

Report on the Joint UNICEF/Women's Association of Tigray Study of Ethiopian Deportees/Returnees from Eritrea Living in Tigray

December 2001

Prepared by
Laura Buffoni
Ehetemariam Tadesse

Table of content

Acronyms	2
Acknowledgements	3
Executive Summary	4
1. Introduction	
1.1. Background: The conflict and the post-conflict period	6
1.2. A short discussion on terminology and definitions	7
1.2.1. Deportees or returnees?	7
1.2.2. Persons affected by the war	7
1.2.3. The CRC and the situation of children	8
1.3. The objectives of the study	9
1.4. Methodologies of the study	9
1.5. The Survey Process: The questionnaire and the sampling	10
1.6. Composition of the Sample	10
1.7. Limitations of the Survey	11
2. Returnees in Tigray: Need for Assistance and Potential Asset	
2.1 Tigray: A fragile Socio-economic Environment	12
2.2. A profile of returnees	13
2.2.1. Returning from Eritrea: Length of stay, sources of livelihood and conditions of return	13
2.2.2. What could be carried back: education and skills	14
2.2.3. Sources of livelihoods and skills	15
2.2.4. The "interrupted family: separations and stress within the family	16
2.2.5 Special Vulnerabilities of Women	18
2.2.6. Special vulnerabilities of children	19
2.3. Re-creating livelihoods: Current socio-economic conditions, assistance received and coping mechanisms	21
2.3.1. Coping Mechanism and individual initiatives	21
2.3.2. Family support vis a vis external assistance	22
2.3.3. Unemployment and economic stress	23
2.3.4. Access to services (education, water, health and counseling)	25
2.3.5. Social reintegration and acceptance	28
2.4. Expectations and visions	29
2.3. Awareness on HIV/AIDS and landmines	30
3. Conclusions and recommendations	31
Annexes	34

Acronyms

BOLSA Bureau of Labor and Social Affairs
DPPB Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Bureau
DPPC Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission
CIDA Canadian International Development Agency
EC Ethiopian Calendar
ERP Emergency Recovery Programme
EUE Emergencies Unit for Ethiopia
FMOH Federal Ministry of Health
GDP Gross Domestic Product
ICRC International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP Internally Displaced Person
NGO Non-Governmental Organization
MOH Ministry of Health
MSF Medicines Sans Frontieres
REST Relief Society of Tigray
UNICEF United Nations' Children Fund
UNDP United Nations Development Programme
UNMEE United Nations' Mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea
UNCT United Nations Country Team
WAO Women's Affairs Office
WAT Women's Association of Tigray
WFP World Food Programme

Acknowledgements

This study would not have been possible without the support of the Women Association of Tigray, the regional DPPB and BOLSA. In particular we would like to thank Mulugeta Aberra of WAT, Khasay G/Kidane of BOLSA and Mammo Kiflu of the DPPB, who worked as part of the survey team and displayed exceptional energy and knowledge.

Our appreciation goes to all the officials at zonal and regional level, and NGOs who provided us with information and insight, and especially Wro. Aster Amara of WAT who facilitated the organization of this study, and Ato Wolde Gebriel of BOLSA. Others in WFP, UNMEE and UNDP/EUE reviewed our findings and contributed ideas.

Special thanks go to UNICEF staff in Addis Ababa and Mekelle who provided guidance and continuous support.

Executive Summary

Since and following the outbreak of the Ethio-Eritrean conflict in May 1998, an estimated 95,000 Ethiopians living in Eritrea were deported or returned to Ethiopia. Approximately 70-75,000 of these were originally from Tigray. Although now the rate has drastically decreased, the flow of the repatriation is still ongoing.

This study addresses the situation of deportees/returnees living in Tigray, with special focus on women and children, who make up 80% of the total deportee/returnee population.

The findings reveal that the situation of women and children deportees/returnees is particularly fragile. After having experienced a difficult - and in some cases traumatic transit from life in Eritrea to their areas of origin - women are now trying to reestablish their lives and ensure that their children and families have adequate food, adequate accommodation and access to education. This happens in the very precarious economic situation of a region, which is trying to recover from the effects of the war. The women who shared their experiences and views, expressed their willingness to move on, and to draw the attention of the duty bearers and of the international humanitarian community on their current difficulties. They are strong and determined women, who want to work, become active members of the society and give their children life chances and opportunities.

The majority of the deportees lived in Eritrea for over twenty years, and youth and children were born and brought up there. Many of them had never seen Ethiopia before.

Among the deportee/returnee population a disproportionate number of households is headed by women. Many families still live separate from one or more members.

While in Eritrea, deportees/returnees were involved in a number of activities, mostly unskilled. They were petty traders, domestic and casual workers, masons etc. Because of their abrupt departure, they were unable to bring their property with them. The payment of clearance and other taxes, also depleted their resources.

Once back in Ethiopia, deportees/returnees receive a one-time assistance package from the DPPC/DPPB, a 9-months food ration and a cash grant. However, the study indicates that only a minority was able to engage in viable income producing activities since their return and while the others remain dependent on assistance. The investigation of the special vulnerabilities of women and children - also validated by focus group discussions - indicates that the current major problem of deportees/returnees are:

- shelter/housing;
- finding a job and/or farming opportunities;
- especially in some areas, the lack of adequate food for children;
- difficulties in ensuring that all children go to school;
- concern for the family members left behind;
- support of the family of origin below expectations;
- movement to urban areas and risk of increased urban poverty.

Integration and acceptance in the communities does not seem to represent a major problem. As many of the deportees/returnees lived in urban areas while in Eritrea, they now prefer to move to towns in Tigray (especially Adigrat and Mekelle) hoping to access better jobs, housing and services. This, added to the recent increased concentration of people in towns and urban villages, is aggravating the problem of urban poverty.

The needs and difficulties of deportees/returnees need to be addressed in a holistic way, solutions to alleviate current problems and create the basis for sustainable livelihoods need to be brought about. The study recommends actions to address both immediate - continued relief assistance to vulnerable groups - and longer term needs, as well as increased monitoring and advocacy. Most important, is the active involvement of all duty bearers of the region in the planning and continuous follow up of the wellbeing of deportees/returnees.

3. Introduction

1.2. Background: The Conflict and the Post-Conflict Period

"In May 1998, a long-standing dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea over demarcation of their common border erupted in armed conflict. The fighting lasted for two months and was followed by several months of relative calm, as various attempts at mediation and negotiated settlement were made (...). In Ethiopia, the initial fighting resulted in the displacement of civilian populations close to the border conflict zones in both Tigray and Afar regions. In addition, other areas close to the border were evacuated during the last quarter of 1998 in a pre-emptive move by the Ethiopian government to minimize the risk of civilian casualties in the event of a resumption of hostilities. In February 1999, armed conflict broke out again in three main areas of the border(...) in Tigray and Afar¹.(UNCT, Humanitarian Needs of War Displaced and Drought Affected People in Tigray, UNCT Rapid Assessment Mission, 7-8 April 1999).

As a consequence of the hostilities, in 1999 the following numbers of people were considered displaced in the three zones of Tigray bordering Eritrea:

West	116,416
Central	88,978
East	110,542
Total	315,936

UNCT, April 1999

In 2000, the main areas of tension were along the 1,000 km border between Ethiopia and Eritrea. The number of IDPs remained fairly stable during 2000 vis a vis the previous year and the Government considered that 350,000 people in Tigray and Afar had been displaced by the conflict. The UN targeted 272,000 IDPs for food assistance, and 315,116 IDPs for non-food assistance in Tigray.

Altogether throughout the war, seven woredas were severely affected: people had to leave and infrastructure was destroyed, either because they were directly occupied by Eritrean military forces or because of precautionary evacuations. Some 42 tabias, suffered damage or destruction of houses, schools, clinics along with the laying of landmines and proliferation of UXOs, affecting farmland, pastureland and water points.

The situation changed following a major Ethiopian offensive in May 2000 and on June 18, 2000 the two countries signed a cessation of hostilities agreement in Algiers, brokered by the OUA, with the support of the United Nations, the United States, and the European Union. Under the terms of the agreement, both parties agreed to cease all land and air attacks and to seek a resolution to their disputes through peaceful and legal means. They also agreed to modalities of deployment whereby Ethiopian troops would withdraw to positions under civil administration prior to 6 May, 1998 when the fighting began, while Eritrean troops would maintain a distance of 25 km from Ethiopian positions, thus creating a Temporary Security Zone (TSZ), which became operational after some time. In July 2000, the Security Council established the United Nations Mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) and authorized the deployment of 4,200 troops and 200 military observers. UNMEE troops to patrol the border area, monitor the implementation of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement, and support

efforts to accommodate the return of displaced civilians in both countries. On October 23, 2000, the two countries signed a more comprehensive peace agreement in Algiers, which laid the basis for a border commission, and a neutral claims commission to decide on all claims for loss, damage or injury by one party (Government or nationals) against the other. The claims must be related to the conflict and result from violations of international humanitarian law or other international law.

1.2. A Short Discussion on Terminology and Definitions

1.2.1. Deportees or Returnees?

"Deportees", "repatriated persons", "returnees" and "expellees". These are the different terms used to define Ethiopian citizens returning from Eritrea. The difference between the terms used appears to be based on the willingness - or lack of it - of this group of Ethiopian citizens to return to their original homeland.

According to the survey conducted, the majority of the returnees (90%) perceive their departure as forced: forced by the circumstances, forced by the loss of their jobs and forced by the social isolation and in some cases by the harassment.

The return of Ethiopians from Eritrea, can therefore be defined as "forced or induced repatriation". The local perception in the region is that because of this, the term "deportees" should be utilized. People returning with the assistance of the ICRC, on the other hand, do so in a voluntary manner. To cover for all cases, and to accommodate the different perceptions, in the report below, the double definition of "deportees/returnees" is used.

1.2.2. Persons Affected by the War

IDPs: Approximately 10 percent of the total population of Tigray was displaced and lost the agricultural production, livestock, sources of livelihood, homes and belongings. Cross-border petty trade, an important source of income in the border areas, which included the selling of vegetable, spices, livestock, locally brewed drinks came to a complete halt. Access to cash reduced dramatically and though the presence of the military accounted for some economic activity (especially purchase of goats and sheep), people living around the border areas experienced a loss of their purchasing power and became generally poorer. Once away from their areas of origin, IDPs were not able to support themselves, their children and the elderly members of the family. As a consequence, families split and women and children became the most vulnerable amongst the displaced. As the authorities in Tigray did not promote settlement in organized camps and encouraged the IDPs to integrate in the communities outside the conflict areas, many IDPs joined families or relatives, or just tried to make a living in the host communities. These were communities already under stress due to the drought and the failure of harvest seasons during 1999/2000. Many displaced people however, were forced to live in caves, under bridges and in makeshift shelters in extremely harsh conditions. In some areas of high IDP density – at various locations of Tigray's northern belt – camp-like settlements emerged.

An estimated 75 percent of the IDPs were assumed to be women and children. During the two years of the conflict, but also upon return to their home areas they have relied mostly on food distribution and other forms of assistance. Currently, an estimated 80 percent of the displaced populations have returned to their home villages. Recovery and return to self reliance has proved to be a lengthy process for many others that upon return to their home areas found that they would not cultivate the fields because of the presence of landmines and UXOs, or who found the houses

completed destroyed, together with health posts, schools and other facilities.

Deportees/Returnees: It is estimated that approximately 75,000 people who were deported or "voluntarily" returned, are from Tigray. In April 1999, when a UNCT team visiting Tigray was informed by the Regional Administration, that "Tigray had received 14,762 Ethiopians who had been obliged to return to Ethiopia from Eritrea since the beginning of the conflict". The number of people who entered Ethiopia through Tigray from the beginning of the conflict, is recorded in official statistics collected by the DPPC at zonal and regional levels (see annex 2). Data on the number of people assisted by the ICRC, following the Algiers peace agreement is also shown in Annex 4.

Historical ties between Tigray and Eritrea had been traditionally strong, with an economically important border trade, frequent seasonal or longer term migrations and large intermarried populations.

The number of deportees/returnees raised dramatically in the weeks immediately following the cessation of hostilities agreement and was an issues of concern during the second half of 2000. The flow of returnees remained high through the end of 2000 (approximately 1000 persons a week) and during the first half of 2001.

The ERP (the Mekelle-based, World Bank-funded Emergency Recovery Programme) is planning to assist an some 64,000 returnees.

Families of the deceased: The ERP will be assisting 57,000 families of deceased militia. The programme is under way and some of them have already received rehabilitation assistance in 8 woredas.

1.2.3. The CRC and the Situation of Children

Of importance to the study is the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), especially article 3 regarding "the best interest of the child", article 9 on the separation of the child from his or her parents and the provision by the State party of "information concerning the whereabouts of the absent family member (s), and article 10 that provides for family reunification and laying down the rights for children "to maintain on a regular basis, save in exceptional circumstances personal relations and direct contacts with both parents".

It is comforting to know that in the case of Ethiopia and Eritrea the problem of unaccompanied minors is not as dramatic as in other conflict situations. In 1999, a UNICEF-commissioned study on separated children (Sarah Jones, 1999) "a total of 1363 separated children was recorded representing the combined population [of separated children] in both countries. [Though] none of the numbers as completely reliable, they can be regarded as an indication of scale. (...) As far as is known at this point, the population of children separated from both parents in both countries is safe from deliberate personal persecution by the host country's authorities. [and further] no children under ten years who customarily live with one or both parents, have been forcibly separated from their parents".

The Central zone BOLSA collected information on separated children and orphans (see annex 3). Their figure refers to children unable to return with their parents, but were accompanied by other adults. It is assumed that some of them were able the parents who arrived in successive rounds.

The issue of split families and the separation of children especially from one of the parents will need to be addressed and given extensive thoughts and appropriate action in light of the best interest of the child and the family reunification principles contained in the CRC.

1.3. The Objectives of the Study

The study was first suggested on the basis of a UNICEF field visit to Tigray in mid-2001 and after discussions with the Women's Affairs Office (WAO) and Women's Association of Tigray (WAT). The overall objectives of the study were consequently jointly identified as follows:

1. To put together a profile and understand the needs of the people who have been deported and returned from Eritrea to Ethiopia, focussing on Tigray region (returnees/deportees living in other regions have not been included in this study).
2. To collect information on specific hardships faced by deportee/returnee women and children in Tigray.
3. Achieve a good understanding of the coping mechanisms enacted by deportees/returnees.
4. Achieve a good understanding of the level of social and economic integration and acceptance of the deportees/returnees in the local communities
5. To recommend actions for alleviating the problems of women and children deportees/returnees

1.4. Methodologies of the Study

A variety of methodologies have been used in undertaking the assessment:

- **Review of statistical data** collected by Government agencies: data on returnees are collected by the DPPB Central zone, upon arrival in Adwa. Data are then transferred to the DPPB in Mekelle, where they are compiled. ICRC/Ethiopian Red Cross also collects data of each "safe passage".
- **Survey: 608 Questionnaires** were collected in the three border zones of Tigray (Eastern, Central and Western) and in Mekelle. Southern zone of Tigray was not included in the survey as it hosts a small number of deportees/returnees.
- **Interviews with key informants:** government authorities at regional, zonal and woreda levels, NGOs, ICRC and other duty bearers were interviewed in Mekelle and towns in the zones.
- **Group in-depth interviews and case studies:** discussions were held with representatives of the returnee associations in Mekelle. Eight focus group discussions with deportee/returnee women were organized with the objective of collecting additional insight on the specific vulnerabilities of women and children (see annex 5 and 6).
- **Participant observation:** the team supervising the survey - which included a UNICEF consultant, DPPB, WAT and BOLSA staff - spent an extensive period of time in the field and collected important personal impressions of the condition of the returnees. The team also spent some time assessing the situation of streetchildren both in Mekelle and Axum (annex 7).

The study was funded by UNICEF. UNICEF also provided technical support through two consultants. One UNICEF consultant organized and supervised the field work for the survey, contributed to the analysis and the additional collection of data. The other consultant followed up on the analysis of the data, the reports writing and the focus group discussions.

1.5. The Survey Process: The Questionnaire and the Sampling

The survey questionnaire was designed by the UNICEF consultant, following discussions with UNICEF Addis Ababa and staff in Mekelle, the Women's Association of Tigray WAT, BOLSA and DPPB. The questionnaire was composed of mostly closed questions a limited number of open-ended questions (see annex 10). The survey through questionnaires enabled the team to collect the bulk of the data discussed below.

A planned total of 600 households were randomly selected in western, eastern, central zones and Mekelle zone. The number of questionnaires administered in each zone reflects the proportion of deportees/returnees living in each zone (see percentage share of questionnaires column below). Urban and rural sites were selected in each zone, in consultation with local woreda (district) and tabia (sub-district) authorities. The number of questionnaires distributed by site is shown in the table below:

Table 1. Sites Selected for the Study and number of questionnaires distributed

Zone	Percentage share of questionnaires	Woreda	Urban	Rural**
Western	10	Tahtay koraro	Shire 60*	
Central	25	Laelay MaichEW	Axum 60	
		Adwa	Adwa 60	
		Ahferom	-	Ahferom 30
Eastern	49	Gantaafeshum	Adigrat 123	Gantaafeshum 57
		Saesaetsadaimba	-	Saesaetsadaimba 61
		Hawiezen	-	Hawiezen 60
Mekelle	16	Debub and Semen	Mekelle 98	

*Shire has to be considered a semi-urban area. Many deportees/returnees have recently moved to Shire town from surrounding rural areas.

** The number of sites in rural areas is smaller due to lack of accessibility, especially in Adwa and Laelay Maychew.

The questionnaire - translated from English into Tigrigna to facilitate the work of the enumerators - was tested during a one-day pre-test session in Wukro, 41 kms from Mekelle. Prior to the collection of data in the field, 22 enumerators and 8 supervisors from WAT, BOLSA and DPPB participated in a two-day training. The training focussed on the objectives of the survey and survey methodology, and, together with the actual fieldwork, was conducted with the aim stepping up data collection capacities within the region.

1.6. Composition of the Sample

The sample is composed of a total of 608 households as 8 extra households were involved in the survey in Mekelle town. Of the interviewees within these households, **118 (20 %) are male and 490, (80%) are female**. Heads of household were interviewed (both male and female), and in some cases the wives of the male heads of household, to enhance participation of women in the survey (see table 2).

Table 2. Marital status of the interviewees (Total number)

	Single	Married	Separated	Divorced	Widowed
Male	36	57	10	6	9
Female	87	146	107	81	68

The interviewees were drawn from different age groups:

Table 3. Total number by age group

	Less 19	19-40	41-60	Over 60
Male	19 (3%)	48 (8%)	31 (5%)	20 (3%)
Female	9 (1%)	288 (47%)	171 (28%)	21 (3%)

It is interesting to note the family size of the households interviewed. The majority of the households interviewed are composed of 2-3 members (42%), while 25 percent are single households. The small family size - compared to the average family size in the region (4.3 members, FMOH, 1997) - was also recorded by the zonal DPPDs (see annex 2). This can be related to the fact that a considerable number of households are single, others have divorced or have separated - sometimes temporarily - from family members.

Table 4. Size of the family of the interviewees

Nr of family members	1	2-3	4-5	Over 5
Total	154	258	113	83
Percentage	25%	42%	19%	14%

The total number of people covered by the survey (total household members) is 1,729. 44 percent being children under 18, 46 percent are adults and 9 percent are elderly above 60.

1.7. Limitations of the Survey

Challenges and constraints during the collection of data

- Conditions of the terrain, accessibility and poor logistical support available to the survey teams did not allow for adequate coverage of rural areas.
- Available information on the situation of the deportees/returnees, including disaggregated statistical data is not complete. There are some gaps in the collection of data especially of the first batches arrived from Eritrea when the war broke out in 1998. Zonal DPPDs have been trying to compile the data in a disaggregated manner by sex and age, but this information is not collated in an overall statistics, because of lack of capacity (the zonal DPPDs do not have sufficient computers) and the lack of staff.
- It was therefore difficult to reflect the demographic composition of returnees in the sample. For this reason, data provide a good understanding of what deportees/returnees think and experience, but less of the demographic characteristics of the population as a whole.
- Supervision of the enumerators in Shire was not possible. As a result, the questionnaire in Shire was only distributed to women.
- Lack of logistic and material capacity of WAO/WAT, and other collaborating agencies (DPPB and BOLSA) as well as lack of skilled staff to sustain the data collection in the field. The enumerators, though all being selected amongst 12 grade graduates, did not have an adequate understanding of the accuracy necessary to a survey. The team could not access a computer in WAT's offices. Tallying and compilation, also because of the translation into Tigrigna, had to be done manually and took a long time (over 15 days) and put added pressure on the UNICEF/DPPB/WAT/BOLSA team.

4. Deportees/Returnees in Tigray: Need for Assistance and Potential Asset

2.1 Tigray: A fragile Socio-economic Environment

Located in the northern tip of the country extending along the border with Eritrea in the North, bordering Sudan in the West, Amhara region in the South and Afar in the East, Tigray has an estimated area of 80000 Sq kms. The total population is 3,358,380 of which 1,65,064 are male and 1,707,892 are female. Agriculture is the source of livelihood for the majority of the people and agriculture contributes mostly to the regional GDP (64,5%). Most of the population (83 %) depends on primarily rain-fed, subsistence agriculture with major crops being sorghum, tef, barley, millet maize and pulses. However the region has a structural food deficit (TNRS, Food Security Desk), with 60 percent of the families in Tigray being able to produce food only sufficient for 6 months of the year.

In the West, especially in Humera zone, there are surplus producing areas, however production is mainly made up of cash crops. In Southern Tigray the failure in the '90s of large scale irrigated agriculture has led to environmental degradation and loss of capital, thus the strategy has shifted towards more sustainable "small scale irrigation" schemes.

Industrialization is still in the infancy stage. There are now a pharmaceutical assembly, a cement and a textile factory in Tigray, while other small scale enterprises are also operational but suffer of the lack of basic infrastructure. Out of the total 3704 kms of roads in Tigray, only 900 kms are all-weather roads (ibidem). Limited distribution of electricity, telecommunications and lack of adequate human resources are also major constraints.

Access to education has improved dramatically in the last ten years, with a total gross enrollment rate in primary school of 63.5 (61.2. % for girls), and a secondary total gross enrollment rate of 12.8 (8.7. % for girls) (MOH, Health and Health related indicators, E.C. 1992). Drop-out rates remain very high, especially amongst female students.

Health indicators compare relatively well to the national average, but remain low: 49.7 percent of the population is fully immunized, 71 percent of the women have access to pre-natal services and 24.8 percent to post natal services, and potential health coverage is 65.9 percent (MOH, E.C.1992 E.C.).

In general, the region faces serious socio-economic problems, firstly food insecurity. The regional strategy therefore focuses on improving agricultural production but also encouraging economic diversification by developing off-farm income. Solutions also will need to be found for the increasingly urbanized populations, especially youth, in the major towns like Mekele, Adigrat and Axum. Especially after 1998, unemployment rates, crime and the number of people living on the streets ("streetism"), have progressively increased in these towns.

In this fragile socio-economic framework, dramatically affected by the conflict, infrastructure still needs to be rebuilt and a substantial number of war - affected, especially IDPs - have still to recover and return to their pre-war living conditions.

Since 1999, UNICEF has programmed over 8\$ million in humanitarian assistance and war displaced and host communities, mostly in the area of health water, education and shelter.

At the moment, the major ongoing assistance programmes include:

- food assistance provided by WFP/REST to 287,501 beneficiaries plus additional 19,995 deportees/returnees;
- The ERP (World Bank funded- Emergency Recovery Programme), which is in the process of assisting with a variety of rehabilitation activities, 84,000 IDPs, 57,000 families of the deceased and 64,000 deportees.

While the ERP project will enable the Government to meet the estimated needs of 56 percent of the affected communities, the remaining 44 percent of needs will have to be met with other source, possibly bilateral. On the other hand, WFP's support to food distribution in IDP locations will decrease dramatically as of January, to assist a maximum of 70-80,000 people (figures are to be officially confirmed).

A continuing influx of returnees to Tigray only adds to burdens faced by the region in achieving recovery from the conflict. In fact, such obligatory movements of populations, most of who have had difficulties in resuming self sufficiency, only retard these efforts.

2.2. A profile of deportees/returnees

2.2.1. Returning from Eritrea: Length of Stay, Sources of Livelihood and Conditions of Return

The duration of stay in Eritrea of the interviewed deportees/returnees varies. However, the majority of them has spent over 20 year in the country. This implies that many deportees/returnees - and especially the children of the interviewees - have never lived in Ethiopia. This is a possible element of vulnerability: for children, because they might have difficulties in adapting to the new environment, and especially in school. For the family as whole, the loss of the family support networks after many years of absence adds to the economic and social fragility. Youth (both boys and girls) also face difficulties of integration, especially in urban areas.

Table 5. Duration of stay of deportees/returnees in Eritrea

0-5 years	6-10 years	11-20 years	Over 20 years
136	107	98	265
23%	18%	16%	44%

The majority of the deportees/returnees transited through an officially established transit camp, Adwa (77%) and Adigrat (10%). The ones who did not transit through these camps, crossed the border on foot. Focus group discussions and in-depth interview revealed the difficulties experienced by these deportees/returnees who returned without organized transport (by the ICRC). Women and children had to walk long distances in harsh climatic conditions, and exposed to the risk of harassment and violence by the Eritrean military.

The duration of stay in the transit camp is mostly one (64%) or two weeks (24%), while in some exceptional cases people stayed less than a week or over two weeks. All returnees who transited through Adwa or Adigrat received the assistance package (see section 2.3).

Asked about their decision to return to Ethiopia, the majority of the interviewed feel that their repatriation was "forced" (90%). Although not always physically forced to leave, the circumstances resulting from the war, made life impossible for Ethiopians living in Eritrea. Having lost their jobs, feeling socially isolated and being harassed, they were forced to make the decision to return.

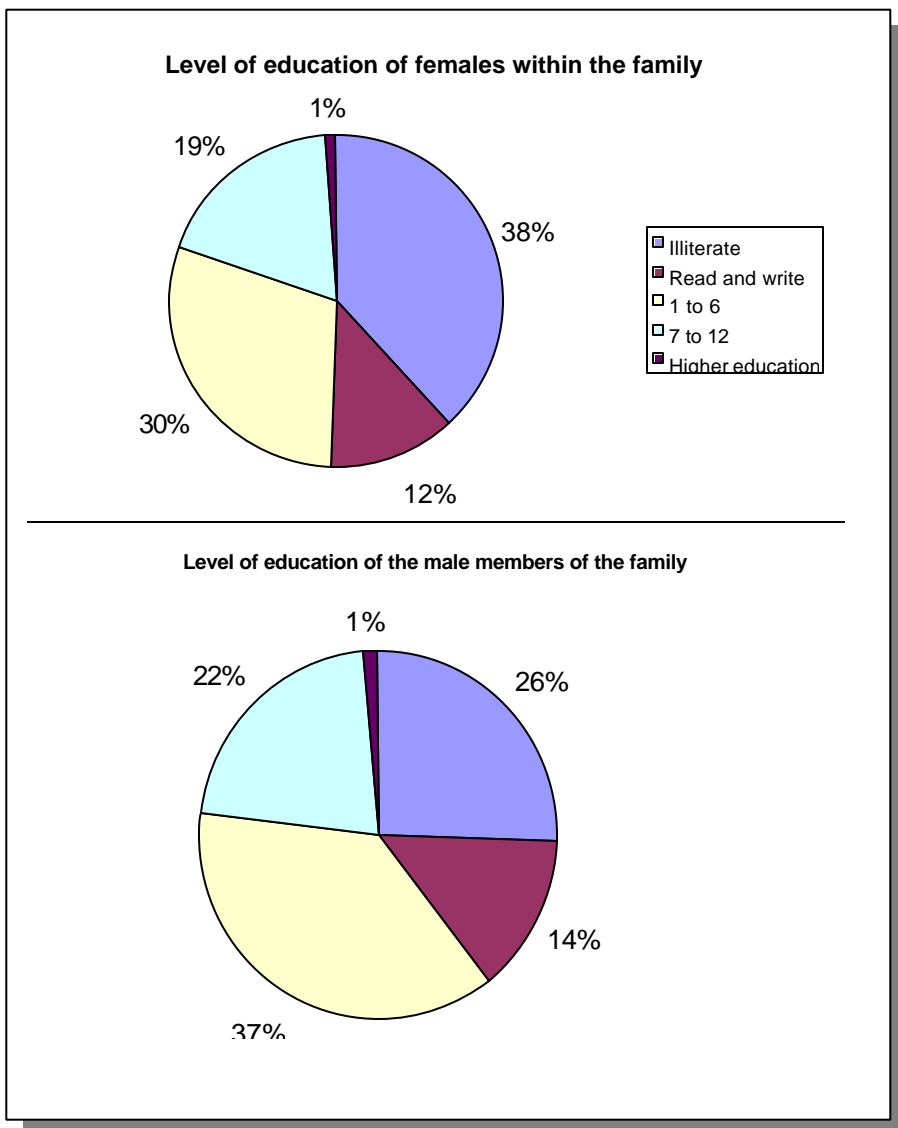
Deportees/returnees interviewed gave accounts of how their children were bullied in school, neighbours were afraid of maintaining social relations, and domestic workers were not trusted in Eritrean homes anymore. Others were rounded up or visited at home and told to leave by the police or security.

A total of 40 percent of the interviewees were forced to leave without being allowed to carry their property. 89% of the respondents indicated that they had either to leave their property behind or sell it. The remaining number of interviewees either had little or no property (10%) or were unable to respond. Six cases were reported of property being taken by Eritrean military while in transit.

The reasons for selling property are mostly related to settling bills, renewal of ID and clearance procedures prior to departure (29%), or because of inability to take it across the border.

2.2.2. What could be carried back: education and skills

The charts indicate the educational level within the family of the interviewees. While illiteracy rates are high for both sexes, females are still relatively disadvantaged as 38% of them are illiterate, 12% are only able to read and write and 30% had accessed primary school. While the first two categories ("Read and write" and "Illiteracy") affect the adult population and therefore the ability to access better working conditions, the survey and the focus group discussions indicate that all deportee/returnee children were in school while in Eritrea. This is also reflected in the deep concern that parents interviewed expressed regarding the ability of their children to join school upon arrival in Ethiopia (see 2.3.2.).



2.2.3. Sources of Livelihoods and Skills

The majority of the returnees interviewed indicated that they were working as casual workers (28%), owning a private business (23%), domestic workers (21%), petty trade (13%). A smaller percentage was employed in government institutions (7%), possibly in low level positions. Others were students, dependent spouses, elderly people depending on the income produced within the family. The "export" of domestic work is a phenomenon that continued until just before the beginning of the conflicts. Girls as young as 13, especially from the border rural areas, had moved to Eritrea to work as maids/nannies. Their current situation is particularly difficult, as they came back without any skills or schooling, to families that were already poor even before the war. Many of these families have also suffered displacement and have not yet resumed regular cultivation.

In general, the women and men who moved to Eritrea to work, whether relatively recently or in the past, were not engaged in skilled and high level occupations.

Many, especially women, only worked as domestic workers and menial laborers. Skills held by women are basic and related to traditional occupations, like embroidery, preparation of local drink "tella" and food, spinning and beauty care. A number of women were also engaged in petty trading. In the focus group discussion, women expressed their desire to engage in these activities - especially petty trade - though many seemed not comfortable with the idea of having to manage a credit. Deportees/returnees who have skills would like to find jobs in their field, however even for them, the current situation of the labour market, is not favorable, even in urban areas.

Table 6. Frequency of skills in absolute numbers

Petty trading and businesses	29
Embroidery	24
Carpenter/mason/construction work	21
Metal work	19
Preparation of local drink	19
Garage worker/mechanic	19
Beauty care/hair plating/hair oil	13
Driver	12
Spinning	9
Technician	11
Barber	7
Food preparation/cook	6
Typist	6
Factory work	2
Taylor	6
Wood work	3
Gold worker	2
Basket making	2
Pharmaceutical technician	1
Glasswork	2
Furniture production	1
Grinding mill operator	1

2.2.4. The "Interrupted Family: Separations and Stress Within the Family

The majority of the interviewees (72%) indicated that their whole family was able to return. However, in many cases, members of the same family returned at different times (different rounds of the repatriation).

Others (27%) left behind some family members. Of these, over 53% left behind one family member, 20% two family members and 10% three family members. During the focus group discussions it was confirmed that there are many women, still waiting for their husbands to come back as soon as they have settled clearance, sold the property or are released from detention. Women separated from their husbands or children know very little about their wellbeing and whereabouts. This is a continuous source of concern, economic and psychological stress. These temporary or longer separations particularly affect children, who are left in the care of a single parent - more often the mother, who is economically and socially fragile, especially in the absence of a strong extended family network. There are cases of couples of mixed nationalities, who are now separated, and whose children are split between the two parents.

Responses indicate a higher number of sons left behind (see table 7). These are possibly teenagers and young adults, for whom leaving Eritrea is more difficult (because in draft age, their departure might be challenged through clearance and detention), or who chose to stay behind hoping in an improvement of the situation.

Table 7. Relationship to family members left behind
(out of the nr. of respondents who have left family members behind)

			Sibling	Daughter	Son	Parent	Spouse	Other close relatives
Eastern zone	Rural	Hawzien	2	1	7		4	
		Sae Sae	2		4		5	
		Gantafeshum	3	1	1	5	3	
	Urban	Adigrat 1	8		1	3	2	
		Adigrat 2	5	7	7	7	5	
Central zone	Rural	Ahferom	5	1				
	Urban	Axum	1	1	5		5	1
		Adwa	1	2	6		5	
Western zone	Urban	Shire	3		6		8	15
Mekelle	Urban	Mekelle	19	18	27	12	11	
TOTAL			49	31	64	27	48	16

Deportee/returnee families undergo exceptional stress. The overwhelming problems families have to face upon return provoke increased conflict within the family. Lack of employment, the interruption of routine activities and the disruption of the social setting all possibly contribute to increased abandonment and divorce. Women shared with us their concern about men who could not "cope" with the too many difficulties of the family, by either giving up looking for jobs or abandoning the family all together.

Table 8. Social and family problems

			Conflict due to economic stress	Divorce	Abandoned by wife	Abandoned by husband	Support below expectations	n/v	None
Easter n zone	Rural	Hawzien	59				3	1	2
		Sae Sae	34	10		21	11	2	
		Ganta	25	7		1	6	4	
	Urban	Adigrat 1	22				1		2
		Adigrat 2	29	9		5			9
Central zone	Rural	Ahferom	13	3		5	1	2	
	Urban	Axum	32		2	4	13		6
		Adwa	29	1		16		2	4
Wester n zone	Urban	Shire	20	1		23	28	5	
Mekelle	Urban	Mekelle	29	15	6	13	40	3	11
TOTAL			296	46	8	88	103	19	34

In the focus group discussions deportee/returnees said that they did not have major problems of integration within the community. However, some 17% of the deportees/returnees interviewed during the survey were not happy with the attitudes found within the communities. This is mostly due to the relationships with landlords. In fact the continued arrival of people, especially in urban areas has led to a dramatic increase in the rent prices. In addition, the fact that deportees/returnees are mostly not known within the communities and do not have stable sources of income reduces the trust of the owners of houses. Some people perceive deportees/returnees as elements of social disruption, because of their slightly different behaviors.

2.2.5 Special Vulnerabilities of Women

The survey indicated that deportee/returnee women do have special vulnerabilities, including psychological stress and physical problems, due to the hardship experienced during transit and difficulties they are facing now. In order to achieve a better and more objective insight on the specific vulnerabilities of women and children, 8 focus group discussions were organized in Adigrat, Mekelle and Addis Tesfa rural tabia, involving 97 women. Summary transcripts of the discussions held are reported as an annex (Annex 5). They provide an interesting overview of individual women's views and experiences.

During the focus group discussions the following issues were identified as major concerns and as elements of vulnerability for women:

Conditions face prior to return:

- The conditions faced during transit have been for all very difficult. In the focus group discussions, many women recalled how prior to departure they were held in "detention camps", where conditions were harsh. In some instances women were beaten or verbally harassed (a frequent method being telling them that the Ethiopian government did not want them back, and misinforming them about their departure). Children were the once suffering most of the harsh environment, heat, lack of food and water.
- All of the women who participated in the focus groups lost their property.
- Separations, in some cases temporary, have been frequent. A few women still don't know when their husbands and grown children will be able to return and have no information on the whereabouts and wellbeing of their relations.
- Many women participating in the group discussions have heard about sexual violence perpetrated on women. It was impossible however, to identify victims. MSF-H has been assisting a number of women and young girls victims of rape while they were in Adwa transit camp. But as the NGO phased out from the camp, there has been no follow up nor assistance to new cases.

Conditions during their last months in Eritrea and during return have affected women. Some of them are still recovering from the trauma and the psychological stress. However, the women interviewed preferred to "move on" and discuss their current situation in order to find ways of solving their current conditions and problems. They feel that they are fortunate to be safely home, and they want that what they are now going through is understood and addressed.

The difficulties currently experienced by women deportees/returnees can be summarized as follows:

- Shelter is the number one priority, both in rural and urban areas. In order to pay rent - in urban areas more than 100 birr a month for one small room - women have to sell food rations, borrow money and use up the cash grant they have received upon arrival. They fear eviction and the gradual deterioration of their housing situation. They appealed for the provision of temporary shelter materials or even tents. Especially in Adigrat and Addis Tesfa tabia, women and children are exposed to extreme cold especially at night.
- Mothers with many children and elderly women are the most vulnerable, because the food rations and the grant have now been exhausted, and are unable to make ends meet. The presence of male breadwinner (husband or adult children) does not always solve the economic

problem because they don't work. This sometimes leads to conflict within the family, extreme stress and abandonment.

- Young girls, both the ones who were born and brought up in Eritrea and the ones who left more recently to work as maids, are now unable to find jobs. Some of them used to go to school but have now dropped out, as their families are not able to support them. Others have never been in school (mostly the ones in rural areas who worked as maids) and are now too old to be enrolled. Their future prospects are gloomy. In Adigrat, some of the young girls who participated in the focus group discussions work as bar-girls and are involved in prostitution. In rural areas, options mentioned were "getting a husband" or "waiting". The overall situation of this specific tabia is particularly difficult, as families have not resumed farming due to fear of landmines.
- Job, jobs, jobs! Women want to work. If single, they are ready to take up the responsibility of being the breadwinner, if married, ready to become the ones bringing home a salary. Some of the women interviewed have taken the initiative of starting small businesses. In Mekelle a group of women who are engaged in petty trading and tea making are trying to generate income. However, high competition, lack of skills and consequent diversification, and lack of capital to buy inputs do not allow for adequate profit. Credit cannot be solution for all of them, as some of the women have no prior experience, and don't feel comfortable in accepting credits.
- Women are concerned for their children, how to provide them with decent living conditions, food and send them to school. This is a source of continuous stress. A few of them are extremely worried about the children - mostly teenagers and young adults - left behind.
- The women interviewed both in Adigrat and Mekelle are not originally from these towns but have moved in order to access better services and especially jobs. Most of the deportee/returnee women were used to an urban lifestyle and they feel there is nothing for them in their villages of origin. Increased urbanization is a potentially problematic, as services are not always adequate and competition for scarce resources is high.
- Although the women interviewed did not report serious health problems affecting them, there was concern about the inability to access freely health services. Deportees/returnees receive an ID card from the kebele but this does not entitle them to free medical treatment. How women cope with delivery, ante and post-natal care, as well as how they address health problems of their children, should be closely monitored.

2.2.6. Special Vulnerabilities of Children

Deportees/returnees interviewed were especially concerned about the psychological and physical wellbeing of children, and the issue of orphaned and separated children. The head of BOLSA Central zone provided the survey team with some statistics on the number of separated and orphaned children arrived from Eritrea and on other vulnerable groups (see annex 3). However he pointed out that, as it is impossible for his office to follow up on separated/orphaned children. As temporary separations due to family members coming back at different rounds have been a common trait of the current repatriation, the Central zone BOLSA does not know how many of these children are still actually separated from their families, and how many have actually reunified with some of their family members.

The EF-commissioned study on separated children mentioned above (section 1.2.3.) "received second-hand reports in Tigray of returnee families becoming separated from one parent. In three instances cited, all the parents remaining behind in Eritrea were father and some were being held in prison or detention centres." Separations from one parent - mostly Ethiopian husbands still in Eritrea and in some cases from Eritrean wives who could not come with their family - were also often mentioned both in the survey and in the focus group discussions recently held in Tigary.

Indeed children have been the first victims amongst the deportees/returnees. While still in Eritrea, some of them were harassed and had to leave school. But the worse situations were probably experienced during transit and the stay in the transit camps within Eritrea. Exposed to extreme heat, lack of food and water, there are accounts of small children having died while in the transit/detention camps. As some deportees/returnees walked back to Ethiopia without support, mothers' accounts indicate that children and young boys and girls had to walk long distances sometimes in insecure conditions. How this affected their psychological wellbeing it is difficult to estimate. As expressed by the head of the Eastern zone education bureau, counseling services outreaching to the deportee/returnee children living in the region could help them and us to understand better.

The following are the main vulnerabilities of children, identified during the focus group discussions with women and during the fieldwork:

- The women interviewed in the focus group discussions recognized that children are the ones mostly affected by the poverty they live in. Especially in big families, not all children have access to education as the family cannot afford to pay fees, educational materials and uniforms for all.
- Not going school, some deportee/returnee children spend their days on the streets.
- Some children have scabies, other skin diseases and health problems because of inadequate nutrition, cold weather and poor living conditions, especially in Adigrat. Mothers in Adigrat expressed their concern about children not having enough clothes and "crying of hunger".
- Teenaged girls, who used to go to school in Eritrea, are now unable to join school for a variety of reasons: the families are unable to support them, they have to work in order to help the family, or they have dropped out from school so long ago, that they are now not able to reintegrate.
- Teenaged girls and their mothers interviewed in Adigrat talked about the problem of early pregnancies outside marriage. These pregnancies are not always accepted by the young boyfriends, who are unable/unwilling to provide support.
- Several mothers have mentioned separations and loss of contact with their children left behind in Eritrea and there are worried about their wellbeing. It appears that the majority of the children left behind are teenagers, mostly boys.
- Children are used to a somehow different cultural setting and educational curriculum, especially in the lower grades.
- The survey team identified some 15 deportee/returnees streetchildren in Mekelle and Axum (see annex 7), but the number of deportee/returnee children living on the streets is not known. The deportee/returnee streetchildren met by the team are mostly orphans between 15 and 17 years of age, or they have lost touch with their families. They eat leftovers from the hotels, and carry the customers' luggage to make some money. There are continuously exposed to harassment by both the police and by other kids, and have very little prospects for the future. Some of them had received the cash grant upon arrival. However, because of lack of protection and separation from the family, they were subject to thefts and abuse. In Mekelle, there is concern that increased streetism is leading to increased crime, including juvenile criminality.

2.3. Re-creating Livelihoods: Current Socio-Economic Conditions, Assistance Received and Coping Mechanisms

Upon arrival to the transit camps, DPPC/DPPB distributes to the deportees/returnees receive food rations, a "reintegration grant" (1000 Birr for individuals, 1500 for couples and additional 100 Birr per child), and other kinds of assistance (transport, blankets small items like soap and other toiletries). While in the camp returnees/deportees are provided with ready meals, shelter, blankets, medical assistance. Women interviewed generally expressed satisfaction with the services provided in Adwa and the initial reception of the authorities and of the communities.

However, once they left the camp and collected their packages, only a minority received additional assistance from the family, local authorities or charitable organizations (tables 9 and 10 below). This becomes a major problem especially after a few months, when the one-time assistance package is exhausted and a permanent source of livelihood has yet to be found.

Deportee/returnee families undergo exceptional stress. The overwhelming problems families have to face upon return provoke increased conflict within the family. Lack of employment, the interruption of routine activities and the disruption of the social setting all possibly contribute to increased abandonment and divorce. Women shared with us their concern about men who could not "cope" with the too many difficulties of the family, by either giving up looking for jobs or abandoning the family all together.

2.3.1. Coping Mechanism and Individual Initiatives

Being able to "cope" in a new situation mostly depends on the capability of reestablishing as soon as possible a stable and sustainable source of income and (re)creating a social setting in which individual and groups can function. These capabilities, include skills, the level of education, and access to both material and social resources. Most of the returnees/deportees lived in Eritrea for economic reasons and were productive members of the society and mostly able to support themselves and their families. Since their return to Tigray their lives are extremely vulnerable.

In spite of the regional authorities having distributed a cash grant and food assistance to all deportees/returnees, only a minority (17%) has been able to start income generating activities. In addition, the region informed all governmental and non-governmental institutions to allow equal access of returnees/deportees to job opportunities.

Access to employment opportunities for returnees/deportees will mostly depend on the overall economic development the region. As mentioned earlier, major recovery programmes (ERP/WB) have targeted IDPs and the families of the deceased. Recovery/rehabilitation of returnees/deportees has yet to be started. A concerted action and strong is necessary. Previous poor and untimely response towards the plight of returnees from Assab in Amhara region (South Wollo) has brought about a difficult situation in which integration and economic recovery appear unattainable.

Table 15 Engaged in income generating activities

			Yes	No	n/v
Eastern zone	Rural	Hawzien	11	49	
		Sae Sae	10	50	
		Gantafeshum	2	38	17
	Urban	Adigrat	15	103	5

Central zone	Rural	Ahferom	10	20	
	Urban	Axum	30	30	
		Adwa	2	58	
Western zone	Urban	Shire	17	43	
Mekelle	Urban	Mekelle	7	84	7
TOTAL			104	475	29
Percentage of total			17%	78%	5%

Of the 103 respondents who are actually engaged in income generating activities, 62% were able to use the government cash grant to take up individual business initiatives. The number of people who have been able use the government cash grants as initial capital is small (67 returnees/deportees out of a total 608 interviewed), as many had to use the grant for everyday expenses, buying household utensils and furniture, sending children to school or paying rent.

Almost 9 percent of the interviewees have used "own capital" to start up income generating activities, while 13 percent have accessed funds of the family.

For women and young girls especially, the inability to find a job or to start up a small business, exposes them to increased risk of being involved in prostitution, especially in areas of high military presence.

2.3.2. Family Support Vis a Vis External Assistance

Deportees/returnees mostly return to their village/town of origin (75%) and join relatives hoping to receive some support, to ease the process of reintegration and create networks for accessing jobs (this was also the assumption of the authorities). However only a minority of the respondents was able to receive actual material support from family members and to find a stable source of income. The reasons for families not being able to provide support are "poverty" of the family (72%), or the fact that close relatives have died (16%) or are too old and/or disabled to help (6.5%). Even in the case where the family is able to help the returning relatives, assistance mostly consists of sharing the house. These arrangements continue for the majority of the interviewees (60%). However for others the family was only able to provide assistance once (11%) or more then once (30%), but had then stopped.

Table 9 Assistance received from external sources

Assistance currently received from Government and other agencies			Yes	No	n/v
Eastern zone	Rural	Hawzien	21	39	
		Sae Sae	55		5
	Urban	Ganta	37	20	
		Adigrat 1	22	19	
Central zone	Rural	Adigrat 2	56	26	
		Ahferom	26	3	1
	Urban	Axum	6	54	
		Adwa	3	57	
Western zone	Urban	Shire	50	9	1
Mekelle	Urban	Mekelle	1	83	14
TOTAL			277	310	21

19,995 returnees/deportees living in "IDP locations" where REST/WFP have ongoing food distributions, receive monthly food rations. WFP reports that 2,598 returnees/deportees have been receiving food in Western zone (Shire, Adi-Nabrid and Humera), a total of 7,484 in Central zone (Rama, Enticho, Chila, Gehurseney and Edaga Rebue) and 9,913 in Eastern zone (Fatsi, Dohown, Sebeya and Adigrat). Monthly rations consist of grain, pulses, oil and blended foods. As the number of beneficiaries of this operation is being revised downwards, deportees/returnees might be excluded in future distributions. A substantial reduction in distributions is expected by the end of November 2001.

Table 10

Kind of assistance received								
			Only wheat	Wheat and oil	Shelter	Education materials	Clothing	Other food assistance
Eastern zone	Rural	Hawzien	21					
		Sae Sae		55				
		Gantafeshum		37				
	Urban	Adigrat 1		22				
		Adigrat 2		56				
Central zone	Rural	Ahferom		26				
	Urban	Axum		3	1	2		
		Adwa			1			1
Western zone	Urban	Shire		50				
Mekelle	Urban	Mekelle					1	1
TOTAL			21	249	2	2	1	2

Neither during transit in the camps nor later, pregnant women and children deportees/returnees were assisted with supplementary rations. As women interviewed during a food distribution in Adigrat and in Mekelle town indicated, most of the food is monetized to pay for rent and for other expenses. Monetization of the food rations however produces very little income when the grains distributed consist of sorghum, which is sold for only 50 cents per kg. Mothers participating in focus group discussions in Adigrat were very upset about their children suffering because of lack of food.

2.3.3. Unemployment and Economic Stress

Lack of employment opportunities and the inability to re-create livelihoods in the short run, affects the well-being of families and individuals. The majority of the respondents (60%) indicated that they are unable to fulfil basic needs, i.e. sufficient food, appropriate living condition and schooling for children. However, the geographic distribution of ability/ inability to address basic does not seem suggest that urban dwellers are better off than rural ones or viceversa. In Ahferom the totality of the interviewees appear to be able to fulfil basic needs, possibly because of the involvement in food for work programmes, that are available in that area. In Shire and Adwa, the situation appears particularly dire, possibly because of the lack of NGOs and assistance programmes, the fact that all interviewees in Shire were women, and the fact that returnees/deportees have been in the country for a long time and have therefore exhausted their initial capital and one-time ration.

As the region is impoverished and has suffered the consequences of the conflict more than the rest of the country, severely limits employment opportunities, especially for young people. It is in the vulnerable economic situation that deportees/returnees are expected to become self-sufficient. As discussed earlier (see 2.3.4) women are the ones carrying the burden of taking care of the family. In Mekelle, women have displayed a certain initiative by initiating some petty trading and taking up activities in the market, which however do not allow for high profits, and only partially contribute to ease their economic situation.

When asked about their major economic problems, the majority of the respondents mentioned firstly the lack of appropriate shelter/accommodation, secondly the lack of employment

opportunities and access to credit to initiate small businesses. This was confirmed in the focus group discussions with women.

Table 11

Major economic problems										
	Eastern Zone				Central zone			Western zone	Mekelle zone	
	Hawzien	Sae Sae	Ganta	Adigrat	Ahferom	Axum	Adwa	Shire	Mekelle	Total
Shelter	57	56	50	121	26	54	50	58	78	550
Lack of employment opportunities	56	57	54	122	24	45	60	54	85	557
Access to credit	54	50	50	118	8	20	50	50	41	441
Access to land	52	7	42	3	27	18		8	9	166
Livestock	41	7	43	4	25	12		8	6	146
Lack of food			1			2	44			47
Education materials	11			5			2		3	21

The economic situation of deportees/returnees is particularly fragile because of their lack of assets and shelter/housing, and lack of social support. As for a variety of reasons - loss of extended family, urban background, search for jobs - many have preferred to move to urban areas, it is expected that their problems will progressively be more felt in towns. Their situation is also more fragile vis-à-vis IDPs. IDPs have been assisted in the last three years with the steady provision of food rations and some other assistance. They were mostly able to move as families and communities, thus not losing the important coping mechanism of social networks.

2.3.4. Access to Services (Education, Water, Health and Counseling)

One part of the questionnaire referred to the ability of returnees/deportees to access basic services. As they generally appear to be able to access water and health services, and the majority of the interviewees has undergone one from or another of counseling, the major problem is education, and the ability of returnee/deportee children to integrate without obstacles in the Ethiopian schooling system. The reasons are predominantly economic and are discussed in more detail below. People can access traditional or modern medical services depending on their preference, but often depending on the availability of medical facilities (clinics and health posts), and on the cost of the services.

Table 12

Access to medical services					
Type of medical service			Traditional	Modern	n/v
Eastern zone	Rural	Hawzien	1	59	
		Sae Sae	4	55	1
		Gantafeshum		57	
	Urban	Adigrat		123	
Central zone	Rural	Ahferom	7	23	
	Urban	Axum	1	59	
		Adwa		60	
Western zone	Urban	Shire	2	57	1
Mekelle	Urban	Mekelle	23	64	11
TOTAL			38	557	13
Percentage of total			6%	92%	2%

The reasons for not using modern medical services are mostly related to the cost of the services and the lack of money to pay for them (84%), while a small minority indicate fear as the reason for not approaching modern medical services or the fact that they have never been ill. Only 1 person has actually chosen to use traditional medicine.

The problem of accessing adequate medical services was further investigated later in the questionnaire, when returnees/deportees were asked about their health status, their ability to afford and access health services, and the type of medical attention they need. The cost of drugs and services is a problem that deportees/returnees share with the other war-affected groups. UNICEF has been providing drugs in IDP areas, however this assistance was not sufficient to cover the needs of all IDPs and additional deportees/returnees throughout the year. As drugs run out in government health institutions, patients have to purchase them elsewhere.

Table 12

Problems related to health							
			Cost of service	Lack of drugs	No MCH	No counseling	No medical services in the vicinity
Eastern zone	Rural	Hawzien	54				2
		Sae Sae	55	28	43		
		Gantafeshum	55	37	5	24	3
	Urban	Adigrat	111	102	5	12	3
	Rural	Ahferom	29	1		13	3

	Rural	Ahferom	29	1		13	3
Central zone		Axum	20	10	23		13
Western zone	Urban	Shire	53	1	8	5	
Mekelle	Urban	Mekelle	77	50	84	1	29
TOTAL			520	293	168	55	53
As percentage of total *			85.50%	48.20%	27.60%	9%	8.70%

*Note: Total percentage > 100, as interviewees could give more than one answer.

Returnees/deportees have received one form or another of counseling (71%). As the Tigrigna word for counseling better translates as "advice", many respondents have also mentioned the advice/counseling received by the community and the family. The importance of this form of support cannot be underestimated, and should be taken into account when programming counseling activities that should have a focus on self-help and participation.

Counseling provided by the authorities is usually as a one-time assistance, but there is no continuous psycho-social support to deportees/ returnees. The majority of respondents who had the opportunity to receive counseling consider it helpful (88%), however, a considerable number of people (12% of the respondents to the question) made an interesting remark: "what we need is money not counseling."

Concern for their children's education has been the leit-motif of the focus group discussions with women. Some mothers complained about their inability of sending their children to school, because of lack of resources to buy uniforms, materials and pay fees. These complaints came as surprise to the zonal educational departments. Contacted by UNICEF, the department heads in Eastern, Central and Western and Mekelle zones, informed us that all efforts had been made to accommodate deportee/returnee students. Their entitlements are similar to those of IDPs, however when it comes to the provision of materials, priority is given to IDPs. Deportees/returnees are expected to pay the school fees, which are not waved for IDP students either. In Western zone however, school is free and uniforms are not compulsory.

The situation is somehow different in Mekelle, where so far 2100 deportee/returnee students have been registered. In Mekelle the average number of children per classroom has now reached 77. The shortage of stationary and educational materials is of concern. According to the department head in Mekelle, it is possible that a number of students have been unable to enroll because of this situation. In addition, some of the deportee/returnee students failed to pass the entrance exam due to differences in the curriculum, and others could not register because they arrived late after the beginning of the school year. The Mekelle department is also looking into creating additional courses for students who were left out. However, budget constraints might not allow the putting in practice of this idea.

Table 13 Access to education

Ability of the children to access education					
			Yes	No	n/v
Eastern zone	Rural	Hawzien	20	12	28
		Sae Sae	32	8	20
		Gantafeshum	21	4	32
	Urban	Adigrat	59	24	40
Central zone	Rural	Ahferom	5	11	14
	Urban	Axum	24	29	7

		Adwa	28	10	22
Western zone	Urban	Shire	21	13	26
Mekelle	Urban	Mekelle	48	44	6
TOTAL			258	155	195
As percentage of total			43 %	26%	31%

The high percentage of not valid responses is due to the confusion between responses that refer to the inability of a child in school-going age not to join school, and responses of a number of interviewees, who have children who are too young to go to school or interviewees who have no children at all.

The Regional Education Bureau adopted a policy of entry exams for returnee/deportee children who do not have documentation, however, it is possible that some of them were not able to go through the process of the examination and join school in time. Major difficulties are lack of resources to buy education materials and uniforms, and to a lesser extent no placement (see table 14). Schools in Tigray - being already overcrowded and operating with double shifts - have nonetheless to extent possible tried to accommodate returnee/deportee students.

Table 14

REASONS FOR NOT BEING ABLE TO JOIN SCHOOL								
			Lack of resources	No placement	No documents **	No school/distance	Lack of time*	Other
Eastern zone	Rural	Hawzien	6	2	2			2
		Sae Sae	11	7				
		Gantafeshum	9	2				2
	Urban	Adigrat	28	5				11
Central zone	Rural	Ahferom				9		
	Urban	Axum		2			23	
		Adwa	9					1
Western zone	Urban	Shire	7					2
Mekelle	Urban	Mekelle	10	20	10			4
TOTAL			80	38	12	9	23	22

* In Axum 23 interviewees responded that they were unable to send children to school because both the caretakers and the children were engaged in some form of work.

** Some children were unable to carry their school certificates and other documents with them.

2.3.5. Social Reintegration and Acceptance

A total of 17 percent of the returnees/deportees interviewed during the survey feel they have not received the expected support from their communities. The survey team reported that returnees/deportees of problems of integration especially in the urban communities of Mekelle, where they feel there is insufficient understanding towards their problem.

Discussions with key informants (see annex 8) suggest that local “host” communities in Tigray do not have deep resentful feelings towards deportees, and the level of reintegration is generally good as there are no major cultural disparities between the two groups. Local “host” communities, are worried especially about the youth deported from Eritrea, as possible element of social disruption in the prevalently conservative communities of Tigray. Deportee youth are said to have a more “open” behaviour and to look differently from local youth. The issue of the urban youth seems to be urgent and possibly problematic, and should be addressed with programmes that involve all urban youth, to work towards better understanding and tolerance.

Returnee/deportee interviewed in focus groups in Mekelle and Adigrat did not discuss specific difficulties in living in the community. They are supported by neighbors to the extent this is possible in very poor environments. In general, there does not seem to be widespread open resentment towards the returnee/ deportees, or towards the fact that they received a one-time special assistance package.

The major issue of integration is related to access to housing. Availability of houses in towns like Mekelle and Adigrat is progressively decreasing. This, in addition to the arrival of an increased number of deportees/returnees, has provoked an increase in rent, which is resented by the locals and has put deportees/returnees in an even more difficult situation.

2.4. Expectations and Visions

In the survey, returnees/deportees were asked about their current needs, what their priorities are what they think they can do to improve their lives and what they think the authorities or organizations providing assistance should do to help them.

The tables below list many of the problems already highlighted in the previous sections. Details of priorities by site are attached in the annex (see annex 9).

Table 16

What returnees/deportees can do to help themselves										
	Hawzien	Sae Sae	Ganta	Adigrat	Ahferom	Adwa	Axum	Shire	Mekelle	
Petty trade	37	30	37	71	16	23	10	12	32	268
Find a job	6	25	3	73			26	12	58	203
Access to credit	1	25	15				14	20	70	145
Trainingt	5	25	3	73			2	5	13	126
Access land		10							37	47
Find initial capital			27	15						42
Rely on relief food		21		5			10	4		40
Taking up any job		6		11		17				34
Use my skills		2		13			6	12		33
Open a shop				16		14				30
Make tella			6	5		18				29
Work in a factory			24			2				26
Sell cooked food				8		17				25
Open a tea shop			7	1		15				23
Improve shelter conditions		4		12						16

Table 17

What can be done/assistance that should be provided										
	Hawzien	Sae Sae	Ganta	Adigrat	Ahferom	Adwa	Axum	Shire	Mekelle	
Credit	29	33	19	62		42	47	27	70	329
Job Opportunities	17	33	23	54		1	38	24	58	248
Shelter	41	17	29	51	5	39	42	24		248
Food aid	46	12	7	17	18	40	11	7		158
Initial capital (grant)			27	53		55				135
Land		9		38			5		50	102
Clothing/blankets	29	9	8	21		24	4	6		101
Financial support	52				20		1			73
Kitchen utensils	19		2	24	11			8		64
Education materials	17	19	2	7		7	4			56
Training	12		1		10	11	4	4		42
Free health services	10			23						33
Agricultural land			30							30
Livestock		9	3			9				21

2.5. Awareness on HIV/AIDS and Landmines

Information on awareness about HIV/AIDS and landmines was collected through the questionnaire. The information is important for future action targeting deportees/returnees and the communities they live in.

The risk of HIV/AIDS transmission is possibly high, because of increased poverty and the disruption of the family and of the community environment discussed in the report (deportees/returnees have to integrate in a new environment, many of them - especially the young - did not know at all). Prostitution and lack of activities engaging young boys and girls are additional risk factors.

- The majority of the deportees/returnees (95%) are aware of the existence of HIV/AIDS. The major sources of information about HIV/AIDS are media, health professionals, friends.
- The replies indicate that deportees/returnees know about variety of methods for the prevention of HIV/AIDS.
- Having sex with one partner only (63%), abstinence (47%) and condoms (20%) are methods used to prevent the transmission of HIV/AIDS (people might be using more than one method).
- Condoms are used by a relatively small proportion of people, however access to condoms appears to be easy in shops (73%), health centres (68%) and hotels (24%).

A total of 283 respondents to the questionnaire are aware of landmines (47%). Sources of information are media (65%), neighbours (31%) and NGOs (25%). The coverage of landmine awareness seems limited especially amongst deportees/returnee participation in landmine awareness programmes should be ensured. living along the border, where the contamination of landmines and UXOs is higher. As indicated in the recommendations, deportees/returnees should be part of landmine risk education programmes.

3. Conclusions and Recommendations

The overall findings of the assessment indicate that deportees/returnees from Eritrea are a fragile social group within Tigray.

Their vulnerability, also vis-à-vis other groups like IDPs, families of the deceased and communities which were affected by the war, is due to their complete loss of property, means of livelihood and lack of social networks to fall back upon. Deportees/returnees are not a homogenous group and are not "a community", as they come from different areas and different experiences while in Eritrea. The abuses suffered and the concern for family members left behind, is a source of continuous stress.

Women and children, have suffered in making the difficult transition from life in Eritrea to return to Ethiopia. Women are now trying to rebuild a living for their families, both in the absence and the presence of their husbands.

Through the DPPC/DPPB, the government has provided one-time assistance to the deportees/returnees. In IDP areas, deportees/returnees have been receiving monthly food rations. However, the circumstances (support from the family of origin, invest the initial capital for income generating activities, and availability of skills amongst the deportees/returnees) that would allow this group to easily integrate and become self-reliant, have been overestimated. Rehabilitation and recovery programmes addressing the needs of deportees/returnees have yet to start.

The problems faced by deportees/returnees are similar in urban and rural areas. In rural areas where cultivation has not resumed because of fear of landmines, deportees/returnees join IDP and locals in their dependence on assistance. In urban areas, concentration, high cost of living, underdeveloped urban infrastructure and increased social problems (streetism, crime, prostitution), expose deportees/returnees - especially the youth - to more risks. A number of deportee/retrunee children were found unable to join school either because they arrived late during the academic year or because of lack of resources.

The findings indicate that there is a need for a comprehensive intervention, which should involve a variety of duty bearers of the region as well as the humanitarian actors. As a discussion is expected to be held in Tigray on how to best programme and prioritize, the following are just preliminary recommendations:

Continued relief assistance

1. Continue food distribution to existing beneficiaries and identify most vulnerable categories that will still need food assistance, especially once exhausted the nine-months rations. Special attention to be given to children, elderly, vulnerable women and other vulnerable categories.
2. Provide temporary shelter and blankets to selected vulnerable families living in particularly in cold areas. Provision of materials for newborns and clothes for children.
3. Distribute of educational materials to deportee/returnee students, especially in areas where they do not access assistance provided to IDPs. Priority should be given to families with many children. Support to the re-printing of teaching materials, provision of classroom furniture.
4. Improve data collection on deportees/returnees especially with disaggregated data of vulnerable categories, in order to better follow up on the targeting of assistance.

5. Provide basic drugs and identification of deportees/returnees who should have free access to medical services.
6. Solve the water problem in Adwa transit camp, as the system has frequent breakdowns.
7. Establish a system of screening and referral for women and young girls in Adwa camp, addressing violence, unwanted and early pregnancies.

Longer-term actions:

Access to stable income producing opportunities:

8. The whole region has a problem of unemployment, low productivity and food insecurity, insufficient markets and purchasing power. A "proactive" inclusion of deportees/returnees in employment should be promoted.
9. Deportees/returnees with technical/professional skills should be identified and matched with the needs of the region. Additional vocational skills training should be provided to groups who have similar interest and skills, to encourage them to set up businesses in the form of cooperatives.
10. The movement towards increased urbanization - to which deportees/returnees contribute - is a potential for dramatic increase of urban poverty. Also because of the poor infrastructure and the weakness of urban programming in Tigray, there should be an intensified programming for the creation of income opportunities in rural and semi-rural areas. Viable Off-farm activities should be studied and introduced to benefit returning families. Small-scale modern livestock rearing projects should be looked into.
11. This will however be difficult because of the constraints in land distribution. Availability of land and land tenure policies, as well as entitlement of deportees/returnees should be investigated
12. Clearance of land from landmines will also help deportees/returnees living in some rural tabias, where cultivation has not yet resumed. Deportees/returnees should be involved in LMA activities.
13. In urban areas, the development of income generating activities should target women. A priority will be mobilizing and organizing women towards the creation of cooperatives according to their interest and skills. Training on management, leadership skills, management of credit as well as specific technical skills should be provided to these groups.
14. Women who do have leadership skills should be encouraged to promote women's empowerment.
15. Creative options for income generation should be investigated as well as market situation and marketability of products.
16. Younger girls should be targeted for vocational skills training that will allow them to find jobs, accompanied by awareness training on HIV/AIDS and family planning. Girls involved in prostitution should be prioritized.
17. Provision of credit aimed at supporting small income generating initiative should be carefully planned and accompanied by training. Credit could be more successful if provided to groups instead of individuals.

Access to adequate shelter/housing

18. Increase access to shelter through provision of semi-permanent housing materials in rural areas and investigate options for low-cost housing in urban areas. Deportees/returnees should be specifically targeted in the regional and federal level policies, aimed at improving access to housing and land.

Promoting the right to education and the well-being of children

19. Children have suffered greatly during the various phases of the deportation/return from Eritrea. As their parents have invested in their education while in Eritrea, it is necessary that they do not

lose their right to education. This should be done not only by providing material support to the individual students and the education bureau, but also by clarifying policies and strategies and by ensuring that deportees/returnees are aware of their entitlements. Needy large family should benefit of the waving of school fees.

20. The education sector of the region will need substantial infrastructural support and capacity building in the coming years. There is a need for more teachers, more classrooms, training etc. throughout the region, and especially in Mekelle and Adigrat.

21. Children who experienced deportation as well as other children in Tigray who lived through the war could benefit from activities both aimed at healing as well as increasing tolerance and understanding.

22. Several mothers have mentioned insufficient access to food as a major cause for disease for their children. Support should be given to health and nutrition surveillance, so that vulnerable children can be identified and helped, especially in chronically food insecure and drought-prone areas of Tigray. In addition clarity should be made on who is entitled to free health care. The elderly and selected vulnerable families should be entitled to free assistance.

Advocacy and monitoring

23. The capacity of the agencies involved in the assistance to deportees/returnees should be strengthened. DPPB should continue playing a leading role in the assistance provided to them, but should improve its data collection and monitoring capacity. The humanitarian situation of deportees/returnees should also continue to be monitored by humanitarian agencies.

24. Following increased monitoring, the problems of deportees/returnees should be kept on the agenda of the region.

25. As deportees/returnees lack an internal social organization on their own, associative efforts like the one experimented in Mekelle (see annex) should be encouraged. The creation of discussion groups, women's groups and youth groups should be encouraged. The WAO/WAT could work as catalyzer of these efforts, but would need some increase in capacity.

26. Deportee/returnee associations would also help increased dialogue with institutions both to lobby for their rights and improve the understanding of needs and targeting.

