

The SSE Programme

**Review of Zula Integrated
Community Development
Programme (ZICDP)**

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Proposed for SSE funding by

Norwegian Church Aid

in partnership with

**Ministry of Agriculture, Eritrea
and**

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ACRONYMES

| | |
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| CERA | Commission of Eritrean Refugee Affairs |
| ERRA | Eritrean Relief and Rehabilitation Agency |
| ERREC | Eritrean Relief and Rehabilitation Commission |
| LCC | Local Community Committee |
| MLG | Ministry of Local Government, Eritrea |
| MOA | Ministry of Agriculture, Eritrea |
| NCA | Norwegian Church Aid |
| NGO | Non-governmental organization |
| NORAD | Norwegian Agency for Development Co-operation |
| NRCE | Natural Resources Consulting Engineers |
| PCC | Project Co-ordinating Committee |
| PM | Project Manager |
| PMC | Programme Management Committee |
| PRA | Participatory Rural Appraisal |
| SSE | Sahel-Suden-Ethiopia Programme |
| TOR | Terms of Reference |
| ZICDP | Zula Integrated Community Development Programme |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The review

After a prolonged pilot-phase with thorough studies and establishment of a local structure (Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) groups) that allows participation by the primary target group in the planning and implementing of programme activities, the Zula Integrated Community Development Programme (ZICDP) is now under operation. Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) applied for financial support to the main project from 1996, and NOK 2,517,500 was awarded by the Norwegian Agency for Development Co-operation (NORAD) on condition that the project was reviewed in 1996 to clarify certain outstanding questions.

The objective of the review undertaken by the Centre for International Environment and Development Studies, Noragric (Noragric) was to look into the following components and aspects:

- Agriculture: food situation, cropping systems, property rights, marketing, demonstration sites and extension work
- Livestock: potentials in the livestock production in the area, veterinary programme, fodder production and conservation
- Training: general education level, training of farmers, partners and staff
- Gender issues: trends in women participation, training, role in household
- Environment: status and strategies for improving the environment
- Organisation and management of the project: sustainability, target group, cost/benefit
- Foro Dam: prospects for rehabilitation.

As an introduction to the review, the Terms of Reference (TOR) and the programme for the field visits and meetings were discussed with Mr. Arild Jacobsen, Resident Representative of NCA/Eritrea.

The programme was also presented and discussed with the representative from the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) and Eritrean Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (ERREC) the next day in a meeting characterised as a brain storming session before the whole group travelled to Zula.

The project manager in Foro gave a brief presentation of the activities and different issues as to organisation, collaboration with MOA/ERREC at central and local level, infrastructure and local challenges posed by the strict Islamic traditions in this area. The meeting was followed by a field visit to Haddis and discussions with beneficiaries, Zula village and the Foro Dam and surroundings, and nursery and demonstration plots.

There was a meeting the next morning with the head of the regional MOA office who emphasised the relations to ZICDP and the high priority given to development activities in that area.

After the return to Asmara, the team had a wind-up discussion on findings with all the team members, Ato Haile Awalom, Head of Plan and Statistics, MOA and Ato Ibrahim Said, Deputy Director of ERREC.

The Project

The overall aim of the project is to assist the population in their efforts to come out of their poverty, to improve their quality of life and to enable them to plan for and carry out their own development based on a self-sustained economy and in harmony with a proper gender approach and ecological and environmental practices.

The revised project does not include rehabilitation of the Foro Dam as did the previous project plan.

The objectives set for the pre-project were mainly to establish PRA groups to ensure local participation in the planning and implementation of activities and to establish the required management structures for future activities. The team received the impression that these objectives had been achieved, even though the management structures will have to be reworked because of institutional changes imposed by decentralisation / regionalisation processes in Eritrea recently. Implementation of the agreed priorities has not proceeded as expected due to the pending outcome of the project application for financial support.

On the whole, the team felt that the objectives are consistent with the SSE objectives, particularly for improved food security and infrastructure for the 6,000 people defined as the primary target group. However, the selection and designing of project activities requires careful consideration.

The Zula programme requires technically qualified persons to guide the development of irrigation systems and the use of the high-potential cultivation area in the Foro Dam. Attention should also be given to the possibilities of growing cash crops that can generate income instead of using all manpower resources for the production of food grains which could be imported more cheaply from other production areas.

The team expressed concern over certain activities that did not appear to be appropriate for the target population at this stage, for example the construction of silos for fodder and a veterinary clinic. The construction of downstream check-dams should be based on the findings from the Foro Dam study.

The team was impressed by the way the problems and strategies are operationalised and structured. The team would also like to give credit to the project for the emphasis on local participation in planning and implementation and the establishment of PRA groups.

In the team's opinion, the present project document does not fully reflect the thorough preparations and studies that have been implemented, and a review of the project document should pay attention to:

- reduction of the annual budget (cost/benefit)
- specification of planned activities, indicators at different levels and expected impact
- contribution from the local population and the authorities
- cooperation possibilities with other NGOs operating within the project area
- strategy for gradually transferring responsibility for project activities to MOA when NCA support is phased out.

1. INTRODUCTION

Since 1991 the Centre for International Environment and Development Studies, Noragric (Noragric) has been engaged to assist the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) in the management and administration of the Sahel-Sudan-Ethiopia (SSE) Programme that funds projects implemented by non-governmental organisations (NGO) in Sudan, Ethiopia and Eritrea. The agreement defines Noragric's role and mandate as being an advisor for NORAD after having reviewed projects for their compliance with SSE objectives. Noragric should also act as technical advisor for the NGOs involved in implementing such projects and, based on knowledge and experiences gained, provide forums for the communication and sharing of experiences and increased collaboration among NGOs.

Norwegian Church Aid Eritrea (NCA Eritrea) had submitted application for SSE funding in support of the Zula Integrated Community Development Programme (ZICDP). A three year project covering the period 1996-1998 was prepared based on the findings and recommendations of a Baseline study conducted in 1994 which was funded by NORAD. The application was approved with an allocation of NOK 2,517,500 for 1996 on condition that the project be reviewed in 1996. There were some outstanding questions and issues which this review was intended to clarify. A Noragric team was sent to Eritrea for this purpose in accordance with the above mentioned agreement.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The SSE Programme

The Sahel-Sudan-Ethiopia (SSE) Programme was established as a response to the catastrophic droughts and famines that struck the Sahelian countries in the mid-1980s. The main objective of the programme was to finance development initiatives in these areas, through projects and research activities, to improve local food production and food security, along with the improvement of the natural ecological base in order to develop sustainable production systems. The main principles guiding the programme were: (a) minimised dependence on future aid, i.e., sustainability (b) recipient orientation (c) specific targeting of women and (d) poverty alleviation.

The SSE funds were intended to be used through three different disbursement channels, namely multilateral organisations, NGOs and research institutions. The three channels were expected to have a degree of interaction for mutual benefit and synergy.

Approximately 50% of the SSE funds were intended to finance agricultural development and environmental rehabilitation projects implemented by Norwegian and indigenous NGOs in Ethiopia, Sudan, Mali and lately Eritrea. The rest of the funds were to be channelled through multilateral agencies, international NGOs and through institutions researching sustainable agriculture. The projects

were to be implemented with a high degree of local participation, and targeted particularly towards the needs of women. Another requirement was that the fundamental policies of Norwegian development aid should be followed especially with respect to sustainability of activities after external funding is terminated.

The SSE Programme provides NGOs with 100% financing from NORAD for their projects if they comply with the SSE objectives. As such, the SSE Programme deviates from NORADs NGO policy which requires a 20% contribution from the NGO itself. Where projects have a relatively larger focus on non-SSE activities such as health and education, SSE funds have been used for activities that would comply with SSE objectives while the NGO would use its own funds or other external sources to finance such activities.

Therefore, the review of the Zula Development Programme must be seen in light of the above frame of reference.

2.2 Overview of the project: Zula Integrated Community Development Programme

The project idea was conceived in 1993 following a request from the Eritrean Government. Pre-project funding amounting to NOK 1,043,375.00 for 1995 was provided by NORAD. While this was in progress, a 3-year project proposal was formulated by NCA and its Eritrean partners. Application to this effect was made to NORAD by NCA and approval was secured on condition that a review was to be made as indicated above.

The objectives set for 1995 were modest. These were:

- a) to establish the required popular participation in planning and implementation of activities through the introduction of the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) communication technique
- b) to establish the required management structures for future activities, both in the programme area as well as in Asmara
- c) to implement the agreed priorities determined by the target group through the PRA process.

From the documents examined by the team and the meetings held with project staff including NCA and MOA staff, it appears that these objectives were, by and large, achieved. Although, the management structures will have to be reworked because of institutional changes imposed by the structural changes as well as the decentralisation / regionalisation processes effected in Eritrea recently, the elements and concepts visualised in the structure are quite impressive.

Thus, the compositions of the Co-ordination Committee and the Programme Committee and possibly the Local Community Committee need to be changed to correspond with the new governmental set-up. Other achievements in 1995 by the Programme Management Unit include: the establishment of 2 demonstration units

for crop husbandry and animal husbandry; the establishment of a tree nursery for reforestation; the training of over 130 farmers and 100 women.

Based on this background, the team examined the 1996-1998 application. Although NORAD has approved the application for the three years and a budget for 1996 of USD 435,412 (Birr 2,612,488), a considerable amount of work remains particularly on the detailed operative plans and budgets for 1997 and 1998. The value of this review is thus to be seen in this context.

2.3 The Partners

2.3.1 Norwegian Church Aid Eritrea

NCA was founded in 1947 to provide emergency relief assistance to refugees and people struck by disaster. The target areas and activities were originally limited to Central Europe and reconstruction efforts following the Second World War. In the early fifties, NCA widened its attention to include developing countries and long-term development activities.

NCA started its work in Ethiopia/Eritrea by running relief and emergency programmes in Ethiopia in 1974, followed by long term development projects focusing on agriculture and water supplies.

Today, NCA mainly works through local authorities or NGOs which are supervised and supported by a local NCA office. The present project is an entry point for NCA in Eritrea after the liberation and is planned in close collaboration with MOA, Eritrea.

2.3.2 Eritrean Institutions

In order to place the project in its correct context, a short description is included on the restructuring/ regionalisation and decentralisation of the line ministries that are taking place in Eritrea in compliance with the policy recently adopted by the Eritrean Government. These measures are intended to introduce administrative and economic efficiency. Thus the country is now divided into 6 Regions or zones which are not based on ethnic identities in order to promote national identity. This information is based on an unofficial translation made at NCA from the Tigrigna text of the Proclamation. Thus the new Regions are:

- a) Southern Red Sea Region
- b) Northern Red Sea Region (where the Zula project is located)
- c) Anseba Region
- d) Gash-Barka Region
- e) Southern Region
- f) Central Region.

The regionalisation process has been followed by a decentralisation of the line ministries, authorities and commissions. Accordingly their new responsibilities are:

- to formulate policies, regulations, directives, measures and/or integrated plans and budgets and to supervise (control) their implementation
- to carry out research and to collect and analyse data
- to give technical advise and assistance to Regional Administrations
- to employ, assign, promote and dismiss personnel in the regional offices, giving due respect to the policies, standards and directives of the central Government and upon the approval of the Ministry of Local Government (MLG)
- to transfer employees in regional with the knowledge of and approval of MLG
- to carry out training programmes and, where special expertise is required, to provide experts for Regional Administrations
- to seek funds for regional development from outside sources.

Similarly, the responsibilities of the Regional Administrations are as follows:

- to implement administrative, economic and social development programmes
- to prepare regional development plans and budgets and implement them in co-ordination with the integrated plans of the Central Government
- to assure the proper implementation of Central Government policies, standards and directives
- to carry out research, collect statistical data and submit same to the MLG
- to submit six-monthly reports to the MLG.

According to Head of MOA Zonal Administrator in Massawa, the date set for full implementation of the new set was September 1996 . Therefore, the scope and nature of the partnership of the Eritrean institutions involved in the planning and implementation of the Zula Integrated Community Development Programme must be seen in light of these developments. Since the present phase involves only agriculture, it follows that the Ministry of Agriculture is the main partner.

The other institutional partner is the Eritrean Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (ERREC) which is a merger between the former Eritren Relief and Rehabilitation Agency (ERRA) and the Commission of Eritrean Refugee Affairs (CERA). ERREC's basic function in the Zula Programme will be to liaise between the implementing bodies, i.e., NCA Eritrea, MOA, and the Regional Administration in light of Government policy, NGO operation and assistance. This means that the project documents should be amended taking into account these structural changes, among other things.

3. METHODOLOGY OF THE REVIEW

The team travelled by car from Axum, Ethiopia to Asmara. Upon arrival in Asmara, a meeting was held with Mr. Arild Jacobsen, Resident Representative of NCA/Eritrea. At that meeting the Terms of Reference (TOR) of the review team as well as the programme of the field visits and meetings were discussed and modified. This was again presented and discussed at the meeting with the representative from MOA and ERREC held at MOA. Unfortunately, the representative from ERREC was not available because of other commitments.

The meeting was conducted in the morning of 6/5/96. It was chaired by Mr. Jacobsen, and the detailed features of the programme were presented by the representative of MOA. Generally this meeting may be characterised as a briefing and brain storming session. The responsibility and commitment of MOA to the Programme was assured. It was at this meeting that the implications of the restructuring and decentralisation of Government institutions was explained in greater detail to the review team. Late that afternoon the whole group travelled to Massawa. The following day, the group left for the project area for the briefing conducted by the project co-ordinator and his staff. This was followed by a field visit to the various parts of the project where discussions with beneficiaries were also made.

The field visit was wound up at the meeting held in the MOA regional office in Massawa for general information on the regional programmes including ZICDP which was one of the priorities.

4. MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE MISSION

4.1 Development problems and issues in the project area

The project area is located in the Eastern lowlands some 55 kms south of Massawa. It is characterised by a fan of rich alluvial soils deposited by seasonal floods in the middle of a harsh arid climate. Temperatures are hot during the day throughout the year ranging from over 40 degrees Centigrade during the summer down to 35 degrees during the winter months. Rainfalls estimated to be between 200 and 250 mm per annum falling mainly during the winter months.

The range of crops grown under spate irrigation is narrow with sorghum and maize constituting the dominant crops. The production system has suffered major damage as a consequence of the war. Depopulation of the area was repeatedly mentioned as a major detrimental consequence of the war. But in hind-sight it might be considered as a blessing in disguise because of the imminent population pressure that is fast growing.

Presently, the population estimate in the Zula Plain ranges from 5,000 to 9000, but the Base Line Study produced a figure of 6,224 people with an average density of 44 persons/sq.km. Two main ethnic groups, the Saho and Tigre, inhabit the Zula Plain which is divided into two districts, namely, the Foro and Hadis district. The Saho and Tigre are mainly Moslems. The Saho are by far the largest group in Hadis district while the Tigre predominate in the Foro district. Each district has its own people's assembly which is the highest form of self administration.

The Foro Dam was constructed in 1960. According to information we received from a Baito member whom we interviewed in Hadis district, the Italians had constructed a dam before but this had been washed away by floods. The present dam had been constructed on the same sited. Our informant told us that before the intensification of the war, farmers used to produce crops like sesame, sorghum, maize, cotton and

water melon with spate irrigation from the waters of the dam, not only for local consumption but also for export.

At the time the Foro Dam was constructed in 1960, the development plan envisaged intensive commercial farming of an area of about 1,600 hectares using sprinkler irrigation. Presently, some 1,400 haa of farmland is under cultivation using traditional agricultural methods and tools (Baseline Study, p.29). The total potentially irrigable land in the Zula plain is estimated at 10,000 haa.

Based on the Baseline Study and the PRA exercises, the main community problems are conceptualised and structured as follows: poor society (low food production, few occupational options, high c/w ratio, partly due to gender imbalance, low educational level, poor community health); outmigration of work force (general poverty, food insecurity, insufficient and poor social services, low activities on local productive ventures, unequal social burdens in a gender context); environmental degradation (overuse of wood for house construction and domestic use).

The team was impressed by the way the problems and the strategies are operationalised and structured. The fact that NCA has been the think-tank in the process was quite evident. The process had not been finalised at the time of our visit. It is hoped that there would be greater contribution from the partners in the process of formulating the various activities intended to address the problems.

It must be noted that during the field visit the team observed in both Foro town and the villages, that there was considerable trading activity especially in manufactured goods (perhaps illegal trade predominates). The team felt that the level of poverty in the Zula plain, at least at the time of this visit, was not as bad as is reflected in the Baseline Study or in the project documents.

4.2 Project objectives and strategies

The overall programme aim is to assist the population in their effort to come out of their poverty, to improve their quality of life and to enable them to plan for and carry out their own development based on a self sustained economy in harmony with proper gender approach and ecological and environmental practices. This all encompassing goal is operationalised for the agricultural component in terms of the following more specific objectives:

- to increase the productivity of peasant agriculture by improving agricultural extension services and provision of input supply
- to promote the maintenance and improvement of downstream infrastructural works (diversion dykes, Agum, and Zebris)
- to promote soil and water conservation and afforestation programmes, and protect and restore the natural ecosystem
- to improve water supply for domestic use and animal husbandry
- to improve livestock production and control animal resources.

The review team was informed that the objective that relates to work on the Foro dam was deferred pending the outcome of the feasibility study by the Natural

Resources Consulting Engineers. The feasibility study is titled "Conceptual Design for the Rehabilitation and Betterment of the Zula Plain Irrigation Project". Preliminary recommendations were expected in June 1996. After having visited the conditions of the dam, the team is concerned that any rehabilitation effort might involve resources that could not be accommodated under the SSE Programme. Otherwise, the above objectives are well thought out and consistent with SSE objectives.

On the whole, the team felt that the objectives are pertinent but careful consideration is required in the selection and designing of the project activities. It must be realised that the dam field consists of silt which is over 25 metres deep. This presents a considerable challenge. The total area covered under this condition is reportedly to be over 350 haa of rich alluvial soil. There is a possibility of putting this area under intensive agriculture, but such activity should be professionally guided.

In pursuit of the above objectives, 5 project components are designed which are considered attainable through SSE funding. These are:

- a) crop husbandry
- b) animal husbandry
- c) training
- d) agroforestry, soil and water conservation
- e) project co-ordination.

The strategy for food production includes the following:

- implementation of a pest control programme
- training in appropriate agricultural practices and livestock management
- provision of agricultural implements and draught animal
- improvement and expansion of the local fisheries.

As noted above, repairing the Foro dam structure and construction of the main diversion canals are deferred. Discussion was continuing on income generating activities for women as well as training in home economics for women. The project staff have realised the formidable challenge posed by the strict Islamic tradition limiting the social role of women in public. Still, the team is optimistic that a difference can be made through education and training as well as in participation in productive enterprises.

The team looked into the various activities and had expressed their concern that some of them sounded inappropriate for the target population at this stage. A good example is silo construction which was not thought timely and technically sound considering the production system and the conditions of food security in the area. The team was of the opinion that, if possible and acceptable to the farmers, priority should be given to high value cash crops that can generate income. Food grains like maize could be purchased more cheaply from other production areas. Other issues that were discussed during the debriefing session are outlined in Annex 2.

4.3 Organisation and operational principles

The basic principle that governs the planning and implementation of activities is participation, at least in the design of a project. According to the documents and briefing given to the team, a project co-ordinating committee (PCC) in which relevant government institutions, provincial administrators and community representatives are members has been established. The composition of this committee will have to be worked out again because of the restructuring and decentralisation processes that took place recently as noted in section 2.2 above. As things stand now, it appears that the committee will be chaired by the MOA with membership from EEREC, NCA, Regional Administration, local administration and representatives of the beneficiaries. Membership will have to be kept to a manageable size.

The PCC has two subcommittees, namely, the Local Community Committee (LCC) and the Programme Management Committee (PMC). The LCC is composed of elected representatives from the villages and PRA groups. The team has questioned the relevance of including PRA groups for such purposes because PRA groups are normally used for purposes of project identification and other exploratory research.

In any case, the main duties specified for the LCC are proposing community priorities, organisation and mobilisation of people as well as monitoring of ongoing activities. The project reportedly provides financial support for the services rendered by the members which is not a desirable practice. The community itself should bear the cost of such services if voluntary participation is not possible. Otherwise, the sustainability of the process would be at stake. This is not to say that individual members should not be compensated but that the beneficiaries should make some form of contribution.

The PMC is composed of local representatives of the line ministries. For obvious reasons, the key institutions are clearly specified. Only the conceptual frame has been documented so far. Therefore, the key actors have to be formally instituted and their commitment secured in writing.

A Programme Management Unit has been created in Foro to manage the project and a project manager, financial officer, cashier and a secretary have been engaged. As the technical requirements are so demanding, an agricultural economist from the Alemaya University of Agriculture has been engaged as Project Manager (PM). An agricultural economist should be able to manage the programme if he is supported technically by irrigation engineers and agronomists stationed either in the Regional office in Massawa or at the MOA in Asmara.

Finally, it must be noted that at present the programme management is entirely under the direction of a programme officer at NCA who was appointed for this purpose. The team has been led to believe that MOA will take over when the system is fully streamlined. The team has no reason to doubt this, but would underscore the need for starting the transfer step by step without much delay.

Another issue raised with NCA and MOA is the need to review the activities of other relevant development projects implemented by NGOs and/or Government bodies. This would be useful not only to avoid duplication or overlap but also to share resources and experiences for mutual benefits. The team was informed that there was at least one Belgian NGO (CBSE) which has recently started operating similar activities within the project area. How work will be co-ordinated should be indicated and rationalised.

4.4 Inputs

A budget summary for the 3-year period 1996-1998 is given. This summary does not in any way reflect contributions from the Government and the community in cash or in kind. The importance of this was emphasised during the discussions. The summary indicates imputed costs in connection with the various budget items where line ministries and the communities are directly involved.

Moreover, while operational plans for 1996 have been prepared in some detail, there is no indication in the plan other than in the budget what activities would be implemented in 1997 and 1998. It is important that such continuing or new activities are described and rationalised in relation to the accomplishments and expected performance of 1996. NCA has agreed to look into this matter and incorporate relevant information and proposals for 1997 and 1998.

Similarly, the team has expressed its concern over the absence of technically qualified staff at all levels to guide the development of irrigation agriculture not only in the Zula plain but also in the region as a whole. It is proposed that at least short term technical assistance should be sought for this purpose. While MOA was in support of this idea, NCA did not seem to be inclined towards this idea.

4.5 Output, results and impact

The team was critical to the fact that the plan does not specify the expected results and impact in concrete terms. It is true that points relating to the establishment of participatory structure and capacity building are made. However, these are means rather than end results or impacts. Certain indicators of impact of food security and poverty alleviation as the result or consequences of project activities can be predicted. For example, yield levels, at present, are said to be 8-10 qts/haa for sorghum and 5-10 qts/haa for maize. Given the productivity of the project inputs, it should be possible to predict a certain higher level of yield for crops or livestock units and/or products.

4.6 Constraints

There is full realisation of the constraints of the project. These are expressed in terms of logistics, personnel, procedural matters and low level of awareness for ecology and environment matters among the beneficiaries. Furthermore, the elaborate organisation and implementation strategies are recognised to be complex and

demanding. The commitment of the partners is crucial if the objectives of the project are to be achieved.

4.7 Plan for phasing out

As yet, there is no clear strategy for the phasing over of project activities when NCA support is phased out. This has to be elaborated in the forthcoming application.

5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Zula Integrated Community Development Programme is the first involvement of NCA in Eritrea since the liberation. This involvement is planned in close collaboration with the Eritrean MOA.

Initially, rehabilitation of the Foro Dam was the main issue in the project plans and was given the highest priority from the local population. However, this activity has now been completely drawn out of the programme pending the outcome of a feasibility study from the Natural Resources Consulting Engineers (NRCE).

The team is concerned that any rehabilitation effort might involve resources that cannot be accommodated under the SSE Programme.

The objectives set for the pre-project in 1995 were:

- a) To establish the required popular participation (PRA-groups) in planning and implementation of activities
- b) To establish the required management structures for future activities
- c) To implement the agreed priorities, determined by the target group through the PRA process.

These objectives were largely achieved. However, the management structures will have to be reviewed because of institutional changes imposed by decentralisation / regionalisation processes effected in Eritrea recently.

According to the project documentation the main community problems are:

- poor society
- outmigration of work force
- environmental degradation.

The overall development objective is:

".. to assist the population in their effort to come out of their poverty, to improve their quality of life and to enable them to plan for and carry out their own development based on a self sustained economy in harmony with proper gender approach and ecological and environmental practices."

The team felt that the level of poverty in the Zula plain, at least at the time of the visit, was not as bad as is reflected in the project documents.

Specific objectives for the agricultural component are:

- to increase the productivity of peasant agriculture
- to improve downstream infrastructure works
- to instigate soil and water conservation and afforestation programmes, and protect and restore the natural ecosystem;
- to provide water supply for domestic use and animal husbandry
- to improve livestock production and control animal resources.

On the whole, the team felt that the objectives are consistent with the SSE objectives, at least for improved food security and infrastructure for the 6,000 people defined as the primary target group- However, the programme requires careful consideration in the selecting and designing of project activities.

The team expressed concern over some activities that sounded inappropriate for the target population at this stage, for example the construction of silos for fodder and veterinary clinic. The construction of downstream check-dams should be based on the findings from the Foro Dam study.

As far as production is concerned, priority should be given to cash crops that can generate income. Food grains like maize could be imported more cheaply from other production areas.

As a result of the siltation, the Foro Dam area today consists of about 350 haa of rich alluvial soil. There is a possibility that this area could be used for intensive agriculture. However, such activity should be professionally guided.

The Zula programme requires at least one technically qualified person to guide the development of irrigation systems. This person is not present today, and the team proposes that short term technical assistance be sought for this purpose.

The pre-implementation phase has led to a high cost per beneficiary. This might be necessary to achieve a more community participatory project, but according to the project document the budget is to be increased from NOK 2,5 million to NOK 3.8 million during the next 3-year period. Therefore, costs should be reviewed.

There is no indication other than in the budget of what activities are proposed to be implemented in 1997 and 1998. More details should be provided and in particular and indication of expected results and impact in concrete terms and relevant indicators at different levels should be supplied. The preparation of annual workplans is necessary.

Similarly, the revised project document should reflect some kind of local contribution from the Government and/or the community in cash or in kind.

Another issue that was raised with NCA and MOA is the need to review the activities of other NGOs in the project area in order to avoid overlap, and to share resources and experiences for mutual benefit. The team was informed that there was at least one Belgian NGO (CBSE) operating within the project area.

Finally, it must be noted that at present the programme management seems to be entirely under the direction of NCA and there is no clear strategy for the gradual transfer of responsibility for project activities to MOA when NCA support is phased out. This has to be elaborated in the forthcoming application.

The team would like to point out especially that it is impressed by the way the problems and the strategies are operationalised and structured. The present project document does not fully reflect the thorough preparations and studies that have been implemented. The team would also like to give credit to the project for the emphasis on local participation in the planning and implementation and establishment of PRA groups.

In view of the above, the team would like to give the following recommendations:

1. Due to the institutional changes imposed by decentralisation / regionalisation processes effected in Eritrea recently, the management structures should be reworked to correspond with the new governmental set-up.
2. The revised project document should reflect detailed workplans and budgets for the present period as well as expected outputs and specific indicators at different levels.
3. The pre-implementation phase has led to a high cost per beneficiary. This might be needed to achieve a more community participatory project. However, in the future, costs should be reviewed.
4. The Foro Dam represents 350 haa of high potential cultivation area. If the project wants to put this area under intensive agriculture, the organisation of the farmers, distribution of land, choice of cultures and techniques and the need for inputs should be professionally guided and well planned.
5. The construction of a demonstration silo does not seem to be a technically sound and appropriate activity at this stage and the plan should be revised.
6. The team was of the opinion that, if possible and acceptable to the farmers, priority should be given to high value cash crops that can generate income as good grains such as maize can be purchased more cheaply from other production areas.
7. The project needs a technically qualified person to guide activities which are based on advanced irrigation systems. The team proposes that at least short term technical assistance should be sought for this purpose.

8. The revised project document should reflect some kind of local contribution from the Government and/or the community in cash or in kind.
9. In order to avoid overlap, and to gain experience and share resources with other and similar NGO programmes in the area, there should be a co-ordination between the different programmes.
10. A strategy for gradually transferring responsibility for project activities to MOA when NCA support is phased out should be included in the revision of the project document.

ANNEXES

**Terms of Reference
Project Review of
SSE project no. 001-259 Zula Region
Kirkens Nødhjelp**

1.0 Background

Kirkens Nødhjelp applied for financial support in Autumn 1995 for the project. Noragric and NORAD supported the application somewhat unwillingly on the condition that the project was reviewed in 1996. NOK 2 517 500 was awarded by NORAD for 1996. New activity is planned for the period 1996-1998.

The project document is unclear on several points. This will be reviewed.

2 Project Activities

2.1 Schedule of work and time frame

Week 19:

| | |
|-------|--|
| 4/5 | Travel Axum - Asmara Meeting with NCA in Asmara |
| 6,7/5 | Site visits in project area in Zula region |
| 8/5 | Discussions on findings with NCA, MOA and ERREC De-briefing and closing discussions, report writing |
| 9/5 | MOA |
| 10/5 | Report writing |
| 11/5 | Departure |

2.2 Participants

Noragric staff: Aregay Waktola, Arild Hansen

Other participants: NCA-Eritrea staff.

3.0 Expected Achievements

Noragric will be looking into the following aspects: rehabilitation of the FORO dam, property rights, farm animal component, cultivation potential/cultivation plans, local participation in planning and action, women participation, management and administration, environmental consequences, sustainability, expected results, etc.

2. Main points of the presentation at the debriefing meeting.

Discussion on findings with NCA, MoA, ERREC 9th May 1996

Introduction.

- Team limitations:
- * Time - brief review, not evaluation
- * Background - documentation
- * Analysis and reflection

OBJECTIVES.

1- *Increasing the productivity of peasant agriculture by improving agriculture extension services and provision of input supply.*

Comments:

-The strategy for input supply is not very clear (ex. as to provision of improved mais seeds, e.t.c.)

2- *Promoting the maintenance and improvement of downstream infrastructural works*

Comments:

- The project input for this objective is not clear.

3- *Promoting soil and water conservation and afforestation programmes, protect and restore the natural eco- system.*

Comments:

- Construction of check-dams should be based on the findings from the Foro-dam-study.

4- *Improving water-supply for domestic use and animal husbandry*

Comments:

- The proj.document does not say much about improving water-supply for domestic use.

5- *Improving livestock production and controlling animal diseases.*

Comments:

COMPONENTS/ACTIVITIES

Question:

4 or 5 components?

1- Crop Husbandry

Comments:

- As far as crop protection is concerned is this budgetted, but the management of it is not clear.

2- Animal Husbandry

Comments:

- The team is not certain as to the appropriateness of silo-construction at this state of the project.

- With respect to the promotion of forrage production and watering of livestock whilw we support the idea, we belive that some charges/fees should be considered to raise founds for maintenance and operating costs.

- Veterinary supplies and equipment are proposed for the projectperiod but no cost-recovery-methodes are indicated to ensure the sustainability of this activity.

3- Training support

Comments:

- As to staff traning we recognized the importance of staff-training through in service training courses, but under present situation the basic qualifications of the staff does not meet the technical requirements of the project activities.

Our consern is that irrigation-agriculture require high-level expertice and experience which are not aviliable now and the project-document does not consider the competence-building at this level.

We recommand that at least at the regional level such expertice should be made available.

4- Agro-forestry, Soil and Water conservation

Comments:

BUDGET.

Comments:

The budget is growing from 2,5 mill NOK to 3,8 mill NOK during the 3-year-period. The investments are considerable and a decrease in the budget would be preferable instead of an increase.

The investments planned for 97 and 98 are not reflected and justified in the text.

ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT.

Comments:

The team understands that during the phase-out of the project the responsibility for continuation of the activities will rest in the hands of MOA and the community. MOA will provide technical assistance while the community will take the responsibility for implementation and development activities.

However the organisation of the community to face these challenges should be worked out in line with government-policy for local development, cooperations, etc.

RESULTS/OUTPUTS.

Comments:

The inputs in the project are well described, but the expected outputs and indicators these should be better defined.

IMPACT.

Comments:

As for Outputs indicators are not concretely spelled out. There should be a clear connection between expected outputs and expected project impact, related to food security and environmental rehabilitation.