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About CDA

CDA Collaborative Learning Projects (CDA) is a non-profit organization committed to improving the effectiveness of those who work internationally to provide humanitarian assistance, engage in peace practice, support sustainable development, and conduct corporate operations in a socially responsible manner.

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Suggested Citation

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Introduction

CDA’s mission is to facilitate collaborative learning promoting effective and accountable international engagements. By listening to nearly 6,000 people in over 20 countries who have received, participated in or observed international assistance, CDA’s Listening Project gathered evidence on the cumulative effects of aid efforts and ideas to make international aid more effective. *Time to Listen: Hearing People on the Receiving End of International Aid* summarizes this evidence and shares the experiences and feedback from local people on how to more meaningfully engage them in aid efforts with a wide range of policy-makers and practitioners.

With this in mind, this report summarizes a single field visit that focused on hearing a broad-range of local perspectives on humanitarian effectiveness. This visit was part of an action-research project funded by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Policy Development and Studies Branch (UNOCHA) and the UK Department for International Development (DFID). Field visits were conducted in Myanmar, Philippines, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti and Ethiopia and supplemented with desk-based research on diaspora and their perspective on effectiveness of humanitarian action. The goal of the overall project, was to better understand local perspectives on the effectiveness of humanitarian action. This report and others in the series aims to feed into the larger conversation and recommendations for the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016.

This report does not represent a final product of the project. While this report may be cited, it remains a working document. This report represents a snapshot of the context, at the time it was written, and represents the viewpoints of those who participated in the study. Broad generalizations cannot be made from a single report. Instead, this report is meant to contribute to the larger learning on what constitutes humanitarian effectiveness and how to improve it.
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Section I – Background on CDA’s visit to Ethiopia

Ethiopia was chosen as a mini-case for gathering local perspectives on humanitarian effectiveness because of the country’s chronic vulnerability due to droughts and food insecurity, long history of receiving international humanitarian assistance, and strong central government. The findings in this report reflect desk-based research and in-country interviews and focus groups discussions with a limited range of people who are affected by and engaged in current humanitarian responses in Ethiopia.

The research team had a short time in Ethiopia and for this “mini” case focused on gathering the perspectives of people affected by food insecurity, local NGOs, government officials, UN agencies and international NGOs. Some donors and representatives of the local business community were also interviewed. In total, 15 individuals were interviewed and 9 focus group discussions were held. The CDA team in Ethiopia included Dayna Brown and Isabella Jean, who worked with Jessica Alexander and Kirsten Gelsdorf from UNOCHA. The full team spent 2 days in Addis Ababa and Dayna spent 4 days in the Tigray Region.

In Ethiopia, the team used CDA’s listening methodology, which includes semi-structured interviews with key informants and focus group discussions. The team asked each individual or focus group a series of open-ended questions that were developed for each constituency and prioritized given the knowledge, experience, and openness of the person being interviewed.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination and Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) supported the team in Addis Ababa, and the Relief Society of Tigray (REST) graciously provided staff, transportation, and the organization of meetings with people in local communities in the Tigray Region. The CDA team extends a sincere thank you to those who were willing to be interviewed as well as all the individuals that provided logistical and technical support to the team.

This field report reflects the themes and patterns that came out of the conversations held by the team, as well as from desk research. It does not represent all perspectives on the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance in all of the Ethiopia, but aims to highlight the issues that were consistently brought up by those to whom the team listened.

Section II – Background on the Humanitarian Context in Ethiopia

Since the infamous famine in the 1980s, huge strides have been made by the Ethiopian government, donors, international and local aid agencies, and researchers to predict and mitigate the effects of droughts, food insecurity, and famines. This has resulted in fewer deaths from malnutrition and associated outcomes of food insecurity. While the 1984-1985 drought put 7.9
million people at risk of famine and killed more than 600,000\(^{1}\) between 1994 and 2003, an average of five million people each year were still considered to need emergency food aid on an ongoing basis, although this number fluctuated significantly year to year.\(^{2}\) A decade later, the 2012 IASC Real-Time Evaluation of the Humanitarian Response to the Horn of Africa Drought Crisis in Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya in 2010-2011 noted that Ethiopia’s sophisticated food security and humanitarian system eventually responded well and saved thousands of lives.\(^{3}\)

The effectiveness of the response to the 2010-2011 regional drought relied on accurate and timely early warning across the region, which prompted some early action in Ethiopia. Famine prevention in Ethiopia is built on strong humanitarian strategies, inter-agency coordination, planning, and resource mobilization, as well as good government, donor, UN and NGO partnerships. This has been improved by a high-level mechanism, the Strategic Multi-Agency Coordination Group (S-MAC), that the government co-chairs with the UN Humanitarian Coordinator (HC).\(^{4}\) With the exception of the Somali region, where there are a higher number of deaths among refugees due to food insecurity, coordination and connectedness were identified as strong features of Ethiopia’s crisis response.\(^{5}\)

Researchers, however, point out that the government’s delayed response was due to “its skepticism about regional estimates and mistrust of international NGOs”\(^{6}\) and suggest that this is a critical factor for its weak response to the 2011-2012 drought. The government does not always accept or agree with international agencies’ assessments, and they were “routinely trimmed down by federal civil servants who assume local exaggeration, which generates the risk creating a bargaining culture in needs assessment.”\(^{7}\) The IASC report also noted the Ethiopian Government’s wariness of giving information to NGOs and vice versa: “The Government has access to large amounts of good-quality data from around the country, but it instinctively guards rather than disseminates this data. This breeds a reciprocal reluctance in information sharing from NGOs to Government.”\(^{8}\)

Some of these political factors may be related to the power dynamic between the central government (which maintains a tight control on budgets and distribution-related decisions) and regional governments and reporting mechanisms. There is a long history of politics, both international and domestic, influencing aid in Ethiopia. Political influence on humanitarian aid

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1 Green 2012.
2 Devereux et al 2006:1.
3 Slim 2012:5.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
can be linked to the conflict between the US and USSR for influence in East Africa during the Cold War as well as to the conflict between the Ethiopian Government and armed non-state actors in northern Ethiopia and in neighboring Eritrea.\(^9\) Other political factors may relate to the Ethiopian Government’s policy of famine prevention and its desire to demonstrate to the world its ability to respond to crises.\(^10\) Discussions with donors and aid agencies highlighted the government’s economic development plans and goals, high economic growth figures, and the desire to be seen as a good place for foreign investment as other reasons for downplaying the numbers of people in need of food assistance and who are chronically food insecure.

According to a Global Humanitarian Assistance report, Ethiopia was the seventh largest recipient of international humanitarian assistance in 2012, including emergency food aid, and has consistently been among the top ten recipients since 2000.\(^11\) With respect to bilateral humanitarian aid from governments during this period, the US has consistently been the leading donor, providing an average of 354.6 million USD per year between 2006 and 2011.\(^12\) Table 1, below, shows the total international humanitarian assistance to Ethiopia as reported by Global Humanitarian Assistance and USAID. Table 2 shows the breakdown of bilateral humanitarian funding by expenditure type from 2007-2011.

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aid (in million USD)</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>842</td>
<td>465</td>
<td>689</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>921</td>
<td>729</td>
<td>662</td>
<td>682</td>
<td>484</td>
<td>332</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: International Humanitarian Assistance 2002-2013 in USD ( Millions)\(^1\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Assistance</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disaster Prevention and Preparedness</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Food Aid</td>
<td>214.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency/Distress Relief</td>
<td>69.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reconstruction Relief</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relief coordination; Protection and Support Services</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (in million USD)</td>
<td>285.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Bilateral Humanitarian Assistance by Expenditure Type, 2007-2011\(^2\)

\(^1\) Source for years 2002-2011: Global Humanitarian Assistance 2014.
\(^2\) Global Humanitarian Assistance 2014.

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\(^9\) See Smith 1987 for summary and analysis of this geopolitical context and the Ethiopian Government’s conflict with such armed non-state actors as the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front (EPLF) and Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF).

\(^10\) Slim 2012.


\(^12\) OECD DAC and UN OCHA FTS data in Global Humanitarian Assistance 2014.
As suggested in Table 2, Ethiopia has made significant progress in disaster risk reduction (DRR) and mitigation and there has been an increase in resilience programming in recent years. In 2011, Global Humanitarian Assistance reported that three percent of humanitarian assistance was spent on disaster prevention and preparedness.\(^{13}\) Non-humanitarian assistance, however, also attempts to address the root causes (not just the consequences) of humanitarian emergencies.\(^{14}\)

Nearly all humanitarian programs address food insecurity, such as the USAID-funded Joint Emergency Operations Program and OCHA Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) funded projects (which the CDA team visited) among others. The UN, INGOs, and the government are also active in responding to the needs of Somali and South Sudanese refugees and Ethiopian IDPs, as well as water shortages, disease outbreaks, small-scale natural disasters, and the return of migrant workers from Gulf States.

One program that nearly all people (from donors, UN, INGOs, government, local NGOs to communities) discuss is the Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP), which was created by the government with support from most donors and the World Bank to shift away from food aid and to decrease dependency. The program started in 2005 to address chronic food insecurity and currently provides cash transfers and/or food aid to seven to eight million rural households.\(^{15}\) Participants in the PSNP must work five days/month on community-based projects as directed by the government in consultation with communities. The PSNP, combined with the Household Asset Building Program and other food security initiatives, is meant to help households “graduate” out of chronic food insecurity and the need for humanitarian assistance, and to shift to a development oriented approach, which addresses the root causes of people’s humanitarian needs.\(^{16}\) While the PSNP has been largely effective in preventing significant increases in famine-related mortality, it has not been as successful in helping people move beyond food insecurity.\(^{17}\) Additionally, although the PSNP was effective at preventing excess mortality in much of the country during the conflict and drought in the Somali region in 2010-2011, limited humanitarian access to some of the most affected areas prevented both the timely verification and assessment of needs and the delivery of assistance, resulting in hundreds of excess deaths, particularly in refugee camps.\(^{18}\)

While the greatest risks and humanitarian needs arise from chronic drought and food insecurity, other new drivers of humanitarian needs include locusts, hailstorms, flooding, crop disease and failures, and inflation. Since 2008, market prices for food and other goods have increased and

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\(^{13}\) Global Humanitarian Assistance 2014.
\(^{14}\) Ibid.
\(^{15}\) Siyoum, Hilhorst and van Uffelen 2012.
\(^{16}\) Sabates-Wheeler and Devereux 2010:3.
\(^{17}\) Devereux et al 2006:40.
some experts note that there would be a lot less humanitarian need and more people would truly “graduate” from the PSNP if locals had not been affected by the inflation (which also seriously affected the urban population and the middle class).

Climate change is affecting many parts of Ethiopia, but people in communities, international NGO and local NGO staff, UN and government officials, and donors all noted that there have been many improvements in early warning systems, assessments, monitoring and evaluations. These have helped people adapt to droughts and climate change by changing crop planting times and amounts, doing more soil conservation, and slaughtering livestock to sell so as not to lose their capital. While access to information and new technologies are enabling people to get more early warning and to be prepared, farmers still desire more support in adapting their practices to the rapidly changing climate.

The Ethiopian Government, donors, and aid agencies all agree on the need to reduce dependency on foreign aid and have established new structures and processes, such as an annual Humanitarian Requirements Document19 (as opposed to bi-annually). These processes have helped to enable more strategic preparedness and planning for recurring humanitarian needs, and have pre-positioned assistance for sudden onset emergencies.

Section III – Perceptions of Humanitarian Effectiveness

This section discusses the roles that different actors play in responding to humanitarian needs in Ethiopia and the expectations and perceptions of their effectiveness, based on limited desk research and interviews. None of the views of people in any group are homogenous, and therefore comments made by a single person should not be used to make broad generalizations about the effectiveness of particular actors, agencies or entire groups, but they provide a snapshot of the views on how to understand humanitarian effectiveness in a complex context such as Ethiopia.

3.1. Government of Ethiopia

3.1.1. Role in Humanitarian Responses

The Government of Ethiopia, which maintains tight control over most aspects of people’s lives and does not want its people to be seen as in need of humanitarian aid, is aiming to become a middle-income country by 2025.20 It is seeking to move away from aid to trade, but the recurring

20 Geiger and Moller 2013.
droughts, food insecurity, land policies, high population growth rate, and conflicts on its borders make this a daunting challenge.

The Government of Ethiopia has an ambitious economic Growth and Transformation Plan and has actively courted investment in large infrastructure projects, manufacturing, and other economic development activities. It has instituted a social protection policy and more than 50% of the gross national product (GNP) is dedicated to it now. The government owns all of the land in the country and provides long-term leases to tenants, which some suggest is a disincentive for long-term planning and investment by farmers. The government has also instituted policies to ensure that people who receive assistance contribute to the development of their communities – largely through public works projects such as terracing, reforestation, water harvesting, trenches, etc.

Figure 1: Structure of the DRMFSS

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23 Early Warning and Response Directorate DRMFSS, Ministry of Agriculture 2013.
In 2009, the Government of Ethiopia established the Disaster Risk Management and Food Security Sector (DRMFSS) in the Ministry of Agriculture. As shown in Figure 1, The DRMFSS has a number of units, including an Early Warning and Response Directorate (EWRD) and a Food Security Coordination Directorate (FSCD), which is responsible for the overall coordination and leadership of the governments’ Disaster Risk Management (DRM) approach in collaboration with its humanitarian partners. This multi-sectoral and multi-hazard DRM approaches disaster management based on vulnerability profiles, which look at the underlying causes and implications of disaster vulnerability to help policymakers, planners, practitioners, and communities design appropriate, targeted risk reduction and awareness, and disaster management programs.

The government provides early warning for droughts, disease outbreaks, flooding, hailstorms, etc. to communities through health and agricultural officers and the local administration. Additionally, it provides education and information to community-based early warning committees. The PSNP has a 15% contingency budget to respond to emergencies and there are other sources of funding that regions can access through the federal government if needed. One challenge for the local Woreda\(^{24}\) and regional governments, however, is competing for these funds, addressing funding gaps between project periods, and allocating funding to address long-term solutions.

In 2009, the government also issued a “Charities and Societies Proclamation” and many local and foreign-supported civic organizations closed as a result of what they viewed to be excessive government interference.\(^{25}\) The law defines “foreign” NGOs as any society that receives more than ten percent of its budget from sources outside Ethiopia.\(^{26}\) INGOs have been particularly affected by the “70:30 Clause” which requires 70% of humanitarian aid to go directly to affected populations with only 30% for administration and overhead (which includes training and capacity building along with salaries for staff such as nurses, teachers, etc.). The government clearly states that its priority is to build infrastructure such as schools and clinics, even if there is no capacity to support the professional development of the limited staff available.

\(^{24}\) Woreda or districts are the third-level administrative divisions of Ethiopia. They are composed of a number of wards or neighborhood associations, which are the smallest unit of local government in Ethiopia.

\(^{25}\) Bertelsmann Stiftung 2014.

\(^{26}\) Taskforce for Enabling Environment for Civil Society in Ethiopia 2011:4.
3.1.2. Perceptions of Effectiveness

One of the governments’ priorities and principles is that no one except the most vulnerable should get free aid (particularly food aid) without contributing to projects at the community level. Some donors and INGOs, however, have raised concerns about this conditionality and delays in the distribution of aid, particularly to those who are most vulnerable, while the government makes plans or monitors their contributions. Local community members explained that one challenge is that these restrictions create delays in decision-making and providing food aid to people when they most need it. A local NGO working in the Tigray region noted how the delays from this top-down approach have an impact on the effectiveness of humanitarian aid, but that they were able to circumvent these restrictions by getting the government at the local (Woreda) level to sign a commitment not to delay the delivery of assistance while waiting for plans to be developed or for people to do the work.

International aid agencies and donors noted that the government has good technical capacity at the national level, but it is limited at sub-national and local levels. Several people that spoke with the CDA team suggest that humanitarian effectiveness is limited by the government’s centralized and politicized decision-making process, inflexibility, and the disabling environment for civic engagement – which has made it challenging for civil society actors to be part of the process. Some international aid workers feel that the government’s focus is on “preventing death rather than on securing life” and that much of the funding for development is not effectively addressing the underlying causes of people’s vulnerability, such as land ownership and the rapid population growth. Some people also suggest that the focus is on large-scale infrastructure projects as the driver of development and that there is insufficient focus on community-driven development processes and on developing rural areas in sustainable ways.

Community leaders are seen to be more responsible and responsive to community needs, even though they have little power and must request support from the Woreda, Kebele,27 and line ministries/departments. Community members noted that their requests were often not met because of lack of funds at the local government level and different priorities of the national government, such as the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam being built on the Blue Nile River to generate electricity (to which people with salaries above a certain level must contribute). Others felt that the government had prioritized developing water resources for towns and cities rather than villages, resulting in many women walking for hours each day to get water. Some suggested that the government also needs to invest much more on resilience efforts than on mega infrastructure projects to decrease humanitarian need and increase effectiveness.

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27 A kebele is the smallest administrative unit of Ethiopia similar to a ward, a neighborhood or a localized and delimited group of people.
3.2. National and Local Civil Society Organizations

3.2.1. Roles in Humanitarian Responses

While local civil society organizations (CSOs) have access to communities and can operate more inexpensively and efficiently than INGOs, restrictions from the government limit space for them to operate, access donor funding, and take a more prominent role in humanitarian responses. Many local NGOs were affected by the government’s “Charities and Societies Proclamation,” which further limited civic space. As a result of the law (which requires registration of all charities and societies, but restricts registration based on the amount of foreign funding an organization receives), the number of CSOs decreased from approximately 4,500 in early 2009 to about 1,400 by the time of the May 2010 elections, and 90% of these organizations’ staff lost their jobs.28 One report suggests that the only space remaining is for “religious organizations, community-level savings clubs and burial societies.”29

At the time of the CDA visit, local CSOs and NGOs were not permitted to receive more than 20% of their budget from foreign sources and under the regulations, most cannot have a foreign currency bank account. Such governmental restrictions limit the donor funding that CSOs are able to receive. This creates challenges in their ability to scale up efforts and often relegates CSOs to partners or sub-contractors of INGOs and UN agencies. Some civil society activists suggest that this marginalization of local actors in Ethiopia has contributed to the levels of poverty and dependency.

The effect of the “70:30 clause” of the Societies and Charities Proclamation for many aid agencies has been to remove the “soft” program support and resources, such as capacity building, participatory monitoring and evaluation, and the numbers of staff, which they argue are needed for their efforts to be effective in the long-term.30 One INGO, for instance, could not hire enough nurses to provide medical services, but had no problem getting funding for water trucking.

In spite of tough governmental restrictions, there are a number of national and local civil society organizations engaged in humanitarian responses. One of the largest is the Relief Society of Tigray (REST), which is closely connected to the Government. REST participates in local, regional, and national level early warning systems and task forces, humanitarian assessments and planning processes, and represents indigenous CSOs in the social protection platform among other fora.

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29 Ibid.
30 Taskforce for Enabling Environment for Civil Society in Ethiopia 2011.
They implement humanitarian and development programs, build local capacity, and support an early warning system for natural disasters, disease outbreaks, and food insecurity. After passing considerable due diligence tests, a number of international donors now fund REST directly, including USAID and OCHA. It took many years and a lot of effort, however, to enable REST to become a direct partner of donors rather than an implementing partner to INGOs. One REST representative explained that bureaucratic restrictions and lack of trust in local organizations resulted in large sums of money flowing for years to INGOs rather than directly to REST for their work in communities.

REST and other local CSO representatives suggested that addressing the funding mechanisms and rules for local organizations would lead to greater humanitarian effectiveness. Africa Humanitarian Action and other local organizations also participate in task forces and processes with the government, but they have been frustrated by the continued funding of INGOs by Western donors due to the donors’ procedures and expectations that local NGOs work at the same scale as INGOs.

3.2.2. Perceptions of Effectiveness

Donors, UN agencies, international NGOs, government representatives, and community members all suggested that REST was effective because of its’ close ties with and proximity to the current government (whose leadership hails from Tigray) and to communities over many years (beginning during the drought and civil war in the late 1970s). Community members explained that it is common for them to suggest their priorities to REST, but often REST does not have the funding to address them. REST explained that while they focus more on long-term development than humanitarian programming, most of their donors do not give them the flexibility they need to address the problems and crises as they arise. Since REST is primarily funded by public and private donors, with some government contracts, they therefore do not have reserves, which seriously limits their flexibility to address community needs and to innovate. While the CDA team was unable to visit the work of other local and national CSOs, these limitations affect their humanitarian effectiveness as well.

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3.3. Affected Communities

3.3.1. Role in Humanitarian Responses

People in different regions of Tigray discussed that they have a culture of sharing and that “we don’t eat alone.” If someone is in need, others in the community help them. Community members are engaged in the development of their community and provide labor for projects such as terracing, soil conservation, tree planting, etc. as well as for plans developed by the government and supported by aid agencies. At the same time, many community members said that those who build wells and other infrastructure should also be responsible for ensuring that the community is capable of maintaining the investments themselves.

For more formal assistance, early warning committees in communities identify those in need in coordination with the local administration. Some community members, however, expressed concern that often there is a delay between assessments and the response, and that not all who need assistance get it, which is seen to be unfair or politically motivated. People in Tigray particularly want more done to address the effects of recurrent drought and to develop sustainable water sources for agriculture, livestock, and their personal needs. Women in one community listed their Kebele’s priorities as:

1) Water;
2) A health post nearby with staff and medicines;
3) Electricity; and
4) A veterinary post for livestock.

People who are affected by recurring drought and food insecurity said their priority is for assistance that addresses the underlying causes of their food insecurity — such as water systems, irrigation, dairy cows for fattening, ruminants, etc. Community members explained that they have told the government, INGOs, local NGOs, donors, and every visitor that water is a priority, but that they haven’t seen anything done to address it. The lack of response has made many community members feel as if those who say they want to help them are not hearing their requests.

While many who spoke with the CDA team said that they appreciate the assistance to keep them alive, they want to break out of the cycle of food insecurity and to not be dependent on aid. Community members talked about how painful it is to be dependent. Many explained that they would prefer a stronger focus and investment by the government and donors in their long-term development, rather than short-term humanitarian programs (which have been funded for many

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32 This phrase is most likely linked with the traditional Ethiopian proverb, “He who eats alone, dies alone.” Found on numerous Ethiopian diaspora blogs. See also, Mesfin 1985; Rahmato 1991: 191; Garrett 1999: 6.
While they know that there are investments being made into infrastructure and “mega projects” such as the Renaissance Dam, the effects are not being felt or seen as quickly as they like, and some parts of the country will benefit more than others.

The spread of technology is enabling more people in rural areas to have access to cellphones and to market information, family and friends. Many people who met with the CDA team and that were receiving humanitarian aid had cell phones. A common complaint, however, is that the networks are oversubscribed and that the government maintains tight control over the telecommunications market. While there is also more information available through satellite images and meteorological data, many farmers and local officials need help in understanding how to interpret and use it, as well as to trust the data and adapt their plans and behavior.

3.3.2. Perceptions of Effectiveness

While international humanitarian actors are excited by and increasingly using cash transfers, surprisingly (and in contrast to cases in other countries) people in communities, who are the direct recipients of cash transfers, said they would prefer to get direct food aid. They explained this is due to a number of factors:

- Prices often go up and the cash may buy less in the market than expected;
- People have to pay for transportation to the markets and to millers; and
- Money can be spent faster than the food can be used up and money can be spent on things that are not productive or addressing food insecurity (particularly when given to the men).

Some local community members noted they do prefer cash when there is a food surplus and prices are lower. Often shopkeepers, however, raise the prices when they know people have received their cash transfers.

Humanitarian effectiveness for communities affected by recurring drought and food insecurity could most explicitly be defined as not having to need humanitarian assistance continuously. People truly want to “graduate” from the PSNP and from receiving humanitarian aid so that they are food secure and have enough income to pay school fees and other expenses, rather than depending on assistance. Too much assistance has focused on the symptoms rather than the causes and many community members felt that humanitarian aid for many years has been a “band aid” that has kept people alive, but has not helped them to become more secure and prosperous.
A Feinstein International Center impact evaluation on livelihoods projects in Ethiopia has shown that in cases where there is good community participation in managing the effects of droughts, there have been greater impacts.\(^{33}\) Community participation, in this case, is measured in part by access to community resources and the degree of social participation, across levels of socioeconomic status (very poor, poor, middle income, and better-off) and across time and exposure to shocks (four alternating seasons of hunger and harvest between 2011 and 2013).\(^ {34}\)

While household consumption decisions during harvests affect both the portfolio of assets available to community members and the coping behaviors during periods of hunger, the establishment of social support networks following the initial hunger shock of 2011 appeared to dampen the effect of subsequent shocks on households.\(^ {35}\) The Feinstein report cautions that the data used in the study is insufficient to determine the extent of this impact, however, calling for a longer-term longitudinal study with greater geographic scope.\(^ {36}\) Furthermore, both the research by the Feinstein Center and INGO staff who spoke with the CDA team point out that when government officials and aid agency staff do not engage communities, they are less effective in providing support and strengthening community capacities.

### 3.4. International NGOs and UN Agencies

#### 3.4.1. Role in Humanitarian Responses

International humanitarian NGOs and UN agencies are primarily focused on addressing chronic vulnerability of both people and livestock, responding to sudden-onset emergencies such as hailstorms and flash flooding, and meeting the needs of refugees from Somalia and South Sudan. Given the lengthy experience of international aid agencies in Ethiopia and the predictable, recurring droughts, most agencies’ humanitarian goals have expanded from “saving lives” to also “saving livelihoods.”\(^ {37}\) For example, the Joint Emergency Operation Partnership funded by USAID and implemented by a number of INGOs and a local NGO, goes beyond food distribution to work on behavioral change and supports an SMS community-based food insecurity early warning system and savings and lending committees.

While INGOs (similarly to national NGOs) are not allowed by the government to work on governance, human right issues, or other politically sensitive issues, some are working with partners and communities to advocate for more government focus on addressing community priorities (such as earthen dams and local water needs). Others noted that there is a shared commitment among INGOs and UN agencies to consult with communities, but that it is

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\(^{34}\) Maxwell et al 2013.

\(^{35}\) Ibid.

\(^{36}\) Maxwell et al 2013:45.

\(^{37}\) Oxfam America and WFP 2013.
challenging when local authorities and community leaders insist that they have already assessed their communities’ needs and know what people prefer.

The UN largely works at the national political level and is not seen to be very present or engaged at the local level, except in the refugee responses in the border areas with South Sudan, Kenya, and Somalia. While some INGO representatives explained that the UN cluster system has led to improvements, they suggested that its function should go beyond coordination to ensure more strategic and effective programs at the collective level. As one aid agency staff said, “We should all be accountable to each other within the cluster.” There has been coordinated dialogue and advocacy by UN OCHA and INGOs with the national government about 70:30 rule and other issues relating to humanitarian operations, however, they have had little influence and agencies fear that pushing harder could lead to further restrictions on their activities.

3.4.2. Perceptions of Effectiveness

UN agencies are seen to be close to the government and not always effective in advocating for community priorities or longer-term solutions. Some government officials, however, noted that UN agencies help more than the INGOs because they work more with the various ministries and departments of the government.

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**Box 1: Horn of Africa Risk Transfer for Adaptation (HARITA) Case**

The HARITA project is an innovative approach (undertaken by UN agencies, INGOs, local NGOs (including REST), academics and the reinsurance company Swiss Re) that gives farmers the opportunity to enroll in a risk-reduction plan that protects against drought and other hazards, with the ultimate goal of improving their livelihoods and long-term food security. Farmers who are also participants in the PSNP can enroll through an insurance-for-work plan rather than purchasing the insurance with cash, although the demand for this plan is far greater than the program budget can accommodate.

In December of 2010, the HARITA project, based on its initial success, was expanded to become the R4 Rural Resilience Initiative. A recent Oxfam impact evaluation of the program found that the program was well accepted by a variety of stakeholders, and had led to particularly positive results in terms of reducing vulnerability of female-headed households, as well as in improving resilience and reducing the hardships faced by farmers during droughts. However, the program had not yet resulted in truly transformative change in livelihood improvement among farmers, citing the need for greater access to irrigation and diversification of sources of income, as well as the need for wealthier farmers to buy insurance in order for the program to be sustainable in the long-term. Moving forward, Oxfam calls for improved communication and education regarding the types of events that trigger insurance payouts to farmers, and more effective management of program activities, particularly with respect to feedback mechanisms and the scheduling of risk reduction activities to avoid the times when farmers are busy with land preparation and planting.

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1 Oxfam America and WFP 2013.
2 Oxfam America 2014
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
Staff of UN agencies and INGOs noted how humanitarian efforts and aid workers have become more professional, but that now it is a big business in which the UN system and donors are much more prescriptive and have standard responses to complex problems. While SPHERE and other standards have led to improvements, some suggested that they represent only statements of good will and that there needs to be more focus and accountability to ensure that the standards are actually upheld.

There were also concerns that donors prefer to fund INGOs who are more expensive than local NGOs and that this results in a significant part of the budget not reaching the beneficiaries. This is one reason that the government established the “70:30” rule. However, the capacity strengthening support that REST and other local NGOs have received -- which they acknowledge has improved their performance and effectiveness -- has too often been reduced as that is considered “overhead.” International NGOs acknowledge that more needs to be invested in strengthening the capacity of local civil society actors so that they can play a more prominent role in addressing humanitarian needs, but they feel their hands are tied with the government restrictions.

3.5. Donors

3.5.1. Role in Humanitarian Responses

Donors have made large investments in early warning and preparedness systems, prepositioned food and other aid, funded household asset building programs (such as livestock restocking), and begun to invest more in resilience programming. Donor governments are also actively involved in the PSNP redesign process, which they see as a real opportunity to shift the focus from a humanitarian approach to a rural social safety net system that is sustainable.

The governments’ new early warning focus has generated the expectation that donor funding streams and mechanisms will have to shift in order to follow the new policies and priorities to address long-term issues. There is a hope that such change might shift the international response from a “humanitarian caseload” to a “social services caseload.” This shift is also being influenced by the desire of donors to reduce the government’s dependency on aid funding as well as the increased funding needs for humanitarian emergencies in other parts of the world.

However, most donors are not likely to have the same level of funding for long-term development efforts as they do for meeting humanitarian needs, which is a concern to INGOs and UN agencies who rely on donors for funding. One Western donor representative explained that the “results-based management” focus of development donors is a disincentive for
organizations to change from a humanitarian to a development oriented approach. This is because the challenges are immense to assist the poorest of the poor, rather than the “poor but viable” whom development donors typically support and for whom “results” may be easier to measure.

The internal politics and differing approaches and priorities within donor agencies will affect how successfully they are able to transition from humanitarian funding to longer-term development funding in the future. Western donors are likely to continue to provide significant resources to Ethiopia given its role in fighting Al-Shabab in Somalia and terrorism in the region, but probably not as much except in times of real humanitarian emergencies. The importance of stability in Ethiopia and in the region is one of the major reasons donors do not push more on issues of human rights and democratic reforms but do continue to fund humanitarian aid, resilience building and other less political priorities.

3.5.2. Perceptions of Effectiveness

Staff of international and local aid agencies suggested that donors do not seem to be very concerned about community perspectives, in taking risks or in looking at the effectiveness of their development assistance in reducing vulnerability and thus the continued need for humanitarian aid. Some noted that governmental donors tend to focus on the areas where they can be seen and where they won’t fail and that this too often drives where they work and what they do. Others discussed how development donors haven’t held the government accountable for the budget support provided and that they should use their leverage with the government (which is still quite dependent on donor funds) to demand more results and accountability at the community level. As one international agency official said, “Donors are silent and have become a gigantic ATM. The national government is winning but the Ethiopian people are losing.”

Government officials, aid agencies, and community members suggested that donors are still too focused on responding to short-term needs rather than on investing in long-term solutions such as developing sustainable water sources. For instance, donors continue to fund seasonal water trucking, which some point out is more expensive in the long run, rather than invest in water systems. Ethiopia has made significant progress in disaster risk reduction (DRR) and mitigation and there has been an increase in resilience funding and programming in recent years. However, operational aid agencies note that this is a small portion of donor funding and that it is still easier to raise money from donors for emergencies, so they continue to frame the problems as humanitarian needs. This raises a question of whether donor-funding streams and mechanisms create a disincentive to re-categorize the situation as chronic underdevelopment, rather than a chronic humanitarian emergency. Most agree that thinking more creatively and holistically
about how to address the long-standing challenges that people in Ethiopia face needs to be a priority of donors if they are to be successful in saving lives and livelihoods over the long-term.

3.6. Private Sector Actors

3.6.1. Role in Humanitarian Responses

The Government of Ethiopia is encouraging investment by Ethiopians in the diaspora and of foreign investors. Some of these investors are turned off by the tight restrictions while others are happy with the government’s strong focus on economic growth at almost any cost (such as the Chinese). The research team was not able to talk to many business people, but the former head of Ethiopian Airlines (which is owned by the government) explained that the primary motives for the private sector to get involved in humanitarian efforts are profit and to generate good public relations. If there is a specific request from the government, the airline and other companies will respond, but most of the time they will not contribute to pooled funds or general funding requests. Some local companies do provide charitable support to individuals, for instance if they need tickets to get medical care, the airline may provide them.

While the banking sector is still controlled by the government, the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia is introducing ATMs and mobile banking, which is helping to facilitate cash transfers in humanitarian programs. Oxfam America, the World Food Program, and others have successfully partnered with Swiss Re to develop crop insurance for farmers using GIS data and other technologies to track crop failures and help farmers reduce their risks and losses. There is more potential for public-private partnerships, such as this program, in the future, and for increasing roles of companies as more invest in Ethiopia.

3.6.2. Perceptions of Effectiveness

Since the role of the private sector in humanitarian responses is quite limited, the CDA team did not hear much about its effectiveness. Some people from NGOs and communities, however, discussed how commercial farming is increasing competition for water and affecting (negatively) some communities’ food security needs. These, however, are not being addressed by the companies, particularly when they affect people far from their areas of operations, and in some cases may be increasing overall humanitarian needs in Ethiopia.
Section IV – The Effects of an Authoritative Government on Humanitarian Effectiveness

In Ethiopia, development donors prioritize “alignment” with the government’s priorities and “ownership” by the Ethiopian government, often providing more funding directly to the government. In contrast, the humanitarian community has to constantly negotiate its goals and define its role. Humanitarian actors have to assure the government that they are not there to embarrass them, as the continued humanitarian need might highlight weaker real progress on the Human Development Index or accomplishing the Millennium Development Goals, particularly given Ethiopia’s rapid population growth. Despite the billions of dollars invested in Ethiopia by donors, there is little shared reality or shared analysis between the international community and the government, which then makes it hard to define and measure effectiveness of those funds.

There are also pressures on agencies to focus on particular regions for political reasons and some are concerned that the “underserved are always underserved.” The “predictive economy” (where the government says what the growth rate will be and claims they have reached it without reliable data) continues to have predictable humanitarian needs, which has also made it difficult for donors and aid agencies to address the real needs.

One challenge for humanitarian agencies is operating and upholding humanitarian principles in this politically sensitive context. While they are able to have frank and productive discussions on a technical level with people in the government (particularly in line ministries), it is harder to discuss politically sensitive issues (particularly at the national level). The humanitarian community is slowly building back trust with the government after the last decade and feels restricted in discussing issues of human rights, governance, restrictions on civic engagement, and other sensitive issues. Discussing such issues may disrupt the access that they have to communities or restrict their activities. Several different government entities have to approve the activities of INGOs, which takes time and can slow down relief efforts.

\[\text{OECD 1999.}\]
The government control of access and of decision-making processes, combined with the suspicion of NGOs in some places, makes it difficult for aid agencies to listen to a range of voices and perspectives in order to ensure that the distribution of aid is not politicized. At the local level, there is usually a committee of 30 people (district officials/party leaders and community leaders selected by party officials) who decide who will get assistance, which results in some people in need being left out for political reasons. Institutional capacity is weak at the sub-national level and different regions are competing with one another for support from the federal government, which controls the funding and budget. At the same time, some INGOs explained that at the local level, government officials are less political and more practical and that working with them is important for an effective response.

Some aid agency staff note that the cultural/ethnic background of aid recipients is an important factor when looking at the effectiveness of aid over time. Different ethnic and religious groups understand and relate to aid efforts in different ways and have had varying levels of support from the government and aid agencies. For some, aid is a very political process locally and they expect much from it, while others see it as a small piece that fills a gap while they seek other solutions to their chronic problems. Each community also has different priorities and preferences, and humanitarians do not always make these distinctions, though these cultural factors affect the overall response, long-term results and definitions of effectiveness.

Section V – Implications for Conceptualizing Humanitarian Effectiveness in the Future

5.1. Humanitarian effectiveness must be linked to development effectiveness

In places with chronic humanitarian needs such as Ethiopia, humanitarian effectiveness cannot be discussed without looking at development effectiveness. High economic growth rates with continued vulnerability and significant humanitarian needs (and funding) raise concerns about inequality and the distribution of economic benefits. Some humanitarians suggest that development actors need to focus on the poorest, not just leave the most vulnerable to seek humanitarian aid. For humanitarian aid to be more effective and reduced in the long-term, it is critical to focus more on this “connectedness” which is defined by the OECD/DAC as, “the need to ensure that activities of a short-term emergency nature are carried out in a context which takes longer-term and interconnected problems into account.”39 The government, donors, and

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aid agencies need to connect humanitarian and development efforts to address chronic vulnerability. To this end, policies and funding for resilience programming should be funded (and possibly led) by development actors and seen as a core aspect of development. This could help ensure that people can better cope with crises and prevent the need for humanitarian aid in the first place.

Development outcomes and impacts need to be measured more effectively and over time to ensure that people who have “graduated” from humanitarian assistance do not become vulnerable again. The shift to a “safety net” approach is an acknowledgement of long-term vulnerability and the need to reduce the need for humanitarian responses to long-term problems. Unfortunately, however, too many people who “graduate” from the PSNP end up back in need. If the gains from safety nets and other development-oriented approaches are not sustainable, the “humanitarian caseload” has not been reduced and thus the effectiveness of the current program should be questioned. The “redesign” of the PSNP currently underway provides an opportunity to address the long-term and short-term goals of reducing vulnerability and to link humanitarian and development effectiveness measures and accountability.

5.2. Funding and Partnerships

In an environment of decreasing funds but predictable needs, donors need to look at their funding mechanisms and the number of intermediaries in the aid chain to ensure that as much of the funding reaches people in communities as possible. Donors need to address their own risk aversion and find more creative ways to partner with local organizations to ensure that more of their limited funding reaches communities. The example of REST shows that local organizations can be trusted and effective. At the same time, donors need ensure that there is an enabling environment for independent civil society organizations to operate and to play roles in policy-making and advocacy, not just in service delivery. This means that humanitarian donors may have to work more closely with their development, diplomatic, and even security counterparts to ensure that this is a priority in their relationships and partnerships with the Government of Ethiopia.40

5.3. Take a Systems Approach

People in communities and the staff of local and international NGOs discussed how the massive amounts of humanitarian assistance to Ethiopia over the years have not been transformative nor have they led to significant changes in people’s lives. As was heard by CDA’s Listening Project in 2006, humanitarian project timelines are too short and there has been too much of a “project” approach as opposed to a long-term “systems” approach to address the underlying causes of

40 Macrae et al 2002.
humanitarian needs. A number of people called for shared analysis and strategies between humanitarian and development actors to ensure that humanitarian aid is more effective, and can be reduced, while development investments (which have a longer time horizon) can be increased.

The recurring droughts and climate change call for more creative, cohesive, and systematic approaches from aid agencies and the government to address the root causes of food insecurity. While the government is trying to increase investment and create jobs that are not all dependent on the land, the rapid population growth rate makes it difficult to reduce the total number of people in need of assistance. Many in affected communities and aid agencies suggested that donors need to shift from the focus on providing food aid to increased funding for development activities to address the causes rather than the effects of the droughts, food insecurity and other humanitarian needs.41 A new approach is needed to ensure that agencies have the time and resources to effectively engage those who are in need of humanitarian assistance (particularly since there are recurring crises in the same communities year after year) to find solutions and ways to address the roots causes in the long-term. The top-down nature of both government planning and donor funding and decision-making are incompatible with the goals of fostering local leadership and ownership of humanitarian and development efforts.42

5.4. Focus on Policies, Not Just Projects

Some in the aid community suggested that in order for humanitarian efforts to be more effective and reduced over time, difficult policy decisions may be needed, such as to move people out of places where livelihoods are unsustainable or where disasters commonly occur. Land tenure policies need to be implemented by the government in a fair way to help address some of the long-term issues. Focusing more on family planning and population control would also reduce the increasing numbers of people trying to live off of limited arable land.43

5.5. Changing Attitudes and Common Standards

Some people suggested the need for changes in the mindsets of humanitarians and in how they engage with those affected by crises so that they can more effectively anticipate and meet their needs in the future. Some aid agency staff acknowledged that there has been too much focus on technical aspects and standards and not enough on the “softer” quality aid issues, such as effectively engaging with those who are vulnerable and ensuring they are part of the problem-solving and decision-making process. National staff of international aid agencies suggested that having a common tool or guidance which brings together the standards and lessons learned through SPHERE, HAP, and many other initiatives would help local humanitarian organizations be

41 Endris and Nenko 2013.
42 Anderson et al 2011.
43 Cochrane 2011.
more effective. They also suggested that more hands-on-tools and platforms to share good practices, reflect, and learn were needed for humanitarians to be more effective.
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