

Civil Society, NGOs, and Development in Ethiopia

21646
June 2000

A Snapshot View

Jeffrey Clark



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The World Bank
Washington, D.C.

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Washington, D.C. 20433, U.S.A.

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First printing June 2000

A free publication.

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Acknowledgments

This paper was written by Jefferey Clark, International Development Consultant, for the NGO and Civil Society Unit of the World Bank's Social Development Department. He relied on the support of countless persons who offered their assistance by providing information and suggestions. We would like to especially thank the Ethiopia Country Team for their encouragement and advice, Najma

Siddiqi for the management of the project, and Yumi Sera and Lina Abirafeh for their editorial support.

William Reuben
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Executive Summary

Overview of the Emerging Civil Society

History of Ethiopian Civil Society

Eight years into Ethiopia's uneven but continuing move toward representative democracy, the country's non-governmental sector struggles for definition, operating space, and enhanced institutional capacity. Civil society, traditionally weak in Ethiopia, remains underdeveloped and somewhat misunderstood in the current era of relative political liberalization. The historical centralization of power in Ethiopia has left long shadows, and the impulse to extend strict and at times arbitrary authority over various civil society entities remains embedded in the psychology of some officials. Many in government seemingly see civil society actors by definition as political opponents—indeed, as part of the partisan opposition—despite a decidedly nonpartisan orientation by the vast majority.

Society is alive again in Ethiopia!

—veteran Ethiopian observer

Ethiopia's long history as a feudal monarchy and its subjugation by a brutal and doctrinaire Marxist regime have left most structures of civil society stunted. Indeed, by the time the Derg¹ collapsed in 1991, virtually all civil society entities had been co-opted or barred from meaningful existence by the regime.² The NGO (non-governmental organization) sector then primarily comprised two significant groupings: international relief agencies, tolerated by necessity by the government, and the humanitarian wings of the opposition groups operating beyond the government's reach. Authentic national NGOs (beyond small, church-affiliated agencies)

barely existed. Other civil society entities had fared no better as professional associations, trade unions, the media, academia, the private business sector, and the like were ruthlessly suppressed by the Mengistu regime,³ and their leaders forced into exile, imprisoned, or executed.

Progress Since 1991

By any measurement, the progress realized since 1991 is impressive. Civil society is increasingly vibrant and relevant to the nation's political and economic revitalization. The private business sector is growing, academic freedom is returning to the institutions of higher learning, the media are slowly gaining credibility, and professional associations are again forming. Most significantly for this study, the number of NGOs—specifically, the number of national, indigenous NGOs—is growing, and the capacity of those groups to play a serious role in addressing the country's complex development agenda is measurably expanding. By 1998, some 240 national and international NGOs were officially registered with the government, and a large number of additional groups awaited the recognition status offered through the registration process. The pace of registration continued to accelerate into 1999, with the best available count of registered NGOs now being 310. Further, there has been notable progress in the ability of the national NGOs to strategically target and design activities, credibly deliver critical services, and provide accountability on programming and expenditure of funds.

Main Concerns

Problems remain. Compared with countries elsewhere in Africa, the NGO sector is small. Its operating capacity, while expanding, remains too limited, and the geo-

graphical focus of NGO activities is noticeably confined to Addis Ababa. The enabling environment in which NGOs operate is replete with excessive regulation and bureaucratic requirements that consume much valuable time. Too many international NGOs and donor agencies remain only rhetorically committed to serious efforts to build the institutional capacity of national NGOs. The sector suffers from internal divisions and jealousy that at times preclude cohesion around important public policy issues. The public and the national media remain somewhat vague on the whole concept of private and voluntary action by civil society actors.

Recently, I have noticed that civil society members, including NGOs, are being consulted on policy discussions on topics like human rights, family law, and ethics in government. These are healthy signs that were unthinkable just a few years back.

—Ethiopian NGO official

Positive Impact of Civil Society

Despite these difficulties and others, NGOs represent an important element in the political and economic transformation of Ethiopia sought by its people and government and supported by the international donor community. In an immediate sense, NGOs provide relatively efficient mechanisms for addressing poverty alleviation through myriad programs and activities being launched in vital sectors of society. As important, they provide channels for involving self-motivated groups and skillful individuals in the nation-building and societal development processes. These are the actors who can serve as anchors for civil society in a pluralistic system of governance.

Recent Improvements

There is a sense that the overall operating climate for NGOs is improving. Relations with the central and regional governments are better, if still uneven. The emergence of a coherent NGO sector is now more apparent. Measurable improvements in the capacity of its members are manifest. The shift in emphasis from relief to long-term development on the part of NGOs has increased their relevance and, significantly, acceptance

by the government. The sophistication of sector leaders as they strive to define NGOs' operating space and improve the enabling environment for their members is notable. The more thoughtful and careful donor agencies are beginning to seek NGO inputs to national development schemes—and not just in implementing but conceptualizing aspects of proposed interventions.

Purpose of the Paper

This paper provides a quick overview of the potential role of NGOs and other civil society actors in meeting Ethiopia's immense development challenges as the country moves to institutionalize fundamental changes in governmental structure and economic orientation. Those changes frame the country's transition from absolute authoritarianism and a command economy to an evolving democracy and economic liberalization. By defini-

Box 1: A Quick View of Ethiopia

Official name of country	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
Population	60.1 million
Territory	1,127,127 square kilometers
Comparative area	slightly less than twice the size of Texas
GNP	US\$6.6 billion
GNP per capita	US\$110
Population growth rate	2.1 percent
Life expectancy at birth	50 years
Infant mortality rate	107 per 1,000 live births
Child malnutrition rate	48 percent of children under 5 years
Illiteracy	65 percent of population above 15 years
Number of NGOs officially registered (1999)	310, of which 120 are international entities

Note: All figures (except NGO count) are for 1997.
Source: World Bank 1998, *Ethiopia at a Glance*.

tion, this overview cannot explore all of the complications and factors that effect the growth of civil society and the NGO sector during this transitional era. It is meant to help suggest some approaches to a Dialogue on Partnership to be organized by the World Bank and the Ethiopian NGO community and provide background orientation to participants engaged in the dialogue.⁴

Sources

A sizable collection of documents was reviewed before the drafting of this study. Those documents provide ample detail on various aspects of the political and economic profile of Ethiopia today and on the history, operations, and orientation of its major civil society and NGO actors. They are listed in the bibliography and available in the NGO Unit offices at the World Bank.

Terminology

The terms *civil society* and *the NGO sector* are not interchangeable. Civil society refers to the large universe of nongovernmental entities found in virtually every society—labor unions and trade guilds, professional associations, grassroots community organizations, cultural affiliations, and other voluntary associations. Significant among subsets of actors within civil society are the NGOs broadly engaged in poverty alleviation and civic education. The focus of this study is on the NGO sector of Ethiopian civil society, though it is obvious that some descriptions and analyses apply across the board.

Portrait of the NGO Sector

Historical Brief

Somewhat modern civil associations began to emerge in Ethiopia during the 1930s as a factor of urbanization and economic development. A law meant to recognize and codify these groups was passed in 1960. Civil society entities in general, however, were slow to take root under the empire and then severely restricted during the Derg period (1974–91). During the last decade and a half of Emperor Haile Selassie's reign,⁵ professional groups such as the Chamber of Commerce and National Bar Association formed, played somewhat credible roles, and enjoyed relative autonomy. That autonomy completely evaporated under Mengistu's long reign of terror, however, and virtually all these organizations effectively became tools of the state or ceased operations entirely. Many of those remaining in existence lost credibility, professionalism, and, ultimately, much claim to legitimacy.

NGOs themselves—both national and international—began to appear around 1960, when neither the various self-help groups found in all levels of Ethiopian society nor the government were able to meet the growing demands of the population. The then current efforts of the emperor to “modernize” the national education system had resulted in a more widespread awareness that his government was failing to provide what people needed for advancement and development. NGOs began in a small way to help fill the perceived void.

NGOs Focus on Relief Operations

International NGOs trace their Ethiopian roots to the catastrophic famine crises of 1973–74 and 1984–85. The NGOs of those years were overwhelmingly focused on emergency relief operations and were largely foreign

entities. Local church-affiliated agencies also played a very significant role in these operations. NGOs were instrumental in preventing even greater loss of life during both catastrophic episodes as,⁶ for various reasons, neither the emperor's government nor the Derg was well prepared to respond to the convulsions spreading across the country. During the famine crisis of 1984–85, many international donors insisted upon channeling relief aid through nongovernmental groups because of well-founded suspicions of the policies of the Mengistu regime. Some donors were also involved in cross-border operations,⁷ despite bitter resistance and resentment by the Derg authorities.

During these crises, NGOs were catapulted into highly prominent roles—a prominence harshly resented by Derg authorities—as they visibly provided hundreds of thousands of people with the means of survival. Mengistu's government struggled to keep these groups under tight control because the NGOs reflected Western values and economic abundance. By 1984, control was harder to maintain as the number of NGOs increased dramatically, their expanded operations became ever more critical, and their presence became the clear key to securing international assistance. The government was forced to allow an increasing number of NGOs to operate more broadly. This was particularly important because the government was attempting to curb the spread of the famine to retain a semblance of legitimacy and order at a time when it was under increasing pressure from armed resistance groups.

During the initial famine of 1973–74, various groups engaged in relief operations formed what became known as CRDA (Christian Relief and Development Association), the first NGO umbrella organization in Ethiopia. CRDA was organized by a coalition of Catholic charities, other religious affiliates, and a few outside, secular NGOs.

Its formation also marked the first organized cooperation between the government (that of Haile Selassie) and the NGO sector in the country. That cooperation was channeled through the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC), established in March 1974 to coordinate the response to the crisis. The original RRC is now known as the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission. CRDA also played a pivotal role in coordinating relief activities during the more acute crisis of 1984–85. It continues its operations in Ethiopia today, as discussed below, and now lists more than 140 members.

The experience of the NGOs in the dual crises of 1973–74 and 1984–85 resulted in an overwhelming focus on relief operations. The sheer size and critical nature of NGO relief operations created a momentum that carried forward when some involved saw the need for a shift to long-term development priorities and a more balanced relationship between local counterparts and the international NGOs. A significant result is the dominance of the sector by international entities that have lingered well into the current period and frame some of the tensions found within the sector, and between the sector and the government.

Another dynamic in effect during this period stems from the radically different experiences of NGOs operating on opposing sides of the preexisting lines of military control as civil war raged across Ethiopia. Within government-controlled (Derg) sections of the country during the 1984–85 famine, relief operations were basically the province of large and resource-rich international NGOs (some working in collaboration with local church-affiliated entities) and United Nations (UN) relief agencies. Local NGOs were decidedly junior partners in these operations. On the other side of the lines of control, however, the humanitarian wings of the rebel movements were for all practical purposes the only relief agencies operating. Thus, the Relief Society of Tigray (REST) and Eritrean Relief Association (ERA) and, to a lesser extent, Oromo Relief Association (ORA)⁸ were managing increasingly large volumes of food and other emergency assistance in sophisticated operations not being orchestrated by either the central government or international agencies. And they were doing so in regions where the famine was most acute and the business of delivering relief commodities most complex.

Cross-border operations refer to the direct provision of relief assistance to the humanitarian wings of rebel groups then engaged in pitched struggle against Mengistu and the Derg. This assistance was largely channeled to REST and ERA. Lesser amounts went through ORA. The size and the critical nature of these cross-border operations effectively forced internal capacity building and self-reliance upon these groups at a critical early stage in their development. Also, important and lasting bonds with the local population were forged. Thus, today, a group such as REST (ERA is no longer relevant to this discussion, and ORA is a much smaller and marginal operation) displays advantages stemming from its historical legacy, including its lack of operational dependence on external partners. REST's early autonomy from international counterparts sets it apart from other national NGOs—as well, perhaps, as do its seemingly close ties with political leaders in Mekelle (a city in northern Ethiopia) and Addis Ababa.

Emerging Civil Society

When the Derg rather precipitously collapsed in 1991, civil society groups and NGOs emerging from the wreckage left behind were weak, disorganized, and without either significant resources or constituent bases. The pronounced emphasis on relief activities demonstrated by international and local NGOs as the national transition of 1991 began was nothing other than an accurate reflection of the dire circumstances of the country during the Derg era: recurring food emergencies, involuntary displacement of large numbers of people, civil war, a totally dysfunctional economy, and massive starvation. People perished in large numbers, and without the work of the NGOs, the calamity would have been considerably more widespread and severe than it was. Local NGOs functioned mostly in the wake of savvy international relief groups who had been waging warlike efforts against famine and massive population displacement for almost 20 years. Humanitarian wings of the various political opposition movements stand apart from this assessment.

For the most part, NGOs that formed or surfaced immediately after the Derg overthrow were ill prepared to have much impact. With few resources,

untrained staff, and limited exposure to the nonprofit world, many demonstrated minimal comprehension of their proper role. Despite sometimes marginal effectiveness, however, the new NGOs were led by honest men and women sincere in their efforts to address the vast social needs of the country. While there were exceptions to this characterization, examples of credible charges of fraudulent behavior were extremely rare.

Donor organizations found working with local NGOs to be slow and difficult because of limited capacity in strategic conceptualization, service delivery, and financial accountability. Many NGO leaders acknowledged the deficits and sought training and technical assistance. The sector as a whole, however, suffered from divisions along social, political, and ethnic lines and encouraged a perception of NGOs as extraneous to the daunting development agenda facing the nation. Most attempts to nudge the international NGOs into capacity-building partnerships with the emerging local groups were fruitless.

Soon, the new government began to exercise greater control over national and international NGOs and to lob accusations that the groups, primarily the international ones, were spending too much on overhead, that their efficiency was overrated, and that they were bloated and out of control. Fears of “briefcase NGOs” were also raised, as were concerns over created dependency on the part of targeted populations. The registration process was restructured and became more complicated as the government began to squeeze out those it considered questionable or marginal—or bothersome, it appeared. In particular, advocacy groups, such as the Ethiopian Human Rights Council, were singled out and denied registration status.

Increasingly, the government became critical of what it saw as the welfare orientation of many groups and their lack of a long-term development focus or strategy. It was determined to break the country’s famine cycle and saw some NGO activities as perpetuating an unnatural dependency on relief assistance.

Relief-to-Development Shift

Altering the mind-set of NGOs away from emergency relief operations was an early priority of the new government as it began to outline a national development

agenda and implement strategies. It viewed the international NGOs in particular as loose and unregulated power centers that steered valuable resources into activities either contradictory or irrelevant to the strategies being put into place. Further, the government saw a number of NGO activities as fostering a dependence it abhorred. One government survey from 1994 declared that only a little more than one-fifth of NGO activities in the country were centered on long-term development objectives.⁹

For a long time, the NGO community was dominated by a relief agenda. But following the government’s policy to steer this focus to development, a number of NGOs are going into education and skill training, credit and saving, environmental protection, health, child welfare and advocacy . . .

—Ethiopian NGO official

The government also seemed to harbor a belief that NGOs were somehow capturing official development assistance funds that might otherwise be coming directly into its own coffers. At this point, the *Guidelines for NGO Operations* were put into place and the government began to more closely monitor and direct the work of NGOs.

By 1995, the government provided *Guidelines for NGO Operations* to classify groups and provide guidance on the priority areas for NGO programming. The areas designated were broad and included agriculture, environment, education, health, women’s empowerment, infrastructure, and the like. Relief and rehabilitation remained areas of sanctioned operations for NGOs, but the provision of relief commodities was subject to control. Regardless of the underlying intent, many in the NGO community perceived the guidelines to be little more than a manifestation of the government’s intent to control them.

Regardless of the motivations one ascribes to the government for imposing the guidelines and tightening the registration process, the wisdom of steering efforts toward sustainable development activities seems logical and beneficial in its impact. The shift appears to be genuine, and there is now little resistance to this direction from the NGO community. Most observers applaud the evolution—and wonder aloud at the slowness throughout the 1990s of many UN agencies to make a similar move.

Further pressure on the NGO community to demonstrate relevance and greater effectiveness was mounting by the mid-1990s. That pressure came from its own leadership, the government, and the donor community. In response, the first tentative sector capacity-building interventions were witnessed. A series of workshops and seminars that addressed issues of concern to broad groupings within the NGO sector was convened by CRDA, IAG (the InterAfrica Group, an Addis Ababa-based Horn of Africa regional NGO and networking group), and others. The United Nations Development Programme sent a group of Ethiopian NGO officials to Zimbabwe, the Philippines, and South Africa to gain perspectives on government-NGO relations. The first NGO coalition groups beyond CRDA were being formed, such as CEVO (Council of Ethiopian Voluntary Organizations, which no longer functions) and SPADE (Society for Participatory Development). Various ad hoc training sessions were being conducted by donor agencies and others. Indicators of a new seriousness, strength, and quest for relevance were emerging from the sector.

The renewed food shortages arising from drought conditions in parts of northern Ethiopia at present underscore the reality that relief operations are not necessarily in the country's past. The evolution of NGOs to implementors of long-term development has clearly increased their reach, impact, and value in the eyes of government. These efforts and others collectively provided the impetus for a maturing of the NGO sector that quickly accelerated and continues today. They also laid the groundwork for the gradual shift in the government's view of the value of NGOs, which also continues at present.

Critical Civil Society Actors

Self-Help Groups and Networks

There are different categories of civil society organizations relevant to understanding NGOs and development in contemporary Ethiopia. First is a cluster of various self-help networks that have existed in its traditional society for generations. These groups operate in multiple strata of society and perform different roles,

but primarily exist to provide self-reliance for individuals, households, and the larger local community. Many are ethnic-specific. Detailed information on these groups and an understanding of exactly how they operate is hard to uncover and thus to describe, but their basic profiles are known.

NGOs in Ethiopia enjoy a far greater degree of respect from government at both the federal and regional levels. One reason is the professional upgrading seen in the sector.

—Senior U.S. government official, Addis Ababa

Debo is one such self-help system, and its role is to provide mutual aid to member farmers. *Ekub* is similar to a savings and credit association, with a lottery component providing periodic rewards to participants. Some *ekub* are established for particular groups of individuals, such as women and merchants. An *ezen* is a self-help group that assists families after the death of a member.

An *idir* is a larger group within this system that serves as a local neighborhood association, taking on various functions, depending upon the community. For example, an *idir* may provide emergency insurance assistance to its members. On occasion, it might take on functions that are usually political. Some *idirs*, for example, provided fuel to the revolutionary passions sweeping through Ethiopia in 1974. *Idirs* are known as mutual associations to many outside observers, who are impressed with their level of support in the local communities. There are believed to be in excess of 3,000 such groups officially registered in Addis Ababa alone.

Some observers see these self-help groups as a logical starting point for various development interventions and as counterparts for international NGOs and donor organizations. Others, however, fear that such association would eventually corrupt and destroy these important social units. They underscore the point that the focus of such groups is not poverty alleviation, but social interaction, and believe that the self-help groups should basically be left alone.

National NGOs

More traditional national NGOs first formed in Ethiopia in the 1960s, but emerged as potentially significant

players in the nation's development only after the 1991 fall of Mengistu and the Derg. After a slow start, the NGO community has of late demonstrated expansion in size and impact, as well as sector coherence. Of the 310 NGOs now registered with the government, more than half are indigenous entities. It is important to note that the number of NGOs registered does not constitute the total number of NGOs existing; any number of groups could be functioning to some extent while awaiting formal registration or appealing a rejected application.

Compared with Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia and Somaliland, the NGO sector in Ethiopia is large. Compared with countries elsewhere in Africa it is small. . . . Due to the hostile policy environment during the previous regime most [NGOs] have limited capacity. A few national NGOs, however, can easily match with sister organizations elsewhere.

—Jos van Beurden, editor, Ethiopia:
NGO Country Profile, 1998

A majority of overall NGO projects in the country are rural-based, with a general focus on health and integrated rural development, though that balance is in part a reflection of the work of the international groups. At present, national NGOs are more likely to be found operating in Addis Ababa or other urban centers. Areas such as the Afar, Gambella, and Benishagul regions are particularly underserved by NGOs. There are no reliable data that can accurately portray the geographic and programmatic spread of NGOs in Ethiopia. The information available is kept in somewhat random and differing databases by local government authorities; it is seldom complete and does not differentiate between national and international NGOs. CRDA has information on the operations of its members, but that membership includes only about half the sector and relatively few—though now an increasing number—of the Muslim groups, which are particularly important in the eastern regions of Ethiopia and the Ogaden.

A large bloc of local NGOs deal with the problems of street children, women, and youth. There are also a number that center on democracy and governance issues, such as civic education. Food security, health, and education are the common objectives of many. Vocational training is a common priority as well, and microenter-

prise credit schemes are increasingly numerous. A number of NGOs have gender issues on their priority lists, though the effectiveness of such efforts is often hard to discern.

International NGOs

There are approximately 120 international NGOs functioning in the country today. The groups, from the United States, Canada, and the European countries for the most part, were critical in the spasms of famine and food emergencies sweeping across Ethiopia in the 1970s and 1980s. Most have increasingly focused on long-term development strategies as a result of the changed circumstances in the country and steady government pressure. The international NGOs vary widely in their interest in and in skill at constructing mutually beneficial partnerships with local counterparts. CARE, Catholic Relief Services, World Vision, and Save the Children are United States-based examples of the larger international relief and development groups carrying out programs in the country. Many are increasingly forging partnerships with various national NGOs and supporting efforts to increase the institutional capacity of these partner groups. They are perhaps mindful of the words of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi: "The government expects them to partner with local grassroots organizations to develop local capacity. They have to understand they are here to work themselves out a job someday. They must have an exit strategy."¹⁰

Development Associations

In Ethiopia today, the various development associations, formed with encouragement from the government and occupying a niche somewhere between governmental and nongovernmental in their essential makeup, are operating with a substantially different profile from traditional NGOs. The more established development associations are the Amhara Development Association (ADA), Tigrayan Development Association (TDA), Southern Ethiopian Peoples' Development Association (SEPDA), and Oromo Development Association (ODA). These entities are supported by contributions from large membership bases and also receive project funds from the government to carry out various development

schemes. Their activities sharply reflect central and regional government development strategies. In addition, the groups are ethnic-based.

The scale of operations undertaken by these associations is impressive. In some cases, they act as umbrella organizations for local development associations and organizations. They also promote rather sophisticated fund-raising drives, including telethons, and generate publicity for their activities on a scale not remotely realized by the smaller NGOs. Operational linkages between the development associations and local NGOs—in some cases, with the right safeguards put into place—could be explored as a means of expanding the reach of the smaller groups as part of the ongoing dialogue within the NGO community and between it and the government.

Relief Society of Tigray (REST)

In between the traditional NGOs and the development associations is REST, identified above as the humanitarian wing of the TPLF during the armed struggle against the Derg. Today, the group occupies a unique position in the country due to the long-standing personal and political ties between its leaders and those of the national government. REST, however, underscores its non-governmental nature and independence and is quite active in the NGO community. REST is considered the largest NGO in Africa. It employs more than 1,000 people in three main departments: environment and agriculture, water management, and emergency aid. It engages more than half a million people in its various programs. Last year, REST's massive microenterprise credit program spun off to become a free-standing entity.

Development and Interchurch Aid Commission (DIDAC)

Another player of note and increasing potential is the Development and Interchurch Aid Commission (DIDAC), the development and relief arm of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, which was established in 1972. Its focus is largely on integrated rural development, food production, reforestation, water, and health. Due to the immense position of power and influence of the Economic Opportunity Commission (EOC) in the country and

DIDAC's ability to raise significant sums of money, this organization could become increasingly important.

Building Capacity for NGOs

The modern history of Ethiopia—the lack of development under the empire, the role played by international relief agencies in recurring national emergencies, the squashing of civil society under the Derg—dictated that its national NGO sector would evolve from a decidedly modest starting point. But forward movement is now readily apparent, and the determination within the sector for increasing capacity is palpable. Capacity building for the Ethiopian NGO sector is central to realizing its potential to contribute to the country's long-term development. The NGO sector is vigorously and effectively pursuing that goal.

Institutional capacity building refers, of course, to training and technical assistance, but also, ultimately, to much more. Capacity building in this context implies an accretion of skills, knowledge, and authority on the part of national NGOs and other civil society actors that will allow them to move front and center as the country strives to meet its development goals. It means taking the steps necessary to empower them to participate in all phases of the development process and, on occasion, to fail along the way—like all the other contributors to the process.

Building the capacity of local NGOs to play such a role means facilitating a gradual transfer of skills, trust, and authority to them to conceptualize, implement, monitor, and evaluate various development interventions—and welcoming a corresponding devolution of roles for international counterparts. This is a process that is more easily described than implemented, and more gradual than immediate, but it is ultimately required if development strategies are going to achieve their most fundamental goals. The process has to be transparent, with the objective of local ownership of the development agenda being clearly and consistently followed.

Central to this objective are the training, technical assistance, exposure, access to funding, and networking required to give the concept traction in the practical world. An effort along these lines is Pact's *Ethiopian NGO Sector Enhancement Initiative*. (Pact is a US-based

NGO funded by USAID.) The initiative has included a series of organizational capacity assessment exercises to establish baselines of strength for individual NGOs, and thus provide a basis for evaluating the impact of training and other inputs. Pact has also structured training and technical assistance components for partner NGOs and has provided a pool of funds for subgrants to partner NGOs.

Networks and Coalitions

Though there is no encompassing national umbrella organization for NGOs in Ethiopia, there is an impressive number of NGO networks, alliances, and forums reflective of the growing sophistication of the sector. Traditional divisions and suspicions reflective of the larger society initially hampered the emergence of networks, and government policies have not been conducive to their growth. But as the sector grows in size and strength, the capacity to work collaboratively on a common agenda is clearly expanding.

Christian Relief and Development Association (CRDA)

CRDA, mentioned previously, is the oldest and largest NGO membership association in the country, dating to 1973. Its history is largely that of a coordinating mechanism for international NGOs and local church-affiliated groups. CRDA's role in facilitating the relief activities of member groups in the 1973–74 and 1984–85 crises has been well documented and is an important chapter in the evolution of today's NGO sector. The latter crisis saw the evolution of CRDA into a major player, generally coordinating the operations of a growing membership and undertaking a direct role itself in implementing relief activities (running feeding centers and fielding medical teams, for example). Its logistical support to members was a critical element in the massive famine response operation.

CRDA began with 13 members. By 1998, its ranks totaled some 140 NGOs, virtually half of all those officially registered in the country. Also by 1998, approximately half of CRDA membership was indigenous and the historical domination by the international groups

was waning. It should be noted that international donors—primarily European, but also from the United States and Canada—contribute significantly to CRDA's budget, supplementing the funds raised through membership dues.

CRDA's transition during the 1990s was not unstructured or unintentional. The collapse of the Derg and the change of government in 1991 were followed by several years of improved grain harvests in the country and the easing of food shortages. The new government was strongly stressing self-reliance programs and attempting to break the cycle of famine and chaos. It clearly expected international NGOs and others to commence a shift in emphasis from relief to recovery and long-term development. Further, the government expected the international groups to make room for emerging local counterparts.

CRDA, at the end of a long process, emerged as a body increasingly interested in the national NGOs as the core of its membership and in an improved enabling environment for all its members. Thus, CRDA has devoted considerable resources to capacity-building programs (that is, training and technical assistance) for its members and effectively abandoned the concept of a direct operational role such as it undertook in the mid-1980s.

With new local leadership and a new strategic plan, CRDA is poised to increasingly become an indigenous grouping of nongovernmental groups seeking to coordinate activities and interaction with international NGOs, an approach applauded by the government.

CIVITAS

During the national election cycle a few years ago, a global network of democracy-related NGOs known as CIVITAS was active in Ethiopia with support from the U.S. government. CIVITAS collaborated with Ad-Net/E95, which was a consortium of five Ethiopian NGOs organized to conduct monitoring and voter education in connection with the 1995 elections. Members of the consortium were IAG, ABUGIDA, APAP, the Ad Hoc Committee for Peace and Development, and the Ethiopian Women Lawyers' Association. The goal was to mobilize human rights activists and educate citizens on their rights and responsibilities in a democratic system. Ad-Net/E95 received direct support from

the donor community in addition to the support through CIVITAS.

Other Networks

Other umbrella organizations have been launched over the past eight years. Some have survived and show some life while others have disappeared. For example, CEVO boasted 27 members at one point, and SPADE had 50. There is an increasing number of rather loose networks of NGOs functioning. A pastoralist forum was formed recently and is now organizing a conference on pastoralist development in the country. A forum for discussion on gender issues incorporating many NGOs meets monthly. An environmental network, supported by the Dutch Embassy, provides a setting for discussions on containing environmental devastation and protecting the natural resource base.

The formation of an Orphans Networking Group, composed of NGOs and community-based organizations that work with orphans and street children, is indicative of the gradual change in relationship between government and NGOs. Government officials are included in its sessions. One group of note active in this area is the Forum on Street Children, an indigenous NGO. Microenterprise and education networks of NGOs have also evolved. Further, an NGO family planning forum exists.

There is some conversation at present on the formation of an umbrella group separate and apart from CRDA. The role and mandate of such a group is under discussion by some in the NGO community. Presumably, one aspect of its formation would be the inclusion of Muslim community NGOs, which do not participate in CRDA. A pronounced interest is to engage in a dialogue with the Ministry of Justice (where government regulation of NGOs is housed) on various civil society topics.

Code of Conduct for NGOs in Ethiopia

A clear indicator of a more sophisticated stance on the part of the NGO community in Ethiopia is provided by the adoption of the *Code of Conduct for NGOs* at the culmination of a collaborative effort on the part of diverse leaders of the sector. The code is meant as a proactive statement of principles by the sector and serves as a

symbol that it is capable of self-regulation, monitoring, and evaluation. It was formally adopted in March 1999, when the overwhelming majority of NGOs operating in the country swore to uphold its principles.

The *Code of Conduct for NGOs* was modeled on a similar pact formulated by the Kenyan NGO community a number of years ago, and it provides basic guidance on acceptable and expected behavior of signatory parties. The impetus to adopt the measure in Ethiopia was twofold: to separate the less than straightforward NGOs from honorable ones, and to signal to the government that the community could provide its own standards and policing. It was also hoped that the Code would help alter the government's somewhat inconsistent stance on the formation of umbrella organizations. "Associations of associations" are not explicitly authorized under the law, and the registration of umbrella groups has been problematic. CRDA is exempt from this interpretation, but even in that case, registration has been a difficult issue in the past.

The big decision was to merge the discussion on the Code of Conduct initiated by various groups. It was a strategic decision and it paid off. We really had huge, hard, and long struggles to find ways to work it out together. The power struggles were real, and at times it seemed like the thing would fall apart. I now feel a great sense of achievement.

—Ad Hoc Committee for Code of Conduct member

While many observers credit the adoption of the Code with a notable improvement in NGO-government relations, others are more cautious, suggesting it is too early to evaluate the real impact of the Code. What seems unarguable, however, is the beneficial impact on the NGO sector that stems from the very process of forging a coalition around the drafting, vetting, and adoption of the Code. An often fragmented and even adversarial grouping of sector leaders came together during the process, determined to find consensus and collective action on the Code. Participants agreed that they would either reach that consensus or abandon the objective, and speak in public about the process only as a group.

Participants kept key government officials informed of their work. The press and the diplomatic and the

donor communities were briefed. Striving for a transparent process, the group invited the larger NGO community, government officials, private sector leaders, professional associations, academics, and the media to a public event for the presentation of the Code's initial draft.¹¹

The Code will have an observance-compliance infrastructure staffed by representatives from the NGO community. Its formulation is considered one of the major achievements for the sector since the onset of the contemporary era for NGOs in 1991.

Legal and Regulatory Framework

NGOs operating in Ethiopia do so under the original law authorizing and recognizing them that was put into place by Haile Selassie's regime in 1960. That law provided the basis for the regulation procedures detailed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 1966 with the issuance of "Regulations Issued Pursuant to the Control of Associations Provision of the Civil Code of 1960." The government's 1995 *Guidelines for NGO Operations* updates those procedures, outlines major classifications for the sector, and defines areas for programmatic activities. Registration of NGOs is under the authority of the national Ministry of Justice. Before 1995, this responsibility rested with the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (DPPC). Once registered, NGOs' operations are then under the supervision of the DPPC and the Bureaus for Disaster Prevention and Preparedness (BDPP) at the regional level.

Much has been written about the Code already in a positive light, and the effort of the NGO sector to put its house in order is well taken among government circles and the public. This, we are sure, is one step to strengthen relations with government.

—veteran NGO sector leader

Each separate project activity by an NGO requires a specific agreement with the appropriate line ministry at the regional level. The time and effort required to reach such agreements varies widely. However, the sparse level of technical knowledge and capacity in the regional governments' bureaucracies can often result in numbing delays of several months.

Many agree upon the necessity for a new, updated basic law, outlining NGO rights and responsibilities in the country, and a more streamlined regulatory framework in which they can operate. Indeed, there is seeming awareness of the necessity for action to be taken in this regard at the highest levels of government, and draft NGO legislation is believed to be under internal review there at present. Earlier momentum to introduce legislation—and to have the draft law vetted by members of the NGO community—seems to have slowed, for whatever reasons. Informed observers assume, however, that the draft bill will be ready for consideration in the relatively near future.

What is less unanimous than concurrence on the need for new legislation, however, are the expectations on what it might bring—or what it should. Clarification of the fiscal rules under which NGOs and other civil society entities operate is needed. At present, no specific regulations guarantee their tax exemption, though in fact income and profit taxes are imposed only on trade and business organizations. NGO exemptions for tariffs and other user fees need to be clarified and standardized.

The precise purposes and requirements of the registration process—and the rights of NGOs to be registered without undue delay—need to be made transparent and less subject to the stops and starts of the recent past. Also of importance is detailing the right of NGOs to form associations, coalitions, and networks, which is an area of considerable confusion and inconsistency at present. The rights of advocacy, public policy lobbying, and civic education groups need similar clarity.

Most fundamental, of course, is whether the law serves to underscore the rights of NGOs to operate freely within a respected and protected civil society environment or if it effectively strengthens governmental controls. There is some apprehension over the real versus the pronounced goals of officials as the law is being conceptualized. And the dearth of capacity in many governmental agencies, particularly at the regional and local levels, gives some sector leaders pause as they ponder the impact of complying with yet another round of new regulations and procedures, whatever their intent.

It is hard to predict when the NGO legislation will be introduced and what it will bring. If the process of its consideration is a participatory one in which the non-governmental sector is involved, then the potential for

clarifying many of the ambiguities surrounding NGO operations could be relatively high.

The Public Policy Advocacy Role of NGOs

A solid understanding of an advocacy role for NGOs has been slow to evolve in Ethiopia. Neither government officials nor the would-be advocates demonstrated much grasp of the concept in the initial post-1991 period, and the art of effective lobbying on public policy issues did not exist in the country. Several factors contributed to this, including the weakness of the news media and academic institutions, and the absolute dearth of public debate in the Derg years. Further, the polarization of the political process witnessed during the early 1990s did not encourage the emergence of public advocates. Such actors were seen as highly political and, in fact, partisan, if not absolute opponents of the government's legitimacy. The reality that some, particularly on human rights issues, were in fact quite partisan and shrill in their narrative of political events only served to further skew the perception.

Civil society is the backbone of democracy and the exercise of public policy formulation. This is being appreciated increasingly, and the participation of various actors from civil society is beginning to be shown.

—NGO official

The government's ambivalent stance toward independent groups voicing criticism of its policies did little to encourage the emergence of effective advocates, nor did its tendency to want to tightly direct the efforts of NGOs. As a result of these dynamics, NGOs tended to shy away from activities or even discussions that might be perceived as political by the government. During the mid-1990s in particular, problems with NGOs gaining registration, work permits, or import licenses were largely dealt with by maneuvering to get exceptions made or paperwork facilitated through friendships and personal connections, rather than via sector advocacy of more lenient and transparent policies. While such steps worked on an irregular basis for individual groups, they did little to strengthen the collective stance of the sector or advance the idea of its autonomy.

As the space for NGOs to operate in general expands, the concept of public policy advocates is now slowly advancing as well. Several factors have contributed to this: the *Code of Conduct for NGOs* adoption, generally improved press coverage of NGOs and their work, expanded institutional capacity within the sector, and support from the diplomatic community. Most significant, however, is simply the increase in communication and collaboration between government and NGO officials. Exposure has dimmed suspicions, and the value of NGO contributions to the country's development challenge is now more apparent. Groups such as Pact have contributed to this evolution by including government officials in delegations sent on exposure visits to view the functioning of NGOs in other developing countries. The view afforded by such exercises has largely been one of beneficial collaboration between government and NGOs, and this is resulting in a change of attitude.

The frequency of government-NGO consultation has clearly increased in the country over the past two years. Also, some observers predict that the establishment of a Human Rights Council and a Human Rights Ombudsman will expand the sense of a fair playing field for various actors.¹²

NGOs and other civil society entities have some distance to traverse before they will be described as effective public policy advocates in any large sense. There is need for additional skills and experience in this area, and a need for the sector to present a united front on important issues. But the general environment for NGOs to develop those skills and obtain that experience is an improving one. Skills are being honed through training and practice, and collaboration within the sector is becoming stronger as the forging of various networks and forums and the adoption of the *Code of Conduct for NGOs* indicate.

Challenges for the NGO Sector

Achieving the financial stability required to consistently implement quality projects and activities, and to serve as advocates for the interests of constituents, is the major challenge facing NGOs in Ethiopia. A small cluster of groups—mostly Orthodox Church affiliates, plus a few other religious NGOs, and REST—operate independently of external donors. All other NGOs in the

country are partially to totally dependent upon donors and sponsors from abroad or, in the case of the regional development associations, at least partially on government support. Generally speaking, there is no significant domestic support for the work of NGOs, and it is not realistic to assume that there will be in the near term. The viability and sustainability of the NGO sector is consequently quite fragile because of the scarcity of resources and the ongoing struggle for operating funds.

The problem of capacity in the local NGO community, I believe, is overplayed and is an excuse to pass funds to smart international NGOs. Capacity can only increase if a partnership of a real type is engaged. . . . Capacity building without trust and even a willingness to risk failure will not succeed.

—NGO official

The number of NGOs operating in Ethiopia is relatively small. There are several reasons for that reality, as suggested throughout this paper; one major factor, however, is clearly the sparse landscape when it comes to generating the revenue required to operate. There is little societal tradition of giving funds to NGOs, the government has sent decidedly mixed signals, and the emerging private sector is struggling for buoyancy itself. That equation puts the spotlight on international donors, and, here again, the record is spotty. Beyond positive rhetoric, most donors have been slow to deliver tangible support for the work of national NGOs. Most of the support delivered has been project specific, which offers little funding for the institutional capacity building, strategic planning, and securing of managerial expertise cited as essential by donors and NGO officials alike.

Many local NGO leaders are increasingly agitated at

the hesitation of donor agencies to provide funding for the very work that they claim is important for them to be doing. Other observers counter that the funding available is not necessarily limited in relation to the absorptive capacity of the sector, and they point to the central and fundamental need for ongoing capacity building work.

While growing, intersectoral linkages remain underdeveloped. The capacity of the sector to effectively advocate views or positions on public policy issues is weak. The intense competition for limited program funds available to NGOs is one explanation of the slow development of sector cohesion. A rather suspicious and envious view of the motivations and activities of others is perhaps another. However, the plethora of forums and networks emerging provide evidence that these linkages are expanding.

Great sustainability for the NGO sector is clearly linked to enhanced institutional capacity within it. Yet many leaders of the sector would argue that if donors see capacity building merely as a mechanical process of training and technical assistance, it will not take and sustainability will not be achieved. They would pose the argument that without a perspective that incorporates an equality of status, mutual trust, and a willingness to give local partners a chance to succeed or fail, those capacity-building inputs will fall short of their potential.

What seemingly is at the heart of this ongoing debate is the search for respect and mutual regard on the part of the national NGO community. The view of some seems to be that without the means to be more than marginal players in the country's development process, then NGOs will indeed face daunting questions of sustainability.

The World Bank and NGOs

Civil Society, Development, and Democracy

Economic arguments for more fully incorporating NGOs and other civil society actors into Ethiopia's national development strategy stem from the notion that it is an extremely poor country and that there are no natural monopolies for addressing its needs and problems. Ethiopia has "an estimated 1997 per capita GNP of US\$110 and the lowest primary school enrollment ratio, highest incidence of malnutrition, and lowest road density in Africa."¹³ It is a country with chronic food security problems and major structural problems in the public health and education sectors. The environmental problems facing the nation are staggering; food production, while up significantly, lags considerably behind the potential. Vast numbers of people remain uprooted from various conflicts and tensions of the past two decades. AIDS is a major threat. The number of orphans and abandoned children is extremely high. In short, the country faces major developmental needs that will require the best efforts of a comprehensive partnership of effective players to counter. NGOs are increasingly poised to be serious contributors to that partnership.

There are many different profiles for NGOs in Ethiopia today. A wide range of competence, focus, size, program approach, and leadership styles exists among the various members of the community; most are tackling issues that are highly germane to the country's development challenge. NGOs also enjoy considerable support within the donor community, where they are largely seen as proper channels for providing assistance. This almost certainly results in a net increase in international donor assistance to the country.

NGOs sometimes offer more efficient and more focused attention to particular problems—that of orphaned or abandoned children, for example—than government bureaucracies. This is not particular to

Ethiopia, but a general assessment. NGOs can mobilize citizens' involvement in ways that government cannot. While some in government tend to see NGOs as *competitors* for donor resources, it can be argued that many donors view them as additional and particularly desirable conduits for both private and official development funds from the home country. Further, some see the engagement of NGOs in the development process itself as an indicator of the proper alignment of development strategies: an exclusion of non-governmental entities from the process can be seen as a reflection of a nonparticipatory process that is less likely to succeed.

A more vigorous civil society and an NGO sector engaged in the country's development process can speak directly about Ethiopia's evolution into a representative democracy. And, it can be argued, without a democratic evolution, economic progress is not ultimately sustainable. A more effective and independent Ethiopian civil society, coupled with a more active NGO sector, will be receptive to greater contributions to the country's political development. Civil society counterbalances Ethiopia's historic tendency to concentrate authority in too few hands.

A more pluralistic and diverse civil society enlarges participation in national life by reflecting the interests of diverse groups of people. The broader the participation in the political process, the more legitimate the system of governance becomes in the eyes of the governed. Effective civic action is the key to that participation. Finally, it can be argued that a more pluralistic and diverse civil society will incorporate vastly more people in the development process and thereby decrease their dependence on the government.

These assertions are universal, but aptly apply to Ethiopia during this critical and transforming stage of national development. The process of creating space for civil society actors is in reality going to be slow and grad-

ual in the country. But the requirement to do so is ultimately central to the Ethiopian development challenge.

NGO Priorities and Official Development Agendas

Overviews of the official development strategies adopted and being implemented in Ethiopia with support from the World Bank and the larger donor community are readily available within the Bank and will not be summarized here. What is clear in reviewing these documents is the natural complementarity of the priorities of the various NGOs engaged in the country and the strategies being pursued by the government of Ethiopia and by the official international development agencies, including the World Bank.

Poverty alleviation and human development are central in the official development strategies and to those of the NGOs. Whatever arguments exist about the efficiency of NGO work, it is virtually impossible to refute the basic orientation of their efforts around these objectives. The World Bank Country Assistance Strategy proposes a strategy focusing on investments in education and health, with additional emphases on population, gender, food security, water supply, nutrition, early childhood development, and urban poverty. These areas, in essence, largely summarize the programmatic portfolio of the NGO sector operating in Ethiopia today.

Recognizing this overlap does not even begin to imply that NGOs hold the key to the successful realization of the adopted development strategies. It is simply an assessment that the programs and projects NGOs are striving to deliver in Ethiopia are immediately complementary to those strategies, and that NGOs offer an additional channel for their implementation. The ways and means for maximizing the contribution of the nongovernmental sector to the national development strategies is not the subject of this paper, but rather of a series of dialogues now feasible and advantageous.

Dialogue on Partnerships in Development

The concluding thrust of this snapshot view of the Ethiopian NGO sector is that a strong basis for a struc-

tured series of dialogues on development in the country between its members and the World Bank now exists. Indicators reveal that a shift in the government's attitude regarding NGOs is underway. The sector is demonstrating increased institutional capacity and efficiency as a result of a series of interventions and the simple accretion of experience. Donor agencies, especially the European ones, are at last moving in the direction of direct funding of national NGOs. Though limited, media coverage of the NGO is increasing and increasingly positive. Furthermore, the public view appears to be less cynical. Adoption of the *Code of Conduct for NGOs* and the accelerating forging of networks and forums are indicative of a maturing NGO sector. Political events—specifically, the impact of the border war between Ethiopia and Eritrea—have indirectly and unexpectedly resulted in a lowering of suspicions and tensions between NGOs and the government.

NGO projects complement Bank-supported development strategies. A widening of the operational space for civil society actors would underscore support for continued democratic evolution in the country. Thus lies the rationale for an expanded partnership between the Bank and the NGO sector.

Necessary Elements of a World Bank–NGO Dialogue

If a World Bank-NGO dialogue were to be structured, several elements would be paramount in its design if maximum utility were to be realized. NGOs first and foremost seek a collaborative process with the Bank that is transparent and mutually respectful. They want a process that will allow the sector's potential value to the Bank's poverty alleviation agenda to be fully presented and understood. NGOs seek to explore the importance of a vigorous civil society to an expanded democracy and better governance.

A number of NGO networks, forums, and associations now exist in Ethiopia, and it would be important for the dialogue to support these groupings as it is being structured. These groups serve as preexisting strategic partners who should be strengthened during the process. To maximize its impact, the effort should incorporate opportunities for expanding the basis of dialogue not simply with World Bank officials, but among the NGO sector, the government, and the larger donor commu-

nity. Central to the agenda would be identification of both opportunities and modalities for cooperation *between the Bank and the NGO community*. Dialogue that does not ultimately lead to action is going to be less useful than a process that advances the agenda of

the Bank and the NGOs. And it appears unarguable that both the Bank and the NGOs have the potential of considerable gain from the envisioned Dialogue on Partnership.

Notes

1. The Derg (“Committee” in Amharic) was the Armed Forces Coordinating Committee that came to power in 1975. The Derg abolished the monarchy and proclaimed a republic.

2. See the timeline in Annex A for further significant events in Ethiopian history.

3. Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam was in power from December 1977 until May 1991, when he unexpectedly fled the country.

4. An examination of the impact of the past year’s serious food shortages in northern Ethiopia on government-NGO relations would be useful for the proposed *Dialogue*. However, time and space considerations prevented a serious look at this topic here.

5. Haile Selassie reigned during two separate periods: 1930–36 and 1941–74. Italy occupied Ethiopia during the interim years. Haile Selassie was overthrown in 1974.

6. The toll of famine in Ethiopia in this period can never be known with accuracy. It is probable that more than 200,000 people died in the 1973–74 crisis and that close to 1 million perished in the 1984–85 catastrophe.

7. Cross-border operations refer to the direct provision of relief assistance to the humanitarian wings of the rebel groups then engaged in pitched struggle against Mengistu and the

Derg. See “Cross-Border Operations” below for further information.

8. REST is the Tigrayan People’s Liberation Front affiliate, and ERA is the affiliate of the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front. ORA is associated with the Oromo Liberation Front. ORA’s operations were largely concentrated in refugee centers in Sudan.

9. See Van Beurden 1998.

10. USAID officials quoted the prime minister making these remarks in 1998.

11. For a more detailed discussion of this process, see Pact 1998.

12. A topic of considerable interest not covered in this brief is the impact of the Ethiopian–Eritrean border war on the NGO–government relationship in Ethiopia. Several well-placed observers comment that as a result of the rather nationalistic rallying of civil society and NGO leaders behind the government after the conflict erupted, government officials have experienced a new confidence in the relationship and appear ready for an enhanced partnership. Additional research is warranted, however, before conclusions can be reached.

13. World Bank, March 1999, “Ethiopia–Country Assistance Note” (draft). World Bank, OED, Washington, D.C.

Annex A: Timeline

<i>Major historical event</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Civil society activities</i>
Haile Selassie crowned emperor	1930	First civil society entities begin to form
Italian invasion; emperor flees	1936	
British expel Italians, emperor restored	1941	
British complete restoration of Ethiopian sovereignty	1948	
Emperor's "modernization" of country	1950	
Federation of Eritrea with Ethiopia	1952	
UN Economic Commission for Africa established in Addis Ababa	1960	First international and indigenous NGOs begin operations
Eritrea annexed; 30-year war for liberation commences	1961	
Organization for African Unity established in Addis Ababa	1963	
Social protests and unrest develop	1965	
Famine strikes Welo & Tigray provinces; 200,000 die	1973	NGOs become major players in relief operations; CRDA formed
Haile Selassie overthrown; Derg reign commences	1974	
Mengistu consolidates power; "Red Terror" claims thousands of lives	1977–78	
Tigray People's Liberation Front formed	1977	
Ogaden war; Soviet bloc military Assistance begins	1979	
People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia proclaimed	1984	
Drought, catastrophic famines hit; 1 million die	1984–85	NGOs pivotal in relief operations; REST and others carry out cross-border operations
Resistance movements gain initiative	1989	
Derg defeated; Mengistu exiled; transitional government formed	1991	New national NGOs form, multiply

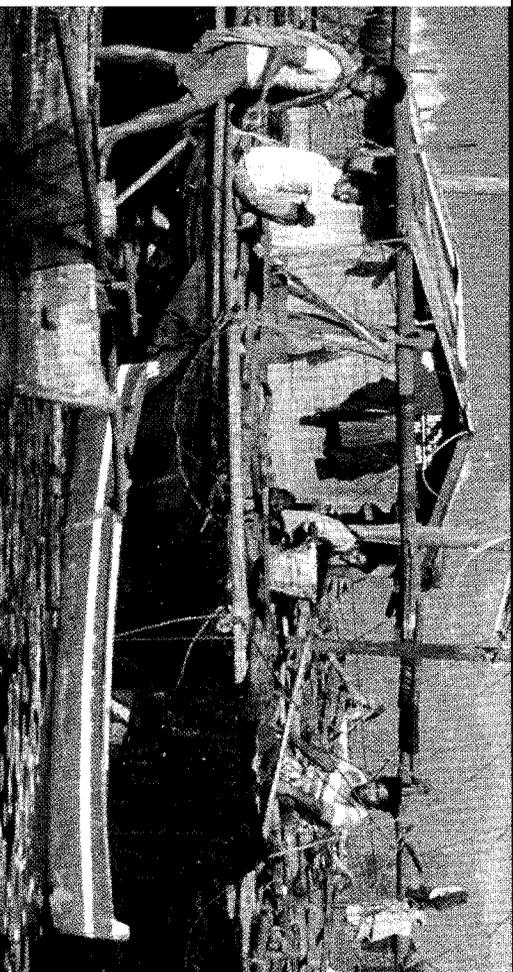
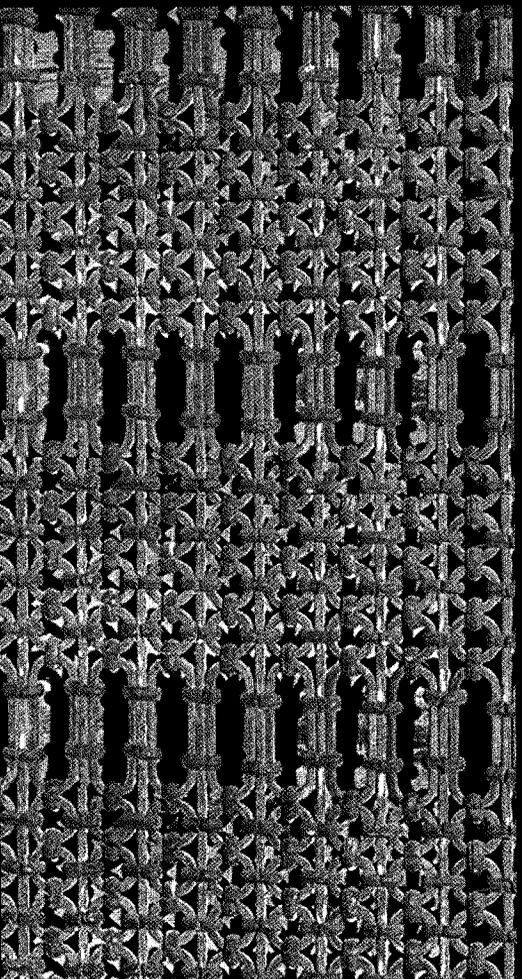
(Annex A continued on next page)

(Annex A continued)

<i>Major historical event</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Civil society activities</i>
Eritrea achieves independence	1993	Regional development associations formed; government requires NGOs to reregister
New constitution ratified, governing structures realigned; Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia proclaimed	1994	
Meles Zenawi elected prime minister	1995	<i>Guidelines for NGO Operations</i> established by government
	1996	Pact launches <i>Ethiopian NGO Sector Enhancement Initiative</i>
Border war with Eritrea begins	1998	CRDA officially registered as NGO umbrella organization
Peace negotiations between Ethiopia and Eritrea begin	1999	<i>Code of Conduct for NGOs</i> adopted

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