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EHRCO stands for democracy, the rule of law and the respect of human rights.

The Problems of an Ill-Prepared Resettlement Programme 68th Special Report

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Introduction

Ethiopia is one of the few countries that are subject to periodic droughts and severe famines. The fact that the number of people that need relief food reached its all time record is an indication that the problem of drought has become chronic. It is saddening to see the peasant population starved and waiting for others for their daily bread in a country where more than 80% of the population depends for their livelihood on agriculture and the economic policy is said to have been agriculture-led.

Identifying the right cause of the famine is not only an achievement by itself it also help to seek lasting solution to the problem. However what could be gathered from the fact that the famine is striking repeatedly is that a consensus has not been reached between the government on the one hand and the general public on the other as to identifying the real cause of the problem and seeking solutions.

In a situation where the real causes of the problem remain obscure, it is highly doubtful if measures that are being taken to deal with the famine would bring about a lasting solution. Some measures are not well panned and end up in worsening the situation rather than solving the problem. One of the measures that the government is taking to do away with the famine is to resettle victims of the famine to different areas. The resettlement activity which is being carried out without sufficient preparation has caused different problems on the resettles. Based on the information it received, the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO) conducted investigations on different resettlement villages in Bale and North Gondar Zones.

1. Resettlement Centers In Bale Zone of Oromia Region.

The resettles used to live in three zones in Oromia:

1. West Harrarge: in Chirro, Darolebu and Tulo weredas
2. East Harrarge: in Meta, Melkabello, Kersa, Gorogutu and Bedeno weredas
3. Arsi Zone: in Arabagugu wereda

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Reasons For Being Displaced

The insufficient rains in 1998 and the consequent famine coupled with the increasing shortage of farm lands which was 2 hectares per family head had forced the farmers to notify the magnitude of the problem to the government in 1999. Since there was no response from the government, farmers in East and West Harrarge had headed their way to Bale Zone, Dolomena wereda starting from August 2002. There, they settled in a former military training camp named Shawe. Some of them had to travel for 15 days on foot while others were lucky enough to get cars upto Goba town. Even these, had to travel for four days on foot from Goba to Shawe.

The table below shows the number of resettlers in Bale Zone Medawelabu wereda and where they came from.

Name of wereda	No. of Family Head	No. of Household	Total
From the Five weredas in East Harrarge			
Meta	1571	4079	5650
Melkabello	642	1623	2265
Kersa	179	452	631
Bedeno	244	640	884
Gorogotu	266	730	996
From the three weredas in West Harrarge			
Chiro	579	1476	2055
Darolebu	304	693	997
Tulo	228	457	685
From different weredas of Oromia			
	47	198	245
Sum Total	4537	11416	15953

The area where the resettlers are now living has a relatively highland climate. As a result the resettlers say they are subjected to severe cold.

The respective distance between the areas where the resettlers used to live and the place where they are living now is as follows:

- From East Harrarge to Abasirba resettlement village in Bale- 989 Kilometers.
- From West Harrarge to Abasirba resettlement village- 978 kilometers
- From Arsi Zone to Abasirba resettlement village- 486 kilometers

The Condition of Resettlers in Shawe Military Training Camp

As stated above, displaced farmers from different weredas of Oromia had in their own initiative settled in this former military training camp in the months of August and September 2002. As the area where this military establishment is lying was a protected forest, they had to clear the forest for shelter and farm lands. The International Committee for the Red Cross, the Ethiopian Red Cross Society, Medicine Sans Frontiers

(MSF) and The Ethiopian Mekane Yesus Church had come to the rescue of the settlers by providing them with tents, maize, wheat and other nutritious foods and medical care. MSF Particularly was playing a significant role with respect to the provision of medical care. The displaced farmers and their families stayed in this place for seven months. Then the government moved them and made them resettle in Medawelabu, Berbere, Goro and Golelcha weredas in Bale Zone.

Officials in Bale Zone told EHRCO that the settlers were made to leave Shawe as the area is a protected forest and it has to be conserved. Before the settlers were moved to their new areas of resettlement 16 representatives were taken to Medawelabu to assess the farmlands, which were to be distributed among their families to places called Abasirba, Wedabogi, Robajirru, sera and Berbere. Officials in the area told EHRCO that the resettlers will be provided with the basic necessities such as food, shelter and farmlands and facilities like health, education road transport etc in due time.

Problems Facing Resettlers in Abasirba Resettlement Village

Shelter

For the 2253 heads of families in Abasirba the Ethiopian Red Cross Society has distributed plastic tents, one tent for two heads of families. Some settlers were not provided with tents because of the acute shortage of the material. Even those who received tents were suffering from cold as the tents are not closed on all sides. And, as a result many settlers were suffering from illnesses such as cold. Seven heads of families for example are forced to spend the nights in open air as they could not get tents.

Food

For two months i.e April and May 2003, a monthly ration of 12.5 kilos of maize per head was given. Starting from June 2003 the ration has increased to 15 kilos of wheat per head; Two liters of oil and 2 kilos of lentils per head were also given for two months. The aid was supplied by the Ethiopian Mekane Yesus Church, the Norwegian Church, the International Committee for the Red Cross and the Ethiopian Red Cross Society. As there were no flour mills in the area the resettlers have to travel up to 18 kilometers to have their cereals ground.

Water Supplies

- **In Abasirba:-** water is pulled from a well and distributed using three stations.
- **In Odaboji:-** a water well has been drilled but it has not yet become operational.
- **In Roba jirru:-** drilling of a water well is being carried out but water has not been found till the time that this information is gathered.
- **In Serra:-** drilling is carried out but water could not be found.
- **In Berbere:-** the resettlers use the Wabe river water.

In addition to this, water is being occasionally supplied using tankers for the resettlers other than those in Abasirba.

Health

- In the four resettlement villages in Medawelabu wereda there are no public health stations.
- Medicine Sans Frontiers (MSF) is providing medical care for children.
- As there are no health facilities for adults, many are suffering from illnesses without getting medical help. Some of them had died.

According to information given to EHRCO by their families the following persons had died due to lack of medical assistances after they arrived in Bale Zone.

Table 1. Deaths Due to Lack of Medical Assistance

No.	Name of Deceased	Place of Origin	Details
1	Mohammed Ahmed	Arsi Zone, Gollelcha wereda	A father of five died in the resettlement village due to lack of medical assistance
2	Ato Shafi Abdulla	East Harrarge, Meta wereda	40 Years old and a father of five died of TB in the resettlement village
3	W/ro Kedija Mume	East Harrarge, kersa wereda	A mother of five died of TB in the resettlement village
4	W/ro Aysha Mohammed Abdulle	Arsi Zone, Gollelch wereda	Died in March 2003 due to excessive bleeding during child birth
5	W/ro Jenet Mohammed	Arsi Zone, Gollelcha wereda	Died of TB on July 2003 in the resettlement village
6	W/ro Razia Mohammed	Arsi Zone, Gollelcha woreda	Died of an illness in the resettlement village
7	W/rt Miskia Aliye	East Harrarge, Melkabello wereda	A 25 years old girl died on April of a sudden illness for she could not get medical assistance
8	Mohammed Abdella		A 7 year old boy died in Shawe resettlement village due to starvation

The following two individuals were suffering from illness as they could not get medical assistance.

1. **Ousman Mohammed**:- A resettler from Arsi Zone Arbagugu wereda now lives in Abasirba resettlement village. The cold weather has affected his health and is still in bed.
2. **Adem Ali**:- A resettler from Arsi Zone Arbagugu wereda now lives in Abasirba resettlement village. The cold weather has affected his health and is in bed because of the illness.

Farmland

Out of the 2253 heads of families in Abasirba 943 of them are given 2 hectares of land each. Officials of the Bale Zone told EHRCO that the land allotment was done based on the number of household members each family has. There are also many resettlers who have not yet got farmlands

In addition to farmlands 15-20 Sq. meters of land was given to each family head for the purpose building dwelling houses.

As to agricultural tools given by government:

896 Oxen had been distributed among the 2253 heads of families in Medawelabu wereda. The proportion is an ox for two heads of families. Other traditional agricultural tools such as spades, sickles, hoes and forks were also given to many resettlers by the government and the Ethiopian Mekane Yesus Church.

Education

There are no schools in the resettlement villages. The officials of the area told EHRCO that they are registering students for the 1996 E.C school season.

Toilets

The resettlers have dug 1253 pits for each family. In addition to these there are 173 pits that are common to all. There are also 81 garbage holes dug by the resettlers.

Roads and Transportation Facilities

There is a 30 kilo meter gravel road from Bidire town to the resettlement village. As the resettlement villages are not too far from the main road, the resettlers in Berbere, Gollelcha and Goro weredas are relatively better off as far as the road facility is concerned. In general however, the resettlers are facing problems as there are no public transport services that link the villages to bigger towns.

The table below shows names of family heads who returned to their former homes from the resettlement villages.

No.	Name of Family Head	Place of Origin
1	Ahme Sahlu	East Harrarge, Meta wereda. He returned with his family because he didn't find the resettlement village to his liking.
2	Kedija Gibriel	East Harrarge meta wereda. She returned home for the same reason stated above (No. 1)
3	Zedad Ali	Arsi Zone Gollelcha wereda. Returned home for the same reason stated above
4	Abdulahi Abdusemed	Arsi Zone Gollelcha wereda. Returned home for the same reason
5	Adem Mohammed	Arsi Zone Gollelcha wereda. Returned home for the same reason

In addition to these, 291 heads of families from Abasirba, 348 heads of families from Wedabogi and 305 heads of families from Serra resettlement villages have returned home as they didn't find the situation in their new places of settlement satisfactory.

3. Resettlers In North Gondar Zone Metama Wereda

An EHRCO investigation team went to North Gondar and investigated the situation in Metema wereda. Following the drought in the 2002-2003 farm season, the government has carried out resettlement ventures and resettled people from the following weredas to various weredas in North Gondar.

- From North Wello Zone: Meket, Bugna, Kobo, Gidan, Delanta, Wadla, Gubalaf to and Habru weredas.
- From South Wello Zone: Kellala, Jemma, Mekdella, Tenta, Debresina, Leganbo, Wegdi, Tehuledere, Dessie Zuria, Ambassel, Werebabo, Kutaber, Kalu and Sayint weredas
- From Waghimra Zone: Sekota, Ziquala and Dahna weredas
- From North Shewa Zone: Antsokia, Asagirt, Ankober, Insaronaweyu, Merhabete, Mida Oromo, Berehet, Moretinajurru, Gishe, Lalomama, and Gerakeya weredas.
- From Oromia Zone: Bati, Sawachefe, Artuma, Farsi and Jelle weredas

The resettlers were made to settle in Quara, Metema, Tach Armachiho and Tegede weredas of the North Gondar Zone.

In the areas where EHRCO has visited, the resettlement was not conducted by creating new villages. What was done is to give the resettlers places in the villages which were established during the resettlement programme carried out by the Derg Regime. Local officials call such type of resettlement "Sigsega". Based on information gathered from resettlers the general situation is presented as follows.

Reasons for Being Displaced

- Resettlers from Waghimra tell that the drought in their areas dates back to 1950. The 1985 drought was so serious that there was a severe famine in the area. People who escaped death were made to resettle in other areas. In 1988 the harvests were all consumed in the field by a herd of mice. This was followed by the migration of people to the nearby Korem town. There was a relatively good distribution of rain in the next year and people had started moving back to their villages. However the floods in 1990 took the soil away and the drought has continued unabated since then. At last after losing everything they used to have, they came and resettled in North Gondar in March /April 2003.
- All resettlers approached by EHRCO tell that they have been receiving relief food for about ten years in their former villages. As the drought situation has become worse due to the infertility of the soil, they have never had harvests since 1992. They all used to receive 2¹/₂ kilos of wheat a day from the Mekane Yesus Church and the Amhara Development and Rehabilitation Agency for participating in a food for work

program. The relief distribution did not take in to consideration the situation of those who could not sell their labour due to old age and permanent disabilities. The resettlers were also requesting local officials to resettle them else where since the last five years. Then, following government’s call that those who want to be resettled to other areas could come and register, they volunteered and resettled in Metema wereda in March 2003.

The table below shows the number of resettlers in the various areas of the North Gondar Zone.

No.	Place of Resettlement	No. of Family Heads	No. of households	Total
1	Quara	6989	9394	16,383
2	Metema	7447	5207+*120	12774
3	Armachiho	1441	1838	3279
4	Tegede	538	254	792
Total		16415	16813	33228

* An additional 32 family heads and their 88 households have resettled in Metema.

Villages in Metema wereda

1. Kumen resettlement village is located at a distance of 12 kilometers from Shehedi town.
2. Resettlement villages 6 and 7 are located at a distance of 32 kilometers from Shehedi town.

Resettlement Villages Not Visited by the EHRCO team

1. Tumet Resettlement Village located 74 kilometers from Shehedi town. The village could not be reached due to the over flowing of Shenfa river.
2. The Quara, Armachiho and Tegede resettlement villages were not visted due to lack of transportation.

The Situation of the Resettlers in the New Villages

Shelter

- The resettlers who arrived in the first round were able to get newly built huts. Plastic tents were given for those who arrived subsequently.
- Resettlers in Kumen wereda have built their huts with the help of the local population.
- Resettlers in village 6 live in the plastic tents distributed to them. As the female heads of families are not given tents, they share the tents with the families who received the tents.
- Resettlers in village 7 have their huts built by the locals.

Food

- Resettlers in Kumen wereda get 15 killos of wheat and 11birr each per month. This amount might be enough for larger families. However it is difficult to live on 15 killos of wheat for a month for a single person. So, the resettlers say that starvation has not been completely overcome yet.
- Resettlers in villages 6 and 7 get a monthly ration of 20 killos of mixed maize and wheat per head as well as 11 birr. The common problem in all villages with regard to food is its insufficiency. This, the resettlers say, coupled with the desert climatic conditions of the area made them vulnerable to diseases such as malaria.

Water Supplies

- The resettlers in Kumen wereda have not faced problems with regard to water as there was an already existing potable water supply.
- Resettlers in village 6 use the nearby river for their water needs as the potable water line has not yet become operational.

Health

There are small satellite clinics in all resettlement villages operated by two nurses. But as there is a severe shortage of medicines the services are limited. The health workers told EHRCO that what they had in their clinics is only malaria tablets. The supply of those tablets has recently been interrupted. At this time they don't even have painkillers in their stores.

Deaths Occurred Due to Lack of Medical Assistance.

- 6 boys and 4 girls and 3 male and 1 female adults i.e a total of 14 resettlers have died. It has been learnt that the cause of death of most of them was tuberculosis. The settlers were being treated for the disease in their former villages. Their death might have been caused as a result of the interruption of the medication.

Education

There are schools that teach students up to grade four. The schools had been built for resettlers who had come to the area during the former regime.

Toilets

As there are pits that were dug by the earlier resettlers, there seem to be no problems in this regard.

Road and Transport Facilities

Though there are roads that are paved to connect the resettlement villages to the nearby towns, none of the villages except Kumen have access to transportation services.

Land and Agricultural Tools

A two hectares per family head farmland was allotted to those who arrived in the first round. Those who arrived latter received a hectare per family head. The Metema wereda information office head told EHRCO that they (the officials) know that a one-hectare land in Metema is not of much value, “so, once the resettlers have become self sufficient, they will be given an additional one hectare per family head.” The resettlers are all given agricultural tools. A pair of farm oxen is given to four family heads for common use. The oxen are not given for free. The resettlers are supposed to pay back the price with interest in three years. The price of an ox is 1000 Birr. Seeds are distributed for free. The resettlers say the price of oxen is expensive. The price plus interest for an ox is 1090 Birr. This, they said, would leave them nothing after paying their debts.

Returnees

Out of the 1946 family heads who were resettled in Metema wereda, 282 of them i.e a total of 2228 resettlers had returned to their former places of living. According to the returnees, the reasons are:-

- Most of them had come to the new villages with the intention of assessing the situation. So they found the food supply to be inadequate.
- They could not get clothing assistances.
- They could not adapt to the hot climate
- They did not like the fact that oxen are supplied on credit.

In general the returnees believe that the relief food they used to get while they were in their former villages is by far better.

Conclusion

The discussion indicates the detailed facts that EHRCO had gathered by visiting the various resettlement areas in Bale and North Gondar Zones. The evidence EHRCO had gathered reveal that the decision taken by the government to resettle people to these areas was not based on adequate studies and sufficient preparation. This decision has therefore brought in the sufferings to the resettlers. Therefore EHRCO suggests the government gives due consideration to the following conditions in carrying out future resettlement programmes and in alleviating the problems that are being faced by the people which are already resettled.

- Sufficient preparations have to be made in the provision of shelter, food, water, health, education and transport facilities before moving resettlers from their places to new areas.
- Resettlers have to be provided with farmlands, seeds and agricultural tools until such time that they have become sustainably self-reliant.
- Health and agriculture professionals have to be assigned in the resettlement villages to help the resettlers solve their various problems.

In view of the problems stated in this report, EHRCO also calls on those who stand for the respect of human rights, national and international human rights groups, religious institutions, governmental and non governmental organizations to exert pressure on the Ethiopian government so that it would conduct its resettlement programmes based on the results of pertinent studies and reliable preparatory measures, by writing to the government bodies and officials listed below.

- Council of People Representatives
P.O.Box 80001, Fax (251-1) 550900 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- Council of Federation
P.O.Box 80001, Fax (251-1) 550722 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- H.E Ato Girma Wolde Giorgis, President, FDRE
P.O.Box 1031, Fax (251-1) 552020 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- H.E Ato Meles Zenawi, Prime Minister, FDRE
P.O.Box 1031, Fax (251-1) 552020 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- H.E Ato Harka Haroye, Minister of Justice FDRE
P.O.Box 1370, Fax (251-1) 520874 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- Amhara National Regional State Council
P.O.Box 312, Fax (251-1) (08) 201068 Bahir Dar, Ethiopia
- Oromia National Regional State Council
P.O.Box 101768, Fax (251-1) 513642 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- South Nations Nationalities and Peoples Regional State Council
P.O.Box 18 Fax (251-1) (06) 201950 Awassa, Ethiopia
- Tigray National Regional State Council
Fax (251-1) (04) 4077233, Tele (04) 404268 Mekelle, Ethiopia