

Economic Independence and Individual Freedom:  
Food Security in Ethiopia

By

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

On Wednesday August 6, 2003, a coalition of non-governmental organizations, including, among others, AfricaCares, Bread for the World, Catholic Relief Services, and Save the Children-US, held a news conference at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. A representative from each of the organizations spoke for a few minutes describing the food insecurity problems that have resulted in the current famine in Ethiopia and his or her own recent fact finding missions. Following their remarks, the floor was opened to questions from the reporters who had gathered and were sitting quietly and taking notes. The first question came from a woman working for CNN (Cable News Network Television).

*“Why is there another famine in Ethiopia?”*

In 1973, a famine in Ethiopia was brought to the world’s attention by a young British journalist. The media attention that resulted played a role in allowing a military *coup d’etat* that forced Emperor Haile Selassie from power. A decade later, in 1985,

there was another famine and a British rock star used this humanitarian crisis to organize and rally a sell-out concert in London that again attracted international attention and raised millions of dollars for emergency food relief in the Horn of Africa. On December 21, 1987 the cover of *Time* magazine featured a four-color photograph of a young Ethiopian woman, eyes downcast and with one breast exposed, a moonfaced starving child in her lap. There were two questions super-imposed in large black typeface over the photograph: “Why are the Ethiopians starving again? What should the world do – and not do?”

Why is there a chronic cycle of food insecurity in Ethiopia? What are the actions that can be taken and the policy changes that may be required so all “members of the human family” in Ethiopia can realize their “economic, social and political rights” (International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Preamble, January 3, 1976)?

## Chapter 2

### Why a Food Insecurity Problem in Ethiopia?

The current food insecurity situation in Ethiopia is described by Save the Children-US as “the largest humanitarian crisis in the world today. Children are suffering the most.” Dennis Walto, field link director for Save the Children-US, commented in a Congressional briefing on Capitol Hill, (October 15, 2003, hosted by the Congressional Hunger Center and chaired by Representative James McGovern) that “of the 14 million children starving in Ethiopia, one-half are under the age of five-years-old. For a two-year-old child, Ethiopia is the most dangerous place in the world.”

For three weeks (August 9-30, 2003) I worked as a volunteer with Save the Children-US in Ethiopia. Save the Children asked me to record my personal observations and to document my visit through photographs and video impressions. This paper combines research with personal narrative that is “an observation of everyday experiences, which formulate visual culture. This real time reportage puts the idealized in the context of reality” (Allen Feldman, personal communication,

October 23, 2003) or as Madeleine R. Grumet points out:

Autobiography becomes a medium for both teaching and research because each entry expresses the particular peace its author has made between the individuality of his or her subjectivity and the intersubjective and public character of meaning. (Grumet, 1990, p. 324)

The personal narrative describes my impressions of Addis Ababa, Awassa, and Dire Dawa and interactions with Cecilia Salpeteur, nutritionist and humanitarian worker for Save the Children-US; Rowa Hayso, a child living in a therapeutic feeding center set up and managed by Save the Children-US; and Abraham Bokore Geedi, the tribal elder in a pastoral village located four hours from Dire Dawa and close to the Somali border.

Unraveling the answers to the questions, as posed by editors at *Time* magazine in 1987: “Why are the Ethiopians starving again? What should the world do – and not do?” is complex, and the research can be framed in the context of a number of issues.

The first question, “Why are the Ethiopians starving again?” can be understood by researching famine theory, which has been extensively studied and chronicled. While there may be disagreements among the experts about what should be done, there is general agreement that “famine is conquerable. It has been eradicated from most of the world. But in some countries in Africa human suffering seems to be getting more rather than less common” (de Waal, 2002, p.1).

The question about what the world can do to eliminate famine in Ethiopia can

be framed in the context of four issues:

First, there is the issue of whether or not the economic and social rights of individuals are being violated. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted and signed by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 10, 1948, did not specifically mention food or economic rights, but does protect women and children and provides everyone with a right of education and the right to life, liberty and the security of person. Ethiopia, as a member of the League of Nations and then the United Nations, had a representative on the committee drafting the Declaration of Human Rights.<sup>1</sup>

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which was adopted and signed by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 16, 1966 does include food in Article 11, No. 2, (b) “Taking into account the problems of both food-importing and food-exporting countries, to ensure an equitable distribution of world food supplies in relation to need” (*Twenty-Five Plus Human Rights Documents*, 2001, p.11).

Second, it is the media who has played a role in bringing the food insecurity situation in Ethiopia to a worldwide audience. It is their footage of starving children and death in the famine camps, and their words, that have raised millions of dollars to provide food and humanitarian assistance. Notwithstanding, the coverage, as described by a former reporter for Reuters, Aidan Hartley, is crafted to:

...convey the tragedy of famine is to depict the death of an individual. ...I

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<sup>1</sup> A representative from Ethiopia served on the Third Committee. “And the members of the third committee, who discussed every line of the draft of the Declaration of Human Rights for over two months in the fall of 1948, represented a wide variety of

found a TV soundman on his knees, poking his furry microphone boom into the face of a man spread-eagled on the earth. The man lay silent, until with a faint exhalation he died. The soundman held on for a few more seconds, then switched off his machine and got to his feet. ‘I’ve been wanting to do that,’ he said. ‘I’ve captured the sound of death on tape.’ (Hartley, 2003, p.206)

The predominant form of journalists’ exposure to famine has been characterized as “disaster tourism” (de Waal, 2002, p.82). The helpless mother with flies in her eyes, holding a child with an extended stomach and limp limbs, has become an iconic image in our culture.

Third, there is the issue of humanitarian assistance provided through foreign governments, official aid institutions, and non-governmental and private voluntary organizations. Has this aid been appropriate and useful? Has it played a role in assisting Ethiopia in working toward sustainable development?

Fourth, there is the issue of trade policies of the developed countries, particularly the United States and countries within the European Union, and the effect these policies have on countries, like Ethiopia, with an economy based on agriculture. The World Trade talks held in Cancun, Mexico in September, 2003 collapsed according to a report in the *Economist* because the rich world’s concessions were too timid on agriculture and too grudging. “...NGO’s, who were in Cancun in force, deserve much of the blame for this radicalization. Too many of them deluged poor countries with muddle-headed positions and incited them to refuse all compromise with the rich world. The NGO’s

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cultures. ...the four African countries represented were Ethiopia, Egypt, Liberia and South Africa (Glendon, 2001, p.225).



main mistake however, was to raise poor countries' expectations implausibly high”

(*Economist*, September 20-26, 2003, pp. 27-28). It is high farm subsidies in the United States that provide much of the gain and other emergency food aid for Ethiopia.

These four issues, human rights, the role of the media, humanitarian assistance, and trade and agricultural policy can then be studied in the context of the policies of the Ethiopian government and the role of foreign policies of the United States government and other developed countries around the world. The HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa must also be factored in as AIDS and famine are inextricably linked (James McDonald, personal communication, October 21, 2003).

The research undertaken through this project attempts, as its primary objective, to understand what actions can be taken to launch and lobby for changes in American policy to help break the cycle of food insecurity in Ethiopia.

The research considers the following three questions:

- 1) Why is there a cycle of food insecurity in Ethiopia?
- 2) The American government has played a major role in providing humanitarian assistance and food aid to Ethiopia during the current period of food insecurity. How is American policy shaped and is it effective?
- 3) How effective is emergency humanitarian assistance provided by non-governmental organizations in working toward achieving long-term sustainable development in Ethiopia?

As Amartya Sen, the Nobel prize winning economist has pointed out:

Appropriate policies and actions can indeed eradicate the terrible problems of

hunger in the modern world. Based on recent economic, political and social analyses, it is, I believe, possible to identify the measures that can bring about the elimination of famines and a radical reduction in chronic undernourishment. What is important at this time is to make policies and programs draw on the lessons that have emerged from analytical investigations and empirical studies” (Sen, 1991. p. 160).

## Chapter 3

### A Very Fragile Palace of Matchsticks

The cabin lights had been turned off, and we were beginning our descent into Bole International Airport. Rain beat against the exterior skin of the aircraft and looking out through the window into the darkness, the tip of the airplane wing was invisible in the heavy mist. The humming engines and the rattling of the rain were in stark contrast to the damp and quiet interior of the aircraft.

Strong headwinds had put us behind schedule, and it was now after two in the morning. The plane had been an animated cabin of children, packages, students, toys, and chatter when we left London, in the early afternoon, but most of the passengers, adults and children, had disembarked in Alexandria, Egypt, our one stop. Those of us who were flying on to Addis Ababa were sitting alone and scattered, randomly, around the plane.

“It’s pretty foggy down there and while we tried, we realized, at the minimum level, that we couldn’t make it. There is another plane in front of us; we’ll see how he does,” the pilot announced.

The holding pattern seemed endless until we swiftly touched down with a loud roar of the engines and the noise of screeching tires braking on the asphalt runway. The bright glare of the light in the chrome and glass terminal building was momentarily blinding as we walked down the ramp and began the what-seemed-like-forever process of clearing passport control and waiting for luggage.

“Ms. Howard.”

A smiling man, clad in a green uniform wearing a Scottish tam and carrying a pole with a sign that read “Hilton Hotel,” gathered my bags and waved both of us through customs in one swift motion. As we left the building he raised a large umbrella over my head as we walked toward the van going to the hotel. It was still raining, the lights in the parking lot were blurred by the mist, and there was the coming and going, going and coming activity of an airport. The smell of Africa hung in the air.

”Help me.”

A crippled body, folded like an accordion and crouched on the ground put a hand on my foot; the dirty palm of a child was outstretched; men clothed in soiled rags and desperation gathered around.

“Go away,” the man from the Hilton Hotel implored.

“Go away.”

The van door was slid shut and we drove away.

What is it that pulls us to Africa? The extravagant beauty of the land? Is it that life without nature is unbearable? Is it in Africa where we can still find a vast expanse of wilderness and people who are connected to the earth?

We marvel at the opulence of ceremonies that exclude us; we marvel at exquisite objects that attract us; we bask in the exotic, as voyeurs. We become poets and publish our journals, trying to capture for others what can never be understood through words alone, as Africa demands and then consumes all of the senses.

Or, is it that our own lives have become empty gourds, and what we have gained, can really never compare with what has been sacrificed to get there?

When we do go to Africa where do we fit in? Nadine Gordimer posed the question in *The Essential Gesture*. “For if we’re going to fit in at all in the new Africa, it’s going to be sideways, where-we-can, wherever-they’ll-shift-up-for-us. This will not be comfortable; indeed it will be hardest of all for those of us (I am one myself) who want to belong in the new Africa as we never could in the old, where our skin color labeled us as oppressors to the blacks and our views labeled us as traitors to the whites.”

(Gordimer, 1988, p. 32)

Alberto Giacometti, in describing a sculpture he created in 1932 writes that “it is a very fragile palace of matchsticks. At the slightest false move a whole section of this tiny construction would collapse. We would always begin it over again” (Maxwell, 1980, pp. 25-27).

Africa astounds us with beauty and arouses in us fear and confusion. A fragile palace of matchsticks.

## Chapter 4

### Addis Ababa

At dawn, the early morning light spreads through the glass doors that open onto the balcony in my room. Across the way, the corrugated-iron roofs of a shantytown create an elegant silver and copper patchwork design. The distant rolling hills are shrouded in a heavy mist, with a few tall trees silhouetted in black against the sky. A squatting figure wrapped in red is the single point of color. A woman walking along the road, wearing a traditional white shawl, creates a stunning profile as she passes a turquoise wall. Dogs bark. Sonorous morning prayers broadcast to praying Christians fill the air, mingling with the odor of burning wood and charcoal.

The smell of cologne fills the elevator and his pilot's uniform, blue pants and a white shirt with small faux gold buttons, is freshly pressed.

“Where are you going?”

“To London. And you are going swimming.”

The turquoise pool in the garden behind the Hilton Hotel in Addis Ababa is fed by hot natural spring water. August is the rainy season and in the chill of the early

dawn the steam rises and hovers over the water, like the special effects in a movie.

This morning there are occasional streaks of lightening and the distant rumbling sound of thunder. After a few laps the rain begins, small crystal drops that fall on the top of the water and sparkle in the glow of the underwater lights. Like diamonds.

In 1886, at the end of the rainy season, Emperor Menelik II and his royal entourage moved down from the chilly hilltops of Entoto, the mountain above Addis Ababa, to set up camp around the hot springs known as Filwoha. Taitu, the Emperor's wife, fell in love with natural hot baths and the abundance of mimosa trees, and suggested that her husband build a house there (Briggs, 2002, p. 156). Today Addis Ababa or “new flower,”<sup>2</sup> is a sprawling city with a population of four million. It is the capital of Ethiopia.

The name Ethiopia, which comes from the Greek word *Aithiopes*, was first used before 700 B.C. to describe the country of dark-complexioned people living south of Egypt.<sup>3</sup> Prior to World War II, the West referred to Ethiopia as *Abyssinia*, *Abyssinie*, *Abissinia*, or *Abessinien*,<sup>4</sup> which are the Arabic words for Ethiopia.

Haile Selassie, who served as the emperor of Ethiopia from 1930 until he was overthrown 44 years later in 1974, is the leader who probably has had the most influence on Ethiopia and played an important role in modernizing the country.

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<sup>2</sup> Wilbur Thesiger writes in *The Life of my Choice* that, because in Amharic, Addis means new and Ababa means flower, he never just calls the city Addis – as this would make so little sense.

<sup>3</sup> “The name Ethiopia was prevalent in the West long before it was adopted locally, and it originally referred to any region inhabited by black people. As such, its significance in antiquity relates to historical accounts of black people in general, including, obviously, the inhabitants of the regions of today's Ethiopia. As black people dominated Africa, the term ‘Ethiopian’ was used to refer to all people of the continent, and particularly to people in the sub-Saharan regions (*Ethiopian Art*, 2002, p. 20).

<sup>4</sup> The name Abyssinia, or its derivations, are western versions of Habasha, or al-Habasah, the name used in the Arab world for Ethiopia, the linguistic process that generated it is not clear. Although the name Habasha is known to Ethiopians, interestingly, it is used locally to refer to the people, not to the country (*Ethiopian Art*, 2001, p. 20).

Selassie was not as brutally repressive as many African dictators, and he was as comfortable in Africa as he was meeting with world leaders in Paris, London, or Geneva. It is reported that he spent at least one third of his budget on education, establishing Addis Ababa University and sending superior students abroad to study. He built hospitals and established and set up the headquarters for the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1960 in Addis Ababa (Lamb, 1982, pp. 200-201). Because of the presence of the OAU and the United Nations in Addis Ababa, it is impossible to drive through the sprawling city without seeing signs pointing to embassies (of almost every African country) and chancelleries.

It was the drought in 1973 that played the greatest role in ending Selassie's rule. He was photographed feeding his two Great Danes fresh meat when thousands of Ethiopians were starving, and it was reported that over 200,000 people had died (Lamb, 1982, p. 201). After Selassie, Ethiopia went to the communists. As Alan Cowell wrote in *Killing the Wizards*:

So pervasive was the superpowers' contest that the Organization of African Unity – the supposed repository of Africa's freedom from dependence on outsiders – was neatly divided into camps looking to Washington or Moscow for succor, brandishing competing ideological labels to support their claim to superpower benefaction. (Cowell, 1992, p. 49)

In 1974 what was called the *Derg* (which means council or committee in Amharic) began a campaign to take control and dismantle the feudal imperial regime of Haile Selassie that had been in place. The grimmest period was from December 1977



through February 1978, which was known as “The Red Terror” when students led rebellions and then other reform efforts were stopped by the new government through violence. Seventeen years under Marxist rule left the country in ruins (*Ethiopian Passages*, 2003, p. 23). In 1994 Ethiopia became a federal republic with nine ethnically based states and two self-governing administrations. Under both the imperial and Marxist regimes, the state was highly centralized, power was concentrated, and institutions were strong. One of the legacies of the *Derg* that has detrimentally affected Ethiopians was the nationalization of all agricultural land, forced resettlement and food requisitioning. The new government has put in place a policy of decentralization in an attempt to encourage community development and to end ethnic conflict. Democratic elections are now held in Ethiopia.

One is initially taken aback by the all-encompassing poverty in Addis Ababa, the herds of sheep being shepherded into the city to be sold, goats bearing goods for the market, men urinating in the streets, and the ever present street children running along beside the piles of potatoes, tomatoes, and frankincense piled geometrically side-by-side on the road ready to sell. Yet, there is, around, beneath and above the poverty, a modern city emerging. There is construction, the kind of traffic congestion one finds in Western cities, many restaurants, boutiques and a shopping mall.

The Hilton Hotel was built in as a compound with shops (pastry, leather, food, clothing), restaurants, and a now well-worn lobby filled with diplomats, aid workers, technicians, actresses, birdwatchers, entrepreneurs, and journalists. It could be self-contained, if necessary, and security guards stand in an enclosed guardhouse at the

entrance. The luxurious Sheraton Hotel is located on a hill across the way from the Hilton and is described as “one of the grandest hotels in Africa.” The vast marble walls, high ceilings, and the soothing music and fragrance wafting through the air, complement the flower shop, expensive boutiques, and pastry shop that are located just off the lobby.

The Sheraton and the new Bole International Airport, which was completed in the Spring of 2003, stand in contrast to almost everything else in Addis Ababa, as they are “symbols of industrialized wealth (that some probably hope will) help Ethiopia qualify for membership in the developed world” (Mayur & Daviss, 1998, p. 28). The construction of Bole Airport is estimated at \$123 million (U.S. dollars).<sup>5</sup>

It is not easy finding your way in Addis Ababa, working down through the layers of history, culture, torment, and hope. As a white American woman, or a *faranji*<sup>6</sup> of the highest order, it is even more difficult. Journalists offer a way in. Two young female journalists invite me for dinner at Habesha, a traditional Ethiopian restaurant with music, dancing (two men and two women who change costumes and dance through a performance of traditional Ethiopian dances) and an on-going coffee ceremony in a *tukul*. Even on a Monday night, the restaurant is crowded, with people sitting outdoors in the garden, at the bar, and at the many round wicker tables that are used to serve *injera*.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Financing for the airport has come through low interest loans from a variety of donors, the largest being Kuwait and the African Development Bank (Selamta, 2003, p.21)

<sup>6</sup> *Faranji* means you. Children and others in the street looking for money say, “*faranji, faranji*” which means “you, you” give me money. The term is usually directed at tourists – and those who are white skinned.

<sup>7</sup> *Injera* is the large, pancake shaped substance of little nutritional value made from *tef*, a grain that is unique to Ethiopia. The *tef* dough is fermented for up to three days before it is cooked, the result of which is a foam-rubber texture and a slightly sour taste reminiscent of sherbet. *Injera* is usually served with a bowl of wat stew (Bradt, 2002, p. 93).

Helina Megersa is Editor-in-Chief for *The Daily Monitor* and Emrakeb Assefa, the more outgoing of the two women, is from *The Addis Reporter*. Both women studied journalism in Ethiopia and through a fellowship, Emrakeb had attended a six-month program for international journalists at Duke University. At the invitation of an editor at *The New York Times*, she spent two weeks in New York City and told us stories of being in New York.

“Why didn’t you stay in the United States?”

“Because there is so much to do here.”

Being a journalist in Ethiopia is not easy, and it is particularly difficult for women journalists. The government keeps very strict controls on their activities, and both women told me that they were not allowed to attend many of the press conferences held by the government that are open to foreign journalists. Emrakeb is one of the founders of a group the “Ethiopia Media Women’s Association.” There are no publications that cover women’s issues – health, general well being, education, and food according to the Human Rights Watch Country Report for Ethiopia, published in 2003.

The Addis Ababa private print media has no circulation outside the capital, partly as a result of transportation problems, but also partly because of intimidation by local authorities who regarded the possession of nongovernmental newspapers with suspicion. The government owned the only television and all radio stations except for one FM station owned by the Tigray Peoples’ Liberation Front (TPLF), the lead political party in the government

coalition. Although the government periodically stated that it would permit others to enter broadcasting, implementing legislation remained stalled (Human Rights Watch World Report 2003: Africa: Ethiopia).

If journalists can help us put the present in the context of general affairs, artists can, as Cornel West writes “...force(s) us to engage our past and present so that we see the fragility and contingency of our prevailing views of reality ... Art never simply reflects reality” (*Africa*, 1995, p.9). A way into any city is through its artists.

The Alliance Ethio-Francaise is located off Churchill Road, one of the main boulevards in Addis Ababa. The main structure, housing the gallery, library, and café, are sited on a hill. Along the edge of one wall, a lush green topiary hedge is sculpted with the Eiffel Tower and other scenes of Paris. There is a small café on the side of the building that opens into the gallery. A few African men are drinking coffee and watching French television. A library with shelves of books and a long comfortable reading table is at the end of the building.

The ceramic pots on exhibition in the gallery have been made by ketchene (traditional) potters who worked with Etiye Dimma Poulsen. The show is entitled, *Femmes du feu ... 13 mois plus tard*. (Women of Fire ...13 months later).

In 2002, Ms. Poulsen received a fellowship from the Alliance Ethio-Francaise to work with the traditional potters who are “often alienated or ostracized from the greater society, which fears their powers with fire and associates them with the workings of the ‘evil eye’” (Harney, 2003, p.43).

Ms. Poulsen was born in the rural village of Aroussi in Ethiopia and orphaned at

age two when she was adopted by a Danish missionary family. Her childhood was spent in Africa (Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Kenya) before the family moved back to Denmark. She began painting as a teenager and studied art and art history in Denmark before moving to France when she was twenty-two years old to live with Michel Moglia, her partner and artist. (Cornell University Web site, Biography of Poulsen) She lives in Paris and her art is exhibited around the world. She is one of the artists featured in the “Ethiopian Passages, Contemporary Art from the Diaspora” that was held at the National Gallery of African Art at the Smithsonian Museum in Washington, D.C. in 2003.

The St. George Interior Decoration and Art Gallery, which opened in 1991, was one of the first art galleries in Addis Ababa and is located in a villa that had been built when the Italians occupied Ethiopia. Ms. Saba Alene is a furniture designer and the owner of the gallery and she combines traditional Ethiopian designs in her work, which is built by craftsman who work in an adjoining workshop. There are wooden chests, decorated with strings of silver beads, leather and wood couches, and chairs.

The Makush Gallery is on the second floor of a commercial building on Bole Road. Windows across the front of the restaurant/gallery provide a view of the city. The room is painted in subdued, rich earth tones that reflect the red clay of the roads, the deep greens of the landscape.

There are a group of shops designed for tourists and set up like an American strip-mall on Churchill Boulevard which offer silver crosses, wooden figures, wooden head pillows, baskets, beaded ornaments, and religious books written in *Ge'ez* texts.

Although it is impossible to know if the old religious texts that are offered for sale are real or reproductions, the originals were “produced by hand with parchment obtained from animal skins that were washed, stretched, scraped, and dried to create suitable writing material. ...Because no cursive form of *Ge'ez* exists, copying religious texts was a laborious process, requiring the scribe to lift his *bere* (reed pen) from the parchment between each letter (*Ethiopian Art*, 2001, p. 30). The hand crosses that are for sale were used by priests in the daily church services. The pectoral crosses, that are sold to be worn as a necklace, usually on a black cord, were worn by Ethiopian Christians at the time of baptism. As a personal talisman, these objects are believed to protect their wearers from harm.<sup>8</sup>

Ethiopia is a religious country and some figures put the Christian population at 62%, Muslim at 32% and traditional African at 5% (*Ethiopian Art*, 2001, p. 21). Religious affiliation is a sensitive issue for the Ethiopian government and the Muslim population may have reached 50% or half of the population (Robert D. Domaingue, personal communication, September 30, 2003).

Gassan Bagersh, is the managing director of Shama, p.l.c. and the son of one of the leading entrepreneurial families in Ethiopia. After spending fifteen years in the United States, he has returned to Ethiopia and opened three book stores in Addis Ababa called “Book World.” They are not unlike the independent shops that one would find on Madison Avenue, carrying international magazines, art books, and a selection of other Western books. Gassan recognized that he was importing all of his books and

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<sup>8</sup> The use of pectoral crosses is documented as early as the fifteenth century, when the Emperor Zar'a Ya'eqob decreed that every Christian should wear a neck cross (*Ethiopian Art*, 2001, p. 92).

established Shama to publish local work. In 2000, Shama published three children's books, *Diving for Honey and Other Folk Tales of Ethiopia*, *Kaldi and the Dancing Goats*, and *The Battle of Adwa*.

I am in Ethiopia to understand why there is a famine and after a day wandering through galleries and museums in Addis Ababa, as we are returning to the hotel, I query the driver about the famine as our eyes meet in the rear-view mirror:

“It isn't here. It isn't in Addis.”

“Is it a serious problem in Ethiopia?”

“Yes, for twelve million people. But we have food here.”

## Chapter 5

### Famine in Ethiopia: An Overview

*Or in the famine camp, where at my feet a child crouches like a frog with eyes clouded white as moonstones. And the American nurse is whispering in my ear, 'We say the ones like that are circling the drain. You know, like a spider in your bath.'*

Aidan Hartley, *The Zanzibar Chest*

Bordered by Sudan, Kenya, Somalia, and Eritrea, Ethiopia is located in the heart of the Horn of Africa, almost centrally between the Tropic of Cancer and the Equator. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) ranks Ethiopia as one of the five poorest countries in the world. In 2002 the World Bank estimated the life expectancy in Ethiopia to be 42.1 years of age; the illiteracy rate among the population over age fifteen-years-old at 58.5% and to be 66.2% for women over the age of fifteen-years. The population was recorded at 67.3 million with a growth rate of 2.2% per year in 2002, and in October 2003, the population estimation increased to 70 million people (Gizachew Bizuayehu, personal communication, October 8, 2003). Ethiopia has one of



the fastest growing populations in Africa. Persistent drought, chronic poverty, a costly two-and-a half year war with Eritrea, environmental degradation, and the spread of HIV/AIDS have greatly complicated efforts to improve the quality of life for most Ethiopians.

In 1973, one year before Haile Selassie was driven from power, Jonathan Dimbleby, a British journalist on assignment in Ethiopia, documented a famine that was unknown to the world.

I stumbled on a famine which had already claimed upwards of 100,000 lives, but which the government had concealed from the outside world. The film of this holocaust, which I made with a team from ITV program “The Week” ricocheted around the globe. It was the first ‘television’ catastrophe of its kind and it soon raised over \$150 million – in today’s money-which triggered a huge international relief operation. A few months later, “The Unknown Famine”, as we called our report, became a catalyst for the overthrow of the quasi-feudal regime of Haile Selassie. Crudely recut to include scenes of high life at the imperial palace and retitled “The Hidden Hunger,” our footage was used to devastating effect on Ethiopian television to soften up the Emperor’s subjects for the military coup which brought Comrade – later President Mengistu to power.

Almost thirty years ago, I ended “The Unknown Famine” with

the words, ‘these people need food, medicine and blankets – and they need these things now. Today I would say ‘they need justice and fairness – and they need these things now. (The *Observer* Web site, September 9, 2003).

The 1973 famine was located in the Wallo province of Ethiopia and affected camel herders, small family farmers, and groups of people who were poor and disenfranchised and therefore hidden from public view (de Waal, 1997, pp. 107-108). Ethiopia was not the only country in the Horn of Africa experiencing a food insecurity and in 1974 the United Nations sponsored a World Food Conference. “One of the most important insights emerging from the Conference was that the causes of food insecurity and famine were not so much failures in food production, but structural problems relating to poverty and to the fact that the majority of the developing world’s poor populations were concentrated in rural areas” (The International Fund for Agricultural Development Web site, About IFAD, October 26, 2003). In 1977, as another outcome of the World Food Conference, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), a specialized agency was set up within the United Nations and established with the mission of “enabling the rural poor to overcome their poverty (The International Fund for Agricultural Development Web site) on 11 November 2003).

In 1984, a decade later, journalists Michael Buerk and Mohamed Amin covered another Ethiopian famine in a news story, and just after it was aired (de Waal, 1997, p.85) Sir Bob Geldof, the British rock star, went to Ethiopia. When he returned to Britain he organized a concert called *Live Aid* that was held in London on July 13,

1985. More than 70,000 people attended the concert at Wembley Stadium which was watched on television by 1.4 billion people in over 170 countries worldwide. A total of 70 million British pounds was raised for famine relief and sent to fund projects in Mozambique, Chad, Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali, The Sudan, and Ethiopia (Live Aid 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, BBC Television Web site). Bob Dylan and Willie Nelson organized concerts in the United States. As Aidan Hartley points out in *The Zanzibar Chest*:

The media had covered famine in Africa repeatedly since the catastrophe of Biafra in 1968 and the hunger story had become a separate news genre. TV broadcasts aimed to stimulate moral outrage and claimed that individual viewers in the rich world didn't have to remain mere spectators. News went out hand-in-hand with charity appeals that told people they could 'do something' to save the children pictured on their screens. After the media circus of the 1984 Ethiopian famine, it got harder to shock people into responding. (Hartley, 2003, p. 203)

de Waal and others raise the question of whether or not the Marxist government governing Ethiopia in the mid-1980s deliberately created the famine? The *Derg* had ruled Ethiopia between 1974 when it overthrew Emperor Haile Selassie, until 1991, when its dictatorship was defeated by insurgent forces. For most of that time, the *Dergue* was headed by Lieutenant Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariom. Mengistu and his associates in the *Dergue* claimed to be Marxists, and from the time of the Ogaden War with Somalia, 1977-78, they obtained extensive support from the Soviet Union. It was during the bombings of insurgent groups that the greatest number of civilian deaths

took place during the forcible relocation of peasant populations. As a result, famines were deliberately created by Mengistu for ideological and counterinsurgent purposes (Neier, 1998, p. 92) According to de Waal, “counter-insurgency restrictions on the grain trade and the re-location of people were instrumental in starting the famine and played a key role in maintaining it” (de Waal, 1997, p. 120).

There was a close relationship between the media and the humanitarian organizations:

When Ethiopia’s famine hit the headlines, it did so because of the relationship between private relief agencies and the television companies. Michael Buerk’s visit in July was accomplished through Oxfam. In news coverage in October and beyond, the relief agencies provided most of the reference points – up-to-date information, places to visit, interviews in the field and at home, and a means of response for concerned viewers. ...Oxfam helped us (journalists) secure visas and although we were happy to pay all the bills, we depended on Oxfam and Save the Children in Ethiopia for transportation in the famine areas. (Gill, 1986, p. 93)

The word famine comes from the French and means starvation. A famine is not one event that can be attributed to a drought or other natural occurrence; it is a process that occurs over time. Fred Cuny in *Famine, Conflict and Response: A Basic Guide* (1999) writes: A famine also results in social disintegration. “...Hoarding and related pathologies (smuggling, black market profiteering, crime) become commonplace. The

distress sale of assets (jewelry, animals, land) accelerates. Families divide in search of work or succor; wives may even be cast adrift and children sold. Out-migration increases as ever more people abandon their lands, homes, and communities in desperation. Abnormally high mortality may be the hallmark of famine, but societal breakdown is its essence” (The International Famine Center Web site).

In *Development as Freedom*, Amartya Sen points out that:

What is crucial in analyzing hunger is the substantive freedom of the individual and the family to establish ownership over the food oneself (as peasants do), by buying it in the market (as the non-growers of food do). A person may be forced into starvation even in the market, through a loss of income (for example, due to unemployment or the collapse of the market for goods that he produces and sells to earn a living). On the other side, even when food supply falls sharply in a country or a region, everyone can be saved from starvation by a better sharing of the available food (for example, through creating additional employment and income for the potential famine victims). This can be supplemented and made more effective by getting food from abroad, but many threatening famines have been prevented even without that – simply through a more equal sharing of the reduced domestic supply of food. The focus has to be on the economic power and substantive freedom of individuals and families to buy enough food, and not just on the quantum of food in the country in question. (Sen, 1999, p. 161)

Famines have been recorded in Ethiopia as early as 242 BC. The city of

Askum, where it is reported that the Christians first reached Ethiopia and later the Muslims, began to decline as a city of power between 800-1000. The decline is attributed to “an increase in population, over-cropping of the land, soil erosion or a collapse in agriculture on account of climatic changes, followed by recurrent drought and famine” (Pankhurst, 2003, p. 41).

The current famine, which is being called “The Green Famine” in Ethiopia, began with a drought that occurred in 1999 and 2000, followed by further weather and economic issues that caused severe food insecurities in 2002. “Of note is the geographical spread of the famine to the traditionally non-food shortage areas of Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples’ Region (SNNP), Arsi, Oromiya, and East Gojam in Amhara. The poor rain caused failure of the belg (short or little rains) and non-belg rains on maturing crops in the following regions:

- Tigray, belg crops in some of the regions completely failed
- Amhara, in several regions late plantings coupled with little rain
- Oromiya, maize and sorghum planted in low land areas completely failed
- SNNPR the failure of the belg rains at a critical stage of crop growth, coupled with hailstorms caused widespread damage to crops, particularly maize and beans
- Afar, serious water shortage led to death of livestock and disease
- Oromiya, drought caused livestock death and unusual migration looking for water
- Somali, livestock were affected by shortage of rain (Lautze, 2003, p .42)

In addition to the weather related problems, the food shortages are also attributed to a drop in the price of coffee, a major crop; a ban on exporting livestock to the Gulf Region from the Horn of Africa; deforestation and other environmental problems; the ability of a rural population to understand how to store and manage food over time; and high cereal prices and falling livestock prices. The low literacy rate, the unavailability of drinkable water, diseases and malnutrition among small children have also contributed to the situation that has resulted in the recent food insecurity.

In a report issued by the United States Agency for International Development (US AID) according to estimates by the United Nations World Food Program and the Food and Agriculture Organization, 12.6 million people in Ethiopia will require more than 1.5 million metric tons of food assistance in 2003 and an additional 1.4 million will require close monitoring (US AID, Fact Sheet #13, Fiscal Year 2003, July 25, 2003).

The United States Agency for International Development (US AID) commissioned a study on the current food insecurity situation in Ethiopia and it was published in June 2003 as a report entitled: *Risk and Vulnerability in Ethiopia: Learning from the Past, Responding to the Present and Preparing for the Future*. The 250-page report outlines perspective on famine, famine theory and recommendations for steps to take in the future. In discussing history the report points out that:

Historical accounts dating from the medieval period and the better documented accounts from the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries

suggest that famine in Ethiopia has been the frequent outcome of natural and socio-economic factors. ... While drought is commonly regarded as the main cause of famine, plagues and pests have been equally as important historically, causing various catastrophes, particularly in the northern parts of the country (Tigray, Gondar, Gojma, Wollow and Shoa). In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries alone, locusts caused the famines of 1625-27, 1706, 1747, and 1748 and at various times during the reign of Emperor Fasilidas (1632-1667). Epidemics such as cholera and influenza, small pox and other unspecified illnesses are recorded as causes of the famines of 1634-5, 1683, 1685 1693 and 1700-01(Pankhurst, 1984). Other medical disasters have occurred in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Lautze, 2003, p. 35).

Close to 60% of the land area in Ethiopia is pastoral and communities of people who live in these pastoral areas constitute some of the most vulnerable communities in Ethiopia. The three major pastoralist communities are the Somali (comprising slightly more than 50% of the total pastoral population), Afa (30% of the pastoral population), and the Oromos (10% of the pastoral population) (Lautze, 2003, p. 35). Data has shown that major droughts take place in pastoral areas every five to ten years. However, there are other “medium and mild disasters” that occur (either in the whole eco-system or in pocket areas between major droughts that are either as a result of drought or some other calamity. The definition of drought, and in particular the terms used to depict “mild, medium, major or acute” crises is subject to the perception of the



individual pastoralist depending on the number of livestock owned (and related to capacity) to cope with the particular drought (Lautze, 2003, p. 39).

The perception that there are more disasters happening to the pastoral people can possibly be attributed to the following factors:

- Greatly improved information flows to government agencies, donors, the UN and NGO's
- The will of the international community to help
- Relatively better accessibility to transport relief commodities
- The proliferation of aid/charity agencies
- The community's ability to manipulate and attract relief resources (Lautze, 2003, p. 39).

What is food security? In *The Guideline on Emergency Nutrition Assessment* prepared by the Early Warning Department of the Disaster Preventive and Preparedness Commission in Addis Ababa, food security is: "access by all people at all times to enough food for an active healthy life." This definition focuses on the availability of food and the ability to acquire it. So what is important is for a household is to understand its level of ability in securing food to feed everyone in the family.

Malnutrition is caused by the level of food security in the family, the access to health care services, and how the child is cared for within the family. It is the younger children, under five-years old, who do not have the ability to secure food for themselves and who are the most at risk.

Food insecurity leads to malnutrition which is "multi-nutrient malnutrition" and

it is a combination of energy and protein deficiencies, as well as vitamin and mineral deficiencies. *Kwashiorkor* begins in the lower legs and feet and leads to apathy, thinning or loss of hair, and peeling skin surfaces. *Marasmus* is the progressive loss of subcutaneous fat and muscle. The thin children with the swollen stomachs suffer from either one or both of these conditions. When a child is in this situation, his or her health can deteriorate rapidly with the onset of other illnesses like diarrhea, respiratory infection, and measles (*Guideline on Emergency Nutrition*, 2002, pp. 3-4).

There are early warning systems in place in Ethiopia to prevent widespread food insecurity that results in a famine, however, “research indicates that the relationship between policy, information and action is not as direct in practice as it is in theory (Apthorpe and Gaspar, 1996, Brown A., 1995, Gardner K. and Lews, 1996, Hendrie, 1997). According to *The Risk and Vulnerability in Ethiopia Report* the systems that are in place the early warning systems that are in place are either under analyzed; there is a over-reliance on secondary data; the scope and range is limited in geographic range; and there are no strong links to humanitarian organizations that provide the assistance. There is little focus on staple crop production. (Lautze, 2003, p. 49)

The more one researches the cycle of famine in Ethiopia the more it becomes clear that because of the complexity of each issue it is impossible to understand the direct policy changes that could make a difference. Do we begin with the environment, and revitalize the soil and look at what could be done to help small farmers in this agricultural economy? As an agricultural economist told me (Joe Siegle, personal

communication, October 8,2003) “part of the public good in a country like Ethiopia should be the development of seeds. As 70% of the country lives in rural areas and relies on agriculture for their food and for their living, this is an economic investment in the country?”

When I interviewed S. M. Hussein, Emergency Program Director for Save the Children-US in Addis Ababa, he listed the problems, in order of priority as: water and health, because they are so interlinked, followed by education, housing/shelter and agriculture. Margaret Schuller, the assistant director of the Addis Ababa office of Save the Children-US, believes the major problem is the Government of Ethiopia. “The policies of this government must change so it is attractive for business to invest in the country to help shift the economy from agriculture. That means making changes in agricultural policy so the land is not barren and resources are pumped into the country to create jobs and encourage local investment.” Many of the people I interviewed in Ethiopia and in Washington, D.C. are in agreement that education, particularly of the women, is an important step in beginning to alleviate the poverty.

## Chapter 6

### American Policy: An Overview (1960-2003)

*We fight against poverty because hope is an answer to terror. We fight against poverty because opportunity is a fundamental right to human dignity. We fight against poverty because faith requires it and conscience demands it. ... We must tie greater aid to political and legal and economic reform. And by insisting on reform, we do the work of compassion. The United States will lead by example.*

George W. Bush

Monterrey, Mexico – March 22, 2003

How do we begin to understand the issues related to governance and policy that have gone so terribly wrong and resulted in a chronic cycle of food insecurity in Ethiopia? Can changes be made in American foreign policy toward Africa, and specifically Ethiopia, to assist in ending the cycle of poverty and the on-going food insecurity in Ethiopia?

San Kwadjovie pointed out, in an article entitled “Historical context of American Policy towards Africa” that appeared in *Legacy* magazine, that the United

States has only paid attention to Africa when it has affected our national security, when it can play a role in attracting the votes of the African-American population in the United States or when an economic issue is at stake, overall it has been “characterized as one of neglect.”

A starting point to understanding food insecurity in Ethiopia is 1935 when the Italians invaded Ethiopia. Ethiopia had never been colonized by a European country, yet the invasion of Italy and the Italian presence in the country for seven years was, in some ways, similar to the experience of other African nations while they were colonies of a European country. Haile Selassie fled in 1936 when the Italians captured Addis Ababa and then combined Ethiopia and Eritrea and Italian Somiland to become Italian East Africa. The dispute that developed between Ethiopia and Eritrea and resulted in a war in 1999 can be traced back to border issues that developed when the Italians left. Emperor Selassie assumed power again in 1941 when the Italians were defeated by British and Commonwealth troops. Selassie had gone to the League of Nations and delivered an impassioned speech to ask for help for his country in June, 1936:

There is no precedent for a Head of State himself speaking in this assembly. But there is also no precedent for a people being victim of such injustice and being at present threatened by abandonment to its aggressor. Also, there has never before been an example of any Government proceeding to the systematic extermination of a nation by barbarous means, in violation of the most solemn promises made by the nations of the earth that there should not be used against

innocent human beings the terrible poison of harmful gases. It is to defend a people struggling for its age-old independence that the head of the Ethiopian Empire has come to Geneva to fulfill this supreme duty, after having himself fought at the head of his armies.

... I ask the fifty-two nations, who have given the Ethiopian people a promise to help them in their resistance to the aggressor, what are they willing to do for Ethiopia? And the great Powers who have promised the guarantee of collective security to small States on whom weighs the threat that they may one day suffer the fate of Ethiopia, I ask what measures do you intend to take? Representatives of the World I have come to Geneva to discharge in your midst the most painful of the duties of the head of a State. What reply shall I have to take back to my people? June 1936. (Appeal to the League of Nations, June 1936)

Ethiopia joined the United Nations on November 13, 1945, and it was one of the first African countries to become a member. Most other African countries joined the United Nations in 1960, the year they received their independence.<sup>9</sup>

John F. Kennedy was elected President of the United States in 1960, and he was sworn into office in January 1961. Kennedy made it clear that he wanted a “strong, free and friendly Africa” (*Legacy Magazine* Web site) and said in his inaugural address: "To those peoples in the huts and villages of half the globe struggling to break the bonds of mass misery, we pledge our best efforts to help them help themselves" (The United Nations Web site).

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<sup>9</sup> In 1960 seventeen newly independent States, sixteen from Africa, joined the United Nations – the biggest increase in one year. (The United Nations Web site, UN Milestones)

It had been recognized in the late 1950s, during the Eisenhower administration, that there were strategic considerations in assisting the newly independent and struggling African countries with the promise of poverty alleviation both as a weapon in the Cold War and in the building of alliances in the ideological confrontation between East and West.

In 1958 two journalists, William Lederer and Eugene Burdick, published a book entitled *The Ugly American*. It became a multi-million-copy bestseller that coined a phrase that continues to be used for American behavior abroad. Although it was written as fiction, it was based on fact and exposed the arrogance, incompetence, and corruption of Americans. It also led readers through examples of how the United States was losing the struggle with Communism in Asia:

”Now, just a minute,” Joe (the Ambassador) said, his voice full of good humor, “someone gave you the wrong dope. Uncle Sammy is not crazy. How many people do you think we could round up in this country who can speak Cambodian or Japanese or even German? Well, not many. I don’t *parlez vous* very well myself, but I’ve always made out pretty well in foreign countries. Fact is, we don’t expect you to know the native language. Translators are a dime a dozen overseas. And besides, it’s better to make the Asians learn English. Helps them, too. Most of the foreigners you’ll do business with speak perfect English. (Lederer, 1958, p.81)

As a result of what was happening abroad, President Eisenhower launched a study of American military aid program that led the way to much-needed reform in how foreign aid was being handled and eventually led to the formation of the United States Agency for International Development (History of US AID Web site) in the Kennedy Administration.

Shortly after his inauguration in January, President Kennedy presided at the United Nations over a resolution that declared that the decade of the sixties would be known as “The Development Era.” At the same time that the Eisenhower administration was looking at issues related to “foreign aid and assistance” the United Nations had also begun to adapt its institutions to take on the development challenge. In 1957, the United Nations established a special fund to support the growth of infrastructure and industrialization which would later become the United Nations Development Program (The United Nations Development Program Web site). This was followed in the early 1960s, as part of the Decade of Development, with a study by UNICEF to undertake a special survey into the needs of children.

This survey, initiated by UNICEF in 1960, took a year to complete and was accompanied by “state of the art” reports from other specialized agencies including the World Health Organization, for the health needs of children; the Food and Agriculture Organization; the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, for the educational needs of children; the UN Bureau of Social Affairs,



for the social welfare needs of children; and the International Labor Organization, for the work and livelihood needs of children. The final report, *Children of the Developing Countries*, presented a theory of development that underlined the importance of satisfying human needs during various phases of childhood and pre-adulthood. In particular, it argued that children's needs should be built into national development plans. Children should not be treated as if they were the orphans of the development process or merely its accidental baggage; they should be a focus of all policies directed at building up a country's "human capital" (The UNICEF Web site). This is significant because it is the children who are most at risk in Ethiopia.

On September 4, 1961 eight months after President Kennedy assumed office, the United States Congress passed the Foreign Assistance Act (FAA), which reorganized the U.S. foreign assistance programs including separating military and non-military aid. The FAA created an agency to administer economic assistance programs and on November 3, 1961 President Kennedy established the U.S. Agency for International Development (US AID). The agency's mission was long-range economic and social development assistance efforts, without a military or political function.

President Kennedy provided justification for foreign assistance on three premises:

- 1) "America's unprecedented response to world challenges" were largely unsatisfactory.
- 2) The economic collapse of the developing countries "would be disastrous to our national security, harmful to our comparative prosperity, and offensive to our conscience."

- 3) The 1960s presented an historic opportunity for industrialized nations to move less-developed nations into self-sustained economic growth.

At the time President Kennedy's commenting on the formation of US AID said:

For no objective supporter of foreign aid can be satisfied with the existing program--actually a multiplicity of programs. Bureaucratically fragmented, awkward and slow, its administration is diffused over a haphazard and irrational structure covering at least four departments and several other agencies. The program is based on a series of legislative measures and administrative procedures conceived at different times and for different purposes, many of them now obsolete, inconsistent, and unduly rigid and thus unsuited for our present needs and purposes. Its weaknesses have begun to undermine confidence in our effort both here and abroad.

Although our aid programs have helped to avoid economic chaos and collapse, and assisted many nations to maintain their independence and freedom--nevertheless, it is a fact that many of the nations we are helping are not much nearer sustained economic growth than they were when our aid operation began. Money spent to meet crisis situations or short-term political objectives while helping to maintain national integrity and independence has rarely moved the recipient nation toward greater economic stability."

Why, then, should the United States continue a foreign economic assistance program?

The answer is that there is no escaping our obligations: our moral obligations as a wise leader and good neighbor in the interdependent community of free nations--our economic obligations as the wealthiest people in a world of largely poor people, as a nation no longer dependent upon the loans from abroad that once helped us develop our own economy-- and our political obligations as the single largest counter to the adversaries of freedom.

To fail to meet those obligations now would be disastrous; and, in the long run, more expensive. For widespread poverty and chaos lead to a collapse of existing political and social structures which would inevitably invite the advance of totalitarianism into every weak and unstable area. Thus our own security would be endangered and our prosperity imperiled. A program of assistance to the underdeveloped nations must continue because the Nation's interest and the cause of political freedom require it. (US AID Web site)

In the final analysis, the greatest achievement of US AID and the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 was that they addressed the goals of setting up country-by-country planning and long-term development planning mechanisms through solving the organizational problems in the then-existing foreign assistance programs (US AID Web site).

After President Kennedy was assassinated, Lyndon Johnson, who served as president from 1963 to 1969, carried out many of the same policies of the Kennedy administration. When Richard Nixon became president in 1970 he asked his National

Security Advisor to undertake a number of strategic evaluations for different parts of the world. ...National Security Study Memorandum 39 (NSSM 39) dealt with Southern Africa (de Villiers, 1994, p. 33). The memo outlined five options. Number two was selected and it was called “The Tar Baby Option:” “To minimize the likelihood of escalation of violence in the area and the risk of U.S. involvement.” (de Villiers, p. 33). The focus during the Nixon administration was not only on Apartheid in South Africa and whether or not to impose sanctions; it was also on co-operating with the white Portuguese government in Angola and serious problems in Rhodesia and in Namibia. Kissinger’s approach was to lean toward supporting the white regimes in Southern Africa.

When President Ford became president, after Nixon resigned, it was a Senator, Dick Clark, a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, who convinced the Ford administration to “abandon the Tar Baby Option and opt for a ‘moral’ approach to South Africa:

At a luncheon in Lusaka hosted by Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda, Kissinger put his ability on display as he announced sweeping policy changes incorporating the moral approach enunciated by Clark only two months earlier. In this address on April 27, 1976 during a thirteen-day tour of African nations Kissinger begged his Black African audience to put aside their feelings about past American attitudes and to find “common group’s.” Racial justice, he declared, is the ‘dominant issue of our age.’ American support for this principle, he added, was not simply a

matter of foreign policy but an imperative of our own moral heritage.” (de Villiers, 1994, p. 41)

With so much happening in Southern Africa, particularly with American business interests in South Africa, what was happening in Ethiopia was not of the highest priority to the United States.

By the mid-1970s students, workers and soldiers began a series of strikes and demonstrations that culminated with the disposition of Emperor Haile Selassie by members of the armed forces in Ethiopia. A provisional governing council, the *Derg*, was established to run the country, and in late 1974 this council issued a program calling for the establishment of a state-controlled socialist economy. In March 1975 the monarchy was abolished, and a Marxist government took power. It was a year before, in 1974, that a British reporter had revealed a famine and reported to the world that at least 200,000 people had died of starvation. It was the Europeans who offered to help with donations of money and emergency food supplies (Gizachew Bizuayehu, personal communication, October 8, 2003).

Jimmy Carter, when he became president in 1977, intended to include human rights in foreign policy and wanted to address concerns similar to those related to promoting a “strong, free and friendly Africa,” raised a decade earlier in 1961 by President Kennedy. At the request of Senator Hubert Humphrey, legislation was drafted in 1978 to reorganize US AID and other foreign assistance programs.

In the Humphrey Bill, an International Development Cooperation Agency (IDCA) was established to coordinate foreign assistance activities as they related to

bilateral programs administered by US AID, multilateral programs of international lending institutions then under the purview of the Department of the Treasury, voluntary contributions to United Nations agencies then administered by the Department of State, food programs then administered by US AID, and the activities of OPIC. An International Development Institute would be established within IDCA to address, among other things, private and voluntary organizations and with one of the Institute's constituent parts being the Peace Corps (History of US AID Web site).

The Humphrey Bill was never enacted into law, but the IDCA was established by an order of President Carter in 1979. Up until that time, all authority to administer FAA programs had been vested in the Secretary of State by delegation from the President. The establishment of IDCA changed this relationship. During the administration of President Ronald Reagan the IDCA faded away.

Beginning in late 1988, during the Reagan administration, the House Committee on Foreign Affairs began an examination of the foreign assistance program generally and, in particular, the continued relevance of the FAA. At the same time, numerous outside interest groups also began a similar review. The findings were similar to the issues that the Kennedy administration had raised almost thirty years earlier. Probably the two most important findings were the continuing recognition that foreign assistance was a valuable foreign policy tool in terms of promoting U.S. security and economic interests; and that the United States would continue to be affected – for good or bad – by economic and political issues in other parts of the world. The report also pointed out that foreign aid does not enjoy broad public support.

The report's major recommendation was to repeal the FAA and start fresh with an act that was far more focused than current law. The legislation that was drafted (although not immediately introduced) by the Committee to address the report's findings, had as its “major economic assistance themes economic growth, poverty alleviation, environmental sustainability, and promotion of political pluralism, which were designed to give focus to the economic assistance objectives of our foreign assistance programs. The bill also attempted to be more results-oriented in its approach by streamlining congressional notification procedures and encouraging a more active role for program evaluation” (US AID Web site).

William J. Clinton was elected president in 1993. During the first year of his administration, in April 1994, a plane crash killed the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi and over the next following 100 days, some 800,000 Tutsi and politically moderate Hutu were murdered in Rwanda. The United States did nothing to stop it. “President Clinton did not convene a single meeting of his senior foreign policy advisors to discuss U.S. options for Rwanda. ...President Clinton and his advisors knew that the military and political risks of involving the United States in a bloody conflict in central Africa were great, yet there were no costs to avoiding Rwanda” (Power, 2002, pp.334-335).

In June 1998, over 50 Ethiopian civilians (including many children) were deliberately massacred, and other undefended civilian locations were attacked by the Eritrean government. As a result of the Eritrean attacks on civilian targets, the Ethiopian government decided to take measures to ensure its security. The following

year, in 1999, there was a full scale war between Ethiopia and Eritrea. (The Ethiopia-Eritrea Web page/Conflict FAQ).

Eritrea and Ethiopia had gone to war over a border dispute and economic problems that include currency **problems**: Eritrea wanted Ethiopia to allow the new Eritrean currency to circulate inside Ethiopia and Ethiopia refused. **Trade Problems**: Eritrea's largest trading partner is Ethiopia, accounting for 67 percent of Eritrean exports. **Divergent economic strategies**: Eritrea has consistently viewed itself as the centerpiece of economic activity in the Horn of Africa and their economic strategies on the assumption that Eritrean companies would have preferential access to the Ethiopian market. (The Ethiopia-Eritrea Web page/Conflict FAQ). Americans read little about what was happening in this war.

In 1998 President Clinton, his wife Hillary, and daughter Chelsea embarked on a twelve-day, ten country trip through Africa. Twenty years earlier, in 1978, President Jimmy Carter had traveled to Nigeria and Liberia, and Clinton was the first president since then to visit Africa. Wallace Ford, a lawyer in New York who had served in the administration of Mayor David Dinkins in New York City and was working on projects in South Africa did not go on the trip. I asked him about why he had not at a reception at the United Nations during the time was President Clinton was in Africa. “The trip is an unwieldy group of over 800 people. A media circus” (Wallace Ford, personal communication, March 1998).

Most Africanists, including Tatiana Carayanis, Research Manager, United



Nations Intellectual History Project, and Dr. Les de Villiers, a former officer in the South African government, will tell you that while the Clinton administration gave the outward appearances of concern for Africa, the policies and efforts of the administration did little if anything for Africa. “President Clinton was playing to two constituencies, the mostly black voters at home and the black leaders with whom he is conferring on the trip” (Apple, Jr., *The New York Times*, March 27, 1998).

President George W. Bush delivered the first major Presidential address concerning foreign assistance since the Kennedy Administration when he announced the "New Compact for Development" at the Inter-American Development Bank. He gave a similar speech at the United Nations Financing for Development Conference that was held in Monterrey, Mexico in March, 2003. In the speech he discusses the formation of the Millennium Challenge Account which is designed to:

Fight against poverty because hope is an answer to terror. We fight against poverty because opportunity is a fundamental right to human dignity.

We must tie greater aid to political and legal and economic reform. And by insisting on reform, we do the work of compassion. The United States will lead by example. I have proposed a 50-percent increase in our core development assistance over the next three budget years. Eventually, this will mean a \$5-billion annual increase over current levels. These funds will go into a new Millennium Challenge Account, devoted to projects in nations that govern justly, invest in their people and encourage economic freedom. We

will promote development from the bottom up, helping citizens find the tools and training and technologies to seize the opportunities of the global economy.”

(G.W. Bush, Speech to United Nations Financing for Development Conference, March, 22, 2003).

During the speech, President Bush indicated that he believed that “combating poverty is a moral imperative” and that he has made it a U.S. foreign policy priority. The African policy of the Bush administration is based on a “national security strategy” and has “three interlocking strategies.”

1. Countries with major impact in their neighborhood like South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya and Ethiopia are anchors for regional development.
2. Coordination with allies, friends and international institutions is essential for conflict mediation and peace operations.
3. Africa’s reforming states and sub-regional organizations must be strengthened as the primary means to strengthen as the primary means to address transnational threats on a sustained basis. (The White House Web site, Africa Policy)

President Bush traveled to South Africa, Senegal, Botswana, Uganda and Nigeria on an eight day trip in July 2003 and his administration has made a commitment to contribute funding for HIV/AIDs and development in Africa.

In looking back through the history of the FAA and the United States Agency for International Development beginning with its formation, it is clear that national security issues has played a role in shaping American policy towards Africa. It is also

clear that the role social development could play in alleviating poverty and helping citizens in country like Ethiopia achieve economic independence and individual freedom and to end the cycle to food insecurity is little understood by the American Congress or the American people.

## Chapter 7

### Humanitarian Assistance

*True generosity consists precisely in fighting to destroy the causes which nourish false charity. False charity constrains the fearful and subdued, the “rejects of life,” to extend their trembling hands. True generosity lies in striving so that these hands – whether of individuals or entire peoples – need be extended less and less in supplication, so that more and more they become human hands which work and, working, transform the world.*

Paulo Freire

*Good to save lives. More good to put all resources together, cash, food, women power, to deal with the deep seated problems.*

Ethiopian Government Official

The United States Embassy and other organizations in Ethiopia do not have an

accurate number of the non-government and private voluntary organizations working to provide humanitarian assistance in Ethiopia. Save the Children-US is playing a lead role in providing emergency assistance in Ethiopia with funding provided by the United States Government through the United States Agency for Development. Save the Children-US has been in Ethiopia since 1984 and has many development programs in place, in addition to the emergency programs.<sup>10</sup>

Organizations are not always credited with helping in a humanitarian emergency and they have been accused of corruption and administrative disarray.

Robert Stone writes in *The Nature of Development*:

Nor did the aid agencies help much. The voluminous literature of the subject is replete with examples of failed dam projects and irrigation schemes, of integrated rural development programs that produced neither integration nor development of desire, and environmental degradation arriving along with aid-donor largess. The World Bank has forthrightly admitted that its failure rate in Africa has been about double what it experiences elsewhere: The solution it advocates rests on the shaky assumption that the key to a reversal of Africa's 'backsliding' is to pour in ever greater amounts of money, proposing to quadruple its support of \$22 billion by 2000. Meanwhile, traditional

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<sup>10</sup> The other Save alliance members include Save the Children-UK, Save the Children, Norway, Save the Children, Denmark and Save the Children, Sweden. Save the Children was founded in Britain in 1919 after the end of the First World War. The situation within Germany, and particularly for the children was terrible and a group led by Dorothy Buxton and a group of her associates set up the "Fight for Famine Council" to campaign for justice and compassion for the defeated nations. The Save the Children Fund, as it was named by Dorothy was launched at Royal Albert Hall in London in May 1919 with the specific goal of raising money to send to children in Europe in the areas devastated by war. (Downloaded from the History of Save the Children, U.K. Web site). Save the Children in the United States was established in New York City in January 1932 when a group of people gathered to think about how to help the people of Appalachia who had been hit hard by the Great Depression. (Downloaded from

conservation efforts throughout the region focused far more intently on nonhuman than on human needs and on ways to sequester wildlife within parks and protected areas.” (Stone, 1992, p. 91)

There are many who are critical of the role of non-governmental organizations and faith-based missionaries who go to Africa to set up emergency feeding centers and missionary work. Dr. Paul Martin, the Director of the Center for the Study of Human Rights at Columbia University suggested in an e-mail before I left for Ethiopia:

I would advise your looking into the literature on these feeding centers. As with any aid project they are controversial as merely band-aids, distracting NGOs and local people from longer-term more challenging projects. Pictures of starving children are good for raising money. If I were you I would want to interview primarily local people and record their points of view. What do they want? It would be most interesting to run a focus group where a group of people interacted together. That would result in more refined thinking. I am always surprised how rational ordinary people are and how little the aid people listen to them and allow them an initiative. This is not to say the aid people are doing the wrong things but too often most such projects die out when the aid group moves on. You can therefore ask the aid people about sustainability, self-reliance, broader education and follow-up. (Dr. J. Paul Martin, personal communications, June 24, 2003)

In many gift shops in Addis Ababa, the book *The Lords of Poverty* is on display in the window. This book, published in 1989 and now out of print, was written by Graham Hancock. In the book Hancock argues that the official aid organizations that are financed involuntarily by taxpayers, are not accountable to the public and often are not helpful in long-term sustainable development, rather they contribute to making it more complicated. He suggests that many of the consulates and the people who work there are highly paid and live with servants, receive generous *per diem* fees and salaries, basking in living an exotic life, in many ways disconnected from the problems within the country. Although he does not principally attack the non-government organizations like Save the Children or Oxfam, for example, he does point out that their fund raising tactics, the focus on suffering, disease and that speaks to the sympathy of those living in wealthy countries is how the organization are supported. Hancock also look at the actual dollars from the fundraising activities that go to supporting programs on the ground and for local community support, then to supporting the organizations. He points out that the organizations are competitive and use slick marketing techniques to raise monies. For example, during a live-broadcast of a concert designed to raise relief funds, another organization, World Vision, ran a paid television spot listing their own 1-800 telephone number so it would appear that they were the group supporting the concert, when actually they were not involved.

Peter Drucker points out in his book *Post-Capitalist Society* that the role of volunteerism in the United States and the role of non-for-profit private voluntary organizations are to encourage “civic responsibility, which is the mark of citizenship, and civil pride that is

the mark of community. ...The need is greatest where community and community organizations and citizenship have been damaged. (Drucker, 1993, p. 177)



## Chapter 8

### Awassa

The drive to Awassa takes about four hours, on a paved road that continues down through Kenya to South Africa. Awassa, the capital of what is now called the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region (SNNP) of Ethiopia, is a city of 80,000 people. There are 13.5 million people in the SNNP and it is estimated that 1.5 million are affected by the current drought. The region is ethnically and culturally diverse, divided by languages, culture and creed and it is estimated that there are 56 nationalities in the SNNP and among and within these groups taboos, cultures and creeds that must be taken into consideration.

The Hotel Pinna is located on the main boulevard that goes through the center of Awassa and leads one down to the lake at one end and to a Christian Orthodox cathedral at the other. The hotel is described in the Brandt Guidebook as “providing the government counterpoint some stiff and long overdue competition. The rooms are far and away the best in Awassa” (Brandt, 2002, p. 396).

The small and cluttered lobby is furnished with a faded maroon velvet couch and a set of matching chairs, a low table covered with gaudy gold and marooned vases, ash trays and white lace dollies. A television in the corner is always on and luggage and yesterday's newspaper are scattered about. The reception desk, and the man who sits behind it, serve as concierge and the person to talk with about anything else. It is the message center, the gift shop, the business center and the reception area.

My room, number 38, is up one flight of stairs on the first floor. Large windows overlook the boulevard and there a balcony with a window box that is hidden behind flowing curtains. Comfortable chairs, the kind that invite reading, are next to the window, but without the additional light that would be required to nestle in with a good book. The dark stained mahogany like wood carved headboard is like many I have seen as we have driven through rural villages. The polyester red bed cover in its own way gives the room a regal look as the gold decoration reminds me of "The Lion of Judah." There is a small refrigerator filled with mostly soft drinks, and a small writing desk with a traditional desk lamp with green glass, and a brass base.

The room is generally overwhelmed with the smells of the street, charcoal and exhaust and the sounds of horses trotting along the boulevard pulling two-wheel carts outfitted with a canvas with bells along the edge that jingle in rhythm with the horses movement. These are the local taxis. Early in the morning, just as it becomes light, the four-wheel drive vehicles that fill the parking lot start up with a collective "vroom" and then hum as their engines keep running until they are ready to leave. There is also the call to prayer and the sound of the birds who are at their nosiest in the morning.

Africans love music and it is ubiquitous. Either poorly made tapes of local music or a radio station are played at a volume that is hard on the hearing. It is my impression that the music that I have been listening in Awassa is the same day after day – a repeating tape that is broadcast from shops across from the hotel. I expect this is their marketing effort, although I find that if it is loud from my room, it is almost deafening when one is actually walking in the shops.

The restaurant Pinna is next door and is “the place to be seen” in Awassa. Although there are other local restaurants, this is where the doctors, emergency workers, government employees, and others gather. Walking to a table one hears English, Amharic, French, German, and other languages. Many of the field workers are young, idealistic, and anxious to make a difference in one way or another. For many, their goal is to eventually start their own non-governmental organization. Like investment bankers who thrive on making deals and tracking the day to day ups and downs of the economic markets, emergency workers thrive on movement, concern, and the challenge of saving lives in impossible circumstances. Talk with any one of them and their resumes read, Afghanistan, Burundi, Iraq, countries in Central Asia and Pakistan. They travel with a few bags, collect local ephemeral and leave husbands, wives and children behind. They are up at dawn and arrive back in Awassa in the early evening. Over dinner they talk about their work, the number of children who have been admitted to a therapeutic feeding center, the reason a child died, a disease that has been noted. English is the universal language so they enjoy meeting friends and speaking in their own language over dinner. Although a few of the people I meet have studied in

the United States there are no Americans among these young workers.

## Chapter 9

### The Perspective of Humanitarian Workers:

#### Traveling with Cecilia Salpeteur

It is before dawn when the telephone rings at 5:13 a.m., my wake-up call as we are leaving at 6:00 a.m. from the Save the Children Guest House in Awassa to bring the supplies and staff necessary to set up a therapeutic feeding center. There are fourteen of us and two four wheel drive vehicles and one truck that seats four. The journey is estimated to take about six hours because of the conditions of the road, a trip that would only take three hours on paved roads. Cecile Salpeteur, a nutritionist for the Save the Children-US, who is leading the group, fears that if we hit a heavy rain we may have to turn back.

It is crowded in the cars, with luggage, backpacks, and miscellaneous personal goods. No one has had breakfast, and the first two and half hours are quiet in our vehicle, with the exception of Ethiopian music, from a poorly made cassette tape. Because our vehicles are covered with supplies, and we are without cellular telephones,

or any devices that might connect us electronically, it is important that we stay together. We reach a small town and stop at the Zereabruk Hotel and restaurant for breakfast. Everyone is hungry and most of the men order *inkolala tibs*, which is a dish that looks like scrambled eggs and is served with onion, green pepper, and tomato or *yinjera firfir*, which is pieces of *injera* soaked in a *kai wat* sauce and then eaten with *injera*. The women in the group have western style pastries.

We have been driving along the edge of the Rift Mountains and occasionally come upon stunning vistas and vast patches of green land and fields of cultivated soil. Along the way there are the tall leaves of the false banana plant which is called enset (*Ensete ventricosum*). This is a main crop in Ethiopia and in other African countries that are food deficient. Enset is related to, and resembles, the banana plant and is produced primarily for the large quantity of carbohydrate-rich food found in a false stem and an underground bulb (corm). It has been estimated that more than 20 percent of Ethiopia's population depend on enset for food, fiber, animal forage, construction materials, and medicines.

There are hedges of cacti that surround corn fields and flocks of colorful flowers. All along the road there are people walking, donkeys carrying supplies, children pushing a small metal circle with a long pole. The women are elegantly dressed with scarves and shawls that flow behind them. The children laugh and run along as we pass and the rags or dirty clothes they wear seem not to bother them.

We see a few local buses and one or two Isuzu trucks carrying supplies. It is even more unusual to have a vehicle pass with a white woman, and when we slowed

down I could feel their stares. Some, a bit older, would call out "*faranji*," which means "you the tourist," and the driver would smile. These people remind me of Alberto Giacometti's bronze sculpture, *Walking Man/Homme qui marche*.<sup>11</sup>

It almost 12:30 p.m. when we reach Bensa, a town with a long, flat main street. Red with dust and dirt, the shacks along the main street are storefronts. In a few shops Western style dresses hang off of hangers that have the faces of white urban women, carefully painted faces with green and red hair. They swing in the breeze like Halloween masks, or a Diane Arbus photograph.

It is Friday, a fasting day, and lunch is a fasting *injera* made with potatoes and lentils or *misr wat*, which I share with Cecilia. The ride is rough, and it is good to be out of the car. The team knows that when they arrive at the clinic they will face a group of critically malnourished and dying children, and they want to be prepared to begin treatment immediately, before nightfall. Cecilia suggests a meeting so we will all understand our tasks. The vehicles must be unloaded and all medicines and supplies accounted for – by item and quantity. The sleeping tents we are carrying must be erected. A storage room must be found if there is not one at the clinic. There will probably be the need for wood to build a fire and water to boil to make the milk. My assignment is to negotiate for a two weeks supply of wood and to find the water.

We gather back into the vehicles, for the most difficult part of the journey. We have been driving for about an hour and a half when it begins to rain. It is light at first

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<sup>11</sup> *The Walking Man* was cast in 1947 and follows on the theme of a few earlier "striding figures." "The figure is almost certainly based on ancient Egyptian statues. At the age of twenty, before he had even moved to Paris, Giacometti wrote to his parents that, 'Until now, and I think I will not change my mind, the most beautiful sculpture that I have found is neither Greek nor Roman, nor is it Renaissance, but Egyptian...The Egyptian sculptures have grandeur, a rhythm of form, a perfect technique which no one has achieved since'"(DiCrescenzo 1994, quoting letter of 4 February 1921 in Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New Haven,

nd then becomes heavy making it difficult to see and navigate. The windshield wipers sweep back and forth, back and forth making a swishing sort of sound. Cecilia is in the vehicle behind mine and I know what she is thinking.

It is after 3:00 p.m. when we reach the Girta clinic, which is located on the edge of the town behind a closed fence. A large group of people have gathered at the edges of the entrance and the most critically ill children have been taken inside and put in a temporary shelter made from thatched wood and branches of leaves.

The doctor at the clinic has received word that we are coming, but there has been little communication. Cecilia gathers a few of us into the doctor's office to outline how we are going to proceed and to understand the situation there.

There are two concrete buildings that comprise the clinic, each space no larger than 600 square-feet. There are four women lying on plastic covered mats receiving medication through intravenous drips crudely attached to the wall. Various family members sit near-by and stare as we walk by. The women are being treated for malaria.

The office has a desk, a few chairs and boxes, empty medicine bottles, papers, and lists tacked to the wall. Cecilia outlines our plan and listens as we are given the background of the problems there. After the meeting, we tour the second building. There is a sleeping room, a kitchen with a wood fire, and a room that, while filthy dirty, can be cleaned and used to store the supplies including the medicine and the food. The people assigned to clean are asked to find a broom and clothes. There is no running

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Connecticut, p. 160). It is written that Giacometti suggest the drama of the human condition and those feelings of anxiety, vulnerability and alienation expressed by Jean-Paul Satre and other existentialists (Giacometti, 2001, p. 22).



water or electricity.

I leave with Yonas Daniel, our driver, a young man who is working at the clinic, and two assistants from our group to find the wood and water. We drive through the town and down another very rough road, at least four or five miles, before stopping. A group of children and a few men gather around but we are told “owner” is not there and that we will have to return. We drive a few more feet, find the owner, and negotiate to come back in the morning and pick up the wood.

The villages have access to spring water through a well located at the bottom of a hill and through a corn field. A well-worn path gives us access to the water. By the time we stop the vehicle and Yonas climbs on top of the vehicle to take down the large blue and orange drums that will be filled with water, the car is surrounded by men, women and lots of children.

Now like the pied piper, I am leading the group in a line down the narrow and worn path through a corn field to the enclosed water pump. We all take turns pumping water and everyone seems to be enjoying what has become an event. Yonas asks two of the boys to slide the cans onto a stick to carry the plastic drums back up the hill.

The doctor and nurses have already started measuring and weighing the children. A group of men are assembling the small two-person tents where we will sleep. They set them up just a few feet from the clinic on the only flat, clean area that we could find, away from the latrines and away from the pit where garbage was collected.

Cecilia grew up in Rwanda and has worked in Afghanistan and other countries

in Africa in famine and refugee camps. She describes a night when there were four deaths in a famine camp: One child is gasping for breath and we assume he had pneumonia. Another had been suffering from severe diarrhea. We feared that perhaps feces that had been spread in the tent that might be causing other children to become sick and we emptied the tent and washed down all the sleeping mats and the bed sheets.

When a child dies, usually in the mother's arms, she runs from the tent outdoors and wails in what is the traditional mourners dance, which is called the *conclamatio mortis*, or death shout (Ashenburg, 2002, p.11).<sup>12</sup> Cecilia closes her eyes and looks away for a moment. "The mother can never again touch the body. The eyes are closed, hands are put on the chest, the feet are put together, and the body is carefully wrapped in gauze. The father or a male relative carries the body home to be buried."

The afternoon sky is changing to evening when we arrive back at the clinic with the water. We decide to walk back into town to see if we can barter with the owner of an Isuzu truck to take us to fetch the wood. Yonas walks with me and we see that the truck in the distance is just pulling away, filled with people. Yonas whistles – but it is too late. As we turn to walk back two small girls, probably twins, appear with batches of firewood on their backs. "Do we support child labor?" I think.<sup>13</sup> In this case it is a question of providing this family with money, probably for food, and they walk with us back to the clinic. It has started to rain, and the clay and dirt road is turning to mud – red, thick paste. We locate small kerosene stoves to begin boiling water.

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<sup>12</sup> In *The Mourner's Dance*, Katherine Ashenburg writes that "Once death was certain, a great noise, called the *conclamatio mortis*, or death shout, used to be made. Some peoples wailed and lamented, others tolled a bell, beat a gong, clapped a sistrum. Depending on whom you asked, the *conclamatio mortis* was designed to ensure that death had truly taken place, or to salute the dead person, or to scare away evil spirits." (p. 11).

<sup>13</sup> Child labor is a problem in Ethiopia. According to estimates by the International Labor Organizations in 1999, 53.7

Darkness is settling over our heads, and the lamps provide little light. Cecilia has finished the examinations and out of 46, eight children will be admitted. These children and their mothers have been sent back to the temporary housing. In this setting it is mothers who have brought their children for help. It has been documented that women do have an advantage during a famine. Kate Macintyre, in “Female Mortality Advantage” concludes that many of the advantages for women are related to socio-cultural factors. Women are in charge of the “cooking pot,” and they have a willingness to seek help. Women are perceived to be more vulnerable by the international community and therefore are protected. A biological advantage may be that women have more body fat.

Cecilia calls one of the nurses and asks, “Please call out the names of the children and tell them they can stay.”

Yonas is hungry and so are the workers. We do not have food with us, and I wonder where we were going to find dinner. It is now cold, dark, and wet. A local man walks back down the street with me to the one house that serves as the local bed and breakfast. It has a porch and a bar with a glaring light in the corner. We go through the room where the food is served, back through the courtyard where there are cows, a cat, and in the corner, the kitchen area. “Could they prepare dinner for 15 people?” “Only if we were back in thirty minutes.”

It is so dark that we have difficulty finding all of our group and gathering them together. Cecilia is still preparing charts and calculating the amount of milk each child will receive. The babies are crying.

We are up at 6:00 a.m. to leave for the drive back to Awassa. Cecilia checks in on the children and we drive away in the early morning light. The rain we had encountered the day before was heavy and the road has turned to thick mud. At some points, the vehicle swerves and we pitch precariously close to the ditch. An hour into the drive we encounter an Isuzu truck desperately stuck at the bottom of a hill and mired in mud. Yonas clinches his jaw, turns off the taped music, and carefully shifts into overdrive, determined that we will succeed.

As we are turning the corner through a small village, a few young men are selling goat skinned covered baskets. We stop to admire the brown, white, and black skin shaped like their thatched homes. We barter, attract a large crowd around the vehicles and generally have a good time exchanging conversation with these men. By the time we leave, the group has become large and we are being offered, mats, hats, baskets and a number of other goods.

Along another part of the road we notice two men carrying a boy with a foot bandaged with rags. We stop and offer the father and his son a ride to the clinic which is several miles away.

## Chapter 10

### Rowa Hayso: The Perspective of a Child

The guard's face appears in the crack of the door at the Morocho Feeding Center. This is just one of fifteen feeding centers<sup>14</sup> Save the Children-US has set up in Ethiopia and it is located about forty-five minutes from Awassa. He nods when he recognizes us and quietly opens the gate and motions us inside. Within a few moments there are little pink and green hooded children pulling at my hands and clutching my pants.

The children speak a number of dialects, and we cannot communicate through language, except through Yonas Daniels, the driver from Save the Children- US who is with me. He is not fluent in all of their dialects either and translate as he can. Inside a feeding center there are no swings to push, slides to slide down, or jungle gyms, toys or books. Instead there is mud, large green and brown military-style tents, wailing children, and the smell of cleaning fluid and disease. Nutritionists, nurses, and doctors

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<sup>14</sup> Save the Children-US is active in six regions in Ethiopia. Save the Children-US has set up fifteen therapeutic feeding centers to provide food and assistance to malnourished children. From January through August approximately 35 TFC's were set up in Ethiopia and managed by international non-governmental organizations.

walk back and forth with charts and pitchers of milk for distribution to the children.

Fathers and mothers stand about, washing their few clothes or carrying their children to the crude, open latrine at the edge of the enclosure.

It occurs to me to line the children behind me in a formation of sorts and to walk through the center. A young boy discerns my thoughts and begins to organize the children. Choo-choo ...choo-choo. As we chug through the camp, more children join along, until we have formed a congo line, of sorts. Choo-choo-choo-choo-choo, around the tree, behind the tents. The children are smiling and laughing, the adults have gathered as spectators, and the young boy helping me is keeping his observant eye on everything that is happening. I ask his name and in a strong firm voice he replies:

“Rowa Hayso.”

“Africans dance. They dance for joy, and they dance for grief; they dance for love and they dance for hate; they dance to bring prosperity and they chance to avert calamity; they dance for religion and they dance to pass the time” (Gorer, 1983, p.184).

We gather in a circle. We sing. We dance. We clap in tune to the music. Rowa is the conductor and the choreographer. The women and men gather around and soon we have formed a tight circle of joy. A group from US AID is visiting and ignores our singing. Two American women working on a documentary film are in one of the tents photographing a mother and child. They are seeking the iconic image the world expects.

The children do have a small pink, plastic ball and we form another circle and kick it back and forth, back and forth. It doesn't matter that this is not a real game. It

doesn't matter that the youngest children do not understand.

Who is Rowa Hayso, I wonder? I do know that he is one of the fortunate ones. It is estimated by Save the Children-US that 172 out of every 1000 Ethiopian children die before they reach the age of five-years-old and one out of every nine women dies during pregnancy or childbirth.

We return the next morning and I offer Rowa a box of crayons and white paper. He draws a lion (The Lion of Judah?), a woman, a pot, a dog, a tree, a football, and a church. I ask if he can draw the layout of the therapeutic feeding center(TFC)? Carefully, using the colors that are associated with the cups used to feed the children (red – Phase I, blue – Phase II in transition and green - Phase III, go) he draws the tents as they are laid out and marks each one in English.

Rowa tells me he is thirteen-years-old and in grade seven. Although he has a handsome, strong and well formed body, he is the size of an American seven-year-old, the result of stunting. He lives in a village three hours from Morocho with his seven brothers and two sisters. When I ask how many siblings he has he names them and counts along with the names. He is, he tells me, “one of the middle ones.”

"I am very strong that is why I came here."

Rowa is here with his young brother Bonnke, who is named after the German evangelist Reinhard Bonnke who began doing missionary work in Africa in the 1980s and founded the International Ministry Christ for all Nations. Rowa is the youngest caretaker I will meet. He sleeps on a rubber mat with Bonnke and has total responsibility for his care, just like the many other mothers and fathers. Rowa tells me

that his brother is getting better and when they leave they will walk four hours to return to their their village.

“Rowa, what do you do during the day when you are at home?”

“I help my parents and I am a student so I study. I walk to school and it takes one hour. I leave at 6:00 in the morning.”

“What makes Rowa afraid?”

“Nothing?”

“What makes Rowa happy?”

“I am happy by Jesus.”

“What makes Rowa sad?”

In a much lower and soft voice he replies, “When I saw a dead person I felt very sad.”

“What questions would you like to ask me?”

“I want to go to your country. I’ll wait for you. Please don’t forget me and please help me and help my parents. My parents are very sick and we have no money. My mother is very weak. She is not strong. We are too much poor.”

The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs in Ethiopia, Ethiopian Development Research Institute, Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission and Save the Children-UK are undertaking a study entitled: *Young Lives: International Study of Childhood Poverty in Ethiopia*. The study began in 2002 in four countries: India, Viet Nam, Peru, and Ethiopia. In Ethiopia, the study is focused on 2000 children in four regions, in two different age groups: one-year-olds and eight-year-olds. The



longitudinal study will be conducted over fifteen years, and the reason for including eight-year-olds is to have a baseline for the one-year-old children when they reach eight-years-old. It is hoped through the findings that there will be a way to “improve the understanding and causes and consequences of childhood poverty in four developing countries” (*Young Lives: An International Study of Childhood Poverty*, Ethiopia, 2003, p. 1). One of the findings is that children have the perception that the water they are drinking is clean and the air they are breathing is healthy. The young children are cared for by other young children in the rural areas, but they feel that they do have someone looking after them. In the rural areas schools are remote and expensive so the literacy rate is very low among eight-year-old rural, very poor children. Most of the children in the rural areas of Ethiopia work to help support their families.

According to the findings of the study the level of education of the mother’s is a good indication of whether children go to school or not. Only 65% of children enroll in school (John Graham, Save the Children-UK, U.S. Embassy Briefing, November 6, 2003). The policy implications of the findings to date is that the creation of household assets, physical, human and social capital and improvement in girls education are the key to protect households from transitory economic shock, improve current child development and widen opportunities for child schooling, thereby enhancing their future capability.”

## Chapter 11

### Dire Dawa

My seatmate on the flight from Bole International Airport in Addis Ababa to Dire Dawa is a young woman wearing leopard skin knee high boots, a matching leopard skin top and short skirt. She sits down and immediately pulls the air sickness bag out of the seat and smiles at me. What does this mean, I wonder?

Dire Dawa, which means “empty plain” is located in the Harar region of Eastern Ethiopia. The city was founded in 1902 when the railroad that was started in Djibouti reached the area. The French started building the rail system in 1896 and it was finished by the British when it reached Addis Ababa in 1917. The rail station marks the center of the town and beyond the dirt one can still admire the architecture.

It is very hot and dry in Dire Dawa, although I’m told this is moderate weather for August. I’m met at the airport by Mussie Haile Selassie from Save the Children-US. His two sons are with him, Gerson Mussie, age thirteen-years-old and Alayar Mussie, age three-years-old. A cousin and another child or two and the driver all

crowd into the Save the Children four wheel drive vehicle to drive me to The Dil Hotel, just a short drive from the airport on a paved road. Dire Dawa is unique for having such roads.

My room is on the first floor in the front of the hotel and has a view of acacia trees across the way. There is a bright fuchsia, flowered bed cover, Cooney Island style, a small television, that receives only Ethiopian television and a clothes closet. In the bathroom the showerhead is on the ceiling, a little off center from the toilet and a slight indentation in the floor is designed to contain the water. There is one knob for cold water.

Mussie is waiting for me downstairs, so I quickly remove my jacket and sweater, and pull on a blue shawl. Lunch is at a local café in town. Later in the afternoon we take me up another short drive around town. We stop by the local market which while similar to the souks in Marrakech, has essentially counterfeited goods, plastic shoes, plastic flowers, electronics, dishes, tin pots, synthetic fabric, and western style dresses and clothes. Then, at the request of Mussie's son we go to Jungle Land. This is a new park. There are bright colored plastic chairs and tables on terraced land. In the back there is a zoo and swings and slides for the children. There is a caged lion cub, a few monkeys, an assortment of birds. It is early in the evening and as the sunsets and the sky become black assorted colored lights are turned on. The grand centerpiece, a white plastic water fountain, becomes a bright flashing green, yellow, red and blue. A wedding party walks down the path, followed by a photographer and women dressed in gold and silver colored shawls and long skirts. All the while crackling American music

is filtering through the air – *Love is a Many Splendored Thing, Some Enchanted Evening*.

Save the Children-US in Dire Dawa has recently moved into a former government building. It has a large open light filled lobby painted a subtle light yellow in color. I meet briefly with Nasri Hussein Adam, Emergency Program Manager and director of the Save the Children-US office in Dire Dawa and then begin a round of morning meetings. There is a meeting to talk about the work Save the Children-US is doing in education through the BESO program; with a representative from GOAL, the Irish NGO working on food related issues; and then with three people who work on issues related to HIV/AIDS. In the afternoon I'm introduced to the regional health and education minister. His office is located in a building that appears to be abandoned. It is dirty and filled with clutter. It has the look of abandoned inner city tenement. The agriculture department, by comparison, seems have a bit more organization.

## Chapter 12

### The Pastoral Perspective:

#### Abraham Bokore Geedi, the Village Leader

Hamed, from Save the Children-US, has invited me to spend the day with him on a trip to Harre, a small village near the Somali border. We will be following a water tankering truck that is delivering water to remote pastoral villages. During a drought, when rivers dry up and the crops die, Save the Children delivers water every ten days. The water is pumped into a large hole in the ground that has been covered with plastic.

The remote villages that are north of Dire Dada are in areas that are difficult, if not impossible to reach. We follow along the railroad tracks, sometimes driving on, along side, or over the tracks to reach these villages. Along the way there are *dik-diks* – small animals that look like miniature deer and across our path a herd of migrating monkeys. There are probably hundreds of them. A woman with a large flock of sheep is striking as her flowing scarf floats in the hot wind against the dry brown and dusty

background.

When we arrive a Harre, a cluster of open shacks, the entire village, children, men and women gathers around as we step out of the vehicle. We are ahead of the water tankering truck. It is now the middle of the day, the sun is high in the sky and it is hot.

The village elder wants to talk with me, and a mat is moved under the shade of the overhang in front of the building that is serving as the shop in the village and I am motioned to a small three-legged stool, known as a *barcema*<sup>4</sup> invited to sit. There are bags of grain (US AID), and a few other supplies. A mug of hot, and very sweet, Somali tea is placed next to me. Sugar is a source of energy.

Abraham Bokore Geedi, the village leader, is next to me. He is wearing plastic flip-flops, a white tee-shirt, and a blue colored wrap. He tells me that within the area of the village, which covers between five and seven kilometers, there are about 4,820 people. I am astonished that he has such precise knowledge of the population. He has been elected as the leader from a group of four or five candidates, and the people have gathered together to vote in a “forum.” Men and women vote.

“Why is there a famine?”

“There has been a drought and camels, cattle and goats can’t get enough to eat. Only sheep. We can’t say it is the judgment of God. In fact we are only doing our normal praying to God – when God wants to release the rain he will.” “We do not have any infrastructure. We need a school and a health clinic. We need teachers and health care professionals.”

“Why don’t you build a school and perhaps the government would be encouraged to provide a teacher?”

“We tried to build a school but it was washed away in a flood.”

The men are standing together in a group on my left, and the women and children are standing together in a gathering on the other side.

Abraham Bokore Geedi invites the women to speak:

“Human beings need shelter and health. Women are dying during childbirth. They are left to care for the old people and the children. The men travel with the livestock and we must face the malnutrition. We need clean water as a permanent resource. Water tankering is only temporary. We do not have a voice to the government. We have no access to tell our problems. Except God, no-one cares for us, only NGO’s come to see us.”

Although we are in a very arid environment, hours from Dire Dawa, the children look healthy and do not have the malnourished look of many of the street children I have seen in Addis Ababa and in Dire Dawa. The children live on camel milk Hamed tells me. “A child can exist on one glass of camel’s milk a day.”

Camel’s milk is high in protein, casein, potassium, and Vitamin C and in fact can be the primary source of food for human being. It has less lactose than a human’s milk which makes it fairly easy to digest. It also has high water content and low fat content, which is another reason it is good for individuals in an arid climate. (Camel Milk Web site) Camels can produce an adequate amount of milk in drought areas where other domestic animals have very low production. Fresh camel milk has a high

pH and is similar to that of sheep's milk. There are Bedouin tales of taking a lactating camel on long trips through the desert.



## Chapter 13

Why Are the Ethiopians Starving Again?

What Should the World Do – and Not Do?”

*Making globalization work for the poor and hungry requires adequate domestic policies in developing countries. But it also needs the diplomatic, military, trade, financial, technological, environmental and institutional policies of the industrial countries to foster a pro-poor international environment.*

Eugenio Diaz-Bonilla, Bonn, Germany September 2001

The reality of the level of poverty in Ethiopia is brutally frightening. Until something is done to raise living standards throughout the country, Ethiopians will face food insecurity, with or without a drought or other weather related situation. Almost 85% of the people live on less than two-dollars a day. Diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis, and pneumonia and other conditions, including diarrhea, eye, ear, throat, and skin problems, affect people throughout the country. Figures are not available on

the percentage of the population infected with HIV/AIDS, although officials at the U. S. Embassy in Addis Ababa believe it is high. The health care system is grossly inadequate. When I interviewed the health commissioner in the Shinile Zone, an area with six districts and a population of 400,000, he listed the health facilities as:

- 1 health center, with 1 doctor
- 16 health stations
- 4 health posts
- 36 nurses
- 26 health associates
- 21 community health attendants (Yared Abera, personal communication, August, 2003).

The economist, Jeffrey Sachs, points out, in an article entitled, “Investing in Health for Economic Development,” that:

...the disease burden in the poorest countries constitutes a fundamental barrier to their economic advance. Millions of impoverished people die tragic deaths each year from infectious diseases that are preventable and treatable simply because they lack access to the needed health services. (Global Policy Forum Web site)

In Ethiopia, a country without water systems and adequate roads, the lack of access to remote areas to build wells and establish clinics contributes to the health problems.

The United States government is currently providing an estimated \$400 million for emergency food aid and development assistance projects through non-governmental organizations like Save the Children- US, Catholic Relief Services, and World Vision. The United States government recognizes the importance of keeping a democratic government in place in Ethiopia, as “part of a national security strategy and one of the

three interlocking strategies for Africa. Countries with major impact on their neighborhood such as South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya and Ethiopia are anchors for regional engagement and require focused attention" (The White House Web site, African Policy).

If the United States does fully fund and follow through with the Millennium Development Goals as outlined by President George W. Bush, Americans could play a role in reducing poverty in Ethiopia. These goals include:

- Eradicating extreme poverty and hunger
- Achieving universal primary education
- Promoting gender equality and empower women
- Reducing child mortality
- Improving maternal health
- Combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- Ensuring environmental sustainability
- Developing a global partnership for development

The non-government and private voluntary organizations working in Ethiopia are playing an important role and fill in where the government of Ethiopia cannot. Changes in the domestic policies of the Ethiopian government will provide the key to economic development and open the door to direct foreign investment. These policies would include maintaining a stable macroeconomic framework; promoting open and competitive markets; ensuring good governance, transparency, and the rule of law; and implementing programs and investments that expand opportunities for all, with special consideration for vulnerable groups or the provision of adequate safety nets.

According to figures compiled by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in 2001, direct foreign investment in Ethiopia was only \$20 million dollars, down from \$200 million in the late 1990s, before the border war between Eritrea and Ethiopia. Clearly, creating an economic environment that provides jobs will help Ethiopia climb out of poverty. What are the barriers to foreign investment?

- High level of illiteracy and few skilled workers
- High cost of doing business and difficult bureaucratic procedures (spouses are not allowed to work, shipping furniture and other household goods into the country is difficult, housing cannot be owned, limitations placed on hiring ex-patriots)
- No clearly defined investment strategy by the Ethiopian government
- Lack of a transportation system (train system is dysfunctional, few paved roads)
- Limited telephone and Internet access (access to Internet is through government server which is slow and erratic, often not functional and no telephone lines or access to cellular telephones in rural areas)
- Environmental problems are not being addressed.

And what are the strengths that might encourage business interest?

- The large labor force, if educational and skills training programs are put in place
- International access through a national airline/airport in Addis Ababa  
A strong link with international organizations (United Nations, The World Bank, Organization African Unity)
- An English speaking population

- Relationships with American/European based humanitarian workers is positive

The government of Ethiopia is making an effort to increase the number of children attending school and many of the non-governmental organizations, like Save the Children-US and Oxfam and institutions like the International Labor Organization and US AID are working in Ethiopia to set up schools in the informal sector. Everyone has a right to an education and this concept has been developed through “Education for All” (EFA), which was set-up in 1990.

However, progress will not be made in reducing poverty in Ethiopia until all of the “actors” begin to work together and achieve common goals. That little information is shared across “stakeholder” groups is one of the findings in *Risk and Vulnerability in Ethiopia: Learning from the Past, Responding to the Present, Preparing for the Future*. It is the business community that is left out of this stakeholder group.

What can business leaders do to encourage an increase in the budget of the United States government to increase its budget for funding sustainable development? What can they do to influence the policies of the Ethiopian government so that more direct foreign investment is encouraged? Could a campaign for social (sustainable) development be mounted to focus on the economic, societal, and civic benefits of development assistance in preventing breakdowns in society? Without infrastructure development and an adequate public health system, it is impossible to have a functioning educational system – civil society.

The July 2003 newsletter of the International Organization of Employers (IOE), in discussing the United Nations Global Compact, points out that business must “buy-in:”

One of the concerns of the IOE is the *ad hoc* nature of some of the Global Compact networks, some of which have been springing up without not only the involvement of the National Employers' Organization but often without many of the core agencies. The main cause for concern with such a disorganized approach is that ultimately the credibility of the Global Compact brand will be damaged. Business is the principal actor in this exercise, but amazingly, and worrisomely, this concept really seems to be misunderstood. (IOE, July 2003, p.5)

In the final statement of the G-8 participants at their Summit Meeting that was held in May 2003 it was agreed that:

We will work with all interested countries on initiatives that support sustainable economic growth, including the creation of an environment in which business can act responsibly. We also welcome voluntary initiatives by companies that promote corporate social and environmental responsibility, such as the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and the UN Global Compact principles consistent with their economic interest...

What will it take to encourage business to become involved? Some sort of direct link, a call to action, or catalyst for change that is striking will be needed. Can we create a tipping point?

The business community does recognize the economic value of having an educated population. The Business Roundtable, in a report on the importance of early education, pointed out that:

In today's world, where education and skill levels determine future earnings, the economic and social costs to individuals, communities, and a country of not taking action on education are far too great to ignore, especially when the benefits far outweigh the costs. Estimates on the return on investment of high-quality programs for low-income children range from \$4 to \$7 for every \$1 spent. However, the research is clear: the return on investment is linked to quality; simply increasing participation without ensuring program quality will not produce positive results. (The Business Roundtable, 2003)

Yet lobbying in the Beltway focuses on energy and environment, health care, economy and business, and telecommunications. These four broad issues account for three out of every five dollars according to The Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania. Lobbying could focus on education and on the need for more funds for development assistance in countries like Ethiopia.

The following elements would be critical to organizing a campaign to enlist the support of the business community in lobbying for more development assistance, which would include education:

Setting an ambitious goal: Enlist businesses to “build a fire” and lobby governments, institutions, NGOs, and others to work together to achieve the Millennium Challenge Goals.

Enlisting well recognized spokespeople: It will take a business leader,

perhaps the high-profile CEO of an agriculture/food company. The campaign must be done through face to face meetings with colleagues, the exertion of peer pressure, and very personal appeals. Businesses will be asked to incorporate the concept of sustainable development into their public affairs efforts.

Motivating Natural Allies: The international media will be enlisted to write feature articles, include discussion of development on business talk shows, and report, through their publications and electronic networks, how the campaign is advancing. As this plan requires an on-going effort, the media must be the natural ally. The media would keep attention focused on the issue, reward those countries who are enforcing compulsory education, and commend those companies who are participating and working to achieve the goals that have been outlined for the campaign. Because the business community could collectively have the power to generate discussion at the legislative level, across the globe, this participation by the media will be essential for the campaign to be heard.

Creating Personal Networks: Business works through networks. The individuals who form the “club” that is the World Economic Forum or the Club of Rome have a collegial relationship and one where decisions can be made and a consensus agreed and acted upon. It will take an on-going, and subtle and yet forceful, campaign to bring all business leaders on-board. Unlike the activists who threaten boycotts at the consumer level, the power here will be in inclusion in the thick community of business.

Advocacy: The business community is beginning to understand grassroots advocacy campaigns. If business leaders could come to an



agreement on a strategy and if NGOs and others could be encouraged to join the campaign, it could be a remarkable success. Businesses would benefit by taking action that goes beyond simply using the public relations aspects of corporate social responsibility. It will not be necessary to understand how lobbying may differ from country to country, rather it will be important for the business leaders who are coordinating and mounting the campaign to have a strategy and time-line for bringing businesses on board.

Roadblocks: In forming coalitions and in taking the agenda of sustainable development from the activists, the business community will run into roadblocks, placed by anti-globalists and others who will question their motives. The NGOs will be concerned that the momentum may affect their fundraising operations. However, once the campaign is in place and the support of the media has been enlisted, NGOs that are working in the area of education, women's education and literacy, and public health, for example, will become even more involved. Eventually, when the campaign can point to success, the NGOs will play an important role in designing, implementing, and monitoring the programs designed to achieve the goals that have been outlined.

A functioning democracy is dependent on citizens who are healthy and educated and enjoy economic independence. In a global economy, everyone must work together toward sustainable development. Such an effort could go a long way in reversing the poverty in Ethiopia and ending the cycle of famine. Making globalization work for the poor and hungry requires adequate domestic policies in developing countries. But it also needs the diplomatic, military, trade, financial, technological, environmental, and institutional

policies of the industrial countries to foster a pro-poor international environment.

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