

# The Horn of Africa between Instability and Hopes: Reflections and Strategic Directions for Development Cooperation \*

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## 1. Introduction

There is not possibility whatsoever to conduct a serious reflection on the Horn of Africa without an analysis of two crucial themes: poverty and conflict. Under a social, economic, political point of view the Horn raises a series of issues - besides the ones just mentioned - that involve the Continent Africa as a whole.

The Horn of Africa, in other words, appears as the land of disillusion and pessimism with respect to any hope of recovery (either economic, or political or social) of a Continent that without any doubt is in the middle of a humanitarian tragedy.

In analysing this context we will therefore unlock the dilemma of the Horn of African crisis using the key of a region where the exasperation of contradictions and problems involving the whole African continent are well visible. It is certainly true that every attempt of carrying out an all engulfing analysis risks to be superficial and excessively simplifying; moreover, 40 years after the end of Colonialism, the existence of an "African crisis" and of a crisis of all the "models of intervention" in Africa is under everyone's eyes, even though the case of the new South Africa, that contradicts this tendency, is often quoted, not without reason.

Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia (in this paper considered in its "old" unitary concept) and Djibouti are the countries we will refer to, directly or indirectly, even though the analysis and the theses put forward will inevitably be centred on the countries on which the NGOs that adhere to *Forum Solint* concentrate most of their cooperation activity, that is Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia.

The paper is organised in three sections. The first one develops an overview of the region stressing some of the heaviest problems that afflict it. The second one tries to shed some light on two themes closely linked to each other: conflict and democracy, while aiming at summarising the main orientation of the International Agencies in this region. Finally the last section focuses on the main challenges facing the international cooperation concerning humanitarian aid strategies, the relationship between humanitarian aid and rehabilitation, food security and fight against poverty. Even though the analysis heavily draws on the cases of Sudan, Somalia and Ethiopia, we meant to develop a reasoning and to put forward some proposals that embrace this area as a whole.

Finally it is necessary to clarify in advance how this work is organised: as it addresses mainly experts and policy makers, we have considered it was convenient not to stuff it with data and historical-political references to the countries concerned. References have been included only if strictly necessary to strengthen the hypotheses presented. The "snapshot of the present situation" will turn to be highly fragmented and incomplete, as we have preferred to concentrate on the analysis of the problems that afflict the whole area and on the definition of proposals of cooperation strategies.

## 2. An overview

The Horn of Africa holds two sad records. The former is that of a society that currently lives without a state, that is Somalia, that after the fall of the Syad Barre's dictatorship (January 1991) has not built yet a credible and unitary state's arrangement, even though it is worth noting the

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strengthening, in the territory of the former British Somalia, of the Somaliland's experience and the gradual development of Puntland, in the Migiurtinia's region. The latter is the longest military conflict in the history of Africa, the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea, that lasted from 1961 to 1991, has halted with the fall of the Derg<sup>1</sup> and the subsequent proclamation of Independence of Eritrea and it has exploded once again, this time as a real war between two sovereign neighbouring states, in May 1998. Besides it is even superfluous to remind that the Sudanese drama appears to be chronic and unresolved.

The first consideration that needs to be made, on the Horn's conflicts, is that in this area it is very difficult to distinguish between internal and external conflicts. Both, in fact, nourish and reinforce each other, and there are no many regions in the planet, like the Horn of Africa, to which the rule: "our enemies' enemies are our friends" apply. Strange and unlikely alliances arise in this way, doomed to collapse and to leave room to new conflicts, once the reasons for these alliances expire.

The main instrument of regional integration the, InterGovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD<sup>2</sup>) has a challenge particularly difficult and important to face: making the reasons of solidarity prevail on those of division. There is a great hope, for example, that under the current chairmanship of Djibouti, the IGAD would contribute to unblock the Somali situation, starting off from a new Conference of National Reconciliation (that has been put off more than once).

Certainly the IGAD itself is the centre of strong and obvious contradictions: the main one is that the Instrument that should foster integration is composed of the same actors that often are in conflict with each other, more or less evidently. It is not a case, for instance, that Eritrea is among the countries that more strongly distrust the Djibouti government initiative on Somalia, having Eritrea and Djibouti harshly clashed.

However we agree on the choice made by some governments, the Italian one being among them, of sustaining the efforts made by the IGAD; nonetheless as it is the only existing instrument of regional cooperation and conflict prevention. Maybe a weak instrument, though existing. Moreover, on the backdrop of the problems that involve the Horn it seems worth reminding three more elements of analysis.

The first one regards **the fall, after the end of the cold war, of the geopolitical international centrality of the region**. While at the cold war time the risk the Horn of Africa was running was that of being "choked" between the existing synergies between its conflicts and the East-West ones, now there is a new risk: marginalisation. On one side it is true that some international diplomacies - namely the American one - do not overlook at all the outcome of the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, also because the way of escape from the collapse of the Derg was to be assumed by the United States as a model possibly applicable to the whole continent - yet on the other side it is also true all the World, and Europe as well, shows a weary attitude towards the Somali crisis, weary attitude that risks to become indifference.

A second element is the **old dispute among the countries crossed by the Nile**. It is a well known issue, as well as the distrusts and the tensions between countries like Ethiopia and Uganda, on one side and the Sudan and Egypt on the other side, over the water usage. We believe that as long as this dispute is not resolved through clear agreements corresponding to the respective countries' rights, it will risk to nourish conflicts and will heavily lie on the regional distension. Just to mention one thing, it is not at all unfounded Ethiopia's dissatisfaction that claims that 85% of the Blue Nile's water springs out of its own territory, while the possibility of exploitation is still substantially marginal. A credible commitment to the peace process of this area cannot therefore exist without sustaining the pursue of right and balanced solutions to this problem.

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<sup>1</sup> Ethiopian military council that took over the country after causing the fall of Heile Selassie in 1974.

<sup>2</sup> Created in January 1986 as InterGovernmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD) and relabelled since March 1996 as IGAD, is composed of Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda.

Finally a third element of analysis is often quoted: the **never-ending contrast** in the Horn of Africa, between centralised state models, in most cases, as Calchi Novati points out, inspired by the tradition of the Abyssinian plateau, and populations that tend to refuse the idea of giving up their representation, or "centreless" as Lewis defines Somali political systems. This contrast is exacerbated by cultural and religious factors, as leading groups belonging to the Christian area favour a centralised state while nomadic or semi-nomadic Muslim populations are mostly hostile to it. This is a possible "cross-interpretation" that could partly (yet not completely) explain the conflict between Somali and Ethiopians, as well as the conflict, within Ethiopia, between the current leading group and the Oromo one. The new Ethiopian federal Constitution, that gives every region (defined in ethnic terms) the right of self-government, up to secession (should this be demanded by the majority of the population), has theoretically pursued the goal of answering to this old problem. But the outcome of this attempt is, on our opinion, at least uncertain for three reasons. The first reason is that, in a country where different linguistic and ethnic groups have contaminated each other during the centuries, is difficult splitting different groups with exact precision (apart from further political evaluations). The second one is that the existence of "ethnic regions" risks to multiply, instead of reducing, the possible arbitrariness in the management of resources, transferring to within every single region contradictions that existed only at central level. Last, but not least, the actual will of the leading group of handing over to local authorities the government and management power is at least uncertain.

The data available on the socioeconomic situation of the countries that compose the Horn of Africa confirm their structural precariousness.

However we have to be careful in interpreting these data as one of the chronicle weaknesses of the area is the lack of internal instruments of data collection and data analysis, that obviously impedes every medium and long term planning and projecting. The following table presents the year for which key indicators referring to the countries considered are available.

Table 1 - Availability and reference year of statistical data in the region

Country	Access to safe water	Sewerage	Access to health services	Deliveries assisted by qualified personnel	Moderate undernour.	Serious undernour.	Income distribution	Social expenditure	Unemploy.
Djibouti	1995	1985	1983	1988	1990-97	1990-97	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Eritrea	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	1990-97	1990-97	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Ethiopia	1993	1993	1991	1988	1990-97	1990-97	n.a.	1994	1993
Somalia	1985	1985	1985	1993	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Sudan	1993	1993	1991	1998	1990-97	1990-97	n.a.	n.a.	1992

Source: Bissio (1999)

n.a.: data not available

It is very interesting to notice that there is no country for which data on income distribution are available. This makes very difficult the elaboration of national strategies of poverty relief tailored on the actual inequality.

Anyway the structural plague of food insecurity strikes cyclically tens of millions of people, so that drought causes, almost inexorably, famines that make entire communities altogether dependent on food aid. Just to quote one case, the World Bank estimates that in 1992 in Ethiopia there were 21 millions of people food insecure (Various: 1998).

Besides, on the basis of the methods of classification used by the World Bank, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia are low income countries (per capita income of less than US\$ 760), while Djibouti is a medium-low income country (per capita income between US\$ 760 and 3,030) but is amongst the poorest countries in this category<sup>3</sup>.

Even though we lack information on income distribution, so that information on per capita income is only indicative, it is worthy reminding that this value is everywhere well below the maximum threshold indicated in order to classify low income countries. In fact per capita income is US\$ 167.5 in Eritrea (1998), US\$ 106.8 in Ethiopia (1998), US\$ 365.7 in Sudan (1998). In Djibouti (1997) it is US\$

<sup>3</sup> These data and the following are drawn from: Development Data, African Development Indicators, The World Bank Group (<http://www.worldbank.org/data/countrydata/adi/adi.html>).

786.3 that is among the lowest values among the ones recorded in the medium-low income countries, while the data for Somalia is missing. The value that refers to Ethiopia, the lowest among the ones presented, is more than three times below that of Uganda and Kenya, East African low income countries.

It is not surprising then that also social indicators contribute in defining the Horn of Africa as one of the poorest areas of the Planet. For instance the incidence of malnutrition on total population is 23% in Djibouti (1996), 43.7% in Eritrea (1996), 47.7% in Ethiopia (1992), 39% in Somalia (1996), 34% in Sudan (1996). The values recorded in Kenya (1994) is 22.5% while in Uganda (1995) is 25.5%.

In the Table 2 further indicators referring to the countries we are dealing with are presented. The scattered data just commented on have the only purpose of confirming that, with a plausible approximation, the Horn of Africa features as a zone of sharp poverty in an area, East Africa, which is by itself very poor.

This reality, however, does not clash with the presence in the Horn of a huge heritage of human and cultural resources. We do not refer only to the existence of qualified people -many of whom unfortunately have been since long forced to exile - but to the fact that the local communities of these countries have been able to implement coping strategies to poverty and conflict that witness their creativity and vitality.

Table 2 - Social and economic indicators (1998)  
Comparison between the Horn of Africa and South-Saharan country data

Region or country	South-Saharan Africa	Eritrea	Ethiopia	Djibouti	Somalia	Sudan
<b>People</b>						
Life expectancy (years)	50.00	51.00	43.00	50.00	48.00	55.00
Fertility rate (births per woman)	5.00	6.00	6.00	5.00	7.00	5.00
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	92.00	61.00	107.00	106.00	121.00	69.00
Under 5 mortality rate (per 1,000 children)	151.00	90.00	173.00	176.00	199.00	105.00
Child malnutrition (% of children under 5)	..	..	..	..	..	..
Urban population (% of total)	33.00	18.00	17.00	83.00	27.00	34.00
Rural population density (per sq. km of arable land)	..	..	..	..	..	..
Illiteracy - male (% of people 15 and above)	32.00	34.00	58.00	26.00	..	32.00
Illiteracy - female (% of people 15 and above)	49.00	62.00	70.00	49.00	..	57.00
Net primary enrollment (% of relevant age group)	..	..	..	..	..	..
Net secondary enrollment (% of relevant age group)	..	..	..	..	..	..
Girls in primary school (% of enrollment)	..	..	..	..	..	..
Girls in secondary school (% of enrollment)	..	..	..	..	..	..
<b>Economy</b>						
GDP (US\$ millions)	333,865.00	650.00	6,544.00	..	..	10,366.00
GDP growth (annual %)	2.10	3.00	-1.00	0.70	..	5.00
GDP implicit price deflator (annual % growth)	..	-0.90	9.70	3.00	..	28.90
Value added in agriculture (% of GDP)	17.00	..	49.80	..	..	39.30
Value added in industry (% of GDP)	29.10	..	6.70	..	..	18.20
Value added in services (% of GDP)	53.90	..	43.50	..	..	42.60
Exports of goods and services (% of GDP)	28.40	19.90	15.80	..	..	..
Imports of goods and services (% of GDP)	31.00	89.70	27.70	..	..	..
Gross domestic investment (% of GDP)	17.40	40.90	18.20	..	..	..
Central government revenues (% of GDP)	..	..	..	..	..	..
Overall budget deficit (% of GDP)	..	..	..	..	..	..
Money and quasi money (annual % growth)	..	..	-2.80	-4.10	..	29.90
<b>Technology and infrastructure</b>						
Telephone mainlines (per 1,000 people)	14.00	7.00	3.00	13.00	1.00	6.00
Cost of 3 min local call (US\$)	0.09	0.03	0.03	..	..	0.02
Personal computers (per 1,000 people)	..	..	0.01	..	..	2.00
Internet hosts (per 10,000 people)	2.32	0.01	..	0.00	0.00	0.00
Paved roads (% of total)	..	..	..	..	..	..
Aircraft departures (thousands)	332.00	..	27.00	..	..	4.00

Source: Development Data, African Development Indicators, The World Bank Group (<http://www.worldbank.org/data/countrydata/adi/adi.html>)

### 3. The International Community and the Horn of Africa

#### 3.1 The main actors

The international community is invested with great responsibilities in the Horn of Africa, for various reasons, among which: the sharp poverty and the high level of political instability; the fragility (or, in the case of Somalia, the absence) of institutional and state local systems, that emphasises the role of the cooperation agencies: the political centrality of this region in the African context. As it is well known, Addis Abeba is the city that hosts the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and the Economic Commission for Africa.

The system of the **United Nations**, in this region, tends to give priority to the themes of managing and prevention of emergencies, with special reference to food emergencies. The UN Secretary General himself, during his visit in Italy in early April 2000, has drawn the attention of the donors' community on the humanitarian impact of the famines that are whipping the region, especially Ethiopia. In Somalia some Agencies, as in the case of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) as far as education is concerned, carry out a planning and coordinating function supplementary to that of the state.

In the Horn of Africa, and especially in Somalia, according to UN<sup>4</sup> intentions, a model of multifarious answer - political, humanitarian and military - to the complex crisis should have been experimented, that could be replicated in some other African countries. Actually, as we know, the substantial failure and the high humanitarian costs of the actions by United Nations Operation for Somalia (UNOSOM), have strongly belittled the expectations.

All the principal United Nations agencies are active in the area, where, as we have clarified in the Introduction, all the problems and the attrition generally present in the whole continent occur.

The role that the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund could play in the immediate future is an issue that has to be treated separately. In December 1999 they have made official the goal of encouraging, starting from the poorest countries, national strategies of poverty relief set up jointly with the governments and the civil society. This general aim (Boorman: 1999) stems out of the premise that the structural adjustment plans cannot reduce poverty radically, without joint political and strategic measures that aim at removing, in each country, the obstacles to development. The idea is that of having the governments, the civil societies, the donors' communities jointly committed to designing and implementing global strategic plans, tailored on the specific needs of each country. In this context great importance will be given to the possible role of the civil society.

The **European Union** generally plays a crucial role in the Horn of Africa. Schematically, we can summarise the commitment of the European cooperation as oriented to the aims of fighting poverty and to food security (especially in Ethiopia), to the rehabilitation and to the support of the pacification (especially in Somalia where the European Union has actually promoted and coordinated for a long time the Somali Aid Coordination Body (SACB<sup>5</sup>) and of the humanitarian aid (see for example the commitment of European Community Humanitarian Office-ECHO in Sudan). As far as trade is concerned, the European Union is an important partner to the Horn's countries. About 60% of exports and 40% of Ethiopian imports involve European countries (Tamrat, 1999). In the immediate future, anyway, the European Union will have to build legal instruments suitable to maintain a significant presence in Somalia, alternative to those activated by the Lomé Convention, that Somalia, lacking a central government, cannot subscribe yet<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Consideration disclaimed to us by a high official of the UN Department for Humanitarian Affairs in New York.

<sup>5</sup> It is a structure of coordination among donors, NGOs and international agencies set up in 1993 in order to define strategies and methods of intervention in Somalia.

<sup>6</sup> It is worth mentioning the action of lobbying acted by CISP and other Forum Solint NGOs under the umbrella of VOICE in order to include in the new EU-ACP Convention a clause that allows the disbursement of resources drawn from the European Development Fund (EDF) also in favour of the countries that lack an official central government.

Traditionally the Horn of Africa represents a priority area for the **Italian Cooperation** too, that besides taking part to bilateral programmes, acts through the instrument of bilateral cooperation, especially in Ethiopia.

Finally, in this region, many **international Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs)** operate, with a significant presence of the Italian ones. In the past few years a net of local Ngos is growing up in a number of Horn's countries. The lot of local Ngos is obviously very various and articulated but, to put it in general terms, the main factors that constrain their activity appear to be, in some cases, the scarce territorial representation, owing to the scarce means and the insufficient availability of human resources. In other cases the lack of autonomy *vis-à-vis* central governments lies heavily on the effectiveness of some Ngos, that diminishes that possible value added with respect to public interventions. In any case, they represent the sole concrete manifestations of formation of an organised civil society, in countries where the democracy deficit has inhibited for a long time the development of free and independent associations.

It is necessary to stress that the NGOs that adhere to *Forum Solint* represent a significant component of the non-governmental cooperation in the Horns' countries and especially in Somalia, Sudan and Ethiopia<sup>7</sup>, thanks to years of presence and territorial articulation of their cooperation work.

### **3.2 Development, conflicts and democracy: the International Community's action**

The recent European debate on the theme of cooperation with the third countries tends to associate, more and more strongly, the themes of development and democratisation. Prestigious and founded theoretical contributions, like the one by Amartya Sen on the relation between lack of democracy and famines, support this statement.

In assessing the effectiveness of the European cooperation with the African countries under the auspices of the Lomé Convention signed since 1975 onwards, the lack of democracy and institutional transparency of many recipients appear to be two of the main factors that have mostly jeopardised aid policy effectiveness. Some European Union strategic directions for the future seem to spring out of this analysis, among which we recall here:

- **Greater emphasis on the conditions** that bind aid to the existence of democratic and representative Institutions and to the respect of the right of the person, without subordinating cooperation policy to foreign policy.
- **Greater impetus to the discussion on policies**, both on the overall Institutional order and on the definition of sector specific and economic policies of African, Caribbean, and Pacific countries (ACP).
- **Development of decentralised cooperation** and promotion of the assumption of greater responsibility by the local civil societies.

In this direction, for example, goes the introduction, in the update of the Convention of Lomé IV, of a clause relative to the composition of the Joint Assembly EU-ACP that will give the opportunity to the latter of taking part to the Assembly with members that do not sit in the Parliament but appointed by the national Parliaments. Still on the composition criteria of the Assembly, it is established that, should not exist working parliamentary institutions, the participation of ACP members has to be previously approved by the Assembly itself. The specification of this criterion is intended to promote the development of democratic parliamentary systems in the ACP countries. These directions are obviously right, but it is necessary stressing that in areas like the Horn of Africa the democracy issue does not exhaust itself within the definition of high institutional parliamentary orders.

The final goal of strengthening the democratic process, also through the instrument of cooperation, is undoubtedly agreeable. At the same time the great emphasis posed on this general direction calls the European Union, the member states and the various subjects, both governmental

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<sup>7</sup> Since long CISP has been operating in Somalia and Ethiopia, COSV in Sudan and Somalia, COOPI in Ethiopia and Somalia, INTERSOS in Somalia.

and not governmental, that belong to the World of cooperation to an effort of analysing and understanding the concrete implications this goal can assume in different countries and more broadly in Africa.

In this critical context it is necessary to contribute to set up social and institutional orders at the same time stable and democratic in the Horn's countries. Both the instruments of the political dialogue and those of cooperation, even though they have different times, different forms and institutional actors, could set themselves the goals of supporting this attempt and of encouraging the development of the preconditions suitable to the structuring of systems both democratic and respectful of the rights of the person.

In a nutshell we put forward here a scenery of perfect partnership aimed at the democratisation of the region and oriented to strengthening the basic condition to give credibility and substance to the institutional systems adopted by each country. Besides it is worth noting that where positive transitions towards democratisation show up the level of stability of the adopted systems (federal republics, two wings systems, presidential republics and so forth) is still precarious. The international actions have then to promote the creation of the conditions that enable the transition and the change to be a physiological stop in the road of development of political systems without being traumatic, above all for the civil population.

The identification of the basic conditions that can consolidate the process of democratisation can start from the analysis of the factors that, to date, have determined the crisis, if not the failure of the state systems of the countries this paper is looking at. Therefore, we proceed by defining the problematic areas of utmost importance.

### 3.2.1 Representative effectiveness of the state order and management of resources

The first issue taken up is the **representative effectiveness of the state order and the management of resources**. Absolutely relevant is the place occupied by the land, given the context of economies essentially agriculture and/or sheep farming based. Wars often classified as ethnic generally arise from the struggle for the access to resources, exacerbated and aggravated by conditions of misery. The identification of central power with the defence of interests that conflict with those of its own group, most of the times motivated by governments' actions, in some cases goes beyond the responsibility of the governments themselves and could nourish power ambitions of political-military groups that offer immediate abductions in favour of peculiar interests. In many cases the cause is the lack of regulation mechanisms of the use of and the access to resources in the places where the conflicts arise. In other words there is the lack of places in which the different groups can represent their interests, mediate them with those of other groups, take part in the government of resources on the basis of predefined balances.

Lacking these mechanism, every repressive intervention of the central authority in case of rebellion seems to be undoubtedly arbitrary as they tend to restore a social order that has not been defined by participation of the actors involved. In the Horn, as in other African regions, even though in convulse form, the demand for participation to the economic policy decision process can be noticed to be stronger than elsewhere as to this process is attached the possibility of survival of the group itself. In a sense, the ethnic character of politics, as opposite groups are identified almost completely on the basis of ethnic or clan consideration, can be seen as a means of having their own interests and identity represented. Putting forward the hypothesis of concrete means of democratisation means giving credible answers to this question, posing at the same time the basis for conflict prevention.

As already stressed, in the context of the Horn of Africa, to form the hypothesis of stable solutions to the democracy problems, only based on the definition of macroinstitutional orders like federal systems founded on the principle of self-government of the various regions, is not sufficient, also because within the local and regional administrative contexts themselves could often arise, and actually in many cases do, conflicts nourished by the struggle over the control of resources.

Both the cooperation and the political dialogue could effectively contribute to the structuring of mechanisms and institutional places that carry out the duties described above, that should be intended as mechanisms of regulation and planning at local levels. A cooperation intervention can have a

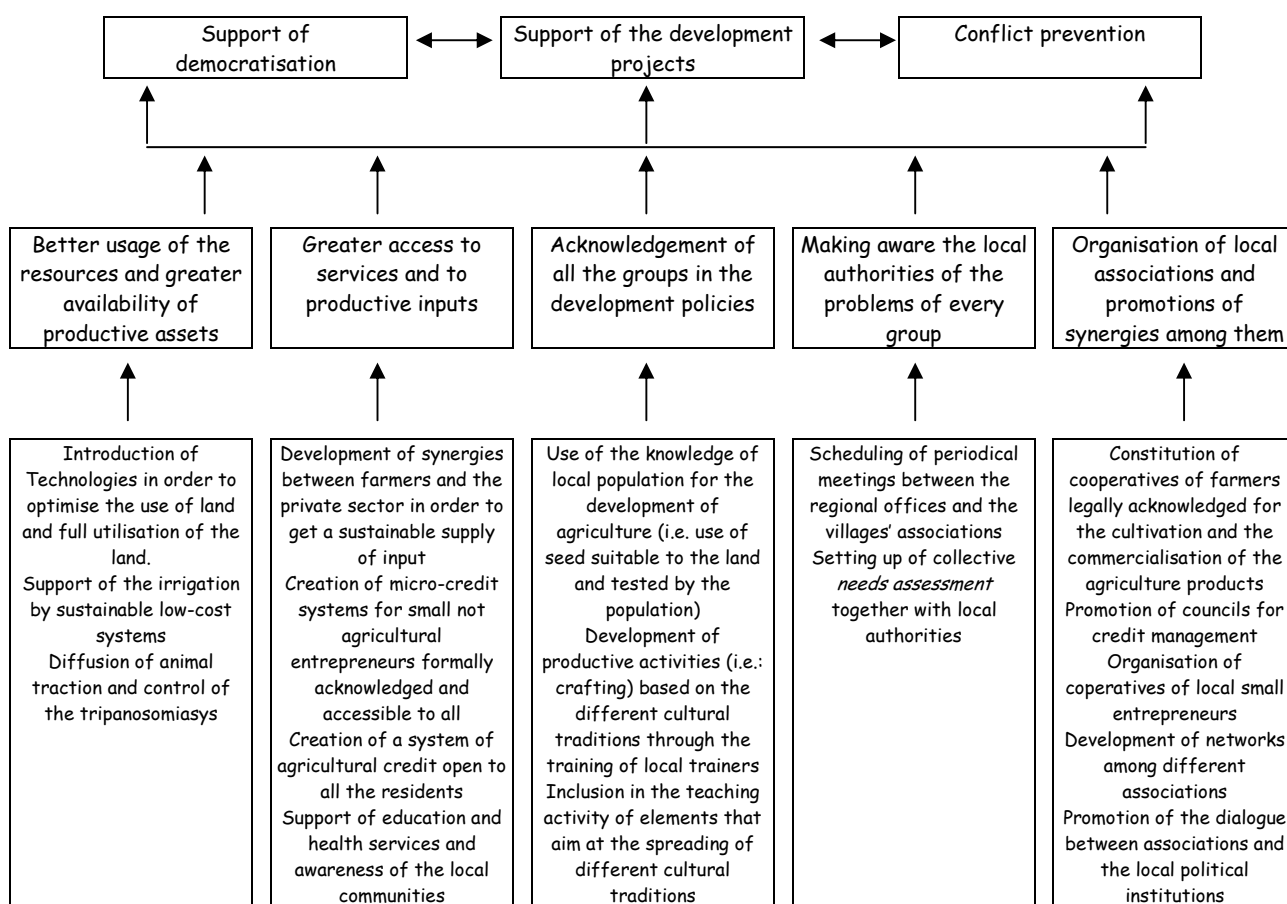
positive effect on the process of democratisation of a country if it includes among its goals that of allowing an actual participation of the local communities to the control and the management of the resources.

**The support to the processes of democratisation and conflict prevention:  
the experience of a cooperation intervention**

In order to make the reasoning clearer we turn to present a case of "typical project" realised by the Italian non governmental cooperation in Ethiopia in a resettlement area, where generally competitions between indigenous and resettled populations for the control of resources -especially land- arise. In this case the democracy deficit had shown up from the beginning as the marginalisation of indigenous groups with respect to the management of resources. Actually this marginalisation also stroke the resettled population as nobody had called them to participate to the intervention planning.

Indigenous population, devoted to fishing, hunting or transient farming felt that their stability was greatly threatened by the entrance of tens of thousands of people and by its implications for in terms of environmental impact.

This obviously determined a climate of overt contrast between indigenous and resettled and heavy cases of conflict. In this case the Italian Cooperation, through a project realised by an Ngo, has objectively contributed to the positive development of the conditions suitable to the coexistence of groups residing in that area, starting from some strategies that have fully developed in ten years time. In the following scheme we try to summarise the main strategies of the project and the actions linked to it. At the top of the figure the goals are presented, while in the subsequent line there are the strategies on which actions are based.



An approach that tends to strengthen the channels of participation and mediation of the interests of the basic social groups, does not diminish but emphasises the role of the central states that should basically consist of the building up of those institutional mechanisms to which we have referred, besides giving assistance to the elaboration of local development plans that should become part of consistent national policies.

### 3.2.2 The role of the intellectuals and of the scientific institutions

A further issue involving the process of democratisation of the Horn of Africa is that of **the role of intellectuals and the freedom of research** of the University and scientific Institutions. The



dismissal of the intellectuals from their own countries has constituted both an effect and a cause of the crisis of the political systems and of their weak democratic features. Even without making the mistake of exaggerating the function of intellectuals, nor that, even more stupid, of considering them *super partes* with reference to the sore contradictions of their countries, it is worthy noting stressing that the debate on the policies in the Horn's countries suffers from the absence of influential contributions "from inside" and tends to concentrate on the themes put forward by external agencies, often distant, sometimes in the substance, sometimes in the form, from the strongest needs of the population.

In the countries of this area is therefore necessary to encourage significant synergies between the spheres of the education and of the politics and where development plans are designed and, above all, not making the mistake, often made in the past by international cooperation, of mortifying rather than developing the contributions to the reconstruction of their own countries of qualified local personalities.

The issue of education, intended not only as the process of making literate the local communities but also as support for the creation of focal points for the development of collective identities, is linked to that of the role of intellectuals. This support is unthinkable without the effective involvement of qualified personalities in this area's countries.

Besides it cannot be ignored that the economic reconstruction also requires the availability of professionals and planning experts, financing, social policies and technologies.

### 3.2.3 Cooperation and regional integration

The third question that needs to be taken up is that, already quoted, of the **regional cooperation and integration**. It is evident the negative impact on the process of democratisation within each state and on their political and economic stability, of the regional tensions. Furthermore in some cases the explosion of civil wars in single countries has extremely negative effects on the stability of the neighbouring countries<sup>8</sup>.

The strengthening of the IGAD and the substantial broadening of its mandate to the prevention and the solution of conflicts consequently appear as the two priorities also in the prospect of support of the democratic processes.

We also believe that in order to favour the regional distension some programmes that aim at cooperation among neighbouring countries can result useful. If in the future the conditions of the Horn will make it possible developing a real cooperation for the development of secondary and University instruction, this could have regional aspect and be based on the principle of inter-link between the scientific World and the spheres of development process planning and management.

### 3.2.4 Administrative and government ability of the local institutions

The fourth problematic area is that of the **administrative and government ability of the local institutions** - regions, districts, municipalities - in the countries of the area that assumes greater and greater importance, given the tendencies observable in these countries of adopting federal systems or however strongly decentralised. This tendency, that responds to the model of centralised state largely prevalent before, multiplies the necessity of administrative staff qualified for the management and the control over the resources and for the identification of the population needs.

There is an indissoluble link between the credibility and the stability of the democratic systems, above all in context of extreme poverty, and the efficiency and the credibility in responding to the existing problems in the competence areas. The improvement of the management and administrative abilities in the sphere of the local governments of the Horn's countries, to which the local bodies could give a strong support, should be among the main goals of the cooperation. Besides this perspective would make it credible the hypothesis of the development of the local bodies' contribution to the development cooperation starting from their own specific competencies.

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<sup>8</sup> It is not difficult, for instance correlating the increase of the armed tensions in East Ethiopia and of crimes in Kenya with the desegregation of the Somali state and with the broad and uncontrolled circulation of weapons that followed

### 3.2.5 Conclusions

To conclude, we believe that once the pair democracy-development, a great exercise of analysis and elaboration remains to be done by the African countries jointly, to concretely define what means today, in countries that are at the margins of the world's economic system, to start processes of democratisation. We think that in the Horn, but more generally in Africa, a debate over democracy that overlooks the serious economic and social problems that threaten the survival of millions of people risk to be fruitless, and, above all, not to involve the people consensus in the "democratic issue". Therefore, we have tried to describe some problematic areas that, on our opinion, define the terms in which today has to be faced the question of democratisation, being aware of the fact that the research to be done with the purpose of defining democratic and stable state orders will not be short and should not be separated by the start of economic reconstruction.

The research of immediate solutions to the needs of the poorest slices of the populations has to be accompanied by the definition of broader strategies and the relation between emergency and rehabilitation has to be intended not only in a diachronic but also in a synchronic sense, that is the emergency plans have to be implemented having in mind the demands of social and economic rehabilitation and of services' reconstruction. In the third part of the paper we will try to go further in defining the practical implications of this methodological issue. The idea we want to put forward here is that democratisation, conflict prevention and management and reconstruction appear, in the Horn of Africa as elsewhere, to be interdependent and correlated. In our opinion, binding aid to specific preconditions should not be the only way of supporting the process of peace setting and democratisation as in this way the international community and its cooperation would lose the possibility of playing an active role in implementing conditions suitable for the strengthening of peace processes and the achievement of democracy.

## **4. Strategic directions and intervention priorities**

### **4.1 The necessity of a long term approach in humanitarian aid: the case of Sudan**

We have already widely stressed that the Horn is a region characterised by chronicle conflicts. It will be sufficient to quote, in order to strengthen this image, the cases of Somalia, never really pacified for more than ten years<sup>9</sup>, the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea and Sudan's war. The last case is undoubtedly the less known by Italian public opinion, for the Italy-Sudan relations in the past have not had the same importance as the Italy-Somalia, Italy-Ethiopia and Italy-Eritrea ones. At the same time the Sudan's conflict, apart from being one of the utmost humanitarian tragedies of our times, strongly conditions - and it is conditioned by - the evolutions of the political and military events in the other countries of this area.

Among the main features of the conflict, that in September 1999 was the object of a meeting between the European Union and the International NGOs involved in humanitarian actions in Sudan<sup>10</sup>, are the following:

- a. the power relations between the parts tend to stay unchanged, and consequently the elements of instability and insecurity tend to become chronicle. This is strongly determined by the existence of strong conditionings and interference from "outside", that play a crucial role in the conflict;
- b. the block of the Southern Sudan keeps on crumbling or, to use a neologism drawn from another drama of the Horn, it keeps on "somalising". The Northern opposition is also divided and all this

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<sup>9</sup> Dating back to ten years the collapse of the political institutions and the beginning of desegregation of Somalia is absolutely conventional. In fact, even before January 1991, during Barre's government Somalia was an unstable country, crossed by strong armed tensions.

<sup>10</sup> The meeting was held in Brussels on the 29<sup>th</sup> and the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 1999, it was set up by Save the Children UK and VOICE (Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergency, network of European NGOs involved in humanitarian aid), jointly with ECHO. Object of the meeting : Developing a rationale for Humanitarian Assistance in Sudan.

determines episodes of guerrilla warfare in large parts of the territory;

- c. the conflict is characterised by a high and generalised level of violation of the person's rights. The opposite armies use slavery as a systematic strategy;
- d. the political and diplomatic commitment to the peace process is quite weak in this phase. The process guided by the IGAD seems to be uncertain and excessively if not exclusively centred on the government of Karthoum and on the *Southern People Liberation Front (SPLA)*;
- e. humanitarian operations in Sudan lack a unitary and strategic reference framework and are almost exclusively based on the research of a response to the emerging problems. In this way, the risk run by humanitarian operations is that of becoming dependant on the conflict agenda. This approach, that so far has made it possible the save of thousands of human lives - as in the case of Bahr and Ghazal in 1998 - has not permitted the full development of humanitarian aid as an instrument of a broader reconstruction and pacification planning, on the contrary, there is the risk for it to end up involved in the conflict rational itself.

Although it has been made clear, even though available data are scarcely reliable, that the food situation has improved in 1999 with respect to the previous years, the risk of food insecurity continues to be very high, also because it is linked to military and political insecurity. Moreover, the distrust of Karthoum towards the Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS<sup>11</sup>), that is felt as extremely politics influenced by some government sectors, makes some areas inaccessible to food and humanitarian aid.

Generally speaking the case of Sudan is emblematic of the necessity of placing the humanitarian aid in a joint and broad strategic prospect. More particularly the international cooperation can draw three strategic directions from the analysis of the case of Sudan.

#### 4.1.1 Broadening the thematic and operative boundaries of humanitarian aid

The first direction regards the necessity of **broadening the thematic and operative boundaries of humanitarian aid**, that cannot be limited in the mere immediate management of emergencies. This necessity was officially acknowledged by the European Union, so that the mandate of its humanitarian office, in the code approved and made effective on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1999, has been extended to the first rehabilitation. However we signal a tendency of going back to the past, that is a too strict vision of what humanitarian aid is, that raises concern and that, on rot opinion, - and Sudan is a clear example - is inadequate with respect to the challenges we have to face today. In order to give a concrete example, interventions of capacity building that support the growth and the intervention capacity of the local communities appear to be indispensable also in contexts of first emergency, above all if we want to reach the two aims: (i) preventing the exasperation of the dependence from outside of the vulnerable communities; (ii) allowing the humanitarian aid to use the nets of local solidarity, without which it is difficult - as the case of Sudan has so far demonstrated, especially for the operations of food aid - to reach the most vulnerable segments of the population.

#### 4.1.2 Endowing humanitarian aid with a certain and medium term time horizon

The second direction overlaps **the necessity of endowing humanitarian aid with a certain and medium term time horizon**. In fact, humanitarian aid risks to be stuck in the conflict rationale - or worse, in contributing to foster it - if it mainly responds to the effects of the conflict itself and if it is not able to present itself before the local institutional actors with an independent rationale, projected in the future and oriented to the restoring of the productive capacity and to reconstruction. With respect to Sudan it is usually argued that if the donors announced a humanitarian support, say for the next three years, the military and political apparatus would perceive it as a belief that the war is destined to last. Yet the thesis we put forward here goes in the opposite direction. In other words we propose to shape priorities and objectives of a broader strategy, and at least with a

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<sup>11</sup> International network coordinated by United Nations and aimed at managing the humanitarian aid in Sudan.

three years' time horizon, aiming, at least where possible, to creating the premises for the rehabilitation.

#### 4.1.3 Strengthening the relations between the political, humanitarian, and diplomatic actors

The third direction regards the necessity of a **stricter relation, both at informative and consultative level, among humanitarian, political and diplomatic actors**. In the case of Sudan, for instance, it is absolutely clear that a greater capacity of movement in the South, and therefore a widening of the possibility of reaching the needy population, relies, not marginally, on the possibility of negotiating with the central government, within which, however, a certain degree of diversification of directions that could be "developed" by the international diplomacy exists. Therefore, we believe that it is necessary for Italy to support the idea of a United Nations representative for Sudan, whose duties would be political coordination and linking among the spheres of negotiation, diplomacy and humanitarian aid.

## **4.2 Humanitarian aid and rehabilitation as strategies of supporting the pacification: the case of Somalia**

Since 1998 on the political situation in Somalia has not recorded particular and generalised progresses. The international community has strengthened its belief that the different areas of the country can be divided into rehabilitation areas, transition areas and crisis areas. At the same time the political issue of the building blocks has asserted itself. This is the idea of a gradual and welcome process of gradual recomposition, in some way unitary, of the Somali state starting from the regions where the political and administrative consolidation are stronger and the safety conditions are more promising.

Somaliland, after the internal conflict from 1994 to 1996, has made significant progresses, both political and administrative, even though the potential clash with Puntland, that claims the areas of Dhulbahnta and Warsengeli, in the regions of Sol and Sanaag, raises concern.

In Puntland, regardless of the existence of only one clan, strong internal tensions for the control of the main resources have not been lacking in the last periods.

The experiment of Benadir's administration, based on a reconciliation of different Hawiye groups, has collapsed in March 1999, after less than one year from its beginning, and the status of Mogadiscio is still in suspense between the clashes between opposite factions and the chronic instability within the city.

In the regions of Bay and Bakool, the Ethiopian support has allowed the Rahenweyne groups of militarily asserting themselves but without finding an inner political solidity.

In Giuba, opposite military hegemonies continue to alternate and as a result the internal instability tends to be exasperated.

Generally speaking, even in the areas of greater stability, the administrative systems appear to be weak, corrupted by peculiar interests that govern their nature and their functioning.

Meanwhile, a confirmation of the analysis of the links between civil wars and regional conflicts in the Horn of Africa developed above comes from the fact that Somalia is ever more evidently the field where of confrontation -and in many cases of support - of other regional conflicts.

The war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, but also the conflict within Ethiopia between the government and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) are an essential pieces of the complex political and military Somali puzzle, where Aydeed<sup>12</sup> is involved in supporting Eritreans and Oromo and Ethiopia is present in a part of the Somali territory backing factions antagonist to Aydeed.

The project of the next Conference of National Reconciliation, led by the Djibouti's Presidency, is the backdrop of this situation of instability.

It is superfluous stressing that we wish that this project could have a successful outcome and

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<sup>12</sup> He's one of the foremost Somali "War Lords". Son of the homonymous general, he's pursued his father's political and military action.

that the Conference could become an event to catalyse a complete pacification process. Besides, without taking up the issue of the future configuration of the Somali state, nor of its boundaries, that is of the eventual inclusion of Somaliland<sup>13</sup>, a minimum state order would be clearly indispensable in order to grant the country an institutional presence in supranational organisations, like UN, OAU, and the joint Assembly EU-ACP, without which even the hypothesis of a process of reconstruction will be difficult.

We cannot hide a slight scepticism about the outcome of diplomatic processes centred on the attempt of mediating among different political and military groups, lacking the essential conditions for new political leaderships to surface.

On this point we want to be very clear. We do not think we have recipes for the solution of the Somali crisis, nor to have main roads to suggest in order to reach in a short span of time the political recomposition of Somalia. We have, and we have always had, the belief that these results depend essentially on the will and the capacity of the Somali population of turning page and closing a tragic period of their history, in which the effects on the civil population have been devastating, so that the International Red Cross, in the early nineties, has defined the Somali's one the most serious humanitarian tragedy in the world.

However we also believe that an effective interaction between the involved governments and the NGOs active in Somalia can give the international community of concretely supporting processes of pacification within the Somali society, that constitute the essential basis for the successful outcome of any high institutional project. We mean pacification not only in the sense of creation of a unitary state, also because this is a goal that, if necessary, can be pursued by the Somali population in the forms they will think appropriate to the aim, but also in the sense of a progressive reduction of the military tensions, starting from the weakening of the weight exercised in the country by the War Lords.

Under the light of these considerations, and given the experience accumulated in twenty years of on the field work, we put forward some proposals for a more effective strategic design of the international community's activity - and especially of the Italian one - in Somalia.

#### 4.2.1 NGOs' participation to the IGAD

The NGOs operating in Somalia and organised in a Consortium already active in the SACB have to be represented by the consortium itself, as observers, in the consultation meetings between IGAD and its partners. This participation would grant a stricter relation between the pacification process on political-diplomatic grounds and on the field cooperation activities.

#### 4.2.2 Rationalisation of the Italian Cooperation involvement

The experience of Italian cofinancing through the European Union has generally been positive, but, apart from the lack, in this case too, of actual sites of confrontation on the priorities, cases of projects, announced by the European Union, substantially agreed on by the European Union and the Italian government itself, and then put off for long unexplainable periods, even in the presence of funds already allocated, waiting for the formal approval by the local offices of our cooperation, have been recorded. It is not our intention to argue about the recent past, while to suggest for the future that the commitments taken on by the cooperation in Somalia could be realised under the auspices of time horizons well defined, bypassing heavy procedures that result useless and harmful to the in the field operators' safety itself.

#### 4.2.3 Management of the peace dividend approach

It is well known that the Donors' community, in first place the European Union, has formalised the approach of the peace dividend to Somalia, that aims at rewarding in terms of aid the most stable

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<sup>13</sup> Decision that can be taken only by the Somaliland population.

and secure regions. In principle this approach is not arguable, but the NGOs have more than once expressed the wish that this approach would translate into an encouragement of structural investments in the most stable areas, while these investments would be highly problematic in regions like, for example, Giuba, without becoming a barrier that impedes the financing of basic services in other regions. Giving the peace dividend approach this narrow meaning would be, in our opinion, wrong and counterproductive for three basic reasons.

First of all the security situation within Somalia is very differentiated, not only among the different regions, but also inside each of them. As a consequence a rigid and schematic application of the peace dividend would be in many cases arbitrary.

Second, in many areas, the sole sites of current recomposition of the connective tissue (i.e. of pacification), either education and health services or projects of restoring of the productive capacity, would be annihilated. This would generate an evident paradox, where a strategy mainly conceived with the intent of making pacification grow would have the opposite effect.

Finally the third reason is the risk that the exclusive concentration of resources in some areas would wind up catalysing a climate of dangerous hostility towards them, as recently the Authorities of Somaliland (one of the most stable and pacified areas) have reaffirmed.

#### 4.2.4 Evaluation of the political impact

A concrete proposal that we formulate in this paper is that of involving NGOs and donors, starting from the Italian government, in a joint evaluation of the political impact of the rehabilitation programmes. Indicators can be defined and applied informing on the local communities' level of participation in the services' management, on the intensity and frequency of the collaborations developed, starting from the rehabilitation projects, among community and personalities related to different clans and officially hostile to each other, on the actual involvement of the district authorities in the projects' planning. This kinds of evaluations could both make surface the impact, on political grounds, of projects centred on the development of local competencies and the overcoming of the clans' antagonisms in the name of common interests of the community and define the guidelines and recommendations for the future.

#### 4.2.5 The issue of the local actors

In the past decade, the NGOs have tried to identify actors at the same time credible and as representative as possible. The effort has been of individuating new counterparts, expression mentality and visions of the country different from the ones that have settled in the years of conflict and contrast. Just to give an example, a group of teachers can be elected as privileged counterpart in an education rehabilitation programme being competent on the programme's themes, representative of the social area where they work, but also, above all, as their interest goes objectively towards the rehabilitation of the education system, without which the teachers' class lacks any significant status. At the same time, on wider grounds, there exist women groups transparently interested to the pacification, not least because, undoubtedly, women have paid and pay the higher price to instability and widespread violence. In some regions there are some NGOs and influential and credible personalities, that already are credible partners of our NGOs.

#### 4.2.6 The theme of sustainability

Another central theme is that of sustainability. In a territory without state the sustainability of interventions, above all if centred on the social services' activation and management, is obviously a very problematic topic. The sustainability of the health and education services is problematic everywhere, in Africa, as a consequence of very fragile economies and of a general cut in public expenditures. In Somalia this issue is characterised by the peculiar situation of the lack of a state order. At the same time, as we have already stressed, these services are indispensable because they represent the few visible and concrete elements of a connective tissue that is laboriously trying to emerge, apart from carrying out functions of the utmost importance. An holistic approach to the

theme of sustainability has then to be necessarily developed. The sustainability has to be considered, rather than a precondition for the start up of new projects, as an objective to meet beginning from three thematic areas:

- institutional: working in order to strengthen the management and direction ability of the local structures, that can be, not necessarily everywhere, the districts;
- technical: the emphasis has to be posed on the training and retraining of the local staff, in order to be in the conditions of assuring continuity to the services' management;
- socioeconomic: reducing as much as possible the costs of services' management and, at the same time, promoting effectively forms of cost-sharing of the services themselves at community level.

Anyway, in the case of sustainability as well it is necessary to define a whole strategy that takes into account the differences existing in Somalia and that, assuming this as a medium-long term goal, defines some unifying methodological criteria.

#### **4.3 The priorities of food security and fighting poverty: the case of Ethiopia**

It has already been quoted elsewhere in the paper the data issued by the World Bank according to which in 1992 21 millions of people were deemed food insecure in Ethiopia. According to other World Bank's analyses the majority of these 21 millions is formed by the poor in rural areas and in sheep-rearing groups residing in the arid zones.

There is no doubt the continuous armed internal conflicts between central governments and groups opposite to it, as well as the wars that have involved and still involve the country with the neighbouring states, have contribute to the worsening of the Ethiopian economic situation.

In the international collective imaginary the imagine of Ethiopia is often associated, not without fundament, with that of famine, that constitutes, as well known, a phenomenon that plunges its roots in the history of the country.

The results of some researches on poverty in Ethiopia (Various: 1998) indicate that the poorer family units of the rural population are those that draw the lowest share of their agriculture production for their own maintenance. In other words, the poorest are almost always those that have to find sources of income alternative to agriculture and rearing carried on through the development of their own resources.

At the same time it has become clear that even in zones and periods in which the agriculture production is satisfying, with availability of products in the market, a large number of households is insecure from as far as alimentation is concerned.

This points out the frequent failure of the strategies of self-maintenance undertaken by the rural poor and focusing on researching sources of income other than self-production.

In order to define serious and effective strategies of food security and poverty relief it is necessary to start from analysing the main factors of vulnerability. These can be divided into two broad categories: those contributing to a poor income generation and those fostering the sedimentation of unfavourable socioeconomic environments.

In the former category find place the insufficient availability of production<sup>14</sup> assets, the insufficient supply of means (i.e. fertilisers and seeds), the critical sanitary conditions of the farmers that obstacle the full productivity.

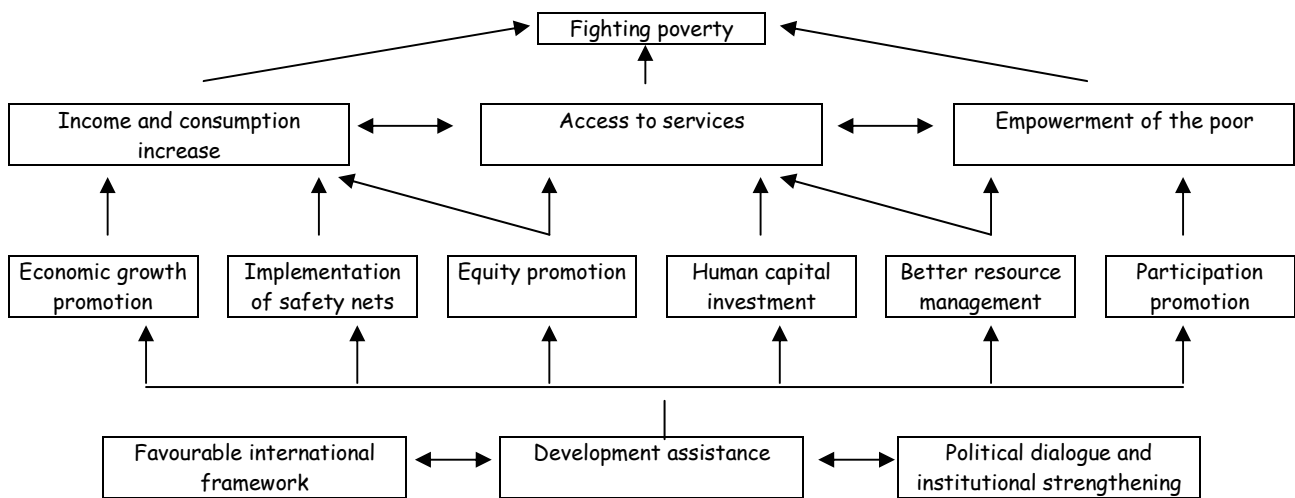
In the latter are traditionally included the scarcity of infrastructure and connection systems, the poor access to services and instruction, the low level of community organisation, which also determine a tendency towards the political marginality of the rural communities with respect to the political power and the institutions.

It is not difficult to extrapolate from the joint factors of vulnerability a comprehensive picture of extreme poverty.

A new line of reasoning is taking over, that is schematically reported in the following figure: assuming fighting poverty as the general objective, in the subsequent lines are set the aims, the strategies, and at the bottom, the principal components of the development support actions.

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<sup>14</sup> A research carried out in 1989 (Various: 1998) suggests that, on average, every rural household commands 0,78 hectares.



This kind of formalisation, which was recently drafted by the European Union, has the advantage of setting the development cooperation strategies in a wider framework, that includes, in general, the net of relations between European countries and African countries. For instance, the determination of favourable international framework does not depend exclusively on the development cooperation, nor it is a development cooperations' priority, while it calls on other general issues, like the commercial relations, the management of the debt crisis, the impact of the European Community Agriculture Policy on the economies of the poor countries. Some strategic priorities seem to arise, on our opinion, from the analysis so far developed and from the above presented scheme on the relation between food security and poverty relief, that are here summarised.

#### 4.3.1 The consistency issue

Italy could give an important contribution to the achievement of a positive balance between commitment to fighting poverty through the cooperation's instruments and the development of international relations consistent with this commitment. This is a demand ever more frequently expressed in the official documents of the European Union, starting from the Maastricht Treaty. In the case of Ethiopia, a feasible idea could be that of supporting financially and technically a permanent Observatory on the impact of the international trade relations on the economy of the country, open to the qualified contribution of local experts. A similar initiative could have among its tasks that of suggesting adjustments that go towards the support of the local economy.

#### 4.3.2 The value added of non-governmental cooperation

Another advantage of the formalisation presented above is that it allows us to identify the different subjects that have to be involved in the pursue of the common general aim of reducing poverty. If, for instance, developing the political dialogue and granting the consistence between cooperation and economic and trade policies is a primary governments' responsibility, we believe that the main value added of the non governmental cooperation regards the aim of empowerment of the local communities, through their actual involvement in the resources management and in the strategies definition. For example, the NGOs can contribute to the strengthening of associations and local NGOs able to effectively represent the demands and the needs of the most vulnerable slices of the population.

#### 4.3.3 The gender issue

The analysis so far developed gives the gender issue a key role in the activity of cooperation for fighting poverty in Ethiopia, basically for two reasons.



The former is that the various dimensions of poverty cannot be understood without a rigorous analysis of the gender issue. Assuming for example the lack of access to services and to productive assets as two of the most significant dimensions of poverty, we cannot ignore, if we want positively affect this situation, that women often suffer from the existence of extremely strong barriers, also for cultural reasons. It is not accidental that among the poor families, both in rural and metropolitan areas, there are female headed households.

The latter is given by the fact that an effective policy against poverty cannot ignore the coping strategies normally undertaken by poor households in situations of crisis, among which are included the reduction of per capita consumption, internal migrations, search of new income sources. These strategies are often undertaken by women. Therefore, increasing the access to instruction and training for the women can improve the effect of coping strategies of entire households and local communities.

#### 4.3.4 The role of cooperation projects

Acknowledging the complexity of the phenomenon of poverty also brings us to conceive a project of development cooperation as catalysing agent of institutional, financial, and human resources in a given context. It is evident that it is unlikely that a single cooperation initiative can substantially affect poverty in a given area if it is not planned in order to favour the actual participation- and the cohesion - of different subjects, in search of adequate solutions for the problems ahead. We refer to the local institutions, to the academic world of this country, to the specialised institutes, to the private sector. In Ethiopia, in different fields, the human and institutional resources are available, but their connection, the synergies among them and their full involvement in the development plans are still missing. The cooperation projects can attempt to fill this gap, becoming the gathering point for the search of effective solutions to the problems of poverty.

#### 4.3.5 The role of cooperation in urban areas

Our analysis of Ethiopia has been mainly centred on poverty in rural areas, where the bulk of the population lives.

The Italian Cooperation is committed in urban areas too, starting from Addis Abeba. This choice is justified by the fact that serious problems of poverty, not different from those already mentioned regarding the rural areas, exist: the poor have scarce access to services, poor opportunities of scraping an income, scarcity of safety and protection nets. Moreover, in the cities the effects of the restrictive fiscal policies are felt more in terms of employment.

The reference already made to the importance of developing and strengthening NGOs and local associations has to be reiterated also with reference to poverty relief and urban marginality strategies. Recently, associations that implement a lobby action for feminine emancipation, for the defence of childhood, for the defence of street children 's rights, have appeared. These realities have to be supported, also through aimed plans of capacity building because they carry out positive actions in support of weak subjects and also because they can contribute to state reinforce in the country a culture of rights that today is objectively fragile.

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**Solint**  
Solidarietà e cooperazione internazionale

*The role of the NGOs in the international crisis:  
towards a new partnership between institutions and civil society  
Rome, 23<sup>rd</sup> of May 2000*

## The Horn of Africa between Instability and Hopes: Reflections and Strategic Direction for the Development Cooperation

by Paolo Dieci (CISP)

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Rome, April 2000

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