areas. But in some cases, project activities relate to each other and to the local context in a seemingly piecemeal, static way. This may give the impression that the underlying thinking is also piecemeal and short-term, but it seems more likely that it is not well enough informed on relevant features of the local context. This may be a long-term effect of poor baseline information. One example concerns land tenure: FFW or CFW activities are sometimes initiated on land often used by the poor, but actually controlled by someone rich. If the value of this land is increased e.g. by soil and water conservation, afforestation, or fodder planting, the poor may eventually be barred from it. Another example is related to local capacity: The issues of upkeep and management of communal structures built through CFW or FFW (terraces, irrigation canals, dams, etc.) are sometimes not sufficiently addressed. The benefits of these activities, apart from that of feeding people, will be significantly reduced if there are no local institutions who feel responsible for maintenance and/or expansion, see the benefits of it, and have material and organisational capacity to do it.

A better understanding of e.g. local power structures, institutions, and features governing access to and control over natural resources may lead to a design and integration of activities which addresses poverty more profoundly and sustainably.

#### *Capacity building and reduction of vulnerabilities*

The NGOs report having faced dilemmas and difficulties with respect to reducing vulnerabilities and building local capacities. It can be difficult to assess the total impact of interventions, NCA elaborated. E.g. improvement of a road, meant to result in better access to markets, might also lead to other positive and negative results, such as lower returns for grains sold, closer relations to surrounding areas, more work migration, easier access to education, or a brain drain. Increased local expectations, disincentives to local activities,

dependence are among the most common negative side effects of provisions involving food provisions. – These experiences may be related to an insufficient understanding of the local context, as suggested above.

NGOs have struggled to strike a balance between project and local responsibilities and inputs. Handouts of both foods and other inputs, once widespread in projects, have been stopped or minimised. Dependency and disincentive problems still make themselves felt, however – it is hard to change a handout approach once it is there, it takes some time for people to develop interest in making their own contributions when they have been used to receiving for free. Food provisioning is an area where finding such a balance has proved to be particularly difficult. Local initiation, mobilisation, and ownership are felt to be crucial in this balance. DF holds that REST's success with their FFR approach to a great degree derives from the way people are motivated by realising that the work which is done is beneficial to them in itself, regardless of the food provisions. People feel ownership because they see results and benefits. PSMF advocates local needs assessments and activity identification, and a 'reiterative', contingency-based approach: Responsibilities, involvement and contributions are divided between the community and project management in an agreement before implementation starts, and every input from the project is given after an input from the community or local institutions responsible has been concluded. Experience shows that people always manage to come up with the resources if they can see the benefits of the effort, according to PSMF.

Project activity profiles should not always be completely dependent on local initiation, it is argued. There are many possibilities which local people are not aware of, and in some cases, certain activities may benefit some groups but may not be popular with other, more powerful groups in the community. One example given is that female-oriented activities are not always welcomed by males. One might also add that short-term benefits are sometimes valued over long-term ones locally – for example, projects have been known to discontinue afforestation activities because local people did not give them priority. NGOs agree that activities which are not locally initiated must never be forced, it must happen through discussion and dialogue with the local community and authorities. It should also be emphasised that empowerment and capacity building are integral aspects of sound participatory processes. Local access to new information is an example, as are comprehensive local analyses of impacts of alternative actions – involving e.g. long-term effects and positive side effects (to men) of women-oriented activities.

The initial emphasis on material and technical inputs has been replaced by a focus on processes, synergies in communication and collaboration, local initiation, responsibilities and ownership, and facilitation. There is emphasis on strengthening local infrastructure and production capacity, and on using local resources when available. In food provisioning, local surplus food is used to the extent that there is any – if not, food is bought from other areas with production surplus (CARE, DF). One activity which is cited by NGOs as capacity-building in several respects is the establishment of local grain banks. They provide shock reduction through securing local food reserves and incomes. Infrastructure and local production capacities are strengthened, as people are provided with a local market for their grains, and are able to buy grains at a modest price when food

production is insufficient. The profits stay in the area. The system also builds institutional and attitudinal capacities, through farmers' own management of the banks, NGOs hold. – It should be added that grain banks can be complicated measures to initiate – there are capacity prerequisites which are not always met, and potential side effects.

Capacity building in local organisations and institutions has a prominent role in present NGO activities. Increasing efforts to link local-level management and partner institutions to national and international pools of knowledge and experience, in the South as well as in the North, are integral to these activities. The objective is to increase cross-fertilisation between NGOs, state administration institutions at different levels, and research and education communities. NCA comments that long-term co-operation networks between institutions in the south and north should be established, rather than bilateral North-South links, which tend to take on a 'master-apprentice' connotation. Co-operation should involve a skills-oriented, practical competence dimension as well as a research dimension to feed into the needs of the practical one. NPA joins NCA in recommending more SSE focus on this activity, involving allocation of resources and responsible institutions. Although the primary focus is on local conditions and project activities, this field of activities spans both the micro and macro level, in the sense that it may involve and influence higher-level state institutions which shape policies .

Empowerment and the political nature of their work is an issue which is seen as crucial and is much discussed in the NGOs. The effects of intervening in terms of legitimising and strengthening government versus strengthening and empowering the weak are discussed. In the general debate on this issue, some argue that development aid is political but relief is not (development aid builds reinforcing structures whereas relief only helps victims); others vice versa (donor governments use relief strategically but give development assistance based on need). There is a quite clear stand among the SSE NGOs that any intervention is political in terms of its micro- and macro-political, direct and secondary, effects on existing power structures. These effects range from the mere signal effect of being present to co-operation with and capacity building in state and civic institutions. This is a relevant issue in SSE project areas, where numerous conflicts have arisen over scarce natural resources. A development agent has the choice of staying out of conflicts, becoming a mediator, or taking a side. Both are political actions. The choice should be informed by the knowledge of where one's primary loyalty and commitment lie.

This stand has been demonstrated by the roles played by some of the NGOs in relation to instability in the SSE countries (NPA, DF, and NCA, notably), as well as to local tension in project areas and advocacy work done by them all. Their commitment is with the poor people in their project areas. Their focus on processes is seen as important also to the extent that it enables them to play a role in advocacy, communication facilitation, and contributions to harmonisation and compromise – between stakeholders in their project area and/or between people in the project area and institutions beyond.

However, this awareness may in some cases be higher concerning existing conflicts than concerning conflicts arising from or being intensified by results of project activities, or concerning the ultimate poverty reduction effects. Again, I

refer to the questions raised concerning awareness of the local context, and to the examples cited.

### *Flexibility*

There are no statements in the NGO review material on flexibility as such – only circumstantial evidence. COWIconsult criticisms concerning projects' blueprint approach to project planning and poor participation have been mentioned above, along with NGOs' statements on their current focus on partnership, processes, participation and capacity building. Flexibility is integral to these processes, and there is no information in the review material to indicate a non-flexible stance. It appears that increased flexibility has been part and parcel of the general changes which the NGOs' approaches seem to have undergone during the last few years.

### *Long-term perspectives*

Time frames defined by some NGOs at the onset of the SSE projects, ranging from 10-15 (NCA; NPA; DF) to 20-30 (CARE) years, show a long-term commitment to their project areas. Moreover, core project activities concerning resource rehabilitation and strengthening of local food production systems have addressed vulnerabilities. However, the mode of operation has not always been consistent with and supported such efforts. The COWIconsult report holds that short-term physical objectives and production goals have been emphasised in the projects, rather than long-term development goals such as capacity building and sustainability. There was similar criticism from Henk Breman.

Since then, the focus appears to have shifted from things to processes, from symptoms to causes. Considerable changes have been made to activity profiles as a result of this, notably the reduction of food aid and other handouts. Efforts to develop better indicators for project and food security monitoring is another sign of a shift in approaches, and capacity building and local participation have been given a more central role, notably through the partnership approach. However, there are still examples of insufficiently sustainable activities in SSE projects – such as the example cited earlier of CFW or FFW schemes where the issues of upkeep of structures and local organisational capacities are not addressed.

### *The partnership approach*

Partnership is a central feature of the NGOs' SSE projects as of today, and some comments need to be made about its role and the underlying rationale, before conclusions are made on the NGOs' preparedness and defense approach.

Nationalisation of development interventions has been a key concept in development policies both in Norway and the SSE countries for some years. Co-operation through partnership between foreign agencies and national/local institutions is a favored approach, which has great potential for capacity and institution building at local, regional and national levels. Nationally and locally based project design and implementation, with professional input from the foreign development agent and access to a wide pool of experience and knowledge offered by the foreign agent's network, give partner institutions the opportunity to develop experience and competence. State and civic institutions at all levels, as well as research communities, may benefit from a wide range of institutional co-operation set-ups. Foreign agents may also learn from this mode of co-operation, and may reinforce sound development processes at various



societal levels in a better way than they would by being operative themselves. Finally, ambitions of project sustainability, equity, local ownership, capacity building and reduction of vulnerabilities within the project area population may be achieved in a better way if the local partner institution has an “insider” understanding of, and ability to operate within, the local context.

All NGOs co-operate with local partners, although in slightly different modes – some are, and have been, more operative than others. DF and PSMF are examples of small NGOs with traditions for staying non-operative and working basically through partners (although PSMF are in fact operative in their two SSE projects in Mali). NCA, Redd Barna, NPA and CARE are all basically operative. Current approaches are often a combination of operative involvement and partnership with local institutions. The general trend is a further reduction or even elimination of operative involvement along with the phasing out of projects, in accordance with NGO implementation policies.

The NGOs’ basic criteria for choices of partners and for co-operation with them largely converge. Finding good partners, with ambitions and approaches which are in accordance with their own, is emphasised. A participatory or community-based orientation is mentioned as important. Close co-operation and involvement with the partner, both through professional inputs, discussion, facilitation in local processes, and monitoring, is another important criterion. That said, interpretations of the partner concept, types of partner institutions chosen, and modes of co-operation vary slightly between NGOs. The following information was given on co-operation modes by some of the NGOs, and may serve to exemplify:

DF stay strictly non-operative, and strongly emphasise finding good partners with intervention initiatives based on local needs and views, with which they can have long-term co-operation, staying involved through close co-operation, discussion, professional inputs and monitoring. NCA’s mode of co-operation appears quite similar. They report to be moving away from a project auction approach towards finding partners for each project who have views and visions which are in accordance with those of NCA. These partners set the agenda in terms of concrete intervention needs and wishes. NCA review these in relation to their own mandate, then support what they feel is in accordance with this mandate. They do this through discussions with their partners on how the objectives identified should be achieved. The NGO can and should not dictate their partners’ actions, NCA notes, but should of course not abdicate from their own views and ambitions. Thus, it is crucial for an NGO to have a clear, well operationalised mandate as a guiding principle in these cases, since a lot of compromising has to be done concerning both objectives and practical work.

CARE have chosen to be more operative in their projects – they are picky in their choice of partners, if there are none to suffice they would rather do the job themselves. They want to have tight reins, and like DF they are strongly involved through monitoring and in planning. Judging from the information provided, they appear to assume a more controlling position and semi-operative mode of co-operation than DF and NCA do.

Redd Barna are in the process of defining partnership to themselves, e.g. in terms of how formal agreements and co-operating institutions should be. They have co-operated with peasants’ organisations and co-operatives for a long time,

and are currently giving limited support to several institutions and organisations, as well as initiating closer co-operation with government authorities in Ethiopia.

Although all NGOs emphasise the importance of a local basis and of representability, there are also nuances in NGOs' views on whether they should choose partners close to the grassroots or at higher levels – nuances which appear to be related to their mode of co-operation and position versus their partners.

CARE prefer working directly with local communities (in coordination and co-operation with authorities). This mode of action is chosen because they want to work where the motivation for development is greatest, which is at the grassroots level directly with the beneficiaries. They do not see capacity-building in national NGOs or national government as their task. However, they emphasise local, regional, national and international networking – involving knowledge systems and authorities, to give the local groups a chance to play up to various other levels. All these institutions then become CARE partners.

NCA has a slightly different policy, seeking partners at somewhat higher levels. They also place their commitment with the grassroots level, and note a potential problem when not co-operating directly with the poor, namely that popular movements are not always led with a focus on popular needs and wishes, or with popular participation – they can be elitist and undemocratic. On the other hand, they feel it is important to work with partners sufficiently high up in the social hierarchy for the work to have a certain macro-effect. NCA try to balance these concerns by choosing partners who have contact with the bottom rung and are not too far removed from it. – In a conflict situation, where all potential partners are part of the conflicts, choosing partners may become more problematic, they note.

There is a general agreement between the NGOs that their primary roles should be those of professional and process facilitators. The former role comprises discussion and own professional inputs to project design and management. It also involves network and institution building to improve the partner institution's own competence, as well as its access to that of various other professional institutions with e.g. project work or research competence.

The latter role is that of catalyst, convenor, or lobbyist in local and national processes affecting the project or its beneficiaries. In some of these processes, the NGO will strive to be a neutral mediator. Several of the NGOs have played this role during earlier conflicts and war in the SSE countries. Some current projects have this as a central activity, notably those of CARE in Awash, Ethiopia and DF/NPA in Barka, Eritrea. Both projects are directed towards pastoralists in areas where there is competition, disagreement, and tension between different stakeholders, e.g. pastoralists, agriculturalists, state farms, government and civic institutions, and repatriates. Under such conditions, the NGO can play a catalyst and convenor role, bringing people together and creating communication lines and discussion fora. – In other processes the NGO will take direct or indirect advocacy responsibilities for certain stakeholders involved, thus influencing present politics and future development work. Redd Barna's child advocacy work is an example of a direct approach, as is NPA/DF's

work in the Barka project. The indirect approach can be through the choice of partners among institutions with a political mandate and agenda.

These different kinds of input can be synergetic. DF reports that institutional network building is also used strategically to create channels for their work in local conflict solving processes. DF and NPA are involved in both conflict solving and lobbying work in their Barka project, although in different fora – they have a neutral role among local stakeholders, but an advocate role for pastoralists towards the government.

The most problematic feature of the partnership approach, the NGOs report, is finding good local partners. One problem is insufficient competence and capacities – a problem which can be reduced or solved through NGO input over time. For example, PSMF extended their operative period in their Bafoulabé, Mali project because there was no good enough local partner, and did capacity-building work with the local development committee as cited earlier, to enable it to take over responsibility as the project phases out. NCA is in the process of doing something similar in their Gourma, Mali project.

More difficult are the problems of incongruent aspirations and approaches, and of insufficient links and scope for NGO input. Several cases of differences of opinion regarding goals and means have been cited. NCA's comments made above on elitism and non-participatory orientations in some popular movements apply, but this can also be a problem in state institutions. CARE reports that they have chosen to stay operative partly because of the problems of control and lack of feedback which can be involved in contracting implementation to partners who want the money but not the supervision and monitoring. NPA reports insufficient links to and training of on-the-ground project staff and village leaders, as well as insufficient reporting on two projects in Eritrea. Addressing problems like these involves a potentially complex, long-term discourse, complicated by the fact that such problematic situations may partially arise from capacity problems.

### *5.2.2. Shock reduction*

#### *Reducing shock frequency and intensity*

NGO experiences and practices on preparedness and early interventions have been dealt with above, but there are some comments to be made concerning natural resource rehabilitation.

Natural resource rehabilitation has been an SSE program objective from the start. The COWIconsult evaluation report stated that this objective had been neglected in relation to agriculture – there was an emphasis on crop cultivation and food production, and a neglect of environmental and pastoral issues in projects. This review cannot provide conclusions on whether a better balance has been reached, but it can offer some comments on changes in activity areas.

Apparently, NGOs were initially involved primarily in work schemes related to FFW, CFW, or FFR activities. These activities included soil and water conservation through terracing, building of check dams and other structures, as well as afforestation and revegetation through area closure and replanting. As stated before in this report, the output from these activities has been huge, but the lasting contribution to resource rehabilitation or sustainable resource management is difficult to assess. – A different type of resource rehabilitation activities has been added more recently, namely resource management process

facilitation: NGOs are acting on their awareness of resource scarcity, competition and conflicts, and are involved in work to strengthen existing resource management institutions, creating new lines of communication and acting as convenors, as well as in competence building work in local institutions. This type of activity also has macro-level impact potential: Discussions with local, regional, national, and international policy-makers, and co-operation with research and education institutions nationally and internationally, may feed into these efforts to the extent that NGOs can give input to the shaping of policies and activities in these institutions. They can relate their own professional experience and knowledge, but also – and as importantly – be a channel for information on on-the-ground realities and needs. This widening of their scope is of crucial importance. Much may come of the NGOs' further exploration of the synergies involved in well integrated activities addressing physical, organisational, and attitudinal aspects of resource management, rehabilitation and sustainability.

*Reducing shock impact*

The projects have given a lot of attention to crop production increase, diversification and agriculture drought-proofing. Activities have included diversification of the range of crops, introduction of new techniques, soil and water conservation measures, irrigation, pest management, physical inputs through handouts and later credit (seeds, draught animals, tools and other inputs), competence and institution building (e.g. grain banks, farmers' associations), and process facilitation (e.g. natural resource management, needs assessments, local conflict resolution). In its broad sense, process facilitation involves contributions to capacity building, communications, and decision-making processes involving people and institutions in the project areas as well as external state, academic, and civic institutions, national and foreign. The NGO may take on a mediator, lobbyist, convenor, or catalyst role. – NCA also reports planting of wild grains (as food supplement when food production is low) and fodder plants as a major activity in their project in Gourma.

While the report can not offer conclusions on the sufficiency of these activities when it comes to drought-proofing and diversifying local farming systems in every project area, their relevance and central place in NGOs' efforts is evident.

Diversification of livelihood security with off-farm activities appears to have been given less attention, apart from some efforts to improve marketing options. It is important to make sure that a diversification of the farming system does not threaten the diversity of the overall livelihood system by reducing or eliminating other income-generation activities. While it is a matter of competence whether an NGO wishes to actively get involved in off-farm income diversification measures, their efforts aimed at strengthening on-farm production must take off-farm income-generating activities into consideration and not generate conflicts of time use. This is particularly important in structurally food insecure areas. For example, several projects are situated in areas where temporary out-migration of individual household members is a traditional income-generation strategy, and an important source of income in most households. Efforts to improve the income base which are in conflict with this strategy, e.g. through overlapping requirements of household personnel, should be avoided, unless local people wish to reduce their dependence on out-migration and it is certain that the alternative does not mean a deterioration of

the overall income base. The result might otherwise be food security reduction in spite of food production improvements, because people would be forced to sell food to compensate for their lost income from migration. In areas with a modest current and even potential resource base, sedentarization may well increase the pressure and thus people's vulnerability to shocks in the long run. The NGOs appear to be aware of this issue and to discuss it.

The COWIconsult report concluded that the attention given to pastoral issues in SSE NGOs' projects was insufficient. The review material contains very few reports on activities concerning pastoralists, or related to livestock in agropastoralist communities. Credit schemes for animal traction is the activity most frequently mentioned; vaccination appears to be the primary activity related to physical capacity-building in livestock husbandry systems. NCA reports on efforts to get pastoralists to adapt more to the wider economy by focusing less on quantity and more on quality, e.g. to adjust their slaughtering patterns more to market price fluctuations, thus to increase their revenue from sales. They report that the interest in this has been limited among the Tuaregs. This may be another example of insufficient attention to the local context, as such a measure would intensify reliance on market prices and reduce income source diversity, and might thus well decrease and not strengthen livelihood security in the event of price instability. – There is little or no mention of activities to integrate agropastoralist farming systems better, e.g. better management of manure.

This apparent neglect of pastoralists is, according to comments from NGOs, related to the modest pool of knowledge and technical input which is available to be offered to pastoralists, the complexity of pastoralist adaptations, and the profound effect which socio- and geopolitical changes are likely to have on their way of life. It is difficult to see how best to contribute under these circumstances, as any intervention may have detrimental secondary effects. Under these conditions, pastoralists are perhaps more vulnerable than agriculturalists, however. They need strengthening and diversification of their production systems, and they need to develop political and organisational capacities in order to survive political, ecological and economic pressures to their adaptation.

Efforts towards this, including local organisational capacity building and process facilitation (e.g. mediation, lobbying, and catalysing or enhancing communication), may constitute the most appropriate type of support to pastoralists. For example, in rather recently initiated projects, CARE (Awash, Ethiopia) and DF/NPA (Barka, Eritrea) both have process facilitation as a core activity – there is a lot of tension between pastoralists and other groups in the project areas, and the projects aim to coordinate and catalyse communication, co-operation, institution building and dialogue between different groups in the areas. CARE is primarily involved in institution building concerning natural resource management. DF/NPA has adopted a "compromise approach", involving local groups and local, regional and national authorities in development of a project portfolio – they aim to strengthen and diversify pastoralists' production systems as well as harmonise relations between groups in the area. Activities include establishment of co-operatives, vocational skills training, and competence building for partners at local and regional levels, but also lobbying towards MoA and the government. NCA has also been involved,

directly and indirectly (through contacts with former staff in power positions) in advocacy, mediation/negotiation and policy work concerning pastoralists in their Gourma project.

This type of advocacy work may also have an impact on policies to create a conducive framework for local livelihood security. Drawing policy-makers' attention to the merits of local adaptations and increasing their understanding of these adaptations' contributions to the national economy, even if cash revenue is modest, may contribute to a better ability among policy-makers to create policies which protect poor people's assets and means of production (e.g. land), ensure that low-potential areas receive more resources and services (schools, health, water), and enhance the stability of macroeconomic conditions.

The NGOs' levels of activity towards other aspects of livelihood security have been modest, although the areas of health and potable water have been addressed some. Health activities have been seen by many as having limited relevance in an SSE context. They have been very limited, and were initially not funded through SSE. Gradually, however, NORAD agreed to fund some activities of this type if they were part of an integrated locally based project. Well digging has been a more widespread and less controversial activity. There is merit in the scepticism of health-related activities, but project activities to improve drinking water quality might in themselves have considerable health effects through reduction of water-borne diseases. Given the impact of such diseases on food production capacity as well as directly on health aspects of food security, this should be seen as a good support activity.

### *5.2.3. To sum it up...*

The SSE NGOs' integration of measures to address needs with measures to address vulnerabilities has been an interesting enterprise and provided a lot of valuable experiences. The idea of integrating food distribution into development activities was sound, but efforts were marred by inconsistencies. A preoccupation with physical capacity-building over sociocultural processes and addressing organisational and motivational capacities has been a fundamental problem, related to initial insufficient understanding of local contexts, blueprint approaches, and short-term goal foci. Activities were to some extent integrated, but their underlying thinking appears to have been too fragmented to allow for a comprehensive and consistent approach.

The NGOs now seem to be emerging from their trial and error period towards an approach which may allow them to integrate their activities in a more effective and synergetic way, as a preparedness and defense approach to shock reduction. Long-term thinking, decentralisation and local participation, process facilitation, and capacity-building seem to be primary concerns. The partnership approach appears to play a key role in the shift towards a process focus. This may be related to a greater access to inside information, to the fact that the approach minimizes or eliminates NGOs' direct input in physical capacity building, and to NGOs' increased attention to organisational and motivational issues arising from their relations to their partner organisations.

There is still room for improvement. The following methodological features may be mentioned in this respect:

- The report cites examples of questionable long-term effects of activities, and of side effects leading to a potential reduction of poor people's access to

resources or diversity of income. Awareness of the local sociocultural and organisational context in which activities are carried out may still be insufficient or not sufficiently operationalised, through conceptualisation of long-term implications and side effects of project activities, to ensure sustainability. This applies both to single activities and to the synergies and counter-effects between activities.

- More attention to participatory, community-based project impact monitoring is still needed. Apparently, present project monitoring tools do not provide timely food security information, and the present sources of information on food security conditions are generally either too rigid and large-scale (EWS) or too informal for systematic monitoring. Monitoring of food security and the natural resource base is necessary for a good assessment of project success in addressing vulnerabilities. Good monitoring tools are also needed for decision-making on the relative activity levels of food provisioning and other efforts.

NGOs identify process facilitation as a principal area in which they can play a role. Their efforts here are not limited to participatory project management and strengthening local institutions. Creating new lines of communication between local communities and institutions, higher-level state institutions, education and research communities, and civic or local institutions in other regions and countries, is seen as a process facilitation activity, as are conflict mediation and advocacy. The NGOs' thinking on these issues is interesting. There is a great potential for shock reduction through these activities. It lies not only in strengthening local physical and institutional capacity, but also in strengthening local political capacity through creating links to external institutions, and in macro-level activities like influencing policies and research. Coordinated efforts in these areas may have a significant impact.

## **6. Summary and conclusions – current status, future challenges and potentials**

This report, based on interviews and desk reviews, cannot profess to present any indisputable truths or firm conclusions. It is meant as a basis for discussion. This chapter summarises issues raised and major points made in the report. These can be addressed further by those interested, according to their perceived relevance and importance. The summary form does not permit any level of detail – for this, please turn to the relevant chapters.

The intention was for further discussion to take place within the SSE context. This is no longer relevant, as the SSE program has been terminated. However, it is to be followed by the Dryland Co-ordination Group (DCG). This is a co-ordinating body comprising all Norwegian NGOs with NORAD-funded projects in dryland areas. A further discussion may be as interesting in this forum as within the SSE program. The relevance and importance of the issues addressed in this report are not restricted to the SSE context, and the review of SSE experiences may be a useful asset to further efforts in structurally food insecure areas, even under different administrative and institutional arrangements. A small addition (section 6.6.) has thus been made, with some brief comments on issues which deserve attention in a DCG context.

### **6.1. Linking relief and development: An integrated approach**

The report outlines an integrated relief/development approach to interventions. It presents the following principles for co-operation: Capacity and vulnerabilities analysis as information input for planning, monitoring and evaluating projects; decentralisation and awareness of the local context; capacity building; participation and empowerment; flexibility; and long-term thinking. These should all come together in a preparedness and defense approach, involving a flexible, contingency-based activity profile, allowing for adjustments of the relative inputs to food provisioning and livelihood strengthening according to fluctuations in food security.

The activities or specific measures involved in the approach should focus on shock reduction. Reduction of shock frequency and intensity involves preparedness and early interventions as well as rehabilitation of the natural resource base. Reduction of shock impact involves measures to strengthen local livelihood security. This includes strengthening (drought-proofing) the farming system for self-sufficiency and greater agricultural capacity, diversifying and strengthening income-earning capacity, improving health and water conditions, and addressing food security.

### **6.2. Relief and development activities in the SSE project areas**

To what extent should development resources be invested in low-potential, marginal areas which may never become self-sustained? The NGOs' stand is that marginality is a political issue, and that in view of this, few if any areas can be defined as unable to become self-sustained. They feel that these are precisely the areas in which they have a moral obligation to get involved, and that this stand can also be justified in terms of cost.

Should efforts be integrated? The report holds that the SSE project areas are typical of those areas which will benefit from an integrated approach.



### **6.3. The NGOs' potential for handling integrated activities towards shock reduction**

The SSE NGOs have emerged from their ten SSE years with a wealth of experience and valuable competence in integrating relief and development work. This experience and competence is primarily related to the micro or activity level and local settings (project areas), but also, through their more recent process facilitation efforts, comprises the macro or policy level and larger-scale settings. Having shifted their focus from things to processes, NGOs are a long way towards developing a preparedness and defense approach to saving lives and strengthening livelihoods.

To the NGOs, there are three major challenges involved in developing such an approach further:

- Developing their competence in analysis and monitoring of local conditions further
- Systematising their activities to achieve greater accordance with the local context, and more synergetic relations between activities
- Developing their process facilitation activities further and exploring the potential for mutual reinforcements between project setting, activity-level efforts and larger-scale, policy-level efforts

### **6.4. Constraints which face the NGOs in their efforts to integrate relief and development**

The SSE countries' food distribution policies have reduced or eliminated the NGOs' involvement in food provisioning. This may complicate the integration necessary for ensuring that food provisioning and development activities mutually reinforce each other rather than counteracting each other. Some major macro-level constraints to achieving this integration are thus related to

- possible scepticism among policy-makers in the SSE countries towards coordinating food provisioning activities with development activities.
- centralisation, or decentralisation with insufficient central coordination
- the limited institutional capacity of coordinating institutions at higher levels in the SSE countries

There are also macro-level constraints related to the un-coordinated organisation of NORAD and MFA funding for long-term rehabilitation projects in structurally food insecure areas.

The most crucial micro-level constraint is the limited institutional capacity in institutions expected to coordinate local-level activities in the SSE countries.

### **6.5. Minimising constraints**

The NGOs' possibilities for reducing the macro-level constraints are limited. Concerning constraints to coordinating state-run food distribution activities with project activities, efforts should primarily go into discussions and lobbying towards policy-makers, and network-building efforts between executive and academic institutions at different levels and in different countries. Both these strategies may contribute to commitment as well as increased capacity in the institutions concerned, in the long run. To the extent that NGOs can interest

Norwegian authorities in the merits of integrated approaches to permanent disasters, they may prove to be good allies.

Concerning the funding constraints, NGOs should act on the current interest in the issue within MFA and NORAD. They should encourage and contribute to a discussion and revision process. Key issues should be how NORAD and MFA together could coordinate funding time frames and professional guidelines for eligibility and requirements. Increasing the NGOs' ability to plan their efforts, and allowing them the needed flexibility and long-term perspective, are central.

Concerning the micro-level capacity constraints, NGOs may play a great role in reducing this constraint through capacity and competence building. In some cases, lobbying in central institutions may be called for, to promote the transfer of more resources to the local level.

To sum up: To achieve the best possible preparedness and defense approach in project areas, NGOs should give primary emphasis to capacity and competence building of local partner institutions, as well as other institutions involved in relevant activities (e.g. food provisioning) at the local level. But these efforts can be supported through those suggested towards reducing macro-level constraints.

#### **6.6. Together we stand – SSE, DCG and integration efforts**

All these efforts would greatly benefit from NGOs' coordinated and sometimes common approaches. Indeed, this is true about the whole issue of developing integrated approaches in structurally food deficient areas. Through the NGOs, SSE was becoming a center of expertise on preparedness and defense approaches to shock reduction. Through DCG, this expertise could be developed further.

Concerning the coordination of appropriate state-run relief provisioning activities and NGOs' development efforts in the countries concerned, DCG could make a significant contribution through promoting the idea and facilitating close co-operation with national governments and their food provisioning agents. A lot of the macro-level support work for efficient state-run food provisioning, e.g. competence building at policy-maker and implementing levels, network building, and professional inputs, could also be organised better through DCG.

Another area where benefits could arise from common activities is that of developing and perhaps monitoring food and livelihood security indicators. Redd Barna have suggested that agents working in the same area or country could co-operate on developing food and livelihood security indicators. They could either do local-level monitoring as a supplement to national and international EWS, or integrate the indicators and their monitoring into existing EWS, to integrate general and specific traits in preparedness information.

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