

Draft Strategy document for engagement on the issue of internal displacement in Ethiopia
November 2008

Background

Humanitarian Agencies in Ethiopia have a strong perception, for various reasons, that the Government of Ethiopia (GoE) does not 'recognise IDPs' and that the political space for dialogue on humanitarian responses to displacement in Ethiopia has become even more difficult over the past few years¹.

Despite a seemingly negative environment, three important developments have come to light in the second half of 2008 that can be built upon to develop a more constructive relationship with the GoE:

- Firstly, the DPPA was dissolved in August 2008 and the GoE has announced a new structure known as the Disaster Management Food Security Sector (DMFSS) which is placed within the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MoARD). The restructuring has come out of a Government initiative known as the Business Re-engineering Process (BRP) and is part of major reforms within the Government sector. The role of the DMFSS is not yet entirely clear but we have learned that the DMFSS will reorient its activities along a Disaster Risk Management (DRM) cycle. This means that instead of the new DMFSS solely having responsibility for crisis management (ie response), as the DPPA did before it, there will be much more emphasis on mitigation and rehabilitation². The GoE is yet to formally explain its DRM cycle and to release its new Disaster Prevention and Prevention Policy³ but it is possible that the new approach will pay more attention to conflicts and to displacement. At the very least it will give an opportunity for the humanitarian community to engage again on issues of displacement.
- Secondly and almost certainly connected to the new DRM cycle, the new DMFSS has decided that the national bi-annual needs assessment which traditionally focussed only on food insecurity will now be expanded to include multi-sectoral assessments. This gives humanitarian agencies another opportunity to engage with the GoE on developing an assessment methodology that includes an analysis of displacement. Noticeably the WASH cluster included an assessment of displacement in their checklist which, if used, will give us a better idea of where the displacement 'hotspots' are in the country. The methodology was put together very quickly in October/November 2008 and the methodology working group has already agreed that the methodology will have to be reviewed after it has been field tested this November/December.

¹ See separate note – Analysis of the Sensitivities Surrounding Displacement in Ethiopia

² The former DPPA had full responsibility for responses to both conflict and natural disaster displacement but its early warning responsibilities were restricted to natural hazards (especially drought). It also did not have any responsibility for 'rehabilitation' (ie durable solutions).

³ This has come out of a long and intensive process of consultation by the GoE over the past two years. The draft policy has not yet been made public but is likely to be issued in early 2009 for further consultation before being adopted by the Council of Ministers possibly as early as June 2009.

- Thirdly, during the latter half of 2008, the humanitarian community has jointly with the GoE responded to two displacements in Ethiopia, experiencing in both cases constructive relationships. One followed a flooding displacement in Gambella where agencies, led by IOM, coordinated very closely with the Regional Government to respond to approximately 50,000 IDPs. The other relates to a conflict displacement of approximately [confirm nos] persons along the Somali/Oromiya border. The humanitarian coordination was led by the new DMFSS in close coordination with several agencies including USAID.

Following consultation with agencies involved in these two displacements, it was generally felt that there was some momentum at the moment and an opportunity to build on recent positive experiences. A strategy has therefore been developed to recommence engagement with the GoE on the issue of displacement. The strategy comprises two complementary approaches:

1. The first approach is long-term and involves engagement at a political and institutional level through the new DRM cycle, with the ultimate objectives of (a) having a much better understanding of displacement in Ethiopia and (b) developing the GoE's capacity to mitigate and respond to internal displacement more coherently and more predictably.
2. The second approach is an intermediate strategy aimed at building confidence within the new DMFSS to take the lead in addressing displacement on a location-specific basis whilst the Government develops its new policies.

In addition, it makes sense to add two further approaches to this strategy:

3. An approach aimed at building the capacity of the GoE through the new assessment methodology to identify both displacement communities and populations at risk of displacement and to assess the humanitarian and protection concerns arising in situations of displacement.
4. An approach that links the HRF to location-specific IDP response coordination mechanisms where the Government has agreed that interventions are necessary, but there is a funding gap.

Approach 1 – engaging the Government through the new DRM cycle

Rationale: Although we yet do not have many details about the new DRM cycle, and in particular what it means in practical terms for the GoE and the new DMFSS, we do understand that there will be a shift in focus away from crisis management towards a more holistic approach of disaster mitigation and preparedness through response and recovery. We understand that the GoE proposes as part of its strategy a 'woreda mapping exercise' which will look at the hazards that have previously occurred in all parts of the country as well as the consequences and past responses. We will need to pay particular attention to whether the 'hazards' include conflict as well as natural disaster and whether the consequences include displacement. The Government will also issue the new DRM policy

for consultation which will provide a platform for agencies to comment on specific aspects relating to displacement. In the past, discussions with the GoE relating to internal displacement have mainly focussed on response and by implication, failures to respond. The new DRM cycle offers an opportunity to discuss displacement in the context of mitigation and recovery both of which are likely to be far less contentious and can, if handled constructively, create a platform for discussion on response also. From these discussions we are also very likely to get a much better feel for how the Government wishes to engage in the future and the extent to which it sees displacement as a priority. The underlying sensitivities may also be more apparent from the way in which it develops the mapping exercise. Also crucial to the new DRM is a change in the way that Government proposes managing humanitarian situations in the future. We are under the impression that there will be a significant shift in responsibility for decision-making in relation to response from the Federal Government to the Regional and even Woreda levels. The experience in Ethiopia is generally that Regional and local government officials are considerably more willing to recognise and engage with the international community on displacement whereas the Federal Government, motivated by bigger-picture economic and political considerations, has been reluctant to acknowledge the problem and has as a result on occasion blocked agencies from participating in responses. The humanitarian community therefore needs to restructure itself (especially through clusters/task forces) along the lines of the Government's new structures.

Implementation: The very first step is to find out more about the Government's new strategy. UNOCHA proposes organising a joint workshop with Government with the specific objective of introducing their new strategy and policy. This will be the platform for further discussions. The second step will be for agencies interested in taking up the issue of displacement to review the new structure and documents carefully to analysis the extent to which displacement is already addressed. From there, we will have to strategise about what elements we would like to develop with the Government and how. It is very likely that due to the scale of the project that the Government will be looking for funding and technical support to implement its new proposals. The humanitarian community should seriously consider the extent to which it can inject technical advice into the process by seconding staff and providing resources.

Constraints and Challenges:

- Obviously a considerable amount of this strategy is based upon engaging on the detail of policies which are not yet available. The current relative levels of optimism about the possibility of engaging may dissipate if the details are unclear or unforthcoming. A long-term view needs to be taken and motivation levels sustained. Also the detailed strategy of how specifically to engage on different aspects of the new process will not be obvious until we have more information.
- It is quite possible that the Government is not yet itself entirely clear on how it envisages the new DRM cycle being rolled out, so we may find ourselves in a situation of flux – including various policy revisions - for some time which could be both frustrating and make it rather difficult to engage (three steps forward, two back seems a likely scenario!)
- The initial discussions will have to proceed very much at the Government's pace rather than ours. Although we can encourage engagement and discussion of details, we have to be mindful that it is a huge project for the Government to implement. The Government will receive enormous numbers of recommendations and will have to respond on a wide

range of issues. Cluster leads must coordinate closely and agree on priorities and a common approach so as to not overwhelm the Government with advocacy and comments. Contradictory advice or advocacy by different sectors within the humanitarian community will be disastrous.

- A shift to a DRM cycle is likely to involve the participation of development actors, especially donors, and there is a danger that the project is seen as ‘developmental’ and that humanitarian actors are ‘squeezed out’ of the process. Most of the expertise on displacement lies with humanitarian actors so care will have to be taken to keep within the process and where possible enhance the capacity of our development and donor colleagues to advocate on certain issues and incorporate displacement in their technical advice.

Approach 2 – responding to displacement on the ground

Rationale: In the absence of a coherent policy from the GoE on responding to displacement, the humanitarian community cannot ignore the serious humanitarian consequences of conflict and natural disaster in Ethiopia and the specific vulnerabilities related to displacement. Two displacements are currently or have been responded to in cooperation with the Government during the latter half of this year. In the case of Gambella, IOM coordinated the flooding response alongside the Regional Government. In the case of the “Filtu IDPs” of Somali/Oromiya border region, the humanitarian agencies led by USAID have coordinated closely with the new DMFSS. This strategy involves building on these experiences and particularly trying to replicate the ‘Filtu’ example where agencies are not able to respond by cooperating with the Regional Government alone but need the Federal Government to intervene.

Implementation: It is important to distinguish between scenarios where agencies are able to respond by cooperating with the local (usually Regional) Government officials. In some cases, such as the Gambella flooding and the flooding in Jijiga it is possible for agencies to react to a displacement by agreeing the response locally and then implementing it. In other cases, where displaced people are amongst larger groups of affected people (particularly if they are with host families) agencies can incorporate them into their general response (eg water trucking projects in the Somali region which also assisted people who had migrated/were displaced). Wherever possible this strategy will continue and is encouraged. It is important to remember however, that liaison with the Federal Government is not left out of this strategy but is done by the Regional Government on behalf of the humanitarian community and full transparency must be encouraged through the relevant agency reporting mechanisms at a Federal level.

In other cases where local capacity is constrained and the Federal Government does need to lead the response, due to the scale of situation or where there are political sensitivities resulting in reluctance on the part of the local government to react without the sanction of the Federal Government, it is proposed that the following mechanism should be triggered:

- The first step will have been coordination on the ground to see who is able to respond and dialogue with the local authorities. If it has become clear that the Federal Government needs to be involved to overcome certain obstacles, UNOCHA

in Addis to be informed of the situation either directly where they do not have a field presence or through their field staff. As much detail as possible should be given about the context, numbers of people displaced, their location, needs and required responses. In the absence of being able to do formal assessments this information is likely to be guesswork to some extent, but nonetheless important.

- UNOCHA to call a meeting of all relevant agencies that have Addis representation. Decision to be made about which will be the 'lead' agency for the response. Generally there was the view that there is some advantage in the 'lead' agency being an operational agency rather than UNOCHA every time. Lead Agency and UNOCHA to approach the DMFSS and ask them to chair a coordination meeting (in a similar style to how it was done for 'Filtu').

UNOCHA's role will be to attend all of these 'ad hoc' location-specific displacement coordination forums with the specific objectives of:

- Being the one agency that can have an overview of each displacement and can monitor how each response is unfolding, particularly keeping an eye on the consistency between displacement responses and constraints/barriers arising;
- To be a neutral agency that can assist the GoE and agencies to overcome issues together;
- To reinforce positive collaboration between the Government and the international community on the issue of internal displacement;
- To identify both training possibilities and opportunities to expand discussions;
- Being a liaison between these location-specific displacements and the Protection Cluster, particularly providing information on the consistency of the various responses and the protection gaps identified.
- To make and reinforce the positive links between the location-specific responses and the new national policy on displacement.

Where there are no agencies on the ground that have the capacity to respond, UNOCHA will (subject to its own capacity constraints) take the lead in gathering information about the displacement, encouraging the DMFSS to coordinate the various relevant line bureaux to respond to the displacement, assisting with that coordination and assessments and (where possible) monitoring the response.

Constraints and Challenges

- Unfortunately there is no hard and fast rule about when and where it will be possible to proceed at a regional level without triggering a Federal Government coordination mechanism. It very much depends on local capacities and the political dimensions of a situation. It is also possible that only certain elements of the response require Federal intervention (such as food assistance or moving NFIs for example) in which case agencies acting bilaterally with the Federal Government to resolve the issue may be enough.
- Whether the Federal Government will be willing to replicate the 'Filtu' experience is also not yet clear. USAID has agreed to suggest to the DMFSS that they review the response

and coordination mechanism, hopefully resulting in the conclusion that it worked well and therefore a willingness to repeat it.

- USAID's involvement in the 'Filtu' displacement may in itself be the reason that the DMFSS reacted. It might be necessary in the future to ask USAID to involve itself in other displacements in the interests of strengthening relationships and building on successes.

Approach 3 – improving national needs assessments

Rationale: The expansion of the national needs assessment to other sectors than food security is a welcomed development. It is very unlikely that we will be able to introduce a 'protection sector' into the national needs assessment for a long time to come. However, through widening the assessment to other sectors such as watsan and health, it is possible to include protection and gender sensitivity issues such as an assessment of the number of people displaced (so that health and water interventions can be adjusted) and to analyse where there are populations at risk of displacement due to resource constraints and/or conflict arising out of resource constraints.

Implementation: Following the national needs assessment this December, survey UN and NGO colleagues on how it went and how useful the tools are. Monitor the results of the assessment to see if they reflect the findings that came from using the tools. Follow up with the 'methodology sub-group' to ensure that there is a review process. Use the review process to support the GoE in developing tools that better assess displacement issues. The Protection Cluster (led by UNHCR) should take the lead in providing or improving tools so that issues relating to displacement are included in the future assessments.

Constraints and Challenges:

- There is an assumption that there will be an opportunity to review the methodology and that the GoE will be receptive to further developments. It will be necessary to engage in very constructive dialogue.
- It will be difficult to develop protection and displacement tools through mainstreaming but not impossible. There may be some resistance from the GoE side and/or other clusters.
- This will be a time consuming and long term effort. Will also require people with some experience to participate in the future needs assessments to see how tools are developed.

Approach 4 – Using the HRF

Rationale: The HRF has funded several IDP situations (in Gambella and the Oromiya/Somalia border). Where gaps have been identified the HRF should be used to fund displacement activities to show added value to the GoE.

Implementation: OCHA to advise agencies working in situations of displacement that funds are available to meet the gaps. OCHA to encourage agencies to apply.

Constraints: The HRF has only so far been used to fund traditional humanitarian sectors such as NFIs and shelter. Funding protection activities under the HRF is difficult due to the 6 month and life saving criteria. However, working with the education cluster to fund temporary schools is a protection activity that we can start with. The recent Gambella flooding project also included a capacity building workshop that allowed for government officials to be trained on the GPID.