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Field Trip Report

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1. INTRODUCTION

Since October 1991, with the new policy of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia regarding regionalization of the country, there has been much debate on the preferred location for the capital of Region 5 (Somali). The Ogadeni were in favour of Gode, which, since the time of Haile Selassie, has been both politically and strategically important for the region as well as being located in the heartland of Ogadeni territory. The majority of the other Somali groups, however, preferred Jijiga as the administrative centre for the new region. Jijiga is geographically situated in the northern part of Region 5, 140 kms east of Dire Dawa and 105 kms from Harar, with good infrastructure and access to communications facilities. However, late in 1992 Gode was designated as the capital of Region 5. Many believe that this decision was taken by the newly elected administration mainly to avoid the wrath of the Ogadeni.

During the past two years, overly bureaucratic administrative procedures in the region have attracted severe criticism from government and aid organisations alike and little progress has been made towards improving services to local communities. For example, despite obvious logistical difficulties and the problem of communications, requests for medical supplies all had to be processed through Gode which then passed the requests to Addis Ababa. This proved particularly problematic for clinics in such places as Jijiga, Kebrebeyah, Gursum, and Degehabur.

The political environment is very complex due to the large number of parties and individual participants and a political approach which is based mainly on tribal affiliations. Following a full session of the Regional Administration Council from 17 to 21 February, a smaller emergency council session was held in Jijiga on 6 April 1994 where the fragility of the then current administration was stressed in terms of its stability as well as credibility in the eyes of the international community. Nevertheless, the session agreed on the boundaries claimed for Region 5, specifying that the northern areas should include Gursum and Babile while the southern area should incorporate the whole of Borena, including Negele and Moyale.

Security, or rather the lack of security, is a major concern in the region. The Shilabo, Degehabur and Gode zones remain unstable. This is perhaps partly due to the position of some fundamentalist Muslim groups in the area who appear to be pushing for the independence of the region while at the same time retaining some connection to the Transitional Government of Ethiopia.

The international community and Transitional Government face a difficult situation *viz-a-vis* Region 5 due to the complexity of Somali politics and culture and the scope for misunderstanding events taking place. Recent exchanges concerning the future status of the region and the controversial changes in the leadership of the administration have further confused an already complicated picture.

The disintegration and decline into civil disorder seen in neighbouring Somalia has had severe consequences for Region 5, which has found itself increasingly isolated both economically and socially. In the wake of the low profile so far adopted by the international community in the region, both in terms of actual and financial presence, an approach has developed which essentially ignores the region's development needs, instead concentrating mainly on relief activities.

Understandably, the frustration of the administration, which feels the region is outside of mainstream development efforts, remains strong.

Even in this time of uncertainty and change, problems of credibility and capacity within the Region 5 administration could be effectively countered by timely and concrete support from the international community. In particular, support for grass-roots level development working through the numerous indigenous NGOs now appearing in the region could pay dividends and establish a mode of working with local communities which is effective and not subject to the frustrations of failure.

2. PRESENT SITUATION

2.1. Somali political parties

The Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) was founded in the mid 1970s during the Ogaden War. The movement started North of Degehabur by the *Darod Absame* family, the *Jidwak* and more distinctly by the *Delelguled* (a minor sub clan of the *Rer Issak*).

The WSLF was a major participant in the war of 1977 and was a gathering of politicians and fighters from various clans of the region. Today this party no longer exists and has been almost totally incorporated into the new Western Somali Democratic Party (WSDP).

The Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) is comprised mainly of partisans from the *Darod Asambe* family, is based in Gode in the Ogaden area.

The Democratic Union Party (DUP) has supporters in the area of Negelle in the Borena zone, with the majority of the *Irir Hawiye* clan heading the party.

The Horyaal Democratic Party was founded by the *Dir Gadabursi* clan; their area of influence straddles the Somaliland border and incorporated the Dire Dawa, Jijiga and the Awbar zones.

The *Al'Tadamur* is an Islamic party but is not fundamentalist. The Ogadeni are the main clan involved with this party, guided by local sheiks around Fik area.

The *Al'Itihad*, an Islamic fundamentalist organization, is well known for its strong leanings toward self-determination and its guerilla activities against the EPRDF. Members of different international organizations, the local Amhara community and other highlanders have also suffered from their actions. Their main area of activity is west of the main road from Jijiga to Gode, around Shekosh, Kebre Dehar and Denan.

In addition, there are a certain number of smaller parties affiliated to several clans such as Issak, Geri, Harti and Marehan.

On 9 February 1994, at a meeting in Hurso near Dire-Dawa a new political party called the Ethiopian Somali Democratic League (ESDL) was founded. This party claims to represent the objectives and needs of the Ethiopian-Somali people; giving particular attention to and observing

the cultural and traditional practices of the people; and giving due regard to the local constitution (Heer). This new party aims to develop a stronger link with the Transitional Government in accordance with Article 9, Title 6 of the ESDL constitution which states:

" Congress, after it convenes, can implement political, community, security and economic issues but these should conform to the policies of the Central Government of Ethiopia".

This League is a formal gathering of different Somali clan politicians representing a concentration of eleven different parties. However, it may be ascertained that a principal ambition of the League was to forge a political union between the Gadabursi and the Issak clans. In addition, several Harti, Geri, Hawiye, Marehan and even some Ogadeni have given their approval to the establishment of the new party. Despite this support, elements of the Darod Ogadeni view the League as a duplication of the existing Somali political environment, which is perceived as anti-Darod and, particularly, anti-Ogadeni. There is a rumour within the ONLF and the WSDP that the ESDL has received financial support to these specific elements within the area to achieve such an effect.

By the end of February, in response to the formation of the ESDL, the ONLF and the WSLF formed the Western Somali Democratic Party (WSDP) in Jijiga, appointing the previous president of Region 5, Hassan Jeri Kalinle, as chairman. This party has not been officially recognized as yet. What the future is for WSDP regarding their political action other than the designation of an official name for the area (Somali-Ethiopian or the Western Somali) is not yet clear.

In summary:

WSLF no longer exists and the majority of its partisans have joined either the Ethiopian Somali Democratic League (ESDL) or the Western Somali Democratic Party (WSDP).

Although some supporters of the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) have joined WSDP, and a few have moved to the Ethiopian Somali Democratic League (ESDL), the majority have remained with the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF).

The situation described for the ONLF is also applicable to the Democratic Union Party (DUP).

2.2. Political environment

For the moment, the influence of the ESDL is dominant in Jijiga and its surrounding areas. With the nomination of Jijiga as the provisional capital of the Region instead of Gode, the newly elected president, Abdurahman Ugas, as well as the re-formed executive committee of 19 members (out of 110 members of the regional parliament) are today subjects of animated debate.

On the one hand the lack of credibility and mismanagement of the previous administration have been revealed as a primary justification for the recent change of president and senior officials in the administration; while on the other hand, elements within the old administration claim the changes are an illegal act perpetrated by a renegade group.

Arguments such as a non-functioning administration in Gode, lack of communication facilities, security problems on the major roads, inaccessibility and the promotion of ideas concerning secession by the ONLF and other radical elements in the region have given central Government the opportunity to react by supporting a new administration that is more supportive of its policies.

The administration of Abdurahman Ugas does not support the ONLF's radical position and believes ONLF leaders, "only talk for themselves and for their own seat and not for the benefit of the region". It has to be noted that such political differences are not related to any hostility against the Ogadeni clan.

Officials in the new administration who met with the author were:

Ali Abdi Issa: Executive committee of the Region 5 and member of the parliament (member of the previous committee in Gode).

Dahir Sheik Mahmud: Executive committee of the Jijiga zone and member of the parliament.

Abdi Rahman Hussein: Executive committee of the Jijiga zone and member of the parliament.

Sultan Abdul Rahman: Chairman of the zone and member of the parliament.

Muurtar Dawid: Deputy chairman of the Jijiga district.

The author also met Rashid Aji, the administrator of Afder zone who attended a regional administration workshop for a week between 16-23 April 1994.

The newly appointed president, Mr. Abdurahman Ugas, is originally from Kelafo, and is a member of the *Darod Absame* family and more specifically from the *Ogaden-Tolomonger* clan. His father is a well respected *Ugas* (Chief) and he has two uncles who are respectively zonal and district administrators.

2.3. The "left over" region

To most Somali leaders, the area of South Eastern Ethiopia now incorporated into the new Region 5, has been historically neglected and marginalised by successive governments in Addis Ababa. It has become known as the "left over" region and is perceived by some Somalis as still being ignored by the present government. Many people who are now participating in the political life of the region originally fled to Somalia following the out-come of the Ogaden War in 1977. They are convinced that the consequences of the disintegration of Somalia over recent years, and especially the US-sponsored "Restore Hope" operation and its military actions, have had a negative impact on life in the region and has led to the adoption of a confrontational rather than peaceful approach to solving the present political problems. To underline this perception, they consider that the US troops were defeated by the Somali people while pursuing General Mohammed Farah Aideed.

Some Somali leaders believe that the problems of Region 5 are now being approached with the same attitude and lack of understanding shown by the international community in Somalia. They also believe that much disinformation is being spread by certain groups in Addis Ababa in order to

discourage the international community from the supporting development programmes in the region.

The needs of Region 5 are tremendous in every sector but especially in agriculture, infra-structure, communications, education and health. Continuing political problems, hostilities between clans, land claims, boundary disputes and the process leading to the election of the constituent assembly are all major issues in the region. Local leaders strongly believe that the international community has taken the present situation and rumours as a pretext to stall activities rather than concentrating on the needs of the indigenous Somali people.

Due to the civil war in Somalia, trade and traditional exchanges with the Ogaden have been significantly reduced. This has had a major impact on the economy of the region which has always been more integrated with Somalia than the highlands of Ethiopia. In recent years, the provision of emergency aid has become an important part of the economy, especially in places like Jijiga where vast amounts of food and other assistance has been channeled to the refugee camps in the area. Indigenous people look on this programme with a degree of envy feeling strongly that the UN and NGOs are not consulting closely enough with local communities or meeting their needs.

" I am fed up of my father and my father brought me his father! " states a Somali proverb.

2.4. Security

It is difficult to provide a clear picture or description of the current security situation in the area. Beside certain facts reported by the international community, mainly the NGOs, it is almost impossible to confirm or deny the many rumours that circulate at this time. During the past months several clashes have occurred between various armed groups and the EPRDF in different areas of the region. More recently, an offensive against the Al'Itihad has been officially confirmed in the media. The main centres of this action appear to have been in the area delineated by the line between Degehabur-Kebridehar-Denan-Fik.

According to rumours, the local population is generally supportive of the EPRDF actions. Several elders and members of the executive committee which the author met, gave the impression of agreeing with the position of EPRDF and mentioned that they had never intentionally harmed the Somali people.

The perception of what constitutes an insecure area or an open conflict by the Somali is generally very different to that of an outsider, especially expatriate westerners. In their view there is a big difference between a outbreak of war with its organized offensives and targeted shootings which could happen anywhere in order to solve disagreements. In general, local leaders regret that the international community does not appreciate the difference between these two situations. The gap of mis-understanding widens as the Somali leaders express their concern for poor international presence in Region 5 compared with that in Mogadishu and elsewhere in the world where war rages.

2.5. Proposal for a technical committee

During his stay in Jijiga, the author had the opportunity to meet on several occasions with Mr. Hamed Yassin, the Attorney General for Region 5. In general, his views seem quite sincere and, more importantly, he has a realistic approach concerning different aspects of the situation faced by the Somali people.

Discussions were carried out principally on how to be operational in an emergency situation; the grassroots impact of implemented programmes; how to reach the beneficiaries; the link between the traditional elders, the district, zonal and regional administration; and reports to the international community.

The Attorney General is presently working on a proposal whereby Region 5 would be divided into four distinct areas under an emergency action plan to be implemented by a technical committee comprised of elders from each area. The proposal is intended to help establish an efficient link between local communities and the administration. The Attorney General is sympathetic towards the new administration and appears to have a good working relationship with the central government.

3. HUMANITARIAN ISSUES

3.1. Refugees

The following table is a comparison between official population figures, UNHCR estimated population figures and approximate figures obtained during a survey flight over the refugee camps of Jijiga zone on Friday 22 April, 1994:

Camp	Official	UNHCR (Est.)	Survey (Est.)
HARTISHEIK (Issak/Hawiye)	250,926	70,000	50-60,000
KEBREBEYAH (Darod)	12,548	10,000	6-7,000
KAMBOKER (Issak)	66,615	7,000	4-5,000
RABASSO (Issak)	24,181	5,000	3-4,000
DAROR (Issak)	31,833	5,000	2-3,000
DERWANAJI (Gadabursi/Harti Gaboye/Hawiye)	117,069	40,000	None visited
TEFERI-BER (Gadabursi/Harti)	98,624	60,000	-

Gaboye/Hawiye)			
AYSHA (Issa)	26,694	8,000	-
TOTALS	628,490	205,000	67-79,000

According to UNHCR the number of refugees arriving from the South and Central regions of Somalia (Hawiye and Harti), does not exceed 5,000 people.

3.2. General food distribution

Food is provided by WFP, monitored by UNHCR, and distributed by the Government's Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA). Distributions usually comprise wheat grain and vegetable oil. The standard quota is 500 grams/day/person for the period of one month. However, the official population requiring assistance is more than 3 times the UNHCR working figure of 250,000 for which WFP procure and deliver food rations. The quota per individual has therefore been reduced to 400 grams/day/person for 15 days instead of 30 days.

3,750 tons of wheat grain are required monthly to supply the eight refugee camps. In addition, supplementary food distributions of sugar, CSB, Beans and DSM is made for vulnerable groups including malnourished children, lactating women, sick and disabled people.

The quantity of food to be supplied over the coming months will be reduced by an amount pending agreement on the number of refugees requiring assistance. It appeared the ARRA are looking to maintain a figure of around 225,000 people.

It is anticipated that GTZ/TOR will shortly stop transporting food for the refugee operation. Instead, WFP will contract private transport companies, in the beginning probably from Dire-Dawa, and later from the departure point which is Assab or Djibouti to the final distribution points which are the refugee camps.

3.3. Water supply

CARE is mainly involved in water tankering to the refugee camps and is delivering around 849,050 litres of water daily to the various camps as follows:

Hartisheik A	= 360 000
Hartisheik B	= 120 000
Hartisheik town	= 33 000
Kebrebeyah	= 101 450
Teferi Ber	= 131 000
Derwanaji	= 103 600

Records kept by CARE indicate overall expenses for this project bring the cost of water delivered to the camps to \$8 per 1,000 litres.

Per day : \$6,800 Per year : \$2,450,000

Two years ago the price was up to \$13 for the same quantity of water.

3.4. Returnees

The number of returnees in Region 5 is estimated to be 500,000 people. The area affected stretches from the Kenyan border around Moyale and the Borena area up to the far north of the region close to Djibouti and Somaliland via the Ogaden and Dollo areas.

Returnees in Jijiga zone and the Babile/Gursum and Degehabur/Aware districts are from Kenya, Somalia, Yemen and Somaliland.

Food-for-Work (FFW) activities in the Jijiga zone have been actively supported by UNHCR and the RRC since mid-1992 and have been designed to help reintegrate the returnees in their chosen home areas. This programme began phasing out at the end of 1993 with all outstanding projects to be completed by April 1994 due to a reduction in available food resources.

FFW projects are carried out following a contract-based approach and activities have included well and birka rehabilitation and construction; earthdam, school, clinic and storehouse construction; and road upgrading and maintenance. Food and other inputs were delivered to the chosen reintegration areas as payment to the participating communities.

Prior to this operation, assistance was provided to the returnees in the Jijiga area for two years essentially as part of the regular refugee relief programme. UNHCR stopped their free food support during the first quarter of 1993.

The majority of returnees have now been reintegrated. However, a number still remain in Kebrebeyah. The official estimation of the returnee population in this town and its surroundings now stands at approximately 3,000 people. This is probably an over-estimate.

A total of 45 villages benefitted from FFW assistance in an area stretching from the south of Babile to Degehabur. The table below gives the quantity of food provided as FFW under the various projects:

2,353.35 tons of wheat grain
122.60 tons of veg. oil
105.24 tons of salt
14.00 tons of CSB
27.45 tons of peas

The average FFW quota is as follows:

1 m³ of removed soil = 20 kg of wheat grain and 4 litres of vegetable oil.

(when the ground is hard and the working condition are difficult the above quantity should be multiplied by 2)

1 m² of finished wall = 10 kg of wheat and 2 litres of vegetable oil.

3.5. Health

MSF Belgium is working in collaboration with the Ministry of Health. They are supporting the hospital in Jijiga which is probably the only fully functioning hospital in the whole region. Their main activity is concentrated on surgery and the management of the operating theatre. In addition, they have rehabilitated 11 clinics in the Jijiga zone and are providing monthly drug supplies. Also, they provide financial and logistical support for monthly training sessions given to medical staff (health assistants) in the zone. There is good cooperation and understanding between Dr. Mohammed, director of the hospital, the MoH representative and the MSF team.

Handicap International is also working with the disabled people.

3.6. Other organisations working in the Jijiga area

The South East Rangelands Project (SERP), which has its headquarters in Jijiga, is involved in a great many different development projects throughout the region mainly in the areas of dry-land agriculture, livestock husbandry, water resources, rural infra-structure and integrated community development. They have worked closely with both UNHCR and SCF (UK) on a number of FFW supported projects and are now planning a similar programme of collaboration with the RRC. According to Mr Adbi Khalif, the new manager of the Jijiga office, SERP is covering 80% of the territories of Region 5, although another source reports that they cover only 20% of the needs of the region.

The previous manager, Ahmed Abdullai, is still in prison on suspicion of political activities and of allowing the ONLF use of the SERP radio system during the armed clash in Warder that took place in March. Abdi Khalif was previously the manager of SERP in Gode.

OXFAM is engaged in the development and rehabilitation of communally owned water points in an area within 100 kms of Jijiga. Their approach is to support projects which could use local methods, skills and materials. They are at the moment with a pending proposal with UNHCR for some expansion of their existing programme.

SCF (UK) operations are mainly confined to the refugee camps in the Jijiga area, though it plans to extend its mandate to include support for rehabilitation and development activities throughout the region.

4. SUMMARY

Jijiga has been newly designated as the 'provisional capital' of Region 5. A new administration has been set up with a strong link to the ESDL party. Mr. Abdurahman Ugas has been elected as the

new president but his political affiliations are not yet really clear though some might argue that, if not a member, he is certainly a supporter of the views put forward by the ESDL.

In response to the formation of the ESDL another political party, the WSDP, was created in March with Hassan Jeri Kalinle, the previous president of region 5, elected as chairman.

Although no security incidents have been reported lately, the Ogaden is a highly sensitive area prone to sudden changes of circumstances. The military offensive mounted by the EPRDF against Al'Itihad Islamic forces in the area have now stretched from Degehabur to Kebre Dehar and Denan.

Within the local leadership, there seems to be collective agreement on the boundaries claimed from the north to the south of the Region. The final delineation of these boundaries as well as the conduct of the forthcoming elections for the constituent assembly will probably be an important factor influencing the stability of the area.

The Somali perception that Region 5 has been, and still is, a region "left over" by both the central government and the international community, is a firmly rooted idea.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

To the international community the political environment and the security of Region 5 remains very precarious. In terms of humanitarian interventions, assistance other than the 'usual' relief response is needed. However, the process of 'normalizing' the implementation of development programmes has been much disrupted and delayed by the boundary claims, inter-clan conflicts on land ownership and the unsolved problem with the fundamentalist Islamic forces in the Ogaden area.

With regard to a society based firmly on an oral tradition passed on through respected Sheiks and elders, approaches to development should be oriented with this in mind. Establishing a dialogue with the Somali elders should be used as an opportunity to build deeper relations with the community and to develop a thorough understanding of the culture. Within any work plan should be incorporated a study on who to contact within the community elders and on how to create effective working links with the administration at both the central and district level.

The administration sees the lack of dialogue with international organisations as a major reason for their absence from the region. Better relations are seen as essential and the administration would appreciate more consultation meetings and exchanges for guidance and improved collaboration.

It would be interesting to find out what happened to the UNDP report from April 1993. At that time a baseline survey team assessed the needs of diverse groups of people which currently inhabit the Jijiga area, the sedentary, the semi sedentary, the nomadic, the refugees, returnees and displaced. The report and recommendations listed by priority were supposed to be available in the near future; and this is one year ago...

ANNEX

The following annex is added concerning two Somali clans; the Yiber and the Gaboye, who are considered as outcasts by the other clans and which the author had the opportunity to meet and hear the story of their origin and about how they settled around Jijiga and areas to the north:

The Yiber (the "untouchable"):

A Somali clan which claims to have an Israelite origin.

As in any legend, there are no specific dates relating to the history of this clan, the events described, however, occurred somewhere in the past.

As in any legend it starts as: Once upon a time there was a Jewish king, called Bu'ur Baayr, the King of Yiber, in a place called today the "Land of Somaliia".

Due to migration of peoples across the sea from the gulf countries and coming from the north, a new civilization and religion arrived in the land of the Somali.

The full power of the established King and the easy way of living of his society was very different to that of the newcomers and disputes developed. The different orientations of culture especially concerning the religion increased the separation between the two communities.

One day the Sheik of the Muslims, Yussuf Al-Kawneyn, sent a message to the King of Yiber to invite him to the palace. When the Yiber Majesty arrived at the royal court he faced the islamic judges and was accused of living in luxury and being a bad influence to his subjects and to the other community as well.

He was found guilty and the sentence was pronounced by the Sheik in order to undermine the influence of Bu'ur Baayr: "In the name of God, if your faith is so great you should be able to bring down this mountain in two distinct parts".

Then, the King of Yiber executed the sentence in front of everyone. The mountain crumbled down and the ground was separated in two parts.

All the audience witnessed God's accomplishment, the real faith of the King of Yiber. They started to praise the Great King for his loyalty and the purity of his acts.

The Sheik kept silent. In front of his own people he couldn't loose his power. His believing and commitment to Allah were so strong, however, that he invited the King to do it one more time, then to walk in the middle of the alley created between the mountain up to its center.

The King of Yiber kneeled down to pray. Suddenly, the opposite hill started to move and a new fresh sandy trail appeared on the ground. The King walked in the middle of the alley, like a Miracle. His steps were so light that his foot not even touched the dust.

In front of his own people, the humiliation of the Sheik was too deep. He felt envious and shamed at once. " On the name of the prophet Mohammed", a wish could also be accomplished to punish this renegade who offended the proudness and the faith of Allah the Great and The only One.

The Sheik went a little way into the desert and sat under a tree. He prayed to Allah for forgiveness. He promised to live a life of purity and religious earnestness if the exclusivity of such power was in his hands. The land started shaking from far. People couldn't see but felt the premonition of something about to happen. The earth started moving. Heavy rain clouds gathered around the area. The sky turned black. Then, the two parts of the mountain collapsed. The King of Yiber died where he stood, between the rocks, in the center of the Mother-Land.

Today the tribe of the Yiber is fully integrated and part of the various Somali clans. However, the legend of the past make them "untouchable". The inter marriage clanic system is not applied to them as they are considered as a lower cast. They are a pariah people, only good as artisans, working as metalsmiths or any similar lowly manual work suitable only for the Yiber.

Today, following the different events of recent history, they are found around the triangle of Hargeisa, Jijiga and Dire-Dawa.

Nevertheless, in acknowledgement to their history, into the mentality of every Somali there is a price to pay: what we might consider as compensation. In every village where the Yiber people are living, during a wedding ceremony involving members of another Somali clan or the birth of a son in a family, the Yiber people come to the door of the house and sing until they get the attention of the head of the family whereupon a share of the presents is requested. On account of superstition, or maybe because of some kind of holy devotion, as far as possible, this request is not refused.

The Gaboye:

In Somali language "gaboye" means quiver for arrows. By definition, the relation has been made that these people were hunters. As the Muslim religion prohibits eating meat without the Bismillah ceremonial they were consider as impure.

Most of the time in Somali society, when a marriage is going to take place, the couple to be married state their name and lineage. Many Somalis from an early age are taught the names of their descendants, sometimes as far back as 30 generations. According to the legend this procedure takes place in order to find out and to make sure that the bride and groom have nothing in common with the Gaboye tribe.

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