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‘ THE ROLE OF MANDATES ’

ETHIOPIA REPORT
THE PATH OF LEAST RESISTANCE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND DISCLAIMER

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND: THE ROLE OF 'MANDATES'

The research behind this report was carried out as part of HERE's broader study on **"The role of 'mandates' in humanitarian priority setting for INGOs in situations of armed conflict".** This study is based on the recognition that the majority of international non-governmental organisations that are active in humanitarian response define their purposes broadly, to include both short-term emergency response and long-term development engagement. In contrast, a small minority of organisations exclusively focus on life-saving assistance in emergency settings. In humanitarian discourse, these approaches are frequently distinguished as 'multi-' or 'single-mandate'. The Role of 'Mandates' Study sets out to investigate the appropriateness of this terminology, and the practical opportunities and limitations that would arise from different approaches. The term 'mandate' is therefore understood broadly as an organisation's goal or mission and not only in its legal meaning. The study takes a look at how organisations set priorities and come to strategic choices, and how that enables them to fulfil their goals on the ground. Eight organisations are participating in the study at the global level: Action Contre la Faim, Concern Worldwide, DanChurchAid, International Rescue Committee, Médecins sans Frontières-Spain, Norwegian Refugee Council, Welthungerhilfe, and the International Committee of the Red Cross. The study focuses on international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and the ICRC as one example of where discussions about tensions and opportunities between single-mandate and multi-mandate organisations have been raised. In view of allowing for a methodologically sound yet feasible study, the Research Team decided to limit the variables by not including UN agencies among the participating organisations. To adequately frame the context in which INGOs and the ICRC operate, due consideration has however also made of the UN system.

In order to lay part of the groundwork towards answering the broader questions of the Role of 'Mandates' Study, this report delves into some of the elements characterising the humanitarian response in Ethiopia, based on the experiences the participating organisations, as well as a range of other stakeholders. As such, it highlights some elements of that context that are of particular interest to the overall research. Specific conclusions with regard to the Role of 'Mandates' Study as such will be addressed in the final report for the project.

For decades, aid agencies in Ethiopia have been responding mainly to refugee influxes and needs flowing from slow-onset recurrent natural disasters. This has been in line with certain requirements of the context, but also the preference of the government to frame humanitarian action as subsidiary to development goals and within a state development agenda. Operating within the strict parameters dictated by the authorities, humanitarian organisations have hence largely come to follow an idea of humanitarian action that is synonymous with resilience-building. The priority has been to strengthen the capacities of local communities and institutions to anticipate, prepare, and respond to climate-driven needs. At the same time, while conflict-induced displacement – both because of regional and internal dynamics – is a long-standing issue in Ethiopia, it has gained significantly in proportion over the past two years. With this recent increase in acute conflict-induced needs, organisations failed to quickly shift gears. Not only did the timeliness and effectiveness of the response hence suffer, but tensions surfaced between organisations' humanitarian identity and principled stance and the government humanitarian/development agenda largely followed until then.

The pivotal moment for INGOs can be traced back to the passing of the Charities and

Societies Proclamation (CSO law) in 2009. The way INGOs have navigated the space given to them within the parameters of the CSO law has in practice shaped their primary identity in Ethiopia. INGOs have had to manage tensions between an Ethiopian/non-Ethiopian narrative, between the state development agenda and their own humanitarian identity, and between domestic priorities and international norms and principles. Hence, INGOs were historically largely not set up in Ethiopia to respond to conflict-driven needs. Gaps in the humanitarian response were therefore inevitable.

The recent waves of conflict-induced displacement and the inability of the humanitarian community to respond effectively to many of them have provided a shock to humanitarian actors in Ethiopia. Organisations noted a marked departure in the humanitarian response since the end of 2018. The positive effect of the shock is that humanitarian INGOs, but also parts of the UN system, have started to question their added value and their approaches to date. If organisations let the context take over their identity, this can lead to a misalignment between a global and a local strategic vision and can make it difficult for organisations to better adapt to changes in the context. Those organisations that were quicker to change gears were the ones that more quickly realigned their country response to their global strategy. External support from HQ was strategic in a few instances to highlight the gaps in the response and introduce necessary readjustments. Notwithstanding external constraints, how organisations set themselves up – in terms of strategy, structure, and protocols – is essential to be able to break the path dependency if, and when, a change in context requires it.

With the current political opening towards civil society at the federal level, witnessed by the adoption of a new CSO law, humanitarian INGOs are at a crossroads. They have an opportunity to redefine the balance between encouraging state responsibilities and intervening in a subsidiary way while maintaining their humanitarian identity and upholding humanitarian principles. It will not be easy, but the alternative is not an option. Recent responses have reportedly been more timely, and there is also strong collaboration among INGOs for collective advocacy to address operational constraints. Further change will need to happen as a thoughtful strategic realignment between humanitarian identity, principles, and operations to better

HOW ORGANISATIONS SET THEMSELVES UP – IN TERMS OF STRATEGY, STRUCTURE, AND PROTOCOLS – IS ESSENTIAL TO BE ABLE TO BREAK THE PATH DEPENDENCY IF, AND WHEN, A CHANGE IN CONTEXT REQUIRES IT.

respond to humanitarian needs in Ethiopia. At the same time, contextual constraints will still limit the timeliness and effectiveness of humanitarian response, and this will need to be accounted for. Change will need to happen as a thoughtful realignment to better respond to humanitarian needs in Ethiopia, while recognising that such a process will be hard to achieve and may be unequal across all levels of government. Expertise built to address recurrent climate-related disasters, such as droughts, should not be lost. Humanitarian organisations should however integrate the necessary expertise, mindset, and protocols to better address all types of assistance and protection needs in their response. With regard to the principles, for example, they should not only become relevant when there is a conflict-induced situation. They need to be thought about strategically. Consequences flowing from compromises made need to be considered in advance. Notably, where the principle of independence is not prioritised from the outset, it is difficult to suddenly change the terms of the relationship between humanitarian actors and the state. If humanitarian assistance and protection interventions are implemented on the basis of long-standing agreements with local authorities and unverified targeting lists, for example, it may take time to (re)evaluate and (re)negotiate whom the aid is/should be prioritising. In the meantime, those most in need risk being cut off from all interventions.

ACRONYMS

ACF	Action Contre la Faim
ARRA	Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs
CRRF	Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DCA	DanChurchAid
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ECHO	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
EHF	Ethiopia Humanitarian Fund
EPRDF	Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front
ERCS	Ethiopian Red Cross Society
ES	Emergency Shelter
EU	European Union
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
FTS	Financial Tracking Service
GA	General Assembly
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HERE	Humanitarian Exchange and Research Centre
HQ	Headquarters
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
ICLA	Information, Counselling, and Legal Assistance
ICRC	The International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
(I)NGO	(International) Non-Governmental Organisation
IRC	International Rescue Committee
LRRD	Linking Relief to Rehabilitation and Development
MER	Medical Emergency Response
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NDRMC	National Disaster Risk Management Commission
NFI	Non-Food Item
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
NWOW	New Way of Working

OAU	Organisation of African Unity
OCA	Operational Centre Amsterdam
OCBA	Operational Centre Barcelona Athens
OFDA	US Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
ONLF	Ogaden National Liberation Front
PM	Prime Minister
PSNP	Productive Safety Net Programme
RC	Resident Coordinator
RR	Resident Representative
SNNP	Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' region
UN	United Nations
UNHCHR	United High Commissioner for Human Rights
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
WHH	Welthungerhilfe

1 — INTRODUCTION

The research carried out in Ethiopia contributes to a broader inquiry into the decision-making processes of selected international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) within the context of HERE's Role of 'Mandates' Study.[1] Humanitarian discourse frequently distinguishes between 'multi-' or 'single-mandate' organisations, depending on whether they define their purposes broadly to include both short-term emergency response and long-term development engagement, or whether they focus exclusively on life-saving assistance in emergency settings (Wendt and Hiemstra, 2016). Nevertheless, there is a lack of evidence and common understanding of the practical opportunities and limitations that would arise from the different ways in which organisations set priorities and make strategic choices. The Role of 'Mandates' Study looks precisely into these issues. The intention is not to answer the normative question of "which type of 'mandate' is best?", or to find which organisations fall into which category,[2] but rather to clarify what differences there are between organisations in terms of how they go about their activities in the field, and to identify how complementarities can be best leveraged.[3]

To lay part of the groundwork towards answering the broader questions of the Role of 'Mandates' Study, the sections below delve

AID ORGANISATIONS HAVE TENDED TO FOLLOW LARGELY SIMILAR PATHS.

into some of the elements characterising the humanitarian response in Ethiopia from the experience of organisations with different mandates[4] or missions and values. Ethiopia was chosen as the fourth case study in the framework of the Role of 'Mandates' Study because it presents a context with a strong state-presence. The first two country case studies looked at Mali and the Central African Republic[5] – contexts which both highlighted the challenges faced by aid agencies working where the state is entirely or mostly absent. The third and fourth case studies – Myanmar and Ethiopia – are very different in this sense, with the respective governments having a much more prominent say in the activities that organisations carry out, raising important questions as to how aid agencies operate – or not – within the available humanitarian space. After an outline of the methodological approach taken for this case study, and a reminder of the contextual elements pertinent to the current humanitarian response in Ethiopia, this report will first discuss *why* and to *what* purpose organisations work in the country, showing that after decades of humanitarian work geared essentially towards slow-onset recurrent natural disasters, aid organisations have tended to follow largely similar paths, coming to focus on resilience (section 2). The next section will then look at *how* organisations have taken on the task of changing gears when recently

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1   "The role of 'mandates' in humanitarian priority setting for INGOs in situations of armed conflict". For more information, see http://here-geneva.org/what-we-do-2/our-projects/.

2   The appropriateness of the expressions 'multi-' or 'single-mandate' organisations in general, and the extent to which they pertain to the organisations participating in this study in particular, will be discussed in more detail as part of the final report for the project.

3   The role of 'mandates' study addresses three main questions: (1) Is it helpful to talk about 'mandate' distinctions? What does it mean? (2) In regard to humanitarian organisations' capacity to work in situations of armed conflict, what opportunities and/or limitations arise from different 'mandates'? (3) Where do these opportunities and/or limitations appear to allow for complementarity between organisations? Where do they engender competition or tensions, such as policy differences, incommensurable priorities, and different target groups? For more information, see http://here-geneva.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/HERE-Mandates-Study-Concept-Brief-Sep-2016.pdf.

4   For the purposes of this study, the term 'mandate' is understood broadly as an organisation's goal or mission and not only in its legal meaning.

5   The report on Mali, entitled "The Limits of Labels", can be found at http://here-geneva.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/HERE-Role-of-Mandates-Mali-Report-2018.pdf. The report on CAR, entitled "From Macro to Micro" can be found at http://here-geneva.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/HERE-Role-of-Mandates-CAR-Report-2019.pdf. The report on Myanmar, entitled "Losing the Forest for the Trees" can be found at http://here-geneva.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/here-myanmar-final-web.pdf.

confronted with more sudden-onset conflict-induced needs. The report concludes on the need to break free from a path dependency that has been largely dictated by the INGOs' relationship with the government. Such a break would require both an adaptive structural set-up that allows an organisation to fulfil its mandate or mission in any given situation, and strategic long-term thinking about the role humanitarian principles play. Sometimes the path of least resistance leads up a dead-end road.

▬▬▬ 1.1
Methodological approach

In line with the overall methodology of the Role of 'Mandates' Study,[6] and as applied in previous case studies within the framework of this project (Montemurro and Wendt, 2019a, 2019b, 2018) a Research Team of two visited Addis Ababa between 9 and 20 September 2019. The team carried out semi-structured interviews with staff members from each of the organisations that participate in the study and who have a presence in Ethiopia.[7] The types of staff met with varied but tended to include, for all the organisations, the Country Director and/or the Director of Programmes and in most cases also additional programme coordinators, finance, or human resources staff. This study primarily focuses on the work of a few INGOs and the ICRC, though there are clearly more actors – including the UN – that have a substantial influence on how humanitarian responses are carried out. To ensure that the research correctly seizes the context in which INGOs operate in Ethiopia, the team reached out to a number of UN agencies, many of which provided helpful insights through interviews. In view of gathering a multifaceted picture of the Ethiopia context, additional conversations were also held with representatives from INGOs that are not participating in the study, as well as from coordination mechanisms, donors, and other stakeholders.

The aim of the research was to look at the participating aid agencies and their decision-making in the context of their own

SOMETIMES THE PATH OF LEAST RESISTANCE LEADS UP A DEAD-END ROAD.

organisational frameworks and values, as informed by the overall context of Ethiopia. As such, the questions asked to the staff of operational agencies concerned their activities, but also the different staff members' definition and understanding of the mandate or mission and values of their organisation, as well as what they would argue that their organisation does particularly well or less well in Ethiopia.[8] In discussions with all stakeholders, the Research Team was further interested in knowing in general terms, for example, how the humanitarian principles feature in decision-making, how activity areas are prioritised, and how relationships with the government, donors, local and international partners, and affected populations and host communities can be characterised.

It should be noted that in line with the methodology used for the previous case studies within the framework of this project, the Research Team did not visit programmes in person to gather the views of implementing staff and affected populations, nor were interviews held with national or local authorities.[9] Where possible, the Research Team was instead in remote contact with field coordinators from the different organisations. Throughout the data analysis, the Research Team has further borne in mind that its findings are largely based on the perceptions that key interviewees had of the work of the humanitarian community in Ethiopia in general, and of the work of their own organisation in particular, at a particular point in time. To triangulate or complement the insights gathered through the interviews, the Research Team has also carried out a desk-based review of publicly available annual reports and strategies from the seven participating organisations, as well as of the wider literature on the humanitarian response in Ethiopia.

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6   See the Concept Note for the project, available at http://here-geneva.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/HERE-Mandates-Study-Concept-Brief-Sep-2016.pdf.

7   Concern Worldwide, DanChurchAid (DCA), International Rescue Committee (IRC), International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), MSF-Spain, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), and Welthungerhilfe (WHH). The French section of Action Contre la Faim (ACF) is also participating in the Role of 'Mandates' Study but does not have a presence in Ethiopia. When in Addis Ababa, the Research Team met with a representative from ACF-US as a proxy.

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8   While some of the results from the interviews have been used to inform the present report, the full set of findings will be included in the final project report.

9   Due to time and resource-constraints, it was not possible for the Research Team to meet with enough local and national stakeholders to ensure that the insights provided would be representative, and not simply tokenistic.

1.2
The context of Ethiopia

The why, what, and how aid agencies set up work in a country is by nature linked to the specificities of the context. This becomes particularly apparent in Ethiopia where contextual developments over the past two years have put into question the response strategies of aid agencies and highlighted a need for adaptiveness.

Ethiopia has long been marred by protracted conflict, notably the ethnic Somalis' rebellion against the Ethiopian state since colonial times in the Ogaden region (Holzer, 2019), the long-lasting war with Eritrea over a border dispute (Kebebew, 2018), and the non-international armed conflict against al-Shabaab in Somalia (RULAC, 2017; Schwikowski, 2019). At the same time, the country has long dealt with seasonal droughts that have affected agricultural processes and caused nation-wide famines. The situation is recurrent: over the past decades, drought has been seen to significantly affect agriculture production in 1984/85, 1989/90, 1999/2000; 2003, 2008, 2011, 2013, and from 2016 up until now (Concern, 2018a, p. 5). With climate change, the droughts have become more frequent, putting pressure on already limited resources and leading to alarming rates of malnutrition (Sida, 2019). The scarcity of resources has in turn fuelled clashes between communities over pasture and water-rights (NDRMC, HCT and partners, 2019a; van Baalen and Mobjörk, 2018). Taken together, food insecurity and malnutrition, internal displacement, morbidity from infectious diseases, and an overall lack of the ability to ensure self-sustenance have led to an estimated 8.86m people in need of humanitarian assistance in Ethiopia, concentrated primarily in the Oromia (4.48m) and Somali (2.01m) regions (NDRMC, HCT and partners, 2019b).[10]

While conflict-induced displacement has hence always been an issue, it has gained significantly in proportion over the past two years (NDRMC, HCT and partners, 2019a), and by April 2019, there were an estimated 3.2 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the country (OCHA, 2019a). Tensions have been seen mainly along the borders between Oromia and Somali region, between Oromia and Southern Nations,

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KEY EVENTS

2012	AUGUST: Prime Minister Meles Zenawi dies and is succeeded by Foreign Minister Hailemariam Desalegn
2015	Severe El Niño-induced drought
2016	OCTOBER: State of emergency declared following anti-government protests
2017	FEBRUARY: South Sudan cross border attacks causes displacement in Gambela region
	MARCH: Intercommunal conflict causes displacement in Guji (Oromia region)
	JULY: Flash floods in Oromia region
	SEPTEMBER: Flooding in Gambela region
	OCTOBER: >43,580 households displaced after regional disputes between Oromia and Somali regions
2018	FEBRUARY: Prime Minister (PM) Desalegn resigns
	APRIL: Abiy Ahmed, an ethnic Oromo, becomes PM and launches political reforms
	APRIL: Conflict in Gedeo and West Guji Zones leading to displacement
	MAY: Tropical Cyclone Sagar caused flooding in Somali region
	AUGUST: Peace agreement signed between Ethiopia and Eritrea
	SEPTEMBER: Conflict in Kamashi (Benishangul Gumuz) leading to displacement
	DECEMBER: Conflicts in Somali Moyale, Oromia Moyale, and Afar leading to displacement
2019	MARCH: Conflict in West and Central Gondar zones of Amhara region lead to displacement
	JUNE: Army chief and Amhara State Governor killed in coup attempt against the federal government
	OCTOBER: PM Abiy Ahmed Ali is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize

Nationalities, and Peoples' (SNNP) region, as well as in Benishangul Gumuz, in the Dawa zone in the Somali region, and in some areas in Tigray and Amhara (Yarnell, 2018).

The recent increase in conflict-induced internal displacement can be linked to changes in the political atmosphere. In 2016, a state of emergency was declared to control civil unrest, and it was only lifted with the election of Abiy Ahmed in 2018. The election changed the Ethiopian political sphere substantially: the

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10   The caseload and financial requirements of the refugee response have not been included in the 2019 HRP (NDRMC, HCT and partners, 2019a, p. 65).

Figure 1: Map of Ethiopia

government forged a peace-deal with Eritrea, invited formerly exiled opposition leaders back to the country, freed political prisoners, fired controversial civil servants, and lifted internet restrictions (HRW, 2019). Many of the reforms have been highly positive in that they increased the freedom of expression in the country. This has been internationally recognised with the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to PM Abiy in 2019. However, significant challenges remain (Jeffrey, 2019). Disagreements between ethnic groups can now be openly discussed in the public sphere, disrupting longstanding traditions of cohabitation (Badwasa, 2018; Yarnell, 2018). The contentious picture has been further fuelled as the influence of the central government has been put into question by many regional authorities. In 1994, a new Ethiopian constitution divided the country into ethnically based regions. While the initial idea was that each ethnic group would have the right to conduct its own affairs, "less attention was put on plurality and more on unity" as time progressed, and the centre came to dictate policy in a rigid system of control (Cunningham, 2018, p. 112). With the recent political reforms, the strong rule from the centre has opened up, and with regions feeling more empowered, there is no longer clear alignment between decisions taken at the federal level and their implementation at the regional level. Disagreements within the ruling coalition have worsened in particular over power-sharing and have opened the door to renewed claims for regional autonomy and demands for statehood, as exemplified by the recent Sidama referendum (International Crisis Group, 2019a). In view of the elections planned for May 2020, there are risks of further escalation of violence and political fragmentation linked

WHILE CONFLICT-INDUCED DISPLACEMENT HAS ALWAYS BEEN AN ISSUE, IT HAS GAINED SIGNIFICANTLY IN PROPORTION OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS.

to rising ethnic tensions and ethno-nationalism (International Crisis Group, 2019b).

The humanitarian context of Ethiopia is further significantly impacted by the fact that following large influxes of refugees over the past decades, Ethiopia has become one of the largest refugee hosting countries globally, and the second largest in Africa (UNHCR, 2018). As of the end of September 2019, there are approximately 700,000 refugees seeking assistance in the country, primarily from South Sudan, Somalia, and Eritrea.[11] The majority of refugees in Ethiopia are located in Afar, Benishangul Gumuz, Gambela, Somali, and Tigray (NDRMC, HCT and partners, 2019a). The government of Ethiopia maintains an open door asylum policy, and in February 2017 Ethiopia became one of the first countries to apply the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), in view of "maintain[ing] its longstanding history of hospitality in hosting refugees, to meet its international obligations as a signatory to both the UN and OAU refugee conventions and to materialize its foreign policy goal of building sustainable peace with all of its neighbours through strengthening people to people relations" (FDRE ARRA, 2017).[12]

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11   See https://data2.unhcr.org/en/country/eth.

12   See also CRRF, 2019.

The Ethiopian government has a strong influence over the humanitarian response in the country. Not only is it the state's primary responsibility to respond to disasters – something which is also further recognised in the Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) agenda (UNISDR, 2015; UNDRR, 2019) – but unlike most contexts, the Ethiopian government is also funding a significant part of the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP). As of early October 2019, the HRP was funded at 57% (with USD 585.2m received of the USD 1.03b budgeted), and Ethiopia was the second largest donor, at USD 71.9m.[13] The government is therefore a strong actor alongside the more formal international humanitarian coordination structures (OCHA, 2019a; Sida, 2019).

Overall, there is a general tendency of the government to favour development work over more immediate humanitarian assistance. The government prefers to emphasise its role as a generous host of refugees, to downplay internal tensions, and to push for the return of IDPs as quickly as possible. While confronted with immediate life-saving needs, the government of Ethiopia has in fact been focusing more strongly on development, working to become a lower middle income country by 2025 (FDRE, 2016) and to mainstream the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into the country's Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) (UN Country Team, 2016). Before discussing in more detail how organisations navigate the relationship with the state to best fulfil their 'mandate' or mission, the next section will highlight why the seven organisations participating in this study set up work in Ethiopia, and what their priorities are in this changing context.

THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT HAS A STRONG INFLUENCE OVER THE HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE IN THE COUNTRY.

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13   See FTS, https://fts.unocha.org/countries/71/summary/2019.

2 — THE WHY AND THE WHAT OF AID

With the droughts of the early 1980s, Ethiopia became an emblematic recipient of humanitarian assistance. Not only have INGOs found needs there to justify their presence, but it has also been a relatively easy context to fundraise for. Today, Addis Ababa is also home to several regional international organisation offices, making it an international hub. Respondents from a majority of the participating organisations acknowledged that the increase in more acute, sudden-onset conflict-induced needs has pushed them to reconsider the way they work. Indeed, while such needs have been longstanding to some degree, the humanitarian community has largely considered Ethiopia as an example of a context primarily requiring assistance linked to recurrent natural disasters and consistent waves of refugees from neighbouring countries. All of the participating INGOs began their work in the country with famine and/or refugee responses.[14] The ICRC arrived in 1977 to provide relief in the Ogaden region related to the armed conflict between Ethiopia and Somalia. As regards the INGOs, three of them came in the early 1970s: DanChurchAid provided support to national partners remotely,[15] and Welthungerhilfe and Concern Worldwide set up their own country offices, all three in view of responding to drought-induced famines. While the history of MSF in Ethiopia can be traced back to the arrival of the French section during the severe famines of 1984-85,[16] the operations of MSF-Spain began in 2001 in relation to the Somali refugee crisis.[17] IRC also came to Ethiopia in 1999 and

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14   See in annex an overview of the operations in Ethiopia of the participating organisations.

15   DCA decided to open its own office in Ethiopia in 2004 to better capacitate partners by building on proximity.

16   MSF France was expelled from Ethiopia in late 1985 after having publicly denounced the government's refusal to open a therapeutic feeding centre along with its misuse of international aid for forced population transfers (MSF, 2013).

17   It should be noted that in 2001 it was MSF-Greece who began operations in Ethiopia. In 2005 MSF-Greece was absorbed by what became MSF-OCBA, and its projects in Ethiopia became part of the Spanish section's regular projects. Currently, two operational centres of MSF are working in Ethiopia; OCBA and OCA.

MANY HAVE ALSO OVER TIME COME TO INCREASINGLY FOCUS ON RESILIENCE-BUILDING PROGRAMMES.

was registered in 2000, to assist refugees as well as Ethiopians affected by droughts. Of the participating organisations, the latest to arrive in Ethiopia was NRC, who began with emergency shelter provision to drought-affected Somali refugees in Dollo Ado in 2011.

Generally speaking, the activities of the humanitarian community in Ethiopia have over the past decades aligned with the prevailing context and the parameters dictated by the government. Looking at the work of the participating organisations, two tendencies stand out in particular: a focus on resilience among many, and emergency capacities that have become geared mostly towards slow-onset crises.

2.1
A focus on resilience

All of the INGOs participating in this study began their work in Ethiopia through emergency responses – linked either to famine or refugee crises. When looking more specifically at the activities that they are carrying out in Ethiopia today, it is noteworthy that the majority of them have come to favour an integrated approach, operating across several sectors and often also in a variety of geographical locations. With some exceptions, many have also over time come to increasingly focus on resilience-building programmes.

The focus on resilience was particularly apparent among the three participating organisations that began working in Ethiopia in the early 1970s. For them, it has appeared

as a natural shift, particularly in view of the recurrent nature of slow-onset crises, as a way to address the underlying fragilities that turn shocks and stresses into humanitarian crises. From the perspective of Welthungerhilfe for example, resilience can be found at the interface of humanitarian aid and development cooperation, and their choice to support people in their efforts to get out of hunger and poverty in a sustainable way has been driven by the observation that humanitarian needs frequently interrupt development efforts (WHH, 2018). WHH today works closely with national partners in Ethiopia to implement programmes in the areas of nutrition and economic development, WASH, agriculture and natural resources management, as well as pastoral development (WHH, 2018).[18] For DCA, the picture is rather similar; as part of that organisation's approach to the humanitarian-development nexus, its aim in Ethiopia is to "enhance the capacities of local communities and individual rights-holders while improving their access to basic services and contributing to their self-reliance in times of crises" (DCA, 2019, p. 35). The organisation's integrated programmes aim to enhance food security, income generation, climate change adaptation, and training of civil society organisations.[19] From the point of view of Concern, the focus on resilience similarly fits that organisation's commitment to assist the extreme poor in the most vulnerable areas of the country both in terms of humanitarian emergency responses and by addressing underlying causes of malnutrition (Concern, 2018a). In Ethiopia, the organisation carries out interventions in the areas of livelihoods and gender equality, as well as emergency services for nutrition, access to potable water, sanitation, and non-food items.[20]

IRC, and to a small extent NRC, have also expanded their activities since their arrival to include aspects of resilience-building. For both, this has been in view of finding lasting solutions to displacement, and to assist crisis-affected people not only to survive but also to rebuild their lives (IRC, 2018; NRC, 2018). Today, both organisations are present in seven regions of the country. IRC does WASH, economic recovery and development, health and nutrition, community-based GBV prevention, and education (IRC, 2019). NRC also takes a multi-sector approach: after initially focusing on providing shelter for Somali refugees (NRC,

HUMANITARIAN ACTORS IN ETHIOPIA HAVE COME TO LOOK AT EMERGENCY MAINLY THROUGH THE LENS OF PROTRACTED NEEDS.

2011), the organisation quickly expanded its activities to include three more of its core competencies – education, livelihoods and food security, and WASH (NRC, 2019). For the first few years in Ethiopia, NRC did not provide its flagship information, counselling, and legal assistance (ICLA) programme, but in 2017 the organisation began also with such activities (NRC, 2017).[21]

It is noteworthy that it is not only the INGOs that came to Ethiopia for famine and refugee responses that have increasingly focused on resilience over the past decades, but also the ICRC. As mentioned, they arrived in the late 1970s to help assist and protect victims of the Ethio-Somalian war (ICRC, 2009). Today, the ICRC works in situations of communal violence, in partnership and coordination with the national Ethiopian Red Cross Society (ERCS). Together with them, the ICRC has also come to focus on the longer-term, working to strengthen resilience and restore livelihoods, particularly in response to violence and displacements (ICRC, 2019a, 2018a, 2018b, p. 176).

2.2
Emergency capacities geared towards climate-driven needs

The increased focus on resilience does not mean that organisations have completely abandoned their emergency capacity, but it appears that such capacity has for many become geared essentially towards responding to needs resulting from recurrent natural disasters and/or the continuously high refugee influx. One respondent explained that "in Ethiopia, everything is chronic, so it is difficult to speak of emergencies. It is expected". This sentiment reflects well the overall tendency among humanitarian actors in Ethiopia to look at emergency mainly through the lens of protracted needs.

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18 See https://www.welthungerhilfe.org/our-work/countries/ethiopia/.

19 See https://www.danchurchaid.org/where-we-work/ethiopia.

20 See https://www.concern.net/where-we-work/ethiopia.

21 To get around government restrictions, the organisation referred officially to "technical assistance", rather than to "legal assistance".

For some, this lens has meant that they primarily engage in emergency responses when a pre-existing longer-term project would be at risk. Following the Linking Relief, Rehabilitation, and Development (LRRD) concept,[22] WHH for example chooses to respond essentially when an emergency risks affecting areas in which the organisation or one of its partners are already working. This has been the case with previous drought-related emergencies (See e.g. WHH, 2016a, p. 13), as well as in connection with the conflict-induced displacement in 2018. In the case of the latter, WHH used its own funds to provide assistance in East Welega in the Oromia region. This decision was primarily based on needs, but also on an assessment of WHH's added value in that zone. WHH could in fact count on the presence of a partner with strong roots in the communities there. Similarly, DCA endeavours to combine long-term development with emergency work mainly to reduce potential setbacks caused by hazardous events (DCA, 2018, p. 50). In case of an emergency, it strategically chooses to allocate its flexible emergency funding to areas where it is already operational. It used its own funds in Bale zone, for example, to respond to IDP emergency needs in 2018 to ensure its long-term project objectives remained on track. As for Concern, its most recent strategy puts forward the strengthening of its emergency capacity as one of the main strategic goals. At the same time, the strategy highlights that as part of an overall aim to consolidate the areas in which the organisation works, it concentrates available resources where they can be most beneficial. This is done based on the proportionality of the relative responses, the level of coverage that already exists, and on meeting the needs of those who are least well served by the broader response. The organisation will respond to emergencies based on need,[23] with a particular focus on the current areas of operation and expanding into new areas as per the level of needs there (Concern, 2018a, p. 8).

THE RECENT INCREASE IN CONFLICT-INDUCED NEEDS HAS LED THEM TO RE-EVALUATE THEIR APPROACH.

The four other participating organisations endeavour to be able to respond in an emergency capacity whenever and wherever there is need. For NRC, this has meant for example providing emergency shelters, clean water, and latrine construction to displaced persons and host communities in locations across the country (NRC, 2018, p. 30). IRC similarly works to respond to emergency needs when they arise (IRC, 2016), and the organisation currently manages two of the three emergency response mechanisms that international actors have put in place in the country.[24] Having both built up their emergency capacity in Ethiopia primarily around their experience with refugees and persons displaced for climate-induced reasons, respondents from both NRC and IRC explained how efforts have had to be made to adapt operations to the recent increase in sudden-onset conflict-related crises. This has included for example rethinking the capacity they have in the country as regards human resources (e.g. redeploying staff to different areas or calling on external surge teams), prepositioned stocks, and early warning systems, but also how they position themselves with regard to the humanitarian principles.

Notably, not all of the participating organisations appear to have been as constrained by the slow-onset emergency lens when it comes to their emergency capacities. MSF-Spain and the ICRC were both among the first to provide emergency assistance to people recently displaced by violence. While supporting a hospital in Gambella, and also providing basic medical help at the airport in Addis for Ethiopian deportees arriving from Saudi Arabia, MSF-Spain directs a Medical Emergency Response (MER) team, which operates country-wide. In building its emergency response, MSF-Spain initially paid special attention to epidemics and nutritional crises (MSF-OCBA, 2016), but in the past two years the MER team has also been providing nutrition, WASH, and shelter services to conflict-induced IDPs in various locations (MSF-OCBA, 2018). As to the ICRC, among others, it has worked closely

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22   The concept of LRRD originated in the 1980s and has continually evolved since. For a historical review of the concept as well as its implications in terms of EU funding approaches, see European Parliament, 2012.

23   Concern's strategy clarifies that for small scale responses (affecting less than 100,000 people) the focus will be on regions where the organisation has a long term presence, for medium scale responses (where between 100,000 and 500,000 people are affected and the government has made a specific request for assistance), Concern will undertake a response outside its area of operation based on a comprehensive assessment and for a large scale emergency (affecting more than 500,000 people in a specific region) Concern will respond in consultation with others, anywhere in the country (Concern, 2018a).

24   IRC manages ECHO's Emergency Response Mechanism (ERM) and ODFA's Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM). The third such mechanism in Ethiopia is the EHF.

with the ERCS to provide assistance to people affected by conflict, for example in Gedeo and West Guji in 2018 (ICRC, 2018c), and in West and Central Gondar zones of Amhara Region in March this year (ICRC, 2019b).

In conclusion, humanitarian actors in Ethiopia have come to follow largely similar paths over the past decades, working essentially to further a resilience agenda and/or to provide refugee responses, while also responding to natural disasters as needed. The recent increase in conflict-induced needs has led them to re-evaluate their approach. And as highlighted by one of the respondents, "aid agencies have been doing development here for long and now they are trying to change to do more humanitarian work, and it doesn't please the government". Indeed, in facing the changing context, organisations have to consider not only their own internal mind-set and processes, but also the parameters dictated by the Ethiopian authorities. The next section will discuss in more detail how this has been done.

IN FACING THE CHANGING CONTEXT, ORGANISATIONS HAVE TO CONSIDER NOT ONLY THEIR OWN INTERNAL MIND-SET AND PROCESSES, BUT ALSO THE PARAMETERS DICTATED BY THE ETHIOPIAN AUTHORITIES.

3 — THE HOW OF AID

Since 2017, various reports have looked at how the humanitarian community in Ethiopia has responded to the emergence of operational requirements driven by new waves of conflict-induced displacement (MSF, 2019; Yarnell, 2018). Building on the details of this response as presented both in these reports and by the respondents for this case study, this section attempts to review the operational decisions made since 2017 against an analysis of how INGOs frame (and have been framing historically) their *raison d'être* in Ethiopia. Paramount to answering the question of their identity and how to best fulfil their mission in such a context is how INGOs navigate the relationship with the state.

The pivotal moment for INGOs can be traced back to the passing of the Charities and Societies Proclamation – or CSO law – in 2009. Framed by the government as a way to strengthen the accountability of NGOs, this legislation *de facto* "established barriers to NGO entry, determined permissible issue areas and activities, dictated organizational structures, and announced new NGO monitoring mechanisms" (Dupuy et al., 2014). It also divided NGOs into three distinct categories: Ethiopian Charities and Societies, which would not use more than 10% funding received from foreign sources; Ethiopian Resident Charities and Societies, which are formed under the laws of Ethiopia and receive more than 10% of their funding from foreign sources; and Foreign Charities and Societies, that are formed under the laws of foreign countries or which consist of members who are

foreign nationals or are controlled by foreign nationals or receive funds from foreign country sources. This categorisation is particularly relevant as it determined the type of activities an NGO would be allowed to carry out. Only the first category of NGOs would be allowed to implement activities linked to human rights, democracy, and conflict resolution. At the same time, according to the so called '70/30 rule' – which classified CSO's expenditures – at least 70% of costs should be operational, and no type was permitted to spend more than 30% of their budget on administrative costs. Such costs were only defined in broad terms (National Legislative Bodies/National Authorities, 2009, art 88/1).[25]

Early 2019, the Ethiopian parliament adopted a new CSO law, which somewhat opens up the way in which CSOs are regulated and perceived (Gionco et al., 2018; Townsend, 2019).[26] Nonetheless, it is unquestionable that the 2009 law has left its mark: the way in which INGOs have had to navigate the space given to them until now has in practice shaped their primary identity in Ethiopia. If looked at this way[27] it becomes clear that gaps in the humanitarian response were inevitable. There was no other possible outcome. Historically, INGOs were largely not set up in Ethiopia to respond to conflict-driven needs. This can be seen more specifically in terms of how INGOs manage tensions between an Ethiopian/non-Ethiopian narrative, between the state development agenda and their own

THE WAY IN WHICH INGOS HAVE NAVIGATED THE SPACE GIVEN TO THEM UNTIL NOW HAS IN PRACTICE SHAPED THEIR PRIMARY IDENTITY IN ETHIOPIA.

25   Expenses for personnel, purchase of project vehicle, transportation, monitoring and evaluation, research and training were classified as administrative costs (Gebre, 2016).

26   For example, the new law refers only to indigenous (local) and foreign CSOs, and it also explicitly stipulates that all organisations have the right to engage in any lawful activity to accomplish their objectives. The new law replaces the 70/30 rule by a 80/20 rule, but it defines administrative costs more precisely, making it clear that these do not include training, research, or networking (Townsend, 2019).

27   The analytical framework used in section 3 is largely inspired by the research carried out by Andrew Cunningham (Cunningham, 2018).

humanitarian identity, and between domestic priorities and international norms and principles.

3.1
Ethiopian/non-Ethiopian

Interviews in Ethiopia have provided interesting insights into the strategies – both internal and external – INGOs have employed to be able to operate in the country. All INGOs who are currently in Ethiopia, including all of the participating organisations and those that set up their presence in the country after 2009, accommodated most or all of the government's demands.[28] In the wake of the 2005 contested elections, the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) took an increasingly restrictive stance on civil society, framing them as promoting foreign agendas and being "inauthentic, undemocratic, unaccountable, or locally illegitimate" (Dupuy *et al*., 2014, p. 7). For example, with restrictions on the number of work permits granted to foreign nationals, the Ethiopian government has had a substantial impact on the in-country capacity of humanitarian organisations akin to a restructuring of an organisation's set-up in some instances. For organisations whose traditional model is to rely on a roster of highly qualified and technical group of professionals, the limits imposed have entailed a shift to more capacity strengthening of local staff but also an increased reliance on external emergency teams for *ad hoc* interventions (MSF, 2019).

With the introduction of the CSO law, those INGOs that had already established a presence in the country had in principle a choice to make. If looked at face value, INGOs could either leave or stay. *De facto*, as studied in other contexts which have introduced restrictive legislation for civil society, it is not a simple either/or question. Besides withdrawal, the options are far more numerous and tend to involve a combination of different approaches, from altering the organisation's internal structure or merging with others less affected by the regulatory changes (internal transformation) to attempts to change the external environment through advocacy or trying to fly under the radar and delaying or avoiding the implementation of the new rules (See Cunningham, 2018; Dupuy *et al*., 2014; Hillman *et al*., 2009). For most organisations in Ethiopia, the choice ended up being how to

FOR MOST ORGANISATIONS IN ETHIOPIA, THE CHOICE ENDED UP BEING HOW TO BEST ACCOMMODATE THE CHANGES INTRODUCED BY THE GOVERNMENT.

best accommodate the changes introduced by the government. As highlighted in the interviews, this has also led in two cases to a tension between a global vision and interpretation of the organisation's mission and its 'local' operationalisation.

The specific ways in which organisations adapted were largely influenced by their institutional set-up. Organisations traditionally working through partnership-based models had to make certain compromises because of the '70/30 rule' (DAG, 2014). The degree of compromise has somewhat depended on the way in which organisations define their partnership approach. For example, for one of the participating organisations which traditionally works fully through partners, the rule meant entirely restructuring its operational model towards one of direct implementation. Investing in building its own capacity to deliver programmes arguably happened at the expense of its traditional capacity-strengthening approach for local partners. For another participating organisation, which has alternated between direct implementation and programme implementation through partners, the impact of the '70/30 rule' was less substantial. Building also on its long-standing relationship with local authorities, this organisation continuously negotiated on a case-by-case basis what the 30% for administrative costs would include. The leeway here revolved around whether the 30% were to be shared between the INGO and the local partner, or whether it were to be allocated solely to the local organisation (DAG, 2014).

Similarly, organisations specialising in one sector or issue area had fewer alternatives available to them. For example, many INGOs with a single human rights or peace-building focus – which is intended by the government as the specific domain of the state – did not survive (Dupuy *et al*., 2014). Organisations focusing on several issue areas were able to engage more easily in key strategies such as rebranding or restructuring (Dupuy *et al*., 2014). Those taking a rights-based approach (generally or for specific programmes) have either relabelled their activities or dropped

them entirely (i.e. institutional restructuring) from their initial palette of operational approaches in favour of other less controversial ones. In some cases, as for one of the participating organisations, it may have been both. After taking an initial more risk averse approach, in conjunction with a political shift at the national level, the INGO realised that not implementing one of their core activities was detrimental to their added value in Ethiopia. The signature programme was introduced, albeit under a new name that removed any reference to rights. For others, as one of the participating organisations noted, adapting to the restrictive parameters set by the Ethiopian authorities meant drastically reducing its public denunciation activities to protect its humanitarian space. There have been attempts at negotiating exemptions, though it is not clear what helped minimise the impact of the 2009 Law for some organisation and not for others. What remains to be clarified is also the extent to which INGOs tried to carve a separate space based on their humanitarian identity.

▬▬ 3.2
State development agenda/ humanitarian identity

Organisations with a focus on longer-term programming in education, health, agriculture, and economic development have generally found it easier to align with the government's substantive requirements and priorities. Since the end of the socialist regime in 1991, in fact, Ethiopia has progressively shaped itself as a development state, one which makes the development agenda its top priority (Shumuye, 2015). Following such a paradigm, priority has been given to poverty-eradication and sustainable economy-building, with the ultimate aim to improve the living standards of the Ethiopian population. Humanitarian action

has been seen as subsidiary to sustainable development goals. The engagement of successive Ethiopian governments with INGOs over humanitarian issues has therefore been framed as "but one aspect of a long history of Ethiopia's international relations as well as its development efforts" (Lautze *et al.*, 2009, p. 9). Addressing humanitarian needs has been shaped by Ethiopia's experience with recurrent drought-induced food insecurity and ideologically integrated as but one element of a broader National Social Protection Policy (Lemma and Cochrane, 2019).[29] International donor evaluations of humanitarian resilience-strengthening financial instruments have further highlighted the need to better integrate them with development initiatives to broaden the impact of humanitarian action alone (Sida *et al.*, 2019). Ethiopia's inclusion of refugees as part of its development agenda and its increasing international leadership on refugee issues has further contributed to shaping the government's humanitarian priorities (CRRF, 2019).

Humanitarian action in Ethiopia has therefore focused on refugees or has increasingly been focusing on building resilience. This approach has also provided a rational justification for continued humanitarian engagement in a country where humanitarian action was increasingly being framed as subsidiary to development goals within the state developmental agenda. As mentioned in an interview in 2017 by the then Ethiopian Minister of Agriculture, "[t]he government's goal is to create climate resilience within the context of sustainable development" (Jeffrey, 2017). With increasing conflict-related needs, respondents from the participating organisations as well as other stakeholders have highlighted, however, how addressing humanitarian needs within such a framework has led to seemingly intractable tensions around targeting strategies and between tackling acute vs. protracted needs.

Representative of this tension is the overwhelming recognition that the humanitarian community as a whole failed to shift gears from an approach meant to

THE HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE FAILED TO SHIFT GEARS FROM AN APPROACH MEANT TO RESPOND TO RECURRENT SLOW-ONSET DISASTERS TO ONE NEEDED TO ADDRESS RAPID-ONSET CONFLICT-DRIVEN NEEDS.

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29   With support from international donors, Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) was launched in 2005, aiming at reducing food insecurity vulnerability by providing economic opportunities and building resilience to crises (ECHO, 2019). The PNSP was designed to be scaled up and reach more people during crises (Clarke and Dercon, 2016). The review of DFID's multi-year humanitarian funding has made the case, for example, that if the predictability and reliability of transfers from the PNSP at times of crisis are read in the context of the resilience agenda, "it is clear such investments contribute to the delivery of humanitarian relief" (Sida et al., 2019, p. 1).

respond to recurrent slow-onset disasters to one needed to address rapid-onset conflict-driven needs (MSF, 2019; Yarnell, 2018). Following events in Gedeo and West Guji or Benishangul Gumuz/Welegas,[30] in 2017/2018, for example, the humanitarian response was neither effective nor timely. If looking at the Humanitarian Response Plans for 2019 and 2018 (NDRMC, HCT and partners, 2019a; Joint Government and Humanitarian Partners, 2018) it becomes apparent why humanitarian actors were not equipped to respond to conflict-driven emergency needs, either individually or collectively. The 2018 version is presented with heavy references to the resilience agenda and the role of the state. On the surface, references to resilience and the joint – government and humanitarian partners – nature of the plan for 2019 are no longer as evident. More importantly, based on the first Humanitarian Needs Overview for 2019,[31] the document provides a layered analysis of the needs humanitarian actors are confronted with. Of the 8.86 million people requiring humanitarian assistance in Ethiopia, almost half display chronic needs linked to chronic food insecurity and water shortages (NDRMC, HCT and partners, 2019b).

Being called to respond to both acute and chronic needs has created tensions as most INGOs were exclusively focused on tackling the latter. While rapidly developing, security infrastructure for INGOs is for example still a novelty. There is a general lack of in-country security management expertise. Donors have tried to include so-called crisis modifiers into existing development-oriented trust funds to provide a quick injection of funds in case of emergencies. As conversations with donors have pointed to, however, there are questions as to whether these can prove effective if the infrastructure and the mindsets of operational partners have not changed. It is not only about whether INGOs could or can shift between a slow-onset and a sudden-onset response in terms of operational modalities, but also the extent to which the INGO humanitarian capacity has generally conformed to an idea of humanitarian action – conflating it with resilience – that is extremely limiting.

THE CONSISTENT REALIGNMENT OVER THE YEARS BETWEEN THE IDENTITY OF HUMANITARIAN ACTORS AND STATE AGENDAS HAS AT TIMES LED TO CLASHES BETWEEN DOMESTIC PRIORITIES AND INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN NORMS AND PRINCIPLES.

3.3
Domestic priorities/ international humanitarian norms and principles

The consistent realignment over the years between the identity of humanitarian actors and state agendas has at times led to clashes between domestic priorities and international humanitarian norms and principles. While the most evident example in the past was that linked to the Ogaden region,[32] today INGOs have to navigate tensions between upholding the principles of independence and impartiality (and of a needs-based vs. status-based response) and getting caught in a state-sponsored indiscriminate push for durable solutions to internal displacement. The first tension is paramount to answering the existential question for humanitarian actors of whom to prioritise, while finding the balance between acknowledging the Ethiopian government's responsibilities and maintaining operational independence. The latter is about promoting an IDP protection agenda while recognising that different displaced groups may face different vulnerabilities as well as different paths to durable solutions.

The choice between a needs-based response and a status-based response is representative of an old debate among humanitarians and forced migration actors. While IDPs face very specific vulnerabilities and protection concerns related to their displacement, they are often hosted by communities that share many of the

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30   While not the only ones, the crises in Gedeo/West Guji and Benishangul Gumuz/Welegas are being used as an example here because of their scale and the severity of their impact. These areas counted 31% of the total IDP caseload by June 2019 while the remaining 69% of the IDPs were located in areas with fewer reported constraints (OCHA, 2019b). There is also more consolidated evidence for these crises that can help understand patterns. Naturally, responses by individual organisations in other zones/woredas will have varied in terms of timeliness and relevance.

31   Prior to this, the HRP was based on seasonal assessments from the government.

32   Ogaden is a disputed geographical area between Ethiopia and Somalia. The region witnessed periodic unrest since the 19th century until October 2018 when the Ethiopian government and the ONLF signed a peace agreement. Perceptions of the neutrality of humanitarian actors has not always been a given in the region. In 2007, for example, the ICRC was expelled by the Ogaden regional authorities who accused them of supporting rebels in the area (Reuters, 2007). In November 2018 the ICRC was invited by the Somali regional government to resume its operations in the regions, which it did in March 2019 (ICRC, 2019c).

same vulnerabilities. Recognition of IDP status may also be highly dependent on the political will of the central and regional governments at any given time. In the case of Ethiopia, the tension is indicative of a certain complacency in the way beneficiaries were identified in the past and expresses a false dichotomy. It is not an either/or, but a layered approach. In a context where the lists of beneficiaries were drawn by the regional and local authorities and seldomly independently verified, it has been difficult for humanitarian actors overall to uphold the principle of independence which in turn has had significant consequences on the ability of humanitarians to remain impartial. A study carried out to evaluate the effectiveness of social protection programmes has for example found that the government of Ethiopia has generally failed to include the most vulnerable (Lemma and Cochrane, 2019).[33] With the influx of external experienced emergency staff following the crises in Gedeo and West Guji, it became apparent that many of those in need were not being included in the lists (MSF, 2019). An agreement between the government and humanitarian actors was reached about targeting guidelines which added a level of verification (EHCT, 2019). Instrumental to achieving this was the role played by humanitarian donors in influencing more developmental actors and the regional/local authorities to agree to a set of specific guidelines. The extent to which these targeting guidelines are applicable beyond the specific crises for which they were drawn is however not clear.

Similarly, while the new central government has been more open to cooperate with aid agencies and has acknowledged the presence of conflict-induced IDPs within its border (IDMC, 2019, p. 14), it has no national IDP policy and it has not ratified the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (the Kampala Convention) (AU, 2019). As it has traditionally attributed all crises to natural hazards – "as such attribution is less likely to damage the country's reputation in terms of making progress in development" (Habte and Kweon, 2018, p. 40) – the government has taken a blanket approach to durable solutions for IDPs. Cases of forced returns have, for

IT HAS BEEN DIFFICULT FOR HUMANITARIAN ACTORS OVERALL TO UPHOLD THE PRINCIPLE OF INDEPENDENCE WHICH IN TURN HAS HAD SIGNIFICANT CONSEQUENCES ON THE ABILITY OF HUMANITARIANS TO REMAIN IMPARTIAL.

example, been highlighted by both international and regional media (Gardner, 2019; Shaban, 2019). The participating organisations working with conflict-induced IDPs have had to reconcile their organisational function and values with their available space in Ethiopia. The tension has been between denouncing the government's approach or going along with it by providing aid in areas of return. Denunciation has happened through the more collective voice of the informal Humanitarian INGO Forum. As respondents highlighted, when one of the representatives of a participating organisation criticised the current government plans at a public meeting, that organisation was left isolated by the UN humanitarian leadership in the country.

The current plans on durable solutions are framed within the UN's New Way of Working (NWOW) approach, which the government of Ethiopia is implementing with support from the UN. With the aim of breaking down the silos between humanitarian and development work, it has been applied in Ethiopia "with a focus to build resilience through development work while addressing the humanitarian agenda in an integrated and sustainable way".[34] There may be clear applications of the NWOW with regard to the government's resilience agenda and its response to refugees. The Ethiopian government has been praised for its enlightened leadership as refugees have come to enjoy more rights – including access to primary education, obtention of work permits, and national financial services – through new legislation (IASC, 2018). With regard to finding durable solutions for IDPs, however, such an approach risks being moot if not accompanied by a strategic discussion on how to address the drivers of displacement. This will include not only considerations linked to peace-building and social cohesion initiatives, but also stronger awareness of each other's comparative advantages in holding the

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33   The PNSP has a facility to scale up its reach to additional beneficiaries in response to droughts. To secure its funding, a risk financing mechanism was introduced in 2009 to allow the rapid mobilisation of additional resources in the event of an emergency. Disaster-risk financing and (re)insurance mechanisms have found a ground for testing in Ethiopia. In the case of the PSNP, however, the lack of early and well defined triggers seems to have hampered its effectiveness (see Clarke and Dercon, 2016).

34   As mentioned by former Ethiopian Prime Minister Desalegn (UNDP, 2018).

government's accountable to its responsibilities under international humanitarian norms.

▬▬ 3.4
Finding the right balance

Overall, the crises in Gedeo/Guji and Benishangul Gumuz and East/West Wellega have generally[35] led individual organisations to reflect on their humanitarian engagement in Ethiopia. As noted by the large majority of respondents, having a fresh set of eyes – usually in the form of newly deployed staff – has helped identify strategic organisational gaps. With the current political opening towards civil society at the federal level witnessed by a change in the CSO law, and a more supportive Agency for Civil Society Organisations, humanitarian INGOs are at a crossroads. All respondents acknowledged ongoing systemic challenges and the blockages represented by the political misalignment between the federal and the regional/local governments. At the same time, they all also recognised the opportunities currently available following a shift in the national political leadership. For example, recent responses have reportedly been more timely, and there is also strong collaboration among INGOs for collective advocacy to address operational constraints. In the end, INGOs have the opportunity to redefine the balance between encouraging state responsibilities and intervening in a subsidiary way while redefining their humanitarian identity and upholding humanitarian principles. It is not easy, but the alternative is not an option.

Change will need to happen as a thoughtful strategic realignment between humanitarian identity, principles, and operations to better respond to humanitarian needs in Ethiopia. At the same time, contextual constraints will still limit the timeliness and effectiveness of humanitarian response, and this will need to be accounted for. While many of the constraints are those typical to those of any complex emergency - data gaps, lack of clarity in the prioritisation of aid recipients, insecurity, and access limitations, some are more typical to Ethiopia. Respondents highlighted for example the persistent misalignment between the funding that is generally geared towards protracted slow-onset emergencies and the needs that flow from acute shocks. Crisis modifiers do not appear to be the answer.

WITH THE CURRENT POLITICAL OPENING TOWARDS CIVIL SOCIETY AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL WITNESSED BY A CHANGE IN THE CSO LAW, HUMANITARIAN INGOs ARE AT A CROSSROADS.

As highlighted by one respondent, expertise built to address recurrent natural disasters, such as droughts, should not be lost. While approaches may differ on a project by project basis, overall humanitarian organisations will need to review and realign as appropriate the necessary expertise, mindset, and protocols to better address all type of assistance and protection needs in their responses. With regard to the principles, for example, they should not become relevant only when there is a conflict-induced situation. They need to be thought about strategically. As one respondent noted, consequences flowing from compromises made need to be considered in advance. Notably, where the principle of independence is not prioritised from the outset, it is difficult to suddenly change the terms of the relationship between humanitarian actors and the state. As in the example of the targeting guidelines above, it may take time to (re)evaluate and (re)negotiate whom the aid is/should be prioritising. In the meantime, those most in need may risk being cut off from all assistance and protection interventions.

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35   The Research Team noted a certain difference with the organisations that were solely focused on refugee response in Gambela.

4 — CONCLUDING REMARKS
THE PATH OF LEAST RESISTANCE

For decades, aid agencies in Ethiopia have been responding mainly to refugee influxes and needs flowing from slow-onset recurrent natural disasters. This has been in line with certain requirements of the context, but also the preference of the government to frame humanitarian action within a state development agenda. Operating within the strict parameters dictated by the authorities, humanitarian organisations have hence largely come to follow an idea of humanitarian action that is synonymous with resilience. This has been reinforced through the UN-supported implementation of the NWOW. The priority has been to strengthen the capacities of local communities and institutions to anticipate, prepare, and respond to climate-driven needs. In view of the emphasis put on host government involvement and domestic resilience in the DRR agenda, this has arguably been the easy path to justify continued humanitarian engagement in the country. Addressing humanitarian needs within such a framework has however led to seemingly intractable tensions between tackling acute vs. protracted needs. Indeed, the recent sharp increase in sudden-onset conflict-induced needs largely took the humanitarian community unawares and unprepared, as a result of which both the timeliness and the effectiveness of the overall response significantly suffered. As humanitarian organisations now ask themselves why, three issues stand out in particular.

Organisations were historically largely not set up to respond to the recent increase in acute conflict-induced needs.

The way INGOs have needed to navigate the space given to them within the parameters of the 2009 CSO law has in practice shaped their primary identity in Ethiopia, and has made gaps in the humanitarian response inevitable.

SURVIVAL STRATEGIES TO ACCOMMODATE THE NATIONAL REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS HAVE LARGELY PREVAILED OVER AN ORGANISATION'S OWN SENSE OF FUNCTION AND VALUES.

Survival strategies to accommodate the national regulatory requirements have largely prevailed over an organisation's own sense of function and values. As INGOs have had to fit their work within an Ethiopian/non-Ethiopian narrative, and in light of domestic priorities and the state development agenda, they were largely not set up to respond effectively to conflict-driven needs.

Organisations who more quickly realigned their country-response to their global strategy were better able to change gears.

If organisations let the context take over their identity, this can lead to a misalignment between a global and a local strategic vision and can make it difficult for organisations to better adapt to changes in the context. Recent responses have reportedly been more timely, marking a positive departure from the end of 2018. Those organisations that were quicker to change gears were the ones that more quickly realigned their country response to their global strategy. External support from headquarters was strategic in a few instances to highlight the gaps in the response and introduce necessary readjustments. How organisations set themselves up – in terms of strategy, structure, and protocols – is essential to their being able to break the path dependency if and when a change in context requires it.

Currently at a crossroads, humanitarian organisations have the opportunity to pick a new path.

As the new CSO law indicates a certain political openness towards civil society at the federal level, humanitarian INGOs are presented with a window of opportunity. They need to find a balance between encouraging state responsibilities and intervening in a subsidiary way while maintaining their humanitarian identity and upholding humanitarian principles. While it is important not to lose sight of the significant expertise gained after decades of experience in addressing recurrent climate-related disasters, there is a need for change to respond better to all types of humanitarian assistance and protection needs in the country. To break free from the path dependency that has been largely dictated by INGOs' relationship with the government, organisations need not only an adaptive structural set-up that allows them to fulfil their 'mandate' or mission in any given situation, but they also need to think strategically about the role humanitarian principles play.

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6 — ANNEXES

Operations in Ethiopia of the participating organisations (mid 2019)
Annex 1

Overview of operations per organisation

	Concern[36]	DCA[37]	ICRC[38]	IRC[39]
In Ethiopia since	1973	Support to partners in Ethiopia since the 1970s, country office in Ethiopia since 2004	1977	2000
Rationale for first entering Ethiopia	Response to a major famine caused by droughts.	Support partners to response to major famines caused by drought. The choice to open an office in Ethiopia in 2004 was to better capacitate partners by building on proximity.	Provide relief related to the 1977 Ethio-Somalia armed conflict.	To provide life-saving and life-sustaining support to refugees and IDPs throughout Ethiopia
Current key goal in Ethiopia	Prevent malnutrition in children through emergency nutrition programs and food education. They have introduced a gender transformative approach into their strategic plan and are focusing on improving livelihoods.	1) Poor women, men and youth in rural and semi-urban areas of Ethiopia experience improved livelihoods and are empowered to lead sustainable and resilient lives. 2) Poor women, men and youth in rural and refugees hosting communities experience improved livelihoods; they are empowered to lead sustainable and resilient lives. Refugees have resettled or returned home and those that remain co-exist peacefully with the host communities.	Protect detainees, restore family links, provide physical rehabilitation and work with the Ethiopian Red Cross.	Deliver life-saving and life-sustaining services and support to over 700,000 refugees and 2,500,000 Ethiopians throughout the country through humanitarian and development activities in the following sectors: water and sanitation, health and reproductive health, education, child protection, prevention and response to gender-based violence, economic recovery and development, youth and livelihoods and provision of non-food items, working across refugee, emergency and development contexts.
Local partners		Yes	Yes (the Ethiopian Red Cross Society)	Yes
Staff	500 staff, of which 5 international		35 mobile staff, and 142 resident staff in 2018 (excluding daily workers)	1,100 staff and 1,400 refugee incentive workers
Budget	EUR 11,584,000 expenditure in 2018	USD 8,398,751.09 in 2017	CHF 19,123M expenditure in 2018	USD 58,000,000 in Fiscal year 2019
Donors/ Fundraising	IrishAid, UKAid, USAid, EU Trust Fund, World Bank, KOICA, ECHO	DANIDA, USAID, ECHO, EU, BPRM		OFDA, USAID, FFP, BPRM, ECHO, EuropeAid, European Trust Fund for Africa, UNHCR, UNICEF, OCHA EHF, Irish Aid, Charity Water, DFID, and Private Funding

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36   https://www.concern.net/where-we-work/ethiopia, and Concern, 2018b.

37   https://www.danchurchaid.org/where-we-work/ethiopia, and DCA, 2019, 2018.

38   https://www.icrc.org/en/where-we-work/africa/ethiopia, ICRC, 2018, p. 175, and ICRC, 2019.

39   https://www.rescue.org/country/ethiopia and IRC, 2016.

Overview of operations per organisation continued

	MSF-Spain[40]	NRC[41]	WHH[42]
In Ethiopia since	2001	2011	1972
Rationale for first entering Ethiopia	To provide medical assistance in the areas affected by ONLF activity and in relation to the Somali refugee crisis.	Provide assistance to drought-affected Somali refugees in Dollo Ado through emergency shelter provision.	Response to a major famine caused by droughts.
Current key goal in Ethiopia	Fill gaps in healthcare and humanitarian assistance and respond to emergencies affecting local communities, IDPs and refugees.	Provide refugees and IDPs with emergency relief and help them to rebuild their lives.	To fight hunger and malnutrition through advocacy and integrated programme delivery to vulnerable households.
Local partners	No	A small number.	Yes
Staff	28 international staff, 412 national staff	16 international staff, 332 national staff	2 international staff, 36 national staff in country office
Budget	EUR 8.8M in 2019	USD 17M in 2019	4.82M EUR in 2018
Donors/Fundraising	MSF Funds	UNHCR, NMFA, ECHO, EU, OCHA, UNICEF, SEM, Sida, Wellsprings, Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, LUMOS	AA, BMZ, DFID, EU, SDC, GIZ, OCHA, and private donors

40   https://www.msf.es/sites/default/files/attachments/informe_de_misiones_ocba_2017_esp_final.pdf
41   https://www.nrc.no/countries/africa/ethiopia/ and NRC, 2019, 2011.
42   https://www.welthungerhilfe.org/our-work/projects-programmes/ethiopiastrategies-goals/ and WHH, 2018, 2016b.

Annex 2

Types of activities per organisation and region

Source: Unless specified otherwise, OCHA 3W, available at https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/ethiopia/3w-dashboard, complemented by information provided by organisation staff

State/ Region	Concern	DCA	ICRC	IRC[43]	MSF-Spain	NRC	WHH
Addis Ababa			Water and habitat, Health, Detention visits, Restoring family links	Headquarters Office	Medical and humanitarian support to migrants		
Afar	Nutrition	Agriculture, refugees and host-communities, fresh food e- voucher and multipurpose cash, emergency support		WASH			Emergency response, WASH, NRM and rangeland management, Livelihood diversification, Income generation, Nutrition and Gender promotion, Sexual and reproductive health promotion, livestock value chain, civil society capacity building
Amhara	Nutrition	Agriculture, resilience-building, DRR, emergency support	Economic security, Water and habitat, Health, Detention visits, Restoring family links	Multi-sector emergency response working through partners			Emergency response, WASH, diversified food production, construction of irrigation schemes, sustainable NRM Livelihood diversification, Income generation, Forest restoration and reduce the loss of biodiversity, Nutrition and Gender promotion, livestock value chain, civil society capacity building and advocacy towards the right to food and resources.
Benishangul-Gumuz			Economic security, Water and habitat, Health, Detention visits, Restoring family links	WASH, GBV, Health	Medical and humanitarian emergency response	Agriculture	

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43   Source ICRC, 2019.

Types of activities per organisation and region continued

State/Region	Concern	DCA	ICRC	IRC	MSF-Spain	NRC	WHH
Dire Dawa			Water and habitat, Health, Detention visits				
Gambela		Agriculture, refugees and host-communities, fresh food e-voucher	Restoring family links	WASH, Health, ERD	Medical and humanitarian response	ES, NFI	
Harari							
Oromia		Agriculture, resilience-building, DRR, Multipurpose cash support to IDPs, Milk value chain	Agriculture / ES, NFI Economic security, Water and habitat, Health, Detention visits, Restoring family links	GBV, WASH, Health, ERD/ Livelihoods and other multi-sector emergency responses	Medical and humanitarian response	ES, NFI/ WASH	Emergency response, WASH, NRM and rangeland management, Livelihood diversification, Income generation, Forest restoration and reduce the loss of biodiversity, Nutrition and Gender promotion, coffee value chain, livestock value chain, community peace dialogue, civil society capacity building and advocacy towards the right to food and resources.
Somali	Nutrition		Economic security, Water and habitat, Health, Detention visits, Restoring family links	WASH, ERD/ Livelihoods, Education, Child Protection, GBV and other multi-sector emergency response		Education/ ES, NFI WASH	
SNNP			ES, NFI / WASH Water and habitat, Health, Detention visits	GBV, WASH, Health, ERD/ Livelihoods and other multi-sector emergency responses	Medical and humanitarian emergency response	Education/ ES, NFI WASH	
Tigray			Economic security, Water and habitat, Detention visits, Restoring family links	WASH, GBV, Health, Education		Agriculture/ ES, NFI	