



Government Offices of Sweden  
Ministry for Foreign Affairs

# *Pragmatic Partnerships*



*All enclosed photos: Ambassador Andre Pung, Permanent Mission of Estonia to the UN in Geneva*

## **OCHA Donor Support Group Field Mission to Ethiopia**

**18– 22 April 2016**

# Executive Summary

The ODSG mission 2016 took place in Ethiopia, a country where protracted food insecurity had been vastly exacerbated by the El Niño phenomenon. Twenty-one ODSG members participated in the mission, co-led by Sweden and OCHA. The mission included meetings in Addis Abeba and visits to the Amhara and Tigray regions.

The humanitarian response in Ethiopia is defined by the government's strong ownership and hands-on engagement. The mission found that OCHA and the RC/HC managed their somewhat unusual roles in this context well. OCHA had played a catalyst role to achieve an improved and strengthened relationship between the government and the humanitarian community.

OCHA's advocacy role was highly appreciated by all counterparts - OCHA's initiative and leadership in calling for early action in response to the ongoing drought was highlighted as instrumental. However, more efforts were needed to capture the full range of humanitarian needs in the HRD, and to provide comprehensive updates on prioritized needs to donors and other stakeholders (this issue was partially addressed after the conclusion of the mission).

The adapted and flexible coordination structures that have been put in place gave OCHA, the HCT and cluster leads an opportunity to affect and steer the humanitarian response without diminishing the government's leadership role. While the Ethiopian context hindered implementation of the Transformative Agenda protocols in a literal sense, the mission was pleased to find OCHA to apply "the spirit of the TA" through a context-adjusted version.

The international community in Ethiopia had made efforts to strengthen the link between humanitarian and development programmes. However, the mission would have liked to see more development efforts being directed to humanitarian priority areas. A comprehensive mapping of humanitarian, development and government activities and resources, while cumbersome to produce, could prove to be highly valuable.

The mission found the Ethiopia Humanitarian Fund (EHF) to be strategic, relevant and relatively fast. The EHF has also proved to accept a higher degree of risk than other humanitarian actors or funding tools, which was welcomed by donors and had paid off in terms of output. Local actors' access to the fund, however, should be increased. Other challenges related to the EHF are not unique for Ethiopia, but should be addressed nevertheless: Slow vetting by clusters, insufficient coverage of overhead costs and low acceptance of multi-sector proposals.

Overall, the mission was encouraged to witness a highly professional humanitarian response, characterized by pragmatism and a sense of common purpose. The effective and well-managed OCHA country office, supported by a strong and engaged RC/HC, appeared to play a key role in promoting this productive team spirit through its approach to humanitarian coordination and leadership as a trusted intermediary, problem-solver and service provider. While a key to OCHA's success in Ethiopia is its tailoring to the local context, this approach should characterize OCHA's footprint everywhere.

The mission was equally encouraged by the strong and professional ownership over the humanitarian crisis by the Ethiopian government. Efforts by the government were perceived as sincere, professional and largely perceptive to advice from OCHA and other humanitarian professionals. Other countries struggling with protracted or re-current humanitarian crises should be encouraged to follow the Ethiopian government's model of ownership over the crisis.

## **I. Introduction**

### **Ethiopia: Humanitarian context and OCHA's role**

Ethiopia is experiencing one of the worst droughts in decades. Climatic shocks, including the ongoing El Niño phenomenon, have led to several consecutive below average harvests. The two main rainy seasons that supply over 80 per cent of Ethiopia's agricultural yield and employ 85 per cent of the workforce were unsuccessful in 2015. A reduction in agricultural yields, livelihood opportunities, livestock conditions and limited access to water and pastures have led to increased food insecurity and malnutrition. The 2016 Ethiopia Humanitarian Requirements Document targets 10.2 million people for humanitarian aid, up from 2.9 million in early 2015.

The Government of Ethiopia leads the coordination of humanitarian response. The OCHA Country Office, in collaboration with the Government and partners, provides support to the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC) in coordinating emergency preparedness and response among national and international actors, and strengthening national capacity for humanitarian coordination at the federal, regional and sub-regional levels.

### **Mission details**

Twenty-one ODSG members participated in the 2016 ODSG field mission to Ethiopia, co-led by Sweden, ODSG chair for 2015-16, and OCHA. The goal of the mission was to strengthen the relationship between OCHA and its donors by demonstrating OCHA's work, value and role in a protracted and escalating humanitarian context. The specific, pre-defined objectives and expected outcomes of the ODSG mission can be found in the attached Mission Terms of Reference.

The mission agenda included meetings with in-country humanitarian leadership, including the RC/HC; OCHA representatives and staff in capital and in the field; federal and regional government representatives; and UN and NGO representatives in capital and in the field.

A two-day field visit to the Amhara and Tigray regions (half the mission representatives travelled to each region) was organised to allow for a first-hand insight into the coordination of the humanitarian response in the field; visits to humanitarian projects funded through the OCHA-managed Ethiopia Humanitarian Fund (EHF); and communicate with affected populations.

## **II. Methodology**

With reference to the mission objectives, two thematic groups were set up around OCHA's key roles and mandate, so as to ensure focused discussions over the course of the week and to substantiate the ODSG mission report. The first thematic group focused primarily on OCHA's partnerships, with the following specific focus areas: a) OCHA's partnership with the Ethiopian Government and other local partners; b) Humanitarian leadership, including advocacy and support to the HC; c) OCHA partnership with other UN agencies, including on common accountability/implementation of the Transformative Agenda. The second thematic group focused primarily on coordination and humanitarian financing, with the following specific focus areas: a) Humanitarian Financing; b) Coordination including coordination of the humanitarian

programme cycle (HPC); c) Information Management; and d) OCHA's internal management, including staffing and budgeting.

A facilitator was appointed for each thematic group traveling to each geographical area (meaning four groups in total) to consolidate the main observations and findings of their thematic group at the end of the mission. The mission's recommendations reflect these findings.

Key interlocutors for during the mission were RC/HC Ms. Ahunna Eziakonwa-Onochie, OCHA Head of Office Mr. Paul Handley and OCHA Deputy Head of Office Mr. David del Conte, along with the global OCHA team, led by Director for OCHA Geneva Mr. Rudolph Muller. Please refer to annex 2 for the complete programme of the mission.

### **III. Key findings and recommendations**

This chapter summarises the main findings and recommendations of the ODSG mission based on the different meetings and visits, and inspired by the feedback from the thematic groups. Recommendations are primarily addressed to OCHA, but also to the overall UN leadership in Ethiopia (RC/HC and HCT) and ODSG members.

The recommendations should be considered with two important issues in mind: 1) The mission is humble in its task of providing recommendations on complex issues after a relatively short mission, and therefore welcomes further discussion on all the below; 2) The mission is acutely aware of OCHA's global budgetary situation, and has therefore attempted to limit recommendations that would have financial implications for OCHA.

Recommendations are grouped based on the interconnectivity of thematic areas, as perceived by the participants during and after the mission. Recommendations are therefore partially grouped differently from the pre-defined thematic groups and expected mission outcomes.

#### **1. Partnership with the Ethiopian Government**

The humanitarian response in Ethiopia is defined by the government's strong ownership and hands-on engagement. The government leads most aspects of the humanitarian response and has contributed significantly from its own resources to the humanitarian response plan. It also manages a parallel pipeline for the seasonal Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP), supported by major development donors. The PSNP covers 8 million people who otherwise would be likely to require humanitarian support. The Humanitarian Requirements Document (HRD) is a joint planning and appealing document produced by the government and the humanitarian community – equivalent to a Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) in other contexts.

OCHA's role in Ethiopia is therefore less of a leader and more of a valued intermediary between the government and the humanitarian community, compared to almost any other humanitarian context. A constructive, pragmatic and mutually beneficial partnership between OCHA and the Ethiopian Government is crucial for a successful humanitarian response. At the heart of this lies the sensitive issue of assessing and communicating the scale of humanitarian needs; the Government on the one hand asserts that it deserves international solidarity to address the needs of its people, though is likewise determined to demonstrate control over the situation and to avoid what it perceives as a possibility of derailing the current level of economic growth. Overall,

most interlocutors agreed the result was a conservative HRD, where some humanitarian needs were excluded.

The mission found that OCHA, as well as the RC/HC, managed this complex relationship very well. The adapted and flexible coordination structures that have been put in place give OCHA and the cluster leads, through secretariat and co-chair roles, an opportunity to affect and steer the humanitarian response without diminishing the government's leadership role. Differences in views between the government and OCHA or the humanitarian community are, generally, identified and solved pragmatically. The joint HRD appears strategic, prioritized and well-formulated, and was presented at the same time as the global humanitarian appeal (more under Coordination). Overall, OCHA appears to have played a catalyst role to achieve an improved and strengthened relationship between the government and the humanitarian community – to the benefit of affected populations.

The mission was also, overall, impressed by the ownership and level of engagement by the Ethiopian Government. Efforts by the government were perceived as sincere, professional and largely perceptive to advice from OCHA and other humanitarian professionals.

However, the mission's questions regarding potential political involvement in the priority classification of *woredas* (counties) and potential nepotism in distribution lines were addressed by OCHA only in general terms. OCHA also faces the challenge of trying to adequately advocate for needs that may not be captured in the HRD (more under Advocacy). Calls for an updated strategic response document, which could help donors make well-informed decisions on funding, had not been realized at the time of the mission (a 2-page, updated "Prioritization Statement" was issued on May 10<sup>th</sup>, after the mission was concluded). While the mission had limited opportunity to review protection issues, the strong government lead could potentially complicate humanitarian protection efforts, not least linked to Ethiopia's some 540 000 IDPs.

#### Recommendations:

- OCHA Ethiopia should continue its constructive and pragmatic approach to the partnership with the Ethiopian government, acting as a trusted intermediary between the government and humanitarian actors.
- OCHA Ethiopia should continue to work with the government to keep up to date and communicate the full scale of needs to the international community, stressing that such messaging by no means signals a failure by the Ethiopian government.
- OCHA Ethiopia should engage/continue engagement with the government on sensitive issues such as needs assessments, prioritization, targeting and protection.
- OCHA and ODSG MS should recognize and encourage the strong and professional engagement by the Ethiopian to the drought response, and draw lessons/best practices for other governments of affected states to follow.

## **2. Advocacy**

The mission witnessed a severe and worsening humanitarian situation as a result of structural food insecurity forcefully augmented by the El Niño drought. The urgent need for additional international support was clear, particularly for strategic interventions such as WASH and seeds distribution. Not acting now could cause millions of Ethiopian small-holder farmers to exhaust

their coping-mechanisms, thereby risk pushing them from temporary to chronic dependence on humanitarian aid.



Humanitarian actors generally agreed that the food assistance needs are presently understated and that several million more were likely in need of humanitarian assistance. It was, at the time of the mission, uncertain if the government would continue its separate food distributions under the Productive Safety Net Programme for 8 million people beyond June. The mission also coincided with the short, *belg* rains – something the Tigray-group witnessed first-hand – which may provide relief for a limited number of *woredas* in the coming months. All these factors made it difficult for the mission to get a clear sense of the scale of the most current, prioritized needs, although there was no doubt needs were substantial and urgent. (The “Prioritization Statement” released some a few weeks after the mission concluded did provide a useful snapshot of prioritized needs).

Several government, OCHA/UN and donor in-country representatives voiced a frustration about the low level of support from the international community. While the mission found such frustration understandable, it noted that the Ethiopia response funding level of 65%, including pledges and support from the Ethiopian government, was far above the global average of 13% (at the time of the mission). The general understanding that needs in the HRD are understated is somewhat offset by the fact that all included needs are targeted, which is not always the case. The higher than average funding level by no means lessen the need for advocacy or further international support, but should be kept in mind as to nuance the image of the international community’s perceived lack of support. The mission did agree that pressure should be applied to broaden support for the appeal beyond the current limited number of donors.

The mission also noted that a group of donors had advocated for a L3-declaration of the situation, partly or primarily for advocacy (fundraising) purposes, which runs counter to the purpose of a L3-declaration as it had been communicated globally.

Finally, both government and OCHA representatives cited aspects such as safeguarding development investments, Ethiopia’s stabilizing role in the region and Ethiopia’s open-border policy to refugees as reasons for the international community to help stabilize the ongoing humanitarian crisis. While the mission found these arguments relevant for development and security policy considerations, it noted that they fall outside considerations for humanitarian funding, as guided by the needs-based principle and the humanitarian imperative.

### Recommendations:

- OCHA Ethiopia should continue to work on timely updates of needs, noting that donors require it for financial decision making. OCHA should use data and evidence to support claims of increased or higher-than-reported needs.
- In-country UN and ODSG MS representatives should continue to advocate strongly for international support for the Ethiopia humanitarian crisis, but do so mindful of the global humanitarian funding levels as to not create the perception that the international community has “forgotten” Ethiopia.
- OCHA and UN representatives should tailor arguments for international support based on audience, noting that development and security-policy considerations – while important - fall outside the principal role of humanitarian support.
- OCHA and ODSG MS should review/renew its communication to field colleagues in regards to the intended use and purpose of a L3-declaration (i.e. that it is not appropriate for advocacy / fundraising purposes).

### **3. Leadership**

The UN’s and OCHA’s role in leadership in Ethiopia is, as noted in the previous chapter, different from many other humanitarian contexts. The RC/HC and OCHA have tailored their roles to the fact that the government is the leading actor for the humanitarian response. Their leading role therefore lies primarily in coordinating and representing the humanitarian community in discussions and negotiations with the government in sensitive and cross-sectorial issues. Similarly, the HCT does play a strategic role in humanitarian decision-making, but decisions on substantial matters require the active approval of the government.

The mission appreciated the RC/HC’s, OCHA’s and the HCT’s pragmatic and context-adjusted approach to leadership in Ethiopia. There is no one-size-fits-all in humanitarian contexts, and here the humanitarian team seems to have embraced the conditions in which they operate, thereby maximizing the value played in their respective roles. The mission found OCHA to focus its role in the HCT and vis-à-vis humanitarian colleagues on solving common problems and providing services prioritized by the humanitarian community. This approach is commendable and should be the model for OCHA engagement globally.

The RC/HC has a background in OCHA and is well familiar with the humanitarian response. She herself stated that her engagement in the humanitarian response had increased significantly as the scale of the ongoing drought crisis became clear. While the scale of the crisis might otherwise have called for a Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator, the active engagement by the RC/HC combined with what appears to be an excellent working relationship between the RC/HC and the OCHA Head of Office limits the need for such a temporary solution. However, the OCHA Head of Office should ensure sufficient support capacity in his representative, “upstream” role as to not draw too much of his time and focus from the daily, “downstream” role of managing the OCHA team and ensuring effective coordination in the field.

Several UN and NGO interlocutors praised OCHA for their leadership role in putting in place and communicating an early warning about the upcoming drought already in September 2015. OCHA’s work was deemed instrumental for raising the alarm and securing resources for an early

response. OCHA also took initiative to boost the quality of cluster coordination by advocating with agencies to place empowered, senior staff in leading coordination roles, supported by context-unaware surge staff, rather than the other way around. With a few exceptions, this has helped improve overall coordination and accountability (more under Coordination). The RC/HC and OCHA has also shown leadership in advocating the government to lessen the strict requirements for INGO's to obtain visas for operating in Ethiopia.

#### Recommendations:

- The RC/HC, OCHA Ethiopia and the HCT should continue the current strategic direction of defining its role based in the best value added vis-à-vis the government. This includes the pragmatic, problem-solving approach to other humanitarian actors.
- The RC/HC and the OCHA HoO should ensure they have the appropriate support functions in place to manage the ongoing, large-scale humanitarian crisis without the support of a Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator.
- HCT members who are cluster-leads should ensure well-functioning clusters at federal and regional levels, and dedicate the appropriate resources to do so, using OCHA's model of dedicating senior programme staff as principal cluster coordinators.
- The RC/HC and OCHA Ethiopia should continue to advocate with the government to lessen NGO-requirements for visas, and to stress the critical value of NGOs for the humanitarian response. ODSG MS should actively support such efforts.

#### **4. Coordination and Accountability**

The government leads the coordination of humanitarian response through the National Disaster Risk Management Commission (NDRMC), headed by Commissioner Mitiku Kassa, who reports to the Prime Minister. The Deputy Prime Minister chairs weekly National Disaster Risk Management Council meetings of Ministers. The Commissioner co-chairs monthly Strategic Multi-Agency Coordination (S-MAC) meetings with the RC/HC. OCHA co-chairs the Government's Disaster Risk Management Taskforce Working Groups (DRMTWG), which in turn guides the locally-adopted cluster approach. Sector task forces are composed of government line ministries and humanitarian cluster leads as co-chairs.

The mission found that the locally adapted and flexible coordination structures function well, and that OCHA plays an important role for creating good working relationships between government representatives and cluster leads. The OCHA leadership were well informed of the content and purpose of the IASC Transformative Agenda (TA), and while the Ethiopian context hindered implementation of the TA protocol in a literal sense, the mission was pleased to find OCHA to apply "the spirit of the TA" through a context-adjusted version.

The robust coordination structures at federal level appeared to be effective, although some interlocutors expressed meeting fatigue. Under OCHA's initiative/leadership, an approach with "empowered cluster leads" has been applied to ensure strong professional relationships with government counterparts. The approach meant senior managers of the respective lead agencies have taken on the co-chair roles for the clusters, supported by context-unaware surge staff, rather than the other way around. The approach appeared to have resulted in significant improvements in the functioning of most clusters.



The co-chairing of clusters with government line-ministries ensures local ownership and synergies with national programmes, but does create some challenges. Some traditional humanitarian sectors, such as nutrition, are split between different ministries which are not always internally coordinated. Not all ministries have the means to assign the appropriate resources to adequately fill its coordination role. Targeted capacity building by OCHA to boost coordination capacity within selected government entities may be a good investment.

The co-chairing of the DRMTWG by OCHA's Head of Office demonstrates leadership and emphasizes the importance of dedicating senior staff to key coordinating roles. The mission's impression was that inter-cluster coordination was well-functioning at federal level, but weaker at sub-national level. The findings also varied between the mission's two field-groups, where partners in the region without a dedicated OCHA sub-office, unsurprisingly, were less satisfied with the level of OCHA's coordination engagement at regional-level. A boost in rotating staff to regions without sub-offices may therefore be advisable.

The logistics cluster had recently been activated to come to terms with the increasingly long-lead times for internationally procured humanitarian goods due to congestion in the Port of Djibouti and bottlenecks in overland transport. This is welcome, particularly since the cluster will ensure coordination between the HRD and the PSNP pipelines, but the mission would have liked to see the activation take place at an earlier stage to avoid significant delays in the first place. Further bottlenecks were identified at distribution points, led by the government. While OCHA's influence over the speed of government distributions may be limited, it is crucial that such challenges are resolved to demonstrate an efficient response, first and foremost to affected populations, but also to donors who are considering support.

The joint HRD is an improved product compared to previous years, and it was released in sync with the global programme cycle for 2016. However, the rapidly changing needs has reduced the HRD's value for operational decision-making. A mid-term review is scheduled for June, but the mission found the gap between the launch in Nov/Dec and an update in June long. (The 2-page Prioritisation Statement released on May 10<sup>th</sup>, after the mission had concluded, partially addressed this issue by listing updated and prioritised needs and financial requirements for all sectors except food).

Interlocutors voiced concern that data on beneficiaries reported by them during the last assessment process were changed when presented at federal level. While some field partners were concerned they had not been invited to participate in, or been informed of, upcoming assessments for the mid-year review, OCHA ensured multiple UN agencies and NGOs would participate in the post-Belg assessment, starting early June. The mission also learned that some smaller NGOs operating in Ethiopia were not participating actively in coordination. Further efforts to engage in dialogue with these NGOs could result in better geographical coverage of the humanitarian response.

Interlocutors also expressed wishes for more rapid and coordinated emergency assessments to help influence operational decision-making, particularly since the dated HRD had lost some of its operational usefulness. The impression was that ongoing needs assessments were ad hoc, patchy and lacking in transparency.

The periodic monitoring report provided by OCHA did fill some of the perceived gap of coordinated, up to date information on prioritized needs. It also served the purpose of increased accountability, but it remained unclear to the mission how widely it had been disseminated to implementing partners on the ground. The humanitarian response ad-hoc survey carried out in March was another good example of efficient and lean ways to improve the knowledge base.

Determining and assessing accountability lines and responsibilities in the Ethiopian context is both easy and difficult. Easy because the government exercises complete ownership and is thereby ultimately accountable for all aspects of the humanitarian response. Difficult because the international community nevertheless assigns humanitarian actors with a level of accountability for the thematic areas where they are cluster leads. As with many aspects of the humanitarian response in Ethiopia, the key is pragmatic partnerships to ensure a productive relationship with the government while not shying away from sensitive issues. The RC/HC, OCHA and the HCT appeared to be managing this balance well.

OCHA prepares and shares weekly humanitarian bulletins and monthly humanitarian snapshots. It compiles and circulates daily news briefs and drafts the HRD on behalf of the Government. OCHA also produces updates and distributes maps, including 4W documents, hotspot maps, and administrative and assessment maps. While the information flow is consistent and appreciated, some interlocutors suggested timing and quality of products should be prioritized over quantity.

#### Recommendations:

- OCHA Ethiopia should continue to advocate for regular and transparent updates in partnership with the Ethiopian government on evolving humanitarian needs, including efforts in joint (real time) response monitoring to facilitate an up-to-date, unbiased representation of the humanitarian needs and collective response.
- OCHA Ethiopia and the HCT should continue to apply its context-adjusted version of the TA. OCHA globally could consider using Ethiopia HCT as an example of what locally-adjusted TA-processes can look like, to deter literal interpretation of the TA-protocols by other HCTs.
- OCHA Ethiopia and the HCT should continue to implement the model of “empowered cluster leads” which seems to be an effective and respectful way to engage with government co-leads. All cluster leads must ensure they dedicate the appropriate capacity to fulfil their coordination roles.
- OCHA Ethiopia should consider offering targeted capacity building in coordination capacity for selected government counterparts, such as through workshops.
- OCHA Ethiopia should increasingly push for an inclusive approach to involving implementing partners at an early stage in the needs assessment and other HPC-cycle processes.
- OCHA Ethiopia should seek ways to enhance information sharing with NGOs of all sizes operating in Ethiopia to facilitate maximum geographical coverage.
- OCHA Ethiopia and the logistics cluster should continue to address operational bottlenecks, including through communication with government counterparts, and transparently report on the effects of bottlenecks to donors and other stakeholders.

- OCHA Ethiopia should consider innovative ways to improve sub-national coordination without increasing its footprint on the ground, such as through information technology.
- OCHA Ethiopia should review its portfolio of information products to prioritize timeliness and quality.

## 5. The Humanitarian-Development Nexus

Ethiopia is one of the world's top-ten recipients of Official Development Assistance (ODA), receiving some USD3.5 billion annually, to be compared with the current humanitarian appeal of USD1.4 billion. A significant amount of this has targeted the agricultural sectors, seeking to build resilience in a country highly dependent on unpredictable, seasonal rains. The PSNP with its 8 million target population also aims to address the cyclical food security needs.

Interlocutors disagreed on the value of past resilience investments. While some credited past investments to have ensured the current crises did not evolve to a full-blown famine, others suggested donors should carefully review the value of ongoing resilience programmes in view of the explosion of humanitarian needs as a result of failed rains. Regardless, it was clear to the mission that there was significant potential overlap between the objectives of development activities and the humanitarian response. Some development funding had also been redirected to respond to humanitarian needs as a result of the ongoing drought.

Coordination between the two sectors, however, appeared to need strengthening. World Bank and PSNP-officials were standing invitees to HCT-meetings, and the Humanitarian Resilience Building Donor Group was formed to create synergies. Still, the mission did not find much systematic evidence of operational coordination. As many prioritized activities in the HRD, not least WASH (well-drilling) and seeds distributions, could fall under both humanitarian and development programmes, there appeared to be a clear risk for unintended gaps and overlaps. For priority 1 and 2 *woredas* in particular, the mission would have liked to see a comprehensive mapping of humanitarian, development and government activities and available resources. Coordinating such mapping is a considerable task, but rewards could be substantial.

OCHA's Regional Bureau also demonstrated that, for East Africa as a whole, development activities were generally not focused to the poorest and now hardest struck geographical areas. Here, bilateral donors and development agencies have the principle responsibility to reassess their approach to development so that it gains the most vulnerable, rather than the most accessible.

Coordination is further complicated at the government level as the humanitarian response fall under the responsibility of the NDRMC and the PSNP fall under the ministry for agriculture. The mission was informed the government was preparing a policy for more effective interaction between these two entities.

The RC/HC recognized the significant need and potential gains to improve humanitarian-development coordination. She suggested the need for increased interaction between the Development Assistant Group and the HCT to create synergies. While the mission would perhaps not, in the interest of humanitarian independence and maintaining manageable groups, go as far as merging the two, but holding combined meetings on a regular basis could be a good way forward.

## Recommendations:

- OCHA Ethiopia should, together with development, government and donor partners, seek to map humanitarian, development and government programmes and available resources for resilience-type activities, particularly for priority 1 and 2 *woredas*.
- The RC/HC and OCHA Ethiopia should consider holding combined HCT/DAG meetings on a regular basis to ensure coordination and synergies between the sectors.
- ODSG MS should advocate development partners and development counterparts in their respective government to increasingly direct efforts to the most vulnerable populations and geographical areas, for Ethiopia as well as globally.

## **6. Humanitarian Financing**

OCHA manages the Ethiopia Humanitarian Fund (EHF) on behalf of the Humanitarian Coordinator. With contributions of almost USD60 million in 2015, the EHF was the second highest funded of OCHA's country-based pooled funds. The role of the EHF is to support the most critical humanitarian needs in the context of both the annual HRD and emerging unforeseen emergency needs. At present, the EHF is one of the principal sources of humanitarian financing in Ethiopia, contributing an average 15-20 per cent of the total non-food support.

The mission found the EHF to be strategic, relevant and relatively fast. Its focus on life-saving projects in otherwise underfunded sectors such as nutrition, WASH and health is sound, as funding towards massive food security needs would be less strategic. The EHF has also proved to accept a higher degree of risk than other humanitarian actors or funding tools. This was demonstrated during a site visit in Tigray, where farmers had received EHF-funded seeds to plant in time for the *belg* rains, thereby securing 2-3 months of crops for approximately USD30 per household (picture). While such programmes do not always pay off (if there is no rain the seeds will be lost), the mission noted that most donors welcome a certain degree of risk if the potential return is high.



The EHF's two governing bodies - the strategic Advisory Board and technical Review Board – appear to provide the appropriate policy direction and programmatic guidance for the EHF to function effectively. Humanitarian actors in the field constantly referred to OCHA as “our

donor?”. This may be a sign of the EHF’s success, but could constitute a challenge to OCHA in carrying out its principal, coordination function.

EHF support to local NGO’s and first responders was limited to a few NGOs with strong Government connections. This is partly due to government legislation, but steps could be taken to increase local actor’s access to the fund. Other challenges related to the EHF are not unique for Ethiopia, but should be addressed nevertheless: Slow vetting by clusters, insufficient coverage of overhead costs, low acceptance of multi-sector proposals, and the challenge for small NGOs to manage the proposal writing process.

OCHA Ethiopia also performs secretariat functions in relation to CERF allocations and reporting. While Ethiopia had received almost USD11 million from the CERF’s underfunded window in 2016, the target of those funds were solely the refugee response in Gambella region. While OCHA Ethiopia was advocating for further CERF funding for the drought crisis, they generally did not believe the CERF would provide two grants from the underfunded window to the same country in the same year. The mission believes this, if true, would be an unfortunate policy as all humanitarian needs should be assessed in their own right. It should be noted that Ethiopia received USD27 million in CERF funding for drought-related needs in 2015.

As Ethiopia attracts a high level of private businesses and investments, the mission would welcome further efforts from the RC/HC, OCHA and other humanitarian actors to engage the private sector for awareness raising and financial support.

#### Recommendations:

- The RC/HC and OCHA Ethiopia should continue the current strategic direction and general management of the EHF.
- The RC/HC and OCHA should advocate the government to adjust or issue waivers for legislation which hampers local NGO’s access to EHF-funding.
- OCHA Ethiopia should encourage pooled proposals by small/local NGOs and larger UN or NGO actors, thereby improving small actors’ access to the fund while building their capacity.
- OCHA Ethiopia should consider hosting a workshop for potential EHF-partners with the aim to improve proposal writing and disseminate global guidelines.
- OCHA Ethiopia should encourage submission of multi-sector proposals for EHF-funding to be vetted with multiple clusters simultaneously, thereby increasing the opportunity for timely approval while promoting synergies between sectors.
- OCHA Ethiopia should increasingly communicate to recipients of EHF-funding that OCHA is the intermediary of EHF-funds, provide information on the donors to the EHF, and stress OCHA’s principal, coordination role.
- OCHA Ethiopia should continue to advocate for CERF-funding to the drought. The CERF Secretariat should clarify any policy on number of underfunded grants per country and year, and otherwise consider the Ethiopia drought-needs as stand alone.
- OCHA Ethiopia should seek creative ways to enhance outreach to the private sector, with a view to raise awareness and financial support.

## 7. OCHA's Internal Management

The OCHA Ethiopia Country Office consists of the main office in Addis Abeba and six sub-offices<sup>1</sup>. The office employs 9 international and 45 national staff, making up a 93 percent staffing rate. OCHA Ethiopia's revised budget in 2016 is USD 5.57 million, and which is fully funded from earmarked contributions. The office is medium sized, smaller than OCHA's offices in countries such as Pakistan and Myanmar, and significantly smaller than those in Afghanistan and Sudan. The RC/HC and the HCT have requested OCHA to further expand and strengthen its field presence, for which additional human and financial resources are sought. OCHA headquarters has communicated its readiness to support targeted and time-bound budget revision, as long as earmarked contributions could be raised to support it, taking into consideration OCHA's global financial situation. To address increased capacity needs for more effective coordination due to the drought response, OCHA Ethiopia has received surge support from the OCHA Regional Office and stand-by partners in 2016.

The mission found OCHA's Ethiopia Country Office to be strategic and well-managed. Compared to other humanitarian contexts with an appeal above USD500 million OCHA's Ethiopia office is small. This is primarily positive, particularly given OCHA's challenging budget situation globally. However, given the vast humanitarian needs, spread over a large geographical area, the appropriate capacity to respond to the ongoing crisis must be ensured. OCHA's model of sub-offices in the largest and most affected regions combined with rotating staff covering other regions was deemed effective, but could use a boost in the rotating coordination staff. The mission was pleased to learn of surge capacity opportunities provided by the Regional Bureau and stand-by partners as means to manage the ongoing crisis without increasing the size of the office in the long or medium term.

The office leadership, Head of Office Paul Handley and Deputy Head of Office David Del Conte, appeared to execute inclusive and professional leadership. Their value for the office was highlighted by several staff and counterparts.

### Recommendations:

- OCHA Ethiopia should strive to maintain a lean footprint in Ethiopia, boosted by time-limited surge capacity for the duration of the ongoing, exceptional drought crisis.
- OCHA Ethiopia should maintain its model of rotating coordination staff for smaller/less affected regions, but should consider boosting that function with one more national staff, if budget allows.
- OCHA Ethiopia should examine ways to use information technology to facilitate coordination and other functions in sub-regions and regions without sub-offices.

## IV. Conclusion

Upon arrival in Ethiopia, the mission identified three priority questions it wanted to have answered through the visit, within the framework of the mission objectives: 1) it wanted to assess the performance of OCHA and the humanitarian community in Ethiopia, 2) it wanted to assess how the partnership with the strong Ethiopian government functioned in practice, and 3) it

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<sup>1</sup> OCHA also has a liaison office to the African Union in Addis Abeba, budgeted separately and not accounted for here.

wanted to get a clear, first-hand picture of the needs in Ethiopia to communicate to government counterparts.

As for the performance of humanitarian actors in Ethiopia, the mission was encouraged to witness a highly professional humanitarian response, characterized by pragmatism and a sense of common purpose. The effective and well-managed OCHA country office plays a key role in promoting this productive team spirit through its approach to humanitarian coordination and leadership as a trusted intermediary with Government, problem-solver and service provider. While a key to OCHA's success in Ethiopia is its tailoring to the local context, this approach should characterize OCHA's footprint everywhere.

The mission was equally encouraged by the strong and professional ownership over the humanitarian crisis by the Ethiopian government. The policies, systems and practices of the international humanitarian community are not always constructed with a strong national counterpart in mind, but such genuine ownership should always be encouraged. The resulting friction between humanitarian actors and the government around sensitive issues such as protection, potential politicization of the response, and working relations with local NGOs must be dealt with, but pragmatically and sensitively. Other countries struggling with protracted or recurrent humanitarian crises should be encouraged to follow the Ethiopian government's model of ownership over the crisis.

In regards to the third priority of obtaining clear, first-hand information on the needs in Ethiopia, the mission left somewhat unsatisfied. The mission was asked to factor in too many variables - understated needs, partial rains, pipeline challenges, lack of updated and coordinated needs assessments, and unclear level of likely government/donor support for PSNP past June - to come up with an updated, clear and communicable number attached to those needs. It was clear, however, that needs are high, acute and requiring a continued prioritized response from the international community. The Prioritization Statement released on May 10<sup>th</sup>, after the mission had concluded, also provided some further clarification on prioritized needs ahead of the mid-term review in June.