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Eritrea (Asmara)

2017-1164-S

rc2774

RESTRICTION CODES

Presidential Records Act - [44 U.S.C. 2204(a)]

- P1 National Security Classified Information [(a)(1) of the PRA]
- P2 Relating to the appointment to Federal office [(a)(2) of the PRA]
- P3 Release would violate a Federal statute [(a)(3) of the PRA]
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- P5 Release would disclose confidential advice between the President and his advisors, or between such advisors [(a)(5) of the PRA]
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- b(1) National security classified information [(b)(1) of the FOIA]
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- b(8) Release would disclose information concerning the regulation of financial institutions [(b)(8) of the FOIA]
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COUNTRY PROFILE

Ethiopia

Eritrea

Somalia

~~Djibouti~~

- does not say
how the north
is ruled

1995-96

The Economist Intelligence Unit
15 Regent Street, London SW1Y 4LR
United Kingdom

Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, Djibouti

Our quarterly Country Report on Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia and Djibouti analyses current trends. This annual Country Profile provides background political and economic information on these countries.

Ethiopia

Political background

History

The Ethiopian state was created by Christian highland rulers, largely through a process of political subjugation and economic exploitation of outlying populations in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Haile Selassie established ascendancy over regional feudal lords as crown prince and regent from 1916 to 1930. Following defeat by Ethiopian forces at Adwa in 1896, Italy consolidated its territorial holdings in the area into the coastal colony of Eritrea. Benito Mussolini's armies invaded and occupied Ethiopia between 1936 and 1941. Following liberation in 1941, Haile Selassie returned and ruled until his overthrow in 1974. After ten years under British rule, Eritrea was federated with Ethiopia in 1952.

In 1962, when Ethiopia abrogated the UN-sponsored federation and annexed the federal state, Eritrean separatists launched a guerrilla war. One year later Ethiopia became embroiled in a war with Somalia in the Ogaden. Peasant revolts followed, underlining the need for land reform. Corruption among senior officials, rampant inflation and unemployment fuelled urban unrest. This was brought to a head by the revelation of government indifference towards a famine in 1972-74, which claimed an estimated 200,000 lives. In January 1974 a wave of strikes and mutinies in the armed forces compelled the prime minister of 13 years' standing to resign, beginning what evolved into a coup by army officers.

Civilian groups lacked the cohesion to mobilise support from the wave of military revolts, labour strikes and urban unrest in 1974. The embryonic Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC, Derg in Amharic) filled the power vacuum, beginning 17 years of rule by a military clique. The removal and presumed execution of Haile Selassie in September 1974 marked the beginning

of three years of acute conflict, both within the military and throughout the country as a whole. The PMAC was racked by perpetual internal power struggles. The first post-imperial head of state, General Aman Andom, was killed in November 1974, when 57 senior officials of the old regime were also summarily executed. One month later Ethiopia was declared a socialist state. Several senior members of the PMAC were executed in July 1976; and another group, including the then head of state, General Teferi Banti, was shot in February 1977, when Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam took power. In November of the same year the vice-chairman of the PMAC was murdered, marking the consolidation of power by Mr Mengistu.

The president's rise was facilitated by the contradictory ideological pressures upon members of the PMAC as they came to terms both with their new-found power and with substantial civilian opposition. The civilian left commanded considerable urban support but fragmented as rival factions alternatively attempted to infiltrate or resist the military regime. The student left was incapacitated by ideological differences over whether opposition should be organised according to class or ethnic and regional identities. Those favouring the latter course launched a rebellion in the northern province of Tigray which formed the nucleus of the movement which was eventually to take power in 1991. The military rapidly lost patience with the intellectuals who had supplied them with their legitimising Marxist-Leninist ideology; debate degenerated into indiscriminate killing in 1977-78 as leftist students went underground and launched an armed struggle, provoking the brutal eradication of all opposition to the PMAC. The ferocity of this "red terror" deprived Ethiopia of a generation of educated youth. Those killed are conservatively estimated at 100,000, while several hundred thousand more fled to settle in the USA and Europe.

During these struggles the government moved steadily to extend its control over the country. Having dismantled the imperial order, it carried out a series of ambitious administrative and social reforms. Land (both rural and urban) was nationalised in 1975. A hierarchical network of peasant and urban dweller associations (*kebeles*) was established and, along with the paraphernalia of socialist mass organisations, became a key tool of social control. Encouragement from Moscow and the president's determination to extend state domination saw the gradual transfer from a military to an ostensibly proletarian-led regime. To this end the Workers' Party of Ethiopia (WPE) was set up in 1984. A Soviet-style constitution was adopted in February 1987 with the People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (PDRE) being formed in September 1987.

Ironically, as the Derg completed its metamorphosis into a centralised Marxist-Leninist state, Soviet material and ideological support began to evaporate and the central state became increasingly fragile. Two years of military reversals in Eritrea and Tigray, a failed military coup in May 1989 and the eventual desertion of his Soviet allies fatally weakened Mr Mengistu. Having pushed deep into Shoa province in July 1990, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), a newly created coalition dominated by the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), launched a decisive assault in February 1991, sweeping largely unopposed through western provinces as the disillusioned conscript army crumbled.

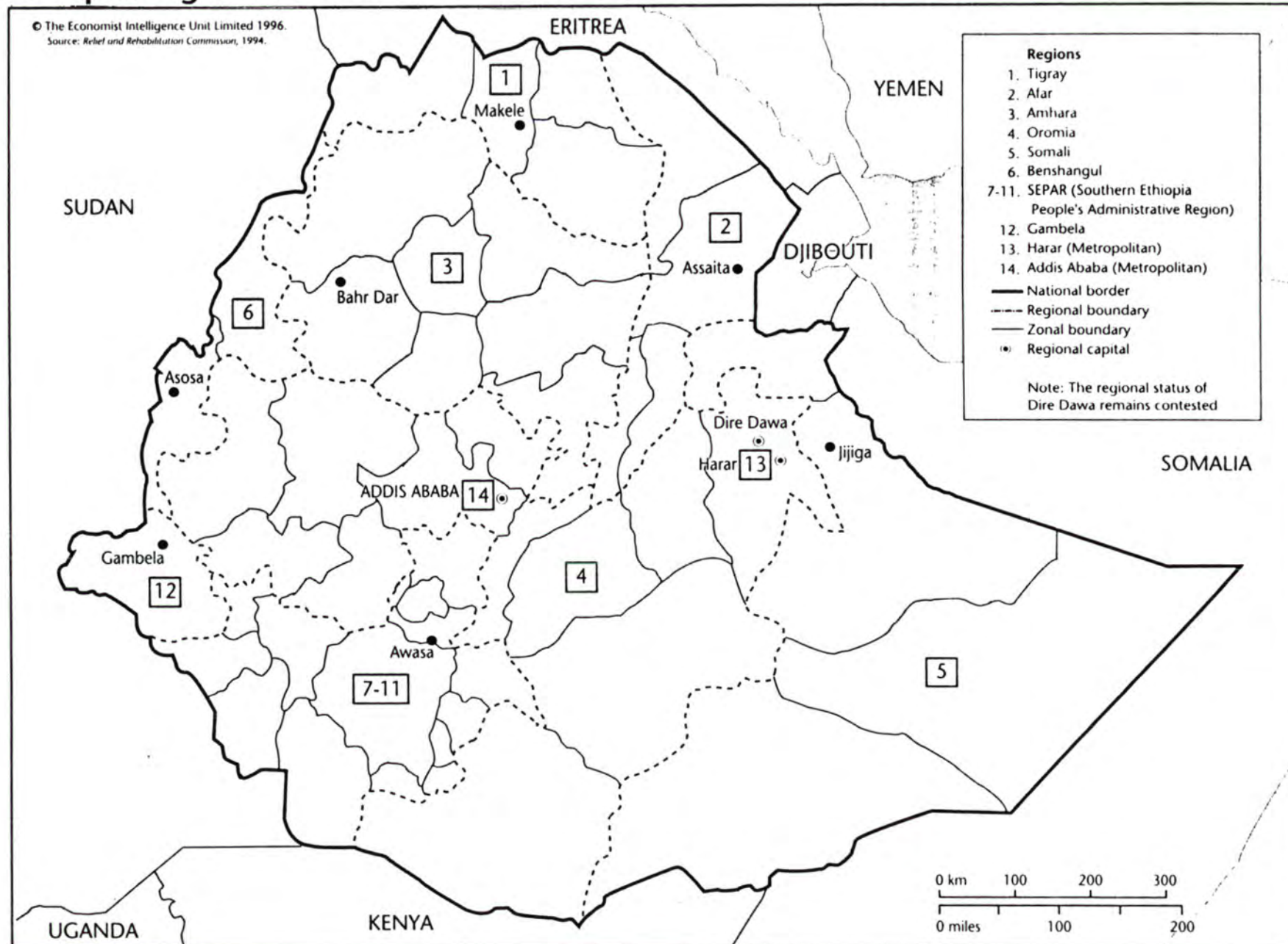
In May 1991 the 14-year regime of Mr Mengistu collapsed as his army in Eritrea was defeated and US-brokered peace talks were being held in London. The president fled to Zimbabwe and the EPRDF marched into Addis Ababa, establishing control in the capital and south largely without opposition. In July 1991 a conference convened by the victorious EPRDF endorsed a transitional charter. This became the legal basis of four years of interim rule under an EPRDF-dominated Council of Representatives, with an executive headed by the TPLF leader, Meles Zenawi. The transitional government implemented extensive economic reforms and a radical form of federal devolution to nine new regional states based largely on ethnic identity. Devolution and the drafting of a new constitution were accompanied by a series of elections. The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia was proclaimed in August 1995. It consists of a bicameral federal assembly, and State Councils for the nine regions plus Addis Ababa.

Eritrea As the EPRDF claimed power in Addis, the northern towns of Asmara and Assab fell to the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF). Although Eritrea became formally independent in 1993, it remains an issue in Ethiopian politics, both because of the links between the Tigrayan and Eritrean fronts and the fact that separation remains controversial among some Ethiopians. However, the Eritrean issue should not be confused with the ongoing debate about regional government within Ethiopia.

The constitution Ethiopia's first constitution was drafted in 1931 and a revised constitution was promulgated in 1955. This incorporated both the "modernising" aspirations of Haile Selassie and aspects of the more sophisticated constitution then operating in the newly federated province of Eritrea. The 1955 constitution was suspended in September 1974. It was replaced by a series of military decrees and ad hoc legislation until the promulgation of the constitution of the PDRE in 1987. The Soviet-inspired WPE was also established, with members being elected to a national Shengo (parliament). A plan for regional devolution was unveiled in 1987, although this was only partly implemented.

The transitional charter of July 1991 was supplemented by a series of decrees, notably on regional government, passed by the Council of Representatives. During 1993 a working committee of the council drafted a constitution. This was endorsed by the council. A Constituent Assembly, elected under universal suffrage in June 1994, then endorsed the constitution in December 1994. It came into effect in August 1995, creating the second republic. It provides for an independent judiciary and a parliamentary, federal form of government with two federal assemblies; the legislative Council of People's Representatives (CPR) and a smaller, supervisory senate known as the Federal Council. The new constitution is based on the EPRDF's blueprint for ethnic federalism under which elections for 14 newly created regional assemblies were first held in mid-1992. The number of regions was subsequently reduced and there are now nine regional State Councils, plus a body for the capital Addis Ababa. Like the constitution of the former Soviet Union, in theory the new constitution allows for the secession of individual nationalities or regions.

Ethiopia: regions and zones



Political forces

The EPRDF consolidated its hold on power in the transitional period, and front members now control all the formal institutions of the federal republic. It holds 90% of seats in the CPR. All but three small regions are run by EPRDF representatives, giving the front a comfortable majority in the Federal Council, whose members are nominated indirectly by the regional State Councils. The front's quasi-monopoly on power belies three spheres of political opposition and debate: urban, internal and regional. The most vocal challenge comes from small, Addis-based politicians who contest the EPRDF's legitimacy in general and its ethnic-based regional devolution in particular. These include the Coalition of Alternative Forces for Peace and Democracy in Ethiopia (CAFPDE), some of whose members were expelled from the transitional government. Such groups are ill-organised, lack an alternative policy agenda and have boycotted elections. Nevertheless they draw strength from a general malaise among the urban classes which find their job security and cosmopolitan identity challenged by ethnic devolution. Opposition is sharpened by the clumsy mixture of derision and repression heaped on its critics by the EPRDF. The highly polarised political climate is further fanned by the fiercely anti-government independent press and the rejectionism of exile groups in the USA.

The TPLF was formed by Tigrayan student radicals who, arguing that the national question should take precedence over the class struggle, split from the civilian left during the revolution and, with logistical help from the EPLF, launched an armed struggle against the state from Tigray province. By March 1989 the avowedly Marxist organisation took control of the whole of Tigray province. As the TPLF pushed southwards in 1989-91, it mobilised non-Tigrayan groups and in early 1990 announced the creation of the EPRDF. Since seizing power in 1991, the front has created surrogate "people's democratic organisations" (PDOs) in most regions. Its junior ally, the Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (EPDM), a multi-ethnic remnant of the 1970s civilian left, was transformed into an explicitly Amhara group to fit the country's new political-ethnic template. Transitional government appointments, and the EPRDF cabinet of August 1995 reflect a concern for ethnic balance. The front's lop-sided genesis and ideological fluidity may prove a weakness; in its second congress in early 1995 it was evident that many of its regional administrators are young and experienced.

The other sphere of opposition is regional. The only other ethnic armed movement active against the Derg was the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) with pockets of guerrillas in both Gambella and Hararge provinces. The Oromos are the largest ethnic group in the Horn of Africa. As EPRDF forces approached the capital in May 1991 they co-opted the OLF leadership. Although it is ostensibly a partner in the transitional government, friction and mistrust often thrust the OLF into the role of official opposition. Disagreements over the regional elections in June 1992 led to the withdrawal of the OLF from the transitional legislature where it held the largest number of seats. The EPRDF has vigorously promoted its own Oromo PDO, which now dominates the State Council in Region 4.

Similar rivalries over legitimacy exist in the numerically smaller Regions 2 (Afar) and 5 (Somali) where the EPRDF has had no effective surrogate. In general the contradictions and competing claims of regional identity in Ethiopia have little

in common with the notion of tribalism prevalent elsewhere in Africa and the new authorities have struggled to propose workable schemes for either regional or ethnic autonomy. Despite a decree of December 1991 which ostensibly gave extensive powers to the regions (devolving security, judicial and fiscal powers), in practice the precise powers and prerogatives of the new regional authorities remained extremely vague throughout the transitional period. This was in part because of the widely disparate nature of the regions themselves; some like Regions 1 and 2 (Tigray and Afar) have relatively homogeneous populations, others such as the amalgamated south-western region are a patchwork of dozens of languages and peoples. In territorial size the regions range from the tiny western frontier regions to the vast Oromo and Somali regions, designated 4 and 5, which between them cover almost two-thirds of the territory. In addition, different regions have hugely differing policy capacity, in terms of resources and personnel.

Food supply and distribution have been critical to the political process. The Mengistu government was not significantly weakened by the famine and drought of 1984-85, which put nearly 10 million people at risk and may have killed as many as 1 million. However, the international image of the government suffered as the height of the famine coincided with celebrations of the tenth anniversary of the revolution. Both the government and the relief agencies were better prepared for the subsequent drought of 1987-88, although a resurgence of fighting hampered relief work and put nearly half the 3 million famine victims beyond the reach of food aid. Further shortfalls of food threatened a further 4 million people in northern Ethiopia in 1990/91. The politics of famine therefore played a role in the political changes of 1991, the northern rebel fronts gaining international legitimacy through their efficient handling of relief aid.

International relations and defence

Under Haile Selassie Ethiopia had a close alliance with the USA, which maintained a major communications base in Eritrea. When the military government proclaimed socialism in 1974, the alliance began to fade away, although for a couple of years the USA continued to supply arms. In 1977 the PMAC announced that it would seek arms and military aid from the socialist bloc. Later that year the USSR came to Ethiopia's help to defeat Somalia in the Ogaden, and Cuba provided some 17,000 troops. In November 1978 Mr Mengistu signed a 20-year treaty of friendship and cooperation with the USSR during one of his many visits to Moscow. In later years Moscow became increasingly vocal in its criticism of the government and in 1991 expressed its intention to terminate arms supplies. In sponsoring the London conference in May 1991 the US government unexpectedly found itself acting as midwife to the new government. Even before 1991 Ethiopia had had good relations with several Western countries, which provided food and development aid, although the level of aid was far lower than might have been expected for the third poorest country in the world (measured by the World Bank in 1991 in terms of GNP per head), on account of Ethiopia's human rights record and economic policies. The transitional government sought a rapid increase in aid and cultivated good relations with all potential donors, particularly the USA. Two months after being named prime minister of the new republic in August 1995, Meles Zenawi made a full state visit to Washington, where Ethiopia is again viewed as a key regional ally.

Both the EPLF and the EPRDF enjoyed support from Sudan and on assuming power the EPRDF summarily expelled the southern Sudanese rebels, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). But in 1995 political links with Sudan deteriorated. Eritrea broke off diplomatic relations with Khartoum in December 1994, accusing Sudan of sponsoring armed attacks within its territory. Ethiopia followed suit after unearthing alleged evidence of Sudanese complicity in an assassination attempt on the Egyptian president, Hosni Mubarak, in Addis Ababa in June 1995. In January 1996 the UN Security Council unanimously passed a resolution ordering Sudan to hand over three men wanted in connection with the murder attempt. Both the EPRDF and the EPLF have played an active role in regional attempts to forge a political settlement in Somalia. Both Ethiopia and Eritrea are active members of the Djibouti-based Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD; see Regional organisations). In 1994 Ethiopia strengthened ties with the Djiboutian government and supported attempts to establish an African peacekeeping force, notably contributing troops to Rwanda.

In November 1989 diplomatic relations with Israel were restored and these were maintained by the transitional government. Building on the biblical links of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Haile Selassie's government had close ties with Israel, which were broken only reluctantly in line with the policy of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU; see Regional organisations) after the 1973 Arab-Israeli war. Israel met one objective from the restoration of relations when it secured the emigration of 14,000 Falashas (Ethiopian Jews) in the final days of Mr Mengistu's rule in May 1991.

Before the defeats in 1989-91 the armed forces of Ethiopia were the largest in sub-Saharan Africa, with a total strength estimated at 438,000 in mid-1990 by the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies. The army numbered 430,000 troops, including the 200,000-strong people's militia. However, behind these impressive figures was the reality of a ramshackle and increasingly disillusioned conscript force. Morale was further sapped by the loss of Massawa in February 1990. The EPLF pinned down half of the army around Asmara and, faced with concerted EPRDF offensives through the centre and west of the country, the disillusioned army crumbled. It is estimated that the EPRDF have 65,000 men and women under arms. The bulk of these are young TPLF fighters. During the transitional period the EPRDF forces constituted the *de facto* national army. A few senior army and air force staff were retained for training purposes. A new promotion of air force personnel graduated in mid-1995. The new government has pledged to demobilise Tigrayan fighters and create a nationally representative army, although progress is likely to be slow.

Population and society

Demographic trends

The mid-1984 national census produced a total population figure of 42 million, with 1.41 million inhabitants in Addis Ababa and major concentrations in Hararghe, Sidamo and Wollo provinces. Other major towns are: Dire Dawa (98,100); Nazret (76,284); Gondar (68,950); Dessie (68,648); Harar (62,160); and Makale (61,583). Official estimates in 1987 showed that the total had

Eritrea

Political background

History Rival interpretations of Eritrean history were at the root of Africa's longest, most bloody war, which ended with the victory of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) in May 1991. Eritrea became a sovereign, independent state on May 24, 1993, following a referendum on independence the previous month. Throughout the war, Eritrean history was contested as keenly as the territory.

Italy established a concession in the small Red Sea port of Assab in 1869 and gained control over Massawa in 1885, providing a base for expansion into the highlands of Ethiopia. The present borders of the state of Eritrea were established in the Treaty of Wechale between the Ethiopian emperor, Menelik, and Italy in 1889. However, at the time Wechale was just one of a series of treaties—designed to advance Italian territorial designs on Ethiopia—signed by Emperor Menelik and rival *rases* (lords) with Italy. Italy's defeat by armies allied to Menelik at Adwa in 1896 limited Italian ambitions to coastal Eritrea while consolidating Menelik's power in Tigray. Eritrea was thus a colonial state, carved out during the European scramble for Africa after the Congress of Berlin in 1884. Italy abandoned its wider territorial ambitions for 40 years and ruled Eritrea as a colony in conjunction with Somalia and Libya.

Colonial rule saw the establishment of rudimentary educational and administrative structures in the colony. By the 1930s, *pax romana*, drought and rapid urbanisation had ruptured the territory's rural hierarchies in both the Muslim lowland coastal plains and the mainly Christian highlands, which shared both religion and language with neighbouring Tigray. Italy's dreams of Eritrea as a settler colony for poor Italian southerners were shortlived, and the colony's principal role became the supply of troops for Italy's colonial campaigns. Eritrean troops were crucial during the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935, after which Eritrea became part of Mussolini's shortlived East African empire.

After occupation by British troops from Sudan in 1941 and the restoration of the Ethiopian emperor, Haile Selassie, to power in Addis Ababa, Eritrea was ruled from 1941 to 1952 under a British mandate administration. British rule stimulated economic and political development as the Red Sea ports—Massawa and Assab—became important imperial staging posts. The recruitment of Eritreans into the civil service accelerated the formation of an intelligentsia and an indigenous press developed.

Amid growing discussion of the territory's future, a four-power commission (made up of the UK, the USA, the USSR and France) canvassed the opinions of all communities in December 1948 but, unable to discern a clear consensus, passed the issue to the UN. A UN enquiry focused political rivalries as Eritrean

opinion polarised between unionists, who favoured integration with Ethiopia, and those seeking independence. In 1949 the UN General Assembly rejected an Anglo-Italian proposal to partition Eritrea between Ethiopia and Sudan. Meanwhile, Libyan independence was granted, an Italian trusteeship was established in Somalia and, in February 1950, a UN commission was despatched to Eritrea. Italy now supported those seeking independence and, as Ethiopia intensified its support for the unionists, in large part via the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, violence between partisans from rival camps escalated. Commission members were divided, but in December 1950 the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 390 A (V), creating an autonomous Eritrea federated to Ethiopia under the Ethiopian crown.

A new constitution was drafted and came into force in September 1952. This gave Eritrea a democratically elected government with jurisdiction over most domestic issues. However, monetary, fiscal and military affairs and foreign policy were controlled from Addis Ababa. Ten years of uneasy federation followed; friction stemmed from the contrast between Eritrea's comparatively educated, democratically aware population and the autocratic and feudal Ethiopian administration. This was compounded by the growing insensitivity of Ethiopian rule during the late 1950s, when Eritrean autonomy was gradually curtailed, and arrogant administrators were sent in from Addis. The Amharic language was imposed in breach of the federation arrangements. Finally, on November 14, 1962, Ethiopia abrogated the federation and dissolved the democratically elected national assembly, Eritrea becoming simply the 14th province of Ethiopia. Although a clear violation of the 1950 UN resolution, this was ignored by the UN and the USA, largely due to geopolitical considerations.

Direct rule by Ethiopia led to stagnation in Eritrea as the economic and political axis shifted to Addis. With limited opportunities at home, educated Eritreans migrated south to take key positions in the expanding Ethiopian civil service and in commerce. The following three decades were dominated by armed struggle against successive Ethiopian governments and internecine strife throughout the Eritrean nationalist movement. The Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) was formed in 1961, supplanting the earlier Eritrean Liberation Movement (ELM) set up by exiles in Sudan to oppose Ethiopian rule. Alarmed by ELM and ELF propaganda, the Ethiopians moved to arrest known nationalists. One of these, Hamid Idris Awate, who was affiliated with neither group, resisted violently while escaping arrest on September 1, 1961, the date subsequently taken by Eritrean nationalists as the beginning of the armed struggle.

Although the ELF attracted former civilian nationalists of the 1950s and lowland Muslim leaders, it was poorly organised along loose ethnic and regional lines. These divisions rendered the ELF militarily ineffective, although it began to attract increasing numbers of recruits (particularly young highland Christians) in the mid-1960s. This influx of young people attuned to African nationalism and Arab socialism accentuated policy divisions in the ELF. In the early 1970s these led to the creation of dissenting splinter groups which in 1973 regrouped to form the Eritrean People's Liberation Forces, renamed a front—the EPLF—at its first congress in 1977. Conflict between the EPLF and various ELF factions enfeebled the nationalist movement for much of the 1970s with full-scale civil

war erupting twice, most fatally for the nationalist cause in 1977, as both fronts were making significant military gains against Ethiopian forces.

EPLF policy stressed the social, rather than purely military, aspects of liberation and national revolution. It placed emphasis on political education, social programmes of health and education, literacy and economic self-sufficiency. Growing numbers of radical young Eritreans left schools and colleges in Ethiopia to join the front in the mid-1970s. Despite the perceived Christian bias in the early EPLF leadership, care was taken to incorporate all nine of Eritrea's ethnic groups. EPLF broadcasts and educational materials were being published in all main languages by the early 1980s. Social change and political mobilisation was reinforced by land reforms in the areas under the control of the EPLF. In these areas it established a parallel, underground administration, running the war effort, hospitals and schools from a network of bunkers in its northern strongholds.

On taking power in 1991 the EPLF declared a Provisional Government of Eritrea pending a referendum on independence. Eritrean independence was endorsed by Ethiopia under its hastily drafted transitional charter in July 1991. The indigenous Eritrean Referendum Commission was established in May 1992 and the UN belatedly created the small Observer Mission to Verify the Referendum in Eritrea (UNOVER). The referendum, held in April 1993, resulted in a 99.8% vote for independence. Of the 1.1 million Eritreans who voted, 340,000 were in neighbouring countries, 154,000 of them in Sudan and 58,000 in Ethiopia. Independence was proclaimed on May 24, 1993.

The constitution

At independence Eritrea had no constitution. A commission drawn from the EPLF Central Committee was charged with preparing a draft constitution. During the two years of provisional rule to May 1993, Eritrea was ruled by the EPLF Central Committee. Two days before official independence a 130-member Eritrean National Assembly convened in Asmara and elected the EPLF's secretary-general, Isaias Afewerki, as president. The front had earlier decreed a four-year transitional period during which the president and his cabinet would constitute the executive and the National Assembly the legislature. Constitutional seminars were held across the country, and an international conference in early 1995. Regional and local council elections were held during the provisional period. In July 1995 the political map of the country was redrawn in an attempt to spread the benefits of development. The ten colonial provinces were reduced to six administrative zones with capitals in Asmara, Assab, Keren, Barentu, Mendefera and Massawa. In January 1996 the National Assembly divided the six provinces into 55 sub-provinces.

Before May 1991 Eritrea had effectively been under military rule from Addis for almost three decades. The monolithic nature of EPLF control during the provisional period, coupled with deep policy divisions over how to transform the front in order to provide the basis for a future pluralist political system, make finalising a new constitution particularly difficult.

The party congress in February 1994 confirmed the move to a pluralist system, but not before a law on political parties is passed. It confirmed Isaias as its chairman and voted to change the name of the ruling party to the People's

Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ). The congress resolved that the new PFDJ should participate in drafting, adopting and applying the proposed law on political parties. However, the ban on other parties set out in the transitional charter (promulgated at independence) remains in force. Presidential and legislative elections are still due in May 1997, when the mandate of the government expires.

Political forces

Government and party are separate in theory, but a lack of skilled people means that leading positions are inevitably shared among the ex-fighters, many of whom are both government and PFDJ members. Isaias chairs the PFDJ's Central Council and its 19-member Executive Council. The congress in 1994 resolved that the National Assembly (Eritrea's legislature) should be composed of the 75 members of the PFDJ Central Council and 75 representatives elected by the people. However, no timetable was set, and the assembly is currently made up of the 75 PFDJ Central Council members plus three representatives of each of Eritrea's ten former regions.

Domestic politics are essentially internal to the PFDJ, which is critically divided over its future role. The front's immediate political problems stem from its lack of resources. However, it is offsetting this handicap by using some of the assets transferred from the EPLF and the government to play a key role in the economy, notably in construction and transport. Fighters and civilians alike have overblown expectations of the material benefits of independence. Rivalry over scarce housing and employment may spark political problems, particularly as richer emigrants return, heightening social divisions.

No real political threat is posed by tiny anti-EPLF Afar groups and Eritrean Jihad factions, reportedly active among refugees in Sudan. This last group has been blamed for armed clashes in the north-west of the country, in which several Eritreans and many more alleged Islamists (of different nationalities) have been killed.

International relations

The Red Sea's strategic importance in the cold war and in Israeli-Arab conflicts gave Eritrea an international prominence incommensurate with its size.

The USA and Israel were Ethiopia's main arms suppliers until the fall of Haile Selassie in 1974. Despite the switch from US to Soviet backing in 1977, Israel remained a close, covert ally of Ethiopia until full relations were restored in 1989 as Soviet military support for the war ebbed away. The EPLF had few international friends during its campaign for independence. Ethiopia's alliance with the Soviet Union precluded Eastern bloc support and meant that other independence movements shunned the EPLF, while Ethiopia ensured that Eritrea was kept off OAU and UN agendas. The EPLF has pursued an active regional policy since taking power, establishing good relations with most neighbouring states and working alongside Ethiopia in seeking a negotiated solution to the civil wars in Sudan and Somalia. Relations with Sudan have been stormy. A much-delayed programme to repatriate the 430,000 refugees from Sudan began in November 1994 after Khartoum was eventually persuaded to sign an agreement with the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). However, repeated incursions by alleged Jihad members led Eritrea to break off diplomatic ties with Sudan in early December.

Relations with Ethiopia are good, with cooperation on most issues from defence to free trade. The Eritrean government has close ties with the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), now the central component of the government in Addis Ababa, though there are also sources of friction between the two organisations. Good relations have been struck up with the USA, Egypt, Djibouti, Germany and Israel. However, relations with Yemen have deteriorated following a dispute over the Zugar-Hanish archipelago in the strategic waterway leading into the Red Sea. There were armed clashes in the islands in mid-December 1995 and the mediation attempts of Ethiopia, France and other parties have been slow to bear fruit, notably due to domestic political problems in Yemen.

During the war the EPLF received substantial economic assistance from non-governmental organisations in the UK and Scandinavia, the latter now contributing to the reconstruction programme alongside Italy and the USA. All European Union states have recognised Eritrea, which is set to receive aid under the Lomé-ACP conventions. Japan has given Eritrea priority in its substantial ODA budget, with a \$10m project in the fisheries sector, and other aid is forthcoming. Having been ignored for so long, the government is determined to follow a pragmatic and sometimes iconoclastic foreign policy.

An estimated 100,000 Eritreans live in Saudi Arabia and official bilateral relations are on the mend after a period of turbulence. A Saudi business delegation came to Asmara in October 1994. Similar delegations have come from China and South Korea, mainly from companies which have secured large construction projects.

Population and society

Demography

Although Ethiopia published census figures in 1987, movement of people due to war and drought in Eritrea means they are of little use except in judging the size of urban areas. Registrations for the April 1993 referendum provide a more reliable guide to the size of the domestic population. Just over 800,000 adults registered and voted within Eritrea, suggesting a population of around 2.5 million. This is below previous estimates, the discrepancy probably being explained by the fact that population estimates became sensitive during the mid-1980s due to the needs of calculating food aid requirements. Extensive rural food surveys in 1988 and 1991 came up with an average rural population estimate of 2.2 million, with 700,000 urban inhabitants, 430,000 of them in Asmara. Urban demography was extremely unstable during the war and rapid urbanisation, fuelled by returning refugees, is now a major problem for the Eritrean government. The EIU's estimate of the total population in mid-1995 is 3.2 million.

In addition, over 1 million Eritreans live in exile. The bulk of those in Sudan, estimated at 300,000-400,000, are scheduled to return over the next five years. A \$262m repatriation programme was presented to the donor community in July 1993. Few funds materialised, so the Commission for Eritrean Refugee Affairs (CERA) drew up a \$13m pilot project to bring back 22,000 people. This

Somalia

Political background

History Somalis probably originated in the southern Ethiopian highlands and had occupied the Somali peninsula by around 1000 AD, practising pastoralism but with some farming in the south. This remains the basis of the country's economy today. Islam was absorbed from coastal Persian and Arab immigrants and traders by the 13th century. Two centuries of Portuguese rule along the Somali coast gave way to Omani dominance from the early 18th century until the recent European period from the 1880s.

During the colonial period the Somali people were split between: Italian and British Somalilands, which became the Somali Republic in 1960; French Somaliland, which became the Republic of Djibouti in 1977; the North West frontier province of Kenya; and the Ogaden, in south-east Ethiopia. The new republic was born in 1960 with a tripartite coalition government, with the two principal northern political parties merging with the Somali Youth League (SYL), the ruling party in the former Italian areas in the south. The government was carefully balanced and representative of the major ethnic groups, but the country was soon divided by ethnic jealousies. Moreover, the different administrative languages and legal and tax systems in the former British and Italian protectorates made unification difficult. However, popular commitment to irredentism, extending Somalia's borders to include the Somalis of Djibouti, Kenya and Ethiopia, obscured internal divisions, though this led to an unsuccessful war with Ethiopia in 1963-64.

The first prime minister had been from the Darod clan family, consisting of many sublineages and based largely in the south. A new Darod prime minister won elections in 1964, but the Darod group and the SYL were bitterly divided. Internal feuding increased after the presidential elections of 1967, when the newly elected president, Abdirashid Ali Shirmarke, secured the appointment of an Issaq prime minister, Mohamed Ibrahim Egal, who favoured détente with Ethiopia. Mr Egal won the 1969 election, in which over 1,000 candidates contested 123 seats, but there were accusations of electoral malpractice. In October 1969 the president was assassinated and a week later the army, under General Mohamed Siad Barre, seized power.

Ruling through a 25-strong Supreme Revolutionary Council, Mr Siad Barre adopted an anti-tribalist policy of "scientific socialism" which advocated popular participation through local councils and worker-management committees. Large industrial units, most services, including trade, and agricultural land were nationalised. A modified Roman script was adopted for the Somali language, unwritten till then, and a mass literacy campaign was launched in 1974.

Relations with the Soviet Union grew closer, largely because it was prepared to arm Somalia to counter US influence in Ethiopia.

Despite the president's assertion that these measures were consistent with Islam and Somalia's accession to the Arab League in 1974, not all religious conservatives were convinced and several imams were executed in the mid-1970s. To silence opposition the government became increasingly autocratic, creating a national security service and secret security courts. Meanwhile, following early successes in social and economic development, agricultural and industrial production began to stagnate.

As the revolution began to founder, Mr Siad Barre latched on to the Ogaden issue to divert public attention from the pressing problems at home. The government gave support to the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF), which was then carrying out a guerrilla war in southern Ethiopia. In June 1977 government troops crossed the border in support of the WSLF. By November 1977 they had reached the gates of Harar, but Somalia suddenly found itself isolated when the USSR switched its support to Ethiopia. Despite the arrival of 17,000 Cuban troops and hundreds of Soviet planes and tanks on the Ethiopian side, the West did not respond to Somali appeals for assistance. Out-gunned and outmanoeuvred, the Somali army withdrew from Ethiopia in March 1978, having suffered heavy losses. The guerrilla war in the Ogaden continued, and in 1979-80 huge numbers of refugees fled from the fighting and from drought.

The Somali Revolutionary Socialist Party (SRSP) was created in 1976 as a channel for popular participation, but in April 1978 disaffected members of the Majerteen, a Darod subclan, mounted a coup attempt. It failed, but many of the officers escaped into Ethiopia where they set up the Democratic Front for the Salvation of Somalia (DFSS). Two years later another opposition movement was formed in the north, the Somali National Movement (SNM). The SNM drew widespread support from the Issaq community and other northern groups which were dissatisfied with their share of national development, resented the political domination of the president's small circle and, as entrepreneurs, were angered by the banning of the mild drug *qat*. Mr Siad Barre responded to the increasing opposition by concentrating power in his own hands and those of his Marehan group (another Darod subclan). Repression also intensified, leading to international protests against the violation of human rights.

As the situation deteriorated other opposition groups emerged, including the armed Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM) and the United Somali Congress (USC) in 1989. The USC is made up mainly of the Hawiye clan family. In the second half of 1989 Mogadishu experienced bloody riots, with the president's notorious "red berets" apparently having *carte blanche* on the streets of the capital, while many government troops outside the capital deserted. The government was forced to make conciliatory gestures towards the opposition, proposing a new constitution and multiparty legislative elections. But the moves were too late. The armed opposition made an informal alliance in the second half of 1990 and fighting against government forces intensified, with the SNM operating in the north, and the USC and the SPM in central and

southern regions. At the end of 1990 USC forces entered Mogadishu and on January 26, 1991, Mr Siad Barre fled south from the capital in a tank, eventually to find political asylum in Nigeria where he died in January 1995. Three days after his exit from Mogadishu the USC swore in an interim president, Ali Mahdi Mohamed, who appointed a government. This move was immediately rejected by the SNM and the SPM which claimed they were not adequately consulted.

The SPM then turned against the USC in the south, while the SNM proclaimed independence in the north on May 16, 1991. The self-styled Somaliland Republic, under the SNM chairman (and prime minister of Somalia in the late 1960s), Mohamed Ibrahim Egal, as president, covers the territory of the former British Somaliland but had not been recognised by any foreign powers by February 1996. Meanwhile, rifts in the USC turned into a major split in mid-1991, between the interim president, Mr Ali Mahdi, and General Mohamed Farah Aideed. Forces loyal to each leader, fought a bitter battle for control of Mogadishu. A US-led international force arrived in December 1992 and succeeded in re-establishing a fragile peace in the capital. Armed escorts allowed aid convoys to reach many areas of the country, although the worst of a much-feared famine had already been arrested. This was the first UN-mounted military operation for purely humanitarian purposes and the first time the UN had intervened in a country without being invited. Poorly informed UN diplomacy and the insensitive approach of the international force, which came under UN control in May 1993, hampered the efforts of a Transitional National Council tentatively formed in March in Addis Ababa. Despite numerous international and regional attempts to broker reconciliation between Somali factions, divisions between USC factions, and between the USC and other armed groups, remain very powerful. The mandate of the UN operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II) ended in March 1995. Three months later General Aideed was elected interim president by his own USC faction, a move rejected by Mr Ali Mahdi, and in early 1996 reconciliation between these and other factions seems as unlikely as ever.

The constitution

Somalia's first independent constitution, ratified in 1961, created a liberal democracy, with all citizens having the right to vote. Elections were for members of the National Assembly, which in turn would vote for a president as head of state, a position tenable for six years. The president had powers to authorise government-sponsored legislation, to dissolve the assembly when in his view it had ceased to discharge its functions, to appoint and dismiss the prime minister, and to commute sentences. The government was made up of the prime minister and his subordinate ministers, who had responsibility for implementing the laws of the National Assembly. The constitution also provided for a judiciary which was independent of the executive and legislative powers. The judicial system was a blend of the British and Italian court systems, and of the *sharia* (Islamic law) and civil court traditions.

The 1961 constitution was not universally praised, since much of its detail had been worked out in the south, before the British agreed to grant independence to their protectorate in conjunction with Italian Somaliland's schedule. Revision of the constitution under the guidance of Mr Siad Barre took place in 1979

and 1984, giving increasing powers to the president. Under mounting opposition pressure, a new constitution was submitted to the assembly in June 1990, but it was not ratified before the fall of Mr Siad Barre in January 1991. Since his fall, most Somali political leaders have advocated a return to the 1961 constitution, although in the self-styled Somaliland Republic drafting of a new constitution began in April 1995.

Political forces

Although there were serious attempts to dispense with clan-based divisions and loyalties among Somalis after independence in 1960, the genealogy-based clan system remains at the root of political, as well as social and commercial, issues today. Every eight-year-old child is expected to be able to recite his or her genealogy through the male line some 20 or 30 generations back to a common ancestor within the clan. The clan organisation is a fragile, unstable system, characterised by shifting allegiances in which power and politics are exercised through temporary alliances and coalitions of lineages. The institutionalised instability that stems from this lineage system is combined with other traditional norms, such as the lack of individual culpability. A murderer, for example, shares his guilt with all members of his kin, who instantly become liable for retribution or compensation. The political situation in Somalia today must be understood in this context, plus the fact that to a large extent traditional brokers of justice, the clan elders and spiritual leaders, have lost their moral authority to military authority, which was for so long held by the former president, Mr Siad Barre.

There are six major clan families in Somalia. Four are pastoral: the Darod (who number over 1 million); the Hawiye (Mogadishu is very largely a Hawiye city, particularly of the Abgal sublineage); the Issaq (who predominate in the north, now the self-styled Somaliland Republic); and the Dir (who subdivide into two branches, the Gadabursi and the 'Iise; the northern town of Borama is a Gadabursi zone). The two largely agricultural clan families are the Digil and the Rahawayn, who occupy the inter-riverine lands of the south.

The two rival USC leaders, General Aideed and Mr Ali Mahdi, are both from the Hawiye clan family but from different sublineages: the Abar Gedir and Abgal respectively. General Aideed had close links with the SNM in the north but changed his mind over secession in 1994, while Mr Ali Mahdi, a former school teacher, is a wealthy hotelier and businessman.

The president of the Somaliland Republic, Mr Egal, spent 11 years in jail following the overthrow by Mr Siad Barre of the democratically elected government of which he was prime minister. He was elected to the presidency of the Somaliland Republic in May 1993, taking over from Abdulrahman Ahmed Ali "Tour", the country's first president.

The Somaliland Republic

Throughout much of the period since its self-declared independence the Somaliland Republic has been relatively peaceful, at least when compared with the chaos prevailing in the south, although sporadic fighting was reported in Berbera and Burao in early 1992 and in the new capital of Hargeisa in late 1994 and through much of 1995. There have also been clashes near the Djiboutian border between forces loyal to Mr Egal and the Issa-dominated United Somali Front. Refugees from persecution by Mr Siad Barre's forces and the subsequent

civil war began to flood back to Hargeisa after independence was proclaimed in May 1991. However, the widespread devastation of the north, the shortages of every conceivable commodity and the lack of international recognition of the new republic have created severe strains. Diplomatic recognition remains a priority, for without it bilateral aid, so desperately needed for economic reconstruction, will not be forthcoming. Following Eritrea's successful transition to independence via a referendum in May 1993, Mr Egal announced a similar exercise would be held in Somaliland in May 1994, but the referendum has been postponed indefinitely. Foreign financial and logistical support for the exercise was not forthcoming, and the government has since been preoccupied with challenges from armed militias.

International relations and defence

Somalia originally turned to the USSR for aid in the 1960s as it was the only country prepared to train and equip the size of army it wanted. This alliance came to an abrupt end in 1977, and Somalia turned to the Western camp. The USA did not, however, replace the USSR as an arms supplier. As a result, Somalia spent a good deal of time and effort looking, ultimately in vain, for regular arms suppliers.

After 1981 Mr Siad Barre started a slow rapprochement with Kenya, pledging that Somalia no longer had claims on Kenyan territory, or on that of Djibouti, having accepted Djibouti's independence in 1977. Somalia also came to terms with Ethiopia in April 1988, after several years of negotiations. This accord ignored the central issue of territorial sovereignty, although there were reports that a secret agreement signed at the same time renounced Somalia's claims to the Ogaden. Both parties followed the terms of their public agreement scrupulously in the following months, withdrawing troops from the present border and exchanging prisoners.

In mid-1990 the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) estimated that government forces numbered 64,500, including 30,000 conscripts. In 1995 the IISS estimated the strength of the key factions at 5,000 in the SNM, 2,000 in the SPM, 3,000 in the DFSS and 10,000 in each of the Aideed and Ali Mahdi groups within the USC. Inevitably these figures are all guesswork. Due to the effective collapse of government in 1991 no national armed force can be formed. At its peak the UNOSOM II force numbered almost 30,000, but all had been withdrawn by March 1995. No armed UN personnel were ever present in the north.

Population and society

Demographic trends

The population was estimated at about 9.1 million by the UN in mid-1994. The World Bank estimated the population growth rate at 3% in the 1980s, forecasting that it would rise to 3.1% in the 1990s, and put 46% of the total under 15 years of age in 1990. The figures are, however, disputed. In April 1990, in its presentation to the Second UN Conference on Least Developed Countries, the government quoted its mid-1988 estimate of 9 million, with an annual growth rate of 3.1%. This excludes refugees, the numbers of which are also disputed. The government put the number of refugees at between 1.2 million and

USAID CONGRESSIONAL PRESENTATION FY 1997

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ERITREA

FY 1997 Development Fund for Africa: \$11,427,735

FY 1997 P.L. 480 Title II: \$ 3,700,000

Introduction .

Eritrea is Africa's newest nation. Eritrea formalized its independence from Ethiopia by popular referendum in 1993 after a costly 30-year struggle. The long struggle for independence left Eritrea with a neglected and devastated physical and institutional infrastructure; however, it also forged a strong determination to build a self-reliant new nation, economically and politically. It is a small, arid and rugged country located north of the Horn of Africa along the southwestern coast of the Red Sea neighboring Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Yemen. Its multi-ethnic population (divided equally between Muslim and Christian religions) is estimated at three million. Even though predominantly rural and agro-pastoral, Eritrea is important to U.S. interests because it possesses major trade routes and Red Sea ports and islands. Eritrea's two deep water ports and shipping lanes in the Red Sea and the size and volatility of its neighbors give it strategic importance in the Mideast and Horn of Africa region. It is also a principal life line for humanitarian assistance to the Horn region, where war and famine recently threatened 25 million people.

Its income-producing natural resources include deposits of gold, copper, gas and oil, a large marine fishery, salt flats, broad grazing land, and potential tourist sites.

Eritrea's primary economic goals are rebuilding energy and transportation infrastructure, establishing sustainable education, health and pension systems, developing a broad-based private sector, and promoting foreign investment. Foremost among its political goals are a strong local and national government, a democratic constitution, and revitalized regional structures. The successful reintegration of ex-combatants and refugees has also been an important concern.

Eritrea presents a unique, determined effort to develop a stable society and self-reliant, broad-based economy in a region characterized by political extremes, instability, and collapse. USAID assistance to Eritrea supports U.S. interests by promoting both the recovery and growth of a market-based economy and the emergence of democratic governance to underpin national stability in this historically volatile region.

The Development Challenge.

Eritrea's severe poverty has been exacerbated by decades of war. Even by African standards, Eritrea's health and nutrition indicators are poor. Infant mortality is 135 deaths per 1,000 and under-five mortality is 203 deaths per 1,000. Life expectancy is approximately 46 years. The population growth rate is a high 3%.

Most Eritreans depend on agriculture for their survival, but Eritrea's northern location in the erratic Sahelian rainfall zones limits foodgrain production. There are opportunities for export crop production,

however. Food security is constrained by difficult physical conditions as well as a lack of income due to a paucity of enterprise. The capabilities of government and the private sector, notwithstanding dedicated personnel, are limited by a lack of education, training, and experience.

Despite these constraints, the potential for rapid rebuilding and development in Eritrea is high. The country was once the most industrialized in Africa and has the legacy of a hard-working labor force and good public and private management. Its location at the crossroad of the Middle East and Africa is advantageous to trade. Eritreans are united in their commitment to rebuild their country, and considerable remittances from Eritreans abroad demonstrate it.

A careful steward of limited resources, the new government is determined to build a new nation avoiding the mistakes of other African countries. With no country debt, a commitment to the principles of an open economy, and progress made in attracting foreign investment, Eritrea could achieve self-reliance within a decade.

Eritrea's leadership looks to East Asia rather than to Africa or the West for its development models. It is strongly supportive of (and a key participant in) the Greater Horn of Africa Initiative (GHAI) and the principles of African leadership, regional integration, conflict prevention, and food security. Given its strategic position geopolitically and in terms of trade and the high potential for instability in neighboring states, strong support of Eritrea's determined effort for self-reliance is in the U.S. national interest in the region.

USAID has been successful in helping Eritrea resolve two of the most sensitive issues in the region: the demobilization of thousands of ex-fighters and the resettlement of tens of thousands of refugees and internally-displaced through provision of considerable food and agricultural inputs. Recognizing that a healthy, productive population is Eritrea's most important resource, USAID also initiated a broad program to strengthen its primary health care system. Most recently, USAID is providing training and institutional partnerships linkages to build democratic governance and private enterprise.

Other Donors .

A formal mechanism for donor coordination is not yet established in Eritrea, and there has not been a Consultative Group meeting for Eritrea since 1994. Overall donor assistance for 1995 was on the order of \$150 million, of which the United States provided about 12%. Italy, Germany, the European Union (EU), and the United States, respectively, are currently the largest donors. The Scandinavian countries, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) also have sizeable assistance portfolios. The World Bank has recently negotiated its first major loan--a community development fund--and is considering loans for regional hospitals, primary education, and port rehabilitation.

USAID has been effective in collaborating with the World Bank, UNDP, and UNICEF in strengthening Eritrea's health system and building administrative and financial management capabilities. In the last two months, USAID was particularly successful in facilitating multi-donor concern leading to a major reform of food policy in Eritrea.

FY 1997 Program .

Supportive of U.S. interests and the GHAI, USAID's strategy is to help Eritrea achieve its goal of self-reliance within a decade. This will involve, above all, building the human capital and key institutions which underpin successful nationhood. Of particular concern are those problems which involve the most

acute human need and the potential for crisis such as chronic food deficits, debilitating health problems, and limited government capabilities -- problems which are worse in the predominantly Muslim, and potentially destabilizing, lowlands.

To respond to Eritrea's determination and needs, USAID is entering into a "development partnership" with the Eritrean government to improve rural food security, mother and child health, and democratic governance. Food security was the earliest area of USAID involvement due to the large amounts of P.L.480, Title II assistance and agricultural inputs provided to assist the post-conflict recovery, demobilization, and resettlement. USAID plays a major role in dialogue on food policy and supports several smaller agricultural production-enhancing activities.

Last year, USAID initiated considerable health and population assistance which is now focused on primary health care services in the central zones of the country. Most recently, in response to the government's expressed needs, USAID launched a sizeable governance capacity-building effort through university, management institute, constitutional commission, and ministerial training.

Agency Goal: Encouraging Broad-based Economic Growth

With Eritrea's liberal investment climate and a tradition of (and location for) commerce, the prospects are good for rapid economic growth in Eritrea's urban areas and their trade corridors. However, rapid growth in these areas without complementary growth and linkages in lowland, predominantly Muslim western areas of the country would leave half the population in poverty with likely destabilizing effects. Physical conditions also limit food production in these lowland areas.

Thus, consistent with U.S. economic interests and the GHAI, USAID's primary strategic objective in Eritrea is to help make food more available in these rural areas through increased enterprise and trade. USAID is building on the experience of its food and agricultural assistance--for example, breeding livestock for dispossessed farm households--to stimulate rural income growth. A combination of bilateral and GHAI resources are being programmed to support the formation of rural associations, cooperatives, and enterprises, and thus expand rural income and trade.

USAID assistance has contributed to several important achievements towards national and household food security: the successful repatriation of tens of thousands of refugee families from Sudan and the demobilization of thousands of ex-fighters; limiting the locust damage to the 1995 grain harvest; and spurring a shift away from government food handouts in order to create a cash food economy and safety net. Notwithstanding these achievements, Eritrea remains critically and structurally food deficient.

The primary guarantor of food security in Eritrea will be a robust and diversified rural economy. To have any catalytic impact on rural economic growth, even in selected areas of Eritrea, considerable resources will be needed for pilot interventions over the next several years.

□ Strategic Objective 1: Increased Rural Income Through Growth of Rural Enterprise in Target Areas

Agency Goal: Stabilizing World Population Growth and Protecting Human Health

The indicators for maternal and infant mortality in Eritrea are among the worst in the world. A generation of neglect and war had obliterated health services in Eritrea. Due to relatively greater inaccessibility, traditionalism, and endemic diseases (e.g., malaria), maternal and child health is generally poorer in the predominantly-Muslim lowlands than in other areas of the country. This situation results in debilitation of the family, continued high rates of fertility, and increasing (and potentially destabilizing) disparities

between regions.

USAID is responding to this dire situation by helping the government build an effective health care system. Specifically, USAID's special objective is improved access to sustainable, integrated primary health care services mainly for rural women and children. Through its broad health and population program with the Ministry of Health (MOH), and several grants to U.S. private voluntary organizations (PVOs) and UNICEF, USAID assistance will improve health care services and delivery. USAID also provides assistance to the logistical, management, and financial systems which support these services, along with increasing the awareness and demand for health care services by target groups.

While USAID has only provided assistance in this sector since last year, several results are already evident. USAID assistance enabled an expansion of child immunization. USAID-sponsored studies and technical assistance have enabled the MOH to streamline its staffing, initiate cost recovery for services, and upgrade the capabilities of the nurse practitioners who service rural health stations. To better achieve and assess its impact on a widespread rural health sector, USAID assistance is being focused in three rural zones. While disbursement of USAID assistance has been slow, primarily due to a lack of professional staff, substantial expenditures on technical assistance, training, and commodities are anticipated in 1996.

☐ Strategic Objective 2: Improved Access to Primary Health Care Services

Agency Goal: Building Democracy

Since the popular referendum in 1993 to affirm the Eritreans' desire for independence from Ethiopia, Eritrea's leadership has moved convincingly, if cautiously, toward the establishment of democratic structures of government. While the government retains some tendencies towards authoritarianism, centralization, and distrust -- due in part to the proceduralism inherited from the earlier dictatorship and in part to the newness of government administration to former fighters -- the commitment to democracy is strong among those who fought for independence. This commitment is demonstrated by recent steps taken to ensure public education and debate on a constitution (with representative elections scheduled for 1997) and to strengthen local government and the judiciary.

USAID, in support of U.S. political interests and in close collaboration with the Embassy, the United States Information Service and the UNDP, has initiated a substantial "governance capacity-building" effort to support and reinforce the establishment of a democratic government in Eritrea. The focus of this effort is training at all levels: a university linkage to build the faculties of law, public administration, journalism, and political science; grants to enable broad education and outreach by the Constitutional Commission; cost-sharing for the establishment of an Eritrean management institute; in-country training for judges and local officials; and a broad participant training program. This broad effort, and the possibility of additional assistance to establish a legislature, indigenous non-governmental organizations, and other elements of a democratic system, will require significant--if incremental--funding over the next several years.

Although USAID's efforts in this area are relatively recent, intermediate results are already evident: a training agreement between a major American university and Eritrea's only university, and a broad and successful outreach effort by the Constitutional Commission. Nevertheless, USAID involvement in the democracy-building process in Eritrea can be sensitive, particularly to its proud and determined leadership. Thus, USAID must continue with a range of capacity-building assistance over a broad front and often through intermediaries such as the UNDP. This broader approach also requires adequate and skilled USAID staffing.

☐ Strategic Objective 3: Increased Capacity for Democratic Governance

Agency Goal: Protecting the Environment

Eritrea faces the environmental degradation common to many countries in Sahelian Africa: deforestation, marginal land agriculture, unprotected coastal resources, urban sprawl, etc. The new Eritrean government is keenly aware of these problems and has taken actions primarily through the Ministries of Agriculture and Marine Resources to mitigate them. These actions include large-scale reforestation and watershed treatment, research on and policing of coral reefs, and environmental education, planning and assessments.

While USAID has not defined a specific objective for environmental protection in Eritrea, the Strategic Objectives for food security and governance support this goal. U.S. food assistance has provided resources for considerable conservation work in upstream watersheds, improvements in food systems, whether actual production or storage, while taking pressure off of marginal lands. Local organizations and cooperatives provide a grassroots institutional structure for environmental awareness, planning and protection.

Governance activities are particularly supportive of environmental protection. Increasing knowledge and professionalism in law, journalism, and public administration will improve understanding and resolution of environmental issues. Building capacity of government officials in key ministries (including Agriculture and Marine Resources) through short and long-term training will improve the capabilities of those ministries.

Two successes are already evident: The Ministry of Marine Resources has been able to effectively protect coastal areas from overfishing; and the Ministry of Agriculture and targeted farmers have reduced per hectare application of locust control pesticides by 15%. Both achievements were largely due to USAID-funded training.

- ☐ Strategic Objective 1: Increased Rural Income Through Growth of Rural Enterprise in Target Areas

Agency Goal: Providing Humanitarian Assistance

Until recently, Eritrea needed and was a recipient of considerable humanitarian assistance (\$49 million from the United States in 1993-94) to help sustain its population after the war and through a drought year. Eritrea is now completing this transition from emergency to development. Emergency Title II food aid is used for ongoing refugee repatriation and resettlement, a crucial component of Eritrea's transition to a stable and self-reliant society. USAID's regular Title II food assistance, as discussed above under Economic Growth, is now focused on helping Eritrea achieve food security over the longer term, as the need for emergency food assistance decreases. Nonfood humanitarian assistance has been effectively utilized to control locust outbreaks at their inception, a threat to food security, not only for Eritrea, but also for the entire Horn region.

- ☐ Strategic Objective 1: Increased Rural Income Through Growth of Rural Enterprise in Target Areas

ERITREA

FY 1997 PROGRAM SUMMARY

	Encouraging Broad-based Economic Growth	Stabilizing World Population Growth & Protecting Human Health	Protecting the Environment	Building Democracy	Providing Humanitarian Assistance	TOTALS
USAID Strategic Objectives						
Special 1: Primary Health Care for Women and Children - Dev. Fund for Africa		3,511,946				3,511,946
1. Increased Rural Income Through Growth of Rural Enterprise in Target Areas - Dev. Fund for Africa - P.L. 480, Titles II	6,067,349		1,260,587		3,700,000	7,327,936 3,700,000
2. Increased Capacity for Democratic Governance - Dev. Fund for Africa				587,853		587,853
Totals - Dev. Fund for Africa - P.L. 480, Title II	6,067,349	3,511,946	1,260,587	587,853	3,700,000	11,427,735 3,700,000

USAID Mission Director: Glenn Anders

ACTIVITY DATA SHEET

PROGRAM: ERITREA

TITLE AND NUMBER: Improved Access to Primary Health Care Services, 661-SP01

STATUS: Continuing

PROPOSED OBLIGATION AND FUNDING SOURCE: FY 1997: \$3,511,946 DFA

INITIAL OBLIGATION: FY 1995; **ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATE:** FY 2000

Purpose: To improve access to integrated primary health care services in focus regions through high quality services delivery; effective information, financial, logistical, and personnel systems; and increased awareness and utilization of the services by families.

Background: Maternal, child, and infant mortality rates are extremely high in Eritrea due to poverty and ignorance, and the deterioration of health infrastructure during the war. However, the independence movement proved adept at initiating health services in the field with "barefoot doctors" and minimal technology. The government is institutionalizing this approach in rebuilding the primary health care system. In 1994, USAID developed a major bilateral project and has since approved grants to U.S. private voluntary organizations (PVOs) and to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to provide technical specialists, training, equipment, and renovations to assist the government in establishing an effective and sustainable primary health care system with a concomitant awareness and demand among local communities for the services delivered. The magnitude of the health problems, the number of donors, PVOs, and interested parties involved, and the limited capacity of a recently-downsized Ministry of Health (MOH) have complicated the start-up of USAID-funded activities.

USAID Role and Achievements to Date: Although there are many donors and PVOs assisting Eritrea in the health sector, USAID is now the MOH's primary donor-partner. USAID is providing the critical inputs necessary for MOH and associated organizations to develop effective and sustainable primary health care. Achievements to date include a 30% expansion in child immunization, the streamlining of central MOH staffing, and an increase in service fees to cover, in a first phase, from 1% to 25% of total costs.

Description: The major activity to achieve this Objective is the \$15 million Eritrea Health and Population Project. This project provides nine person-years of specialized assistance, 300 person-months of training, supporting vehicles (12), medical and office equipment with related supplies, and selected building renovations. These inputs, primarily for the MOH but also for women and youth groups, will be concentrated in the three central-west zones of the country over a period of five years. They will enable the development of the requisite management systems, institutional structure, technical capacity, and client awareness for effective and sustainable primary health care. This project is supplemented by several grants to U.S. PVOs and one to UNICEF to support smaller, complementary activities that improve individual health centers in rural areas, provide iodization facilities for the salt industry, and expand vaccination coverage. The MOH's cautious use of resources, prudent recurrent costs, and cost recovery policy ensures sustainability of these activities. The substantial capital investment in building and equipping new rural health care facilities by the government and other donors will also contribute to achieving this Objective.

Host Country and Other Donors: The MOH provides the total cost of its central and local staff, as well as salaries for medical staff at health centers and stations. The MOH also covers the major portion of its other operating costs. Several donors -- Germany, Italy, the European Union, and the World Bank -- provide concessional funding to build health facilities, particularly in the rural areas. Several international PVOs with whom USAID maintains close contact (e.g., Save the Children and Christian Outreach) provide assistance for the improvement and operation of individual rural health facilities. USAID has established close collaboration with the World Bank to facilitate a \$10 million loan for regional hospitals and regional planning which will complement USAID's assistance in the central-western zones.

Beneficiaries: Approximately 1,000,000 mothers and children under five in the central-western zones are the primary direct beneficiaries of these activities, although it is expected that these activities will have nationwide impact, benefitting an additional 500,000 mothers and children.

Principal Contractors, Grantees, or Agencies: Basic Support for Institutionalizing Child Survival and Family Planning Service Expansion And Technical Support (SEATS) Consortia, Macro International, Africare, World Vision, International Eye Foundation, and UNICEF.

Major Results Indicators:

Baseline Target

National health policy adopted N/A^L/ Late 1996

Operating costs recovered

1% 25% by 1998

Health centers/stations trained/equipped (TBD) 100% by 1999

Increased utilization of primary health care (TBD) 300% by 2000 services

ACTIVITY DATA SHEET

PROGRAM: ERITREA

TITLE AND NUMBER: Increased Rural Income Through Growth of Rural Enterprise in Target Areas, 661-S001

STATUS: Continuing

PROPOSED OBLIGATION AND FUNDING SOURCE: FY 1997: \$7,327,936 DFA; \$3,700,000 P.L. 480, Title II

INITIAL OBLIGATION: FY 1995; **ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATE:** FY 2005

Purpose: To increase the ability of the rural population to access food in targeted rural areas through increased production, external trade, marketing, and distribution.

Background: Eritrea suffers from chronic food deficits and subsistence-level agriculture. Accordingly, for a country with a large rural population, agriculture contributes a surprisingly small share to national income: about 25%. Nevertheless, it is the source of sustenance and livelihood for almost three-fourths of the population, and thus, is of critical importance to the rural economy. With a view to this importance, USAID has, since 1993, provided significant amounts of food and agricultural assistance to sustain the livelihood of rural populations (particularly demobilized fighters and returning refugees) affected by the war and, later, drought.

The experiences gained from this assistance and USAID's considerable expertise with food aid and agricultural development led to the support of a number of other food and agriculture-related activities requested by the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) and the Eritrean relief and rehabilitation agency (ERREC). While USAID assistance will not be able to have a substantial effect on large-scale foodgrain production, there are opportunities for USAID assistance to make a significant difference through the support of catalytic intervention and dialogue in several critical areas of the rural economy, including food policy analysis, crop protection, storage and processing, horticultural development and the formation of associated organizations, enterprises, and cooperatives. The linkage with the food security objectives and activities in the Greater Horn of Africa Initiative (GHAI) will be important. The use of P.L.480 food resources, combined with small amounts of Development Fund for Africa, have proven particularly effective as demonstrated by USAID-supported food monetization and the changes in government food aid policy. Nonetheless, the sector is large and subject to multiple physical variables such as weather and pestilence, complex socioeconomic interactions, and severe resource constraints.

USAID Role and Achievements to Date: USAID is a small, but key donor in the improvement of rural food security. When faced with critical issues, Eritrean decision-makers often request USAID support, most recently in locust control and food monetization policy. USAID assistance has facilitated the repatriation of 25,000 refugees from Sudan and provided livestock, seeds and tools which enabled 2,500 resettled refugee families to earn a livelihood. USAID-funded training and supplies helped contain a

massive locust infestation to only 20% of the area planted this year, likely saving as much as a quarter of the grain harvest. USAID support has also enabled ex-fighters (55 women and 70 men) to develop food and agricultural enterprises. Finally, U.S. food assistance provided supplemental nutrition to approximately 200,000 needy beneficiaries -- about one-third of the most vulnerable rural households. USAID dialogue also spurred a major shift in Eritrea's food policy away from distortive feeding programs and towards monetization and targeted cash benefits.

Description: USAID has supported a range of diverse activities to help Eritrea achieve food security. These have included large USAID-Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance and Economic Support Fund grants (\$6.7 million) for construction, agricultural inputs and equipment, and other assistance in support of the government's resettlement and demobilization programs; P.L.480 Title II monetization grants (\$9.5 million) to two U.S. private voluntary organizations for agricultural and school projects; a number of pilot activities to test micro-enterprise and irrigated farming models; and several centrally-funded collaborative research and training grants to resolve agricultural problems. USAID's assistance is now being focused on rural enterprise and trade in the central-western zones of Eritrea. The new activities currently being designed will build on the previous activities. Resources will be used to support the formation of rural associations, cooperatives, and enterprises involving food production, processing, storage and marketing; associated policy formulation; and local currency costs.

Host Country and Other Donors: Eritrea has mobilized considerable domestic and external resources for projects and imports to improve food security. Several donors, including Germany, Italy, the European Union (EU), and the World Bank are also providing considerable concessional assistance for rural road and agricultural development projects. Due to the number of donor-assisted activities in rural areas and the lack of any formal coordination mechanism, USAID has collaborative working relationships with other donors in the areas of food policy (EU) and irrigated farming (Israel). While USAID is now a comparatively small donor, it retains an importance due to its previous large-scale food assistance and the effectiveness of several of its current assistance programs.

Beneficiaries: The direct beneficiaries of USAID assistance will be approximately 10,000 rural households. However, the entire rural population of the central-western zone of approximately 1 million will ultimately benefit from greater food availability.

Principal Contractors, Grantees, or Agencies: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Africare, World Vision, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and Virginia State Universities, Centre for International Cooperation of Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Agricultural Cooperative Development International.

Major Results Indicators: As the scope and specification of this Strategic Objective is not yet finalized, indicators and baselines are still under consideration and not yet determined.

Major Results Indicators:

Baseline^{2/} Target^{3/}

TBD TBD

ACTIVITY DATA SHEET

PROGRAM: ERITREA

TITLE AND NUMBER: Increased Capacity for Democratic Governance, 661-S002

STATUS: Continuing

PROPOSED OBLIGATION AND FUNDING SOURCE: FY 1997: \$587,853 DFA

INITIAL OBLIGATION: FY 1995; **ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATE:** FY 1997

Purpose: To build the skills and knowledge necessary to establish and administer the institutions of democratic government.

Background: As a newly independent nation, Eritrea is now building the institutions and processes of democratic governance. This effort is well informed by the organizational experience of the long struggle for independence; by the sizeable, professional Eritreans in Europe and the United States; and the lessons of other nation building experiences. The success in building democratic institutions and processes of governance will determine the future of the Eritrean state. After considerable dialogue with the government at several levels, the U.S. Embassy, and the United States Information Service, USAID assistance was sought, both to support the constitution-writing process and capacity-building through several institutions. Currently, this assistance is being provided through the Technical Assistance Project, as amended. The difficulties that have arisen are due to the sensitivity and concerns over sovereignty of the new nation and the weakness of its new institutions.

USAID Role and Achievements to Date: USAID's involvement in Eritrean democracy-building is less than a year old; however, USAID's role -- as part of the Embassy country team -- will grow as activities are more fully implemented. As USAID's role is primarily that of "capacity building", the influence of this assistance will likely be widespread and long-term. While USAID's activities are new, two achievements are noteworthy: the establishment of a an influential, U.S.-Eritrea university partnership in the critical areas of law, journalism, and public administration; and a country-wide civic education and outreach effort by the Constitutional Commission, which has now submitted a draft Constitution for public debate.

Description: USAID is supporting multiple "capacity-building" activities: (1) a \$1.3 million partnership between the University of North Carolina and the University of Asmara featuring the exchange of faculty and graduate students in law, journalism, and public administration, and a fund to improve University facilities and equipment in these areas; (2) a \$1 million fund for governance capacity-building that supports in-country training programs for judges, officials and village leaders and the new Eritrean Institute of Management; (3) a broad \$2 million participant training fund to send selected officials and leaders to the United States and third countries for specialized training; (4) \$1 million in grant support through the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) to support the Constitutional Commission's educational and outreach activities; and (5) a \$1.35 million grant to train and advise Eritrea's new Central Bank. Over the next few years, as the structure of the democratic government develops, additional activities may include assistance for the national legislature, strengthening indigenous non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the development of other institutions of democracy. Training activities supported by the government and other donors, complementary to USAID's activities and Objective 2, also enhance the existing capacity within government institutions.

Host Country and Other Donors: The United States, although often providing assistance through intermediaries such as the UNDP and U.S universities, is now the leading donor in this broad sector of building democratic governance. Other bilateral donors such as Germany, Norway and Italy provide training and equipment in selected governance areas. The World Bank has piloted a Community Development Fund which involves aspects of democratic governance.

Beneficiaries: The direct beneficiaries are the 3,000 officials who are expected to receive training and other assistance. However, the entire nation should benefit from more competent, democratic governance, with the establishment of the rule of law.

Principal Contractors, Grantees, or Agencies: University of North Carolina, EnCorps, and World Learning.

Major Results Indicators:

Baseline^{1/} Target

Press Law

TBD Mid 1996

Constitution Ratified

TBD Late 1996

Representative Elections

TBD Mid 1997

Judiciary Trained and Equipped TBD Mid 1998

^{1/} Not available.

^{2/} To be determined.

^{3/}

^{4/} To be determined.

Fact Sheet - Eritrea

Political Environment

The Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) defeated the Ethiopian government in 1991 and held a successful referendum on independence in 1993. Elections for the National Assembly are slated for the end of next year. The EPLF -- now called the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) -- decided not to institute a multi-party framework during its transition period. There remains firm opposition to parties based on religion or ethnicity, but other more nationalistic parties will be allowed. The PFDJ will dominate governance and the economy in Eritrea for the foreseeable future.

Eritrea's religious and ethnic heterogeneity presents unique challenges to the government in terms of conflict prevention. The PFDJ's concentration of political and economic power is a primary concern. The PFDJ firmly controls the reins of governance at all levels, and it is also the country's main economic player, directly investing in private businesses in exchange for 51% ownership. All major Eritrean companies have a PFDJ hand on the wheel, be they public or private. Land is government-owned.

There were always significant fissures within the Eritrean independence movement throughout the thirty year war. But the PFDJ should not be viewed as a Christian-dominated organization, as Muslims comprise a significant percentage of their membership and active efforts are continuous to ensure as little discrimination as possible along religious or ethnic lines. There is a real effort to forge a national consciousness which submerges ethnic and religious differences, in contrast to Ethiopia.

Two issues which are particularly salient: the U.S. and Eritrea are currently negotiating an access agreement (the Eritreans have a draft copy of DoD's proposal, and it is being reviewed now -- some of the issues will be contentious, such as exit policy); and a restrictive international NGO code has recently been enacted which only allows NGO participation in health and education, while eliminating tax breaks for NGOs. Democracy/governance/elections/civil society programming is not allowed to be undertaken by NGOs. The State Department expressed an interest in possibly having the First Lady bring the latter issue up on her trip. Although this is clearly a problem, there is a rationale for the law. There is growing concern across the Horn region about dependency on international NGOs; health and education require the most outside help, according to the Eritreans, and international organizations have the most to offer in these sectors. Although imposing an income tax on aid workers is a problematic precedent, there are Eritreans working in the U.S. for 501(c)3 who pay U.S. income taxes. The Eritreans want an equal standard. There is a tension which exists between the vast resources available to international NGOs and the pittance available to transition governments like Eritrea's. At the same time, the Eritrean example may be

cited by other governments as a precedent for restricting NGO activities in democracy and governance on purely political grounds.

Economy

After thirty years of war and a legacy of state control before independence, Eritrea is attempting to rebuild its economy and liberalize its trade and investment regimes. Inflation is roughly 15%. The economy is inordinately dependent on remittances from Eritreans abroad and on donor grants. The economy is growing at 3-4 percent, the trade deficit has stabilized, per capita income is rising, and interest from foreign investors is increasing.

Geography

Area: 121,000 sq km, a little bigger than Pennsylvania

People

Population: 3,578,709, with **43% under age 14** and **3% over 65**

Pop. growth rate: 9.04% with 44.34 births per 1,000 population

Infant mortality rate: 120 deaths/1,000 live births

Life expectancy: average=50; male=48, female=52

Total fertility rate: 6.53 children born per woman

Ethnic groups: 9, with Tigrays 50% and both Tigre and Kunama 40%

Religions: Roughly half Muslim and half Christian

Bilateral Assistance

USAID is currently finalizing a five year strategic investment plan to support primary health care, expanded rural enterprise, and democratic governance. There are 40 Peace Corps Volunteers providing technical and educational assistance. By 1998, there will be 100.

Beyond developmental goals, Eritrea shares the U.S. assessment of the threat to international stability posed by the regime in Khartoum. Consequently, the U.S. provides non-lethal military assistance to Eritrea, conducts joint training exercises, undertakes extensive demining, and is working to conclude an access agreement for U.S. military forces.

Eritrea: U.S.-Eritrean Relations

The United States is working closely with Eritrea to promote regional stability, democracy and good governance, sustainable development, private sector-led growth, and U.S. trade and investment. Eritrea emerged from its war for independence with a strong national identity, and its government seeks to establish a free market democracy. We have assisted efforts to draft Eritrea's first democratic constitution, but have been critical of some unresolved human rights issues, including government restrictions on the press and NGOs. Although the United States has not historically been a major trading partner, commercial relations are expanding rapidly as the economy is liberalized.

Eritrea's strategic significance lies in its location on the Red Sea, near a potentially volatile region of importance to U.S. national security. DOD funds training and education programs, takes part in bilateral exercises, and has established a highly successful demining program. Eritrea shares our assessment of the regional threats, chiefly from neighboring Sudan, which seek to destabilize Eritrea through its support for the Eritrean Islamic Jihad, a terrorist group which has staged cross-border attacks. In 1996, in response to the Sudanese threat, the United States announced the provision to Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Uganda of surplus non-lethal, defensive military equipment. We are currently working with Eritrea to conclude an access agreement for U.S. military forces.

Eritrean President Isaias has been outspoken in his support for regional solutions to the problems in the Horn of Africa -- a focus of U.S. policy in the region -- and is a leader in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the East African sub-regional organization. Eritrea has used IGAD to denounce Sudan and assists Sudanese rebels trying to topple the National Islamic Front regime in Khartoum. Isaias strongly supports President Clinton's Greater Horn Of Africa Initiative (GHAII), because of its emphasis on African leadership in addressing regional problems.

Our assistance program is an investment partnership, which gives Eritrea the lead role in determining the focus of our aid - - currently democracy and governance, private sector development, and primary health care. Our flexibility in developing assistance programs as tools for investment and in reinforcing Eritrea's sense of ownership has triggered policy reform by other donors. Our relationship is enhanced by our support for the University of Asmara and the nascent judicial system, academic linkages with U.S. universities, and exchanges and cultural programs arranged by the U.S. Information Agency. We plan to increase the number of Peace Corps volunteers to 100, and the Eritrean government has asked for even more.

Eritrea: Political Overview

Eritrea has a short history of self-governance, a population split evenly between Muslims and Christians, and nine separate ethnic and linguistic groups. It is therefore impressive that a strong political and social consensus emerged from Eritrea's thirty-year war of independence from Ethiopia. During the war, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) made the creation of a sense of national identity a top priority. It formed a government to oversee political, social, health, education, and information programs in its territory.

After winning power in 1991, Eritrea held a plebiscite in 1993. Eritreans voted overwhelmingly for independence. Eritrea's first constitution, drafted with input from international experts and the Eritrean people, will be ratified this year, and is expected to contain human rights protections consistent with international standards. Elections for the National Assembly are scheduled for late 1997 or early 1998. The current government is made up of the former rebels and headed by President Isaias Afwerki. The National Assembly is comprised of 75 members of the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ), and 60 others, of whom 30 are elected from the regions and 30 are selected by the EPLF Central Committee itself (including ten women).

Currently, the PFDJ is Eritrea's only political party. There are no domestic human rights organizations or private press in Eritrea, and the government limits the activities of non-governmental organizations. Jehovah's Witnesses are denied the full benefits of citizenship because of the refusal of some Witnesses to vote in national elections or to take part in mandatory national service. An unknown number of Eritreans, including members of other Eritrean political factions, have been detained without trial.

As a small country in a troubled neighborhood, Eritrea's welfare is linked to that of the region. President Isaias is a forceful advocate for the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the East African sub-regional organization set up to pursue regional economic integration and crisis prevention and resolution. A newly-revitalized organization, IGAD does not yet have a record of accomplishment. Isaias welcomed President Clinton's Greater Horn of Africa Initiative.

Eritrea's overriding security concern is Sudan, which supports the Eritrean Islamic Jihad (EIJ), a small Eritrean terrorist group. In turn, Eritrea supports Sudanese rebels seeking to overthrow the Khartoum regime. Since mid-January, fighting along the Sudanese-Eritrean border has escalated. Despite urging by UNHCR, the Eritreans and Sudanese are unwilling to meet to arrange a repatriation of the estimated 150,000 Eritrean refugees who remain in Sudan. Relations with Ethiopia are close, based on cooperation while both were fighting to overthrow the former Ethiopian government. Its ties with Yemen are strained, in the wake of the December 1995 military hostilities over the disputed Hanish Islands in the Red Sea. Relations with Egypt have been cool because of differences over Sudan policy and fishing rights.

Eritrea: Economic Overview

After thirty years of war, Eritrea is now rebuilding its economy, with a focus on human resources and physical infrastructure. It has committed itself to liberalizing its trade and investment regime. In the 1930's and 1940's, Eritrea was one of Africa's most industrialized nations. It was home to over 700 small to medium-sized firms which provided transportation, construction and building materials, tires, salt, cement, paper products, cotton, fruits, vegetables, coffee, and other foodstuffs. Eritrea was annexed by Ethiopia in 1961. Its industries were largely dismantled and relocated to Ethiopia. After the Marxist "Derg" regime took power in the 1970's, Eritrea's economy was further damaged, as private sector firms were nationalized and free enterprise ended. Eritrea's \$100 million agricultural export earnings in 1970 had shrunk to \$10 million by 1992.

As Eritrea moves forward with the revitalization of its economy, it faces a number of challenges. Inflation is 12-15 percent but not out of control. The Eritrean government has had difficulty managing its monetary policy, as Eritrea still uses the Ethiopian Birr as its currency. While there is close Eritrea/Ethiopia cooperation, Eritrea is making plans to launch its own currency. Elsewhere, unemployment is increasing as private sector firms and the government streamline operations.

The past devastation of its industrial base has resulted in chronic trade deficits, as Eritrea imports needed machinery and manufactured goods to reconstruct its industries. The government depends heavily on the large cash remittances sent by Eritreans living abroad, many in the United States. Eritrea is also dependent on donor grants, which account for 15 percent of GDP, to finance high government budget and trade deficits. Another cause for concern is that as the government reduces its role in the economy, its place is being taken by firms owned and controlled by the ruling party.

While the Eritrean economy faces its share of challenges, there are also some positive signs. The economy is growing at a steady rate of 3-4 percent, the trade deficit has stabilized, per capita annual income is rising (though it is still half the average for sub-Saharan Africa), and there is increasing interest by foreign investors. Eritrea's primary exports are livestock, agricultural products, and raw materials. A growing source of income is the export of manufactured goods, now 19 percent of total exports. Twenty-eight American firms operate in Eritrea, with \$300 million in actual and committed investments. Sales by U.S. companies grew from a 1 percent share of the Eritrean market in 1994, to 6 percent in 1995, exceeding \$24 million. U.S. firms are hopeful that this encouraging trend will continue.

Eritrea: Women's Issues

Both Christianity and Islam, as traditionally practiced in Eritrea, reinforced patriarchal power. The war for independence offered Eritrean women an alternative, and many of them achieved greater status and opportunity in the rebel cause. Thirty percent of the Eritrean fighters were women, as were a number of rebel administrators. The government has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and intends to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW) is the country's largest and most influential women's group. Its chairperson, Mrs. Askalu Menkerios, headed Eritrea's delegation to the Beijing conference.

Government policy is to "assure women full rights of equality with men in politics, the economy, and social life." Legal reforms have strengthened the status of women. The Agrarian Land Reform gave women the right to own land for the first time. Other new laws protect equal rights for women, "equal pay for equal work," equal access to education and health care, and the right of women to initiate divorce and conjugal property division. A new marriage law banned arbitrary, coercive, or unequal marriage arrangements. The government has taken a strong stand against domestic violence and promotes family planning services for women.

Still, women have not yet achieved equal rights or equality of opportunity. According to a 1995 Eritrean government report on the status of women, "women still carry an unacceptable burden of social and family responsibilities and are victimized by outmoded social values and relations." Harmful social practices continue, including widespread female genital mutilation (FGM). In recent years, some leading women have complained that the Eritrean government, to assuage criticism among Eritrea's traditional Muslim community, has stepped back from its strong support for women's empowerment.

In the government council, 20 of 120 seats are set aside for women, as are 10 percent of the elected seats in provincial assemblies and village councils. The draft constitution sets aside 30 percent of the seats in the National Assembly for women. There are presently 22 women members in the National Assembly, one female minister (Minister of Justice Fozia Hashim), and a number of others hold senior government positions. Minister Fozia is focused especially on the need to ensure that traditional law, used in some low-level courts, does not impinge on women's rights.

Few women occupy high-level technical or managerial positions in business. Women in the workforce usually work in retail trade service and manufacturing jobs. Women between 18 and 40 participate in compulsory national service, as do men. In 1994, the male/female ratio for primary school enrollment nation-wide was 10 to 8, with higher rates of female attendance in the capital city than in rural areas. Adult women have a 20 percent literacy rate, slightly lower than the overall average.

Eritrea: Children's Issues

Almost half of Eritrea's population is 14 years old or younger. The high population growth rate will make it difficult for the Eritrean government to meet the increasing health and education needs of the country's children. Only about a quarter of Eritrea's primary school-aged children attend school due to a shortage of schools and teachers. Primary school enrollment has grown at an average rate of 24 percent per year since independence, yet girls and young women are under-represented in school. Half of all male children between 16-20 years attend school, but less than one-third of female children do. Shortages in schooling today mean decreased opportunities for employment as these children grow up.

Eritrea has ratified the International Convention on the Rights of the Child. The legal minimum age for employment is 18, although apprentices may be hired at age 16. Currently there is no inspection to monitor compliance, and detailed data is not available. Children in rural areas often work on family farms, and urban children often work as street vendors of cigarettes, peanuts, newspapers or chewing gum. In both rural and urban areas, female children regularly assist with household tasks and supervision of younger children. Ninety percent of Eritrean women are subject to female genital mutilation, including the most severe forms. FGM is generally performed on girls at a young age. Young girls also are often subject to early marriage.

Eritrea's child mortality rate is estimated to be 136 per 1,000 live births. The infant mortality rate is approximately 72 per 1,000. Diarrheal diseases and acute respiratory illnesses are the major causes of mortality for children under five. Malaria, endemic in the northern and western lowland regions, is also a major cause of mortality and morbidity, and vaccine-preventable diseases such as measles and tetanus still remain threats. Poor nutritional status greatly increases the vulnerability of children. Approximately 13 percent of infants are born with low birth weight due to the poor nutritional or health status of the mother. Two-thirds of children under five are stunted, 41 percent are under-weight, and 10 percent are "wasted," due to poverty and poor feeding practices. The majority of malnourished children are between 18 and 24 months. Twenty-two percent of children aged 9-11 display signs of iodine deficiency. USAID supports efforts to make health care more widely available, especially to people in rural areas. Women and children's health care is a special priority.

In 1992, there were almost 90,000 orphans nationwide and 1,800 street children registered in the four larger cities. Of the 700,000 refugees (almost one quarter of the population) that fled the country during the war, approximately 80,000 have returned. Of these returnees, 7 percent are orphans, a quarter are children under the age of 5, and over half are under the age of 16.

Eritrea: Education

Providing educational and vocational training to its citizens is a top priority of the Eritrean government. Education was severely disrupted throughout the war for independence. The country still suffers from a shortage of qualified teachers and of school buildings in rural areas. Many ex-fighters and secondary school graduates have become primary school teachers, but have received only nine to eighteen months of teacher training. While there has been significant improvement in children's education, the country has a literacy rate of only 20-25 percent. Vocational training and adult education are both essential components of the government's overall educational plan.

Grades one through seven are compulsory; admission to middle and secondary schools is determined by a competitive examination. In 1996, there were approximately 280,000 students in Eritrean schools, up from 137,000 in 1992. They are enrolled in 600 primary schools, 90 middle schools, and 33 secondary schools. For the first five years of school, the curriculum is taught in regional languages (with English taught as a separate subject). English is the exclusive medium of instruction at the middle, secondary, and university levels. In 1991, just before the current Eritrean government won the war, the Ethiopian government dismantled the country's sole institution of higher learning, the University of Asmara, transferring students, professors, books, and supplies to Ethiopia. Today, the University is being gradually rebuilt. In 1996 it had 3,000 students, only 10 percent of whom were women.

The Embassy strongly supports the Eritrean education system. The U.S. Information Service sponsors an affiliation between the University of Asmara and the University of North Carolina, in cooperation with USAID, which has provided more than \$1.3 million to support the faculties of law, public administration, and political science. The Peace Corps presently has forty volunteers involved in education. Within three years, we expect an increase to 100. USIS hosts three or four Americans on Fulbright scholarships annually and sends a similar number of Eritrean graduate students to the United States. USAID is planning to fund up to thirty grants for Eritrean graduate students in the U.S. Both agencies have sent numerous Eritreans to the U.S. on short-term educational programs. The Embassy's self-help fund has supported grassroots organizations involved in rebuilding schools and libraries and in providing technical and vocational assistance.

Eritrea: Involvement in UN Fourth World Conference on Women

Eritrea's delegation to Beijing consisted of six representatives, headed by Mrs. Askalu Menkerios. The Eritreans did not play a major role at Beijing or any of the prepcoms. However, the Eritrean government made the following public commitments to:

- * Revise all inherited (residual) laws (from pre-independence) that conflict with equal rights for women;
- * Ensure the participation of women in education and the economy;
- * Introduce appropriate labor-saving technologies;
- * Improve and expand maternal and child health care;
- * Give women equal access to land for housing and farming upon attaining age 18; and
- * Proceed with developing the new labor law with the participation of the National Union of Eritrean Women to provide for: equal employment opportunities; equal pay for equal work; protection of pregnant women from certain work; guarantee of 60 days paid maternity leave, two weeks annual leave, and sick leave; and the prohibition of child labor.

The government has taken a firm stand against domestic violence. It has consistently advocated improving the status of women, many of whom played a significant role as fighters in the struggle for independence. As a part of a draft plan to establish regional legislatures, 30 percent of legislative seats will be reserved for women.

Eritrea: Population and Family Planning

Eritrea's population is less than 3.5 million in an area the size of England. It is estimated that half a million people fled during the thirty-year struggle for independence, although many have returned since the end of the war in 1991. Much of the country is sparsely-populated, arid scrubland, offering sustenance only to nomadic pastoralists. Despite its low population density, Eritrea faces population pressure exacerbated by a sharp upturn in the postwar fertility rate, extreme poverty, lack of arable land, and a predominantly rural population.

Eritrea's total fertility rate is 6.1 children per mother, and the annual population growth rate exceeds 2.6 percent. At the current rate, Eritrea's population will double in 27 years. While the growth rate is not as serious as some countries in the region (Kenya's population growth rate in the 1980's was between 3 and 3.5 percent per year), it will, if not reduced, give Eritrea less time to cope with its still daunting development problems.

The government appreciates the need to slow population growth, and USAID funds family planning training courses as part of its \$25-million investment program to promote sustainable, integrated primary health care in conjunction with the Ministry of Health. Currently, only 4 percent of married women use modern family planning methods. Of USAID's \$3.2 million budget request for health-related programs in FY 98, \$200,000 is planned for population activities. Already, funding from the United States has enabled Eritrea to develop a national family planning curriculum.

A consequence of the high birth rate and inadequate medical care is a high maternal mortality rate -- 998 per 100,000 live births. The lifetime risk of an Eritrean woman dying from causes related to pregnancy and childbirth is 1 in 10. (In industrialized countries the risk is 1 in 10,000.) The risk of maternal death is correlated with general health, nutritional status, the availability of emergency obstetric care, and the ability of women to recognize when prompt obstetric care is needed.

Ninety percent of Eritrean women are subject to female genital mutilation, or FGM. This is almost certainly a contributing factor in the high maternal death rate. Another key factor is the marriage of young girls. A study in Asmara found that 24 percent of women were married before the age of fifteen. High rates of infant mortality also lead families to overcompensate, having more children than desired and spacing them closer together.

Eritrea: Health Care Issues

Eritrea has an epidemiological profile that places its health status among the worst in the world. Recurrence of severe drought, epidemic disease, and population displacement cause extremely high morbidity and mortality rates, especially among women and children. Access to basic health care is severely limited. UNICEF reports that 54 percent of Eritrea's hospital beds and 19 percent of its health stations are located in Asmara, which has about 16 percent of the population. More than half of all Eritreans live more than 20 kilometers from the nearest health station, and the difficult terrain and harsh climate throughout much of the country makes more difficult the transportation of those who need medical care. A plan to initiate user fees may further limit access to health care unless it contains a safety net provision. Many Eritreans are currently unable to afford even the most nominal fees.

Women's health care is a serious problem. In some Muslim and pastoral nomadic groups, women must seek their husband's permission to obtain health care for themselves and their children. Anecdotal evidence suggests that women will not give birth in health facilities for fear that their husbands will perceive them as weak. The maternal mortality rate is estimated to be 998 per 100,000 live births. The Ministry of Health reports that fewer than 10 percent of all deliveries in 1995 took place in a health facility. A 1995 report stated that one in five births in the three years preceding the survey were assisted by trained medical personnel.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), including the most severe forms like infibulation, is widespread, despite government attempts to combat it. FGM is generally practiced on very young girls, and contributes to the maternal mortality rate. Malnutrition is pervasive and contributes significantly to overall morbidity among Eritrea's women and children. A 1993 survey found that 22 percent of children aged 9-11 years displayed signs of iodine deficiency disorder. Iron Deficiency Anemia is common among women, and Vitamin A deficiency is high. While the HIV/AIDS rate in Eritrea has not been well documented, there is evidence that it has increased significantly since 1988. The former military occupation, cultural practices that permit men to have multiple partners, and the number of prostitutes associated with the transitory populations of the port cities of Massawa and Assab are important factors in the spread of HIV.

Through USAID's strategic investment objective, we support efforts to make health care more widely available, especially to people in rural areas. Women and children's health care is a special priority. Our support has enabled the Ministry of Health to better manage its resources while increasing Eritreans' awareness of the availability of health care.

Eritrea: Human Rights

With no history of self-rule, let alone democracy, before winning independence from Ethiopia in 1991, Eritrea is building its institutions from the ground up. Upon taking power, the former rebels announced a forward-looking plan of political reform, including the drafting of a democratic constitution with substantial input from international constitutional scholars and, to an impressive extent, the Eritrean people. Eritrea's first constitution, to be ratified later this year, will include human rights protections consistent with international standards and will provide the basis for democratic national elections in late 1997 or early 1998.

Although Eritrea is headed in the right direction, a number of problems remain. Civil society is still weak. Eritrea has no parties other than the ruling People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ), no private press, and no domestic human rights organizations. While the government has pledged that the constitution will protect freedom of the press, the 1996 Press Law forbids private ownership of broadcast media, requires that newspapers be licensed and journalists be registered, provides for the banning of foreign publications, and allows the punishment of those who "slander" the government. The government also maintains significant legal control over the activity of non-governmental organizations. Restrictions on international NGOs forced Catholic Relief Services to end its programs in 1996, and have kept others away.

Despite the government's impressive efforts to support the rights of women, they generally have a lower status than men, and female genital mutilation remains widespread. Other human rights problems seem to derive from the government's desire for control, perhaps fed by fears about Eritrea's position as a new country facing still significant internal and external dangers. Jehovah's Witnesses are denied the full benefits of citizenship, including travel documents, trading licenses, and the opportunity to work for the government, because some Witnesses refuse to vote in national elections or to take part in mandatory national service. Despite talks with the International Red Cross, the government does not permit prison visits. An unknown number of detainees, including members of other Eritrean political factions, have been held without trial. The United States granted political asylum to members of one group based on a "well-founded fear of persecution."

The Embassy works with the Eritrean government to support the consolidation of democratic institutions. We have assisted financially the constitutional drafting process, judicial training, and the national women's organization. We also support the University of Asmara faculties of law, journalism, political science, and public administration. Nevertheless, government officials are still sensitive to perceived criticism of their progress on democratization. President Isaias has questioned publicly whether any country as imperfect as the United States should be critical of another country's human rights performance.

Eritrea: Environment

Eritrea is a semi-arid country in the northern Sahelian rainfall zone. Rainfall averages 8 to 26 inches annually, although during recurrent droughts lowland areas can receive less than 4 inches. Eritrea has no perennial rivers. The country is divided into four geographic zones -- the central and northern highlands, southwest lowlands, northwest lowlands and eastern coastal plains. Eighty percent of the population resides in rural areas. The highlands are largely settled, Orthodox Christian, and economically advantaged. Lowland Eritreans are predominantly semi-nomadic, Muslim, and poorer.

Deforestation has been a major environmental problem. One hundred years ago, 30 percent of the land was covered by forest. Today only 0.4 percent is. Since independence in 1991, the Ministry of Agriculture has made reforestation a major goal, including planting over 60 million trees. In 1994 alone, high school students were able to plant 4 million trees. The loss of habitat from deforestation contributed to the disappearance of most large mammals and wildlife.

The end of the war brought an increase in migratory birds. In 1992, an American ornithologist recorded 13 orders, 41 families and 109 species of birds migrating through Eritrea. The U.S. Department of the Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service supports studies on elephants, which have recently returned to Eritrea after years of absence. Poaching is less of a problem in Eritrea than in other East African countries. The 1,200 km long coastline and 300 offshore islands harbor a variety of marine life, including the rare dugong (sea cow), the green turtle, and a rich abundance of coral.

Eritrea faces a number of environmental challenges. The disposal of sewage, solid industrial waste, and contaminated water pose serious health problems. The lack of sewage treatment facilities leads to contaminated underground water supplies, and the ocean dumping of raw sewage is damaging the coral reefs and seabeds. Land degradation is a vicious cycle. Poor farming techniques decrease soil fertility and lead to a loss of natural vegetation. The subsequent soil erosion degrades farmland, discouraging successful farmers and more efficient practices.

To meet its environmental challenges, Eritrea issued a National Environmental Management Plan in 1995. It aims to eliminate waste of natural resources, promote sustainable and rational resource use, and advance conservation practices to protect resources and natural habitats. The government's recent restructuring has established a new Ministry of Environment, Land and Water Resources. The country's leading expert was appointed Minister. Eritrea is a party to the Convention on International Trafficking in Endangered Species (CITES), but not the Biodiversity Convention. Eritrea has signed, but not ratified, the UN Desertification Convention.

Eritrea: U.S. Assistance

The United States has provided economic assistance to Eritrea since 1993. USAID is currently completing a 5-year strategic investment plan to support primary health care, expanded rural enterprise, and democratic governance. USAID expects to provide about \$11 million in grant aid and \$7 million in food assistance to Eritrea annually over the next ten years. DOD contributes \$8 million in security assistance annually, including a large demining program, extensive military training, and excess non-lethal defensive military supplies. USIS directs its assistance and support to the academic linkage programs and the Fulbright, International Visitor, and Young African Leaders programs. Peace Corps, through its 40 volunteers (to increase to 100 in 1998), provides technical and educational assistance.

In partnership with the Ministry of Health, we have launched a \$25 million investment program in Eritrea to promote sustainable, integrated primary health care. To date, we have improved immunization coverage, supplied salt iodization that will virtually eliminate iodine deficiency disease, built new health facilities and laboratories, established primary health care policy and treatment guidelines, and decentralized health services management. We have also designed a new health information system, provided contraceptives and expanded family planning services, and increased awareness of the consequences of female genital mutilation.

Our new \$15 million Rural Enterprise Investment Program and a \$20 million food aid grant under PL-480 will assist new and expanding businesses while spurring greater private investment in rural areas. To ensure the success of these programs, our Embassy in Asmara is working closely with the Commercial Bank of Eritrea, and with officials in the Eritrean Ministries of Agriculture, Fisheries, Trade, Public Works, as well as local government entities. Eritrean and U.S. NGOs, including the Corporate Council for Africa and Africare, are also engaged in this rural development scheme. Recently, 35,600 metric tons of U.S. PL-480 wheat arrived for sale in retail outlets in food deficit areas, with proceeds dedicated to rebuilding rural roads. Training has begun for new rural branches of the Commercial Bank, and the first Eritrean investment mission to the United States, in December 1996, was a success.

Our \$2 million annual Democracy and Governance program builds capacity in the legal and judicial system, civic organizations, and public administration. To implement this program, we are working with the Eritrean Ministries of Justice and Local Government, the Central Bank, the Constitutional Commission, the University of Asmara, and the Women's Union. Several U.S. institutions, including the University of North Carolina, the National Council of Negro Women, and the National Center for State Courts, are also active in this endeavor. We sponsored an outreach and civic education program for the draft constitution and the first U.S.-Eritrea university linkage. We have also trained staff and provided equipment for the launching of Eritrea's own currency, and supported the Ministry of Justice's law center and legal reform program.

Eritrea: U.S. Embassy

The U.S. Embassy in Asmara is one of our smallest in Africa. It is also our newest, established in 1993 after Eritrea's formal independence from Ethiopia. There are 26 direct-hire American staff members, representing the State Department, the U.S. Information Service, USAID, the Defense Department, and the Peace Corps. Counting Eritrean employees (many of whom are former freedom fighters), the entire Embassy staff is around 300. Asmara is considered a hardship post because of its lack of adequate health care, infrastructure, consumer items, and recreation opportunities. Over the last three years, the Embassy has carried out a building campaign to create an Embassy compound.

Embassy Asmara, like all our diplomatic missions, is charged with protecting U.S. national security, sharing America's fundamental values and culture, helping to build investment and trade ties which benefit the American economy, and assisting and protecting U.S. citizens. Our national security priorities include assuring the safe passage of international shipping in the Red Sea, defending against Sudanese-sponsored aggression, and establishing military-to-military ties with a friendly country.

We work with the Eritrean government to support the process of democratization, the protection of human rights, and a free market economic system. We promote U.S. business interests and facilitate U.S.-Eritrea trade. The Embassy assists the approximately 300 Americans living in Eritrea and the many others who visit for business, tourism, or family reasons. Additionally, USAID promotes sustainable development through its health, education, democracy, environment, and humanitarian assistance programs.

Ambassador John Hicks was confirmed as U.S. Ambassador to Eritrea in June 1996. He is a career Foreign Service Officer, and formerly served as USAID's Assistant Administrator for Africa. Donald Yamamoto is the Deputy Chief of Mission.

Eritrea: Etiquette

In Eritrea, greetings tend to be more formal, lengthy and elaborate than in the West. Greeters usually ask about each other's family and health. The more you enjoy someone's company, the lengthier the greetings tend to be, with phrases like "How are you?" repeated a number of times. Everyone, including small children, is expected to shake hands when a guest enters a room. If one's hands are dirty or wet, the wrist (with hand hanging down) is offered. Kissing young children is a form of greeting and affection, even by strangers on the street.

It is also customary, especially between two women or two men, but also between men and women, to touch cheeks together (right, left, right) making kissing sounds. To express particular happiness upon seeing a friend, one might kiss as many as five times. One greeting popularized by the "tegadelti" (freedom fighters) is the shoulder bump -- right hands clasped, right shoulders pressed together three times. It takes a while to get the proper feel for the rhythm of the bumps as the third bump is delayed and pushes the two people apart and face to face again. Touching and holding hands is very common, even between two friends of the same sex. However public displays of affection, even between wife and husband, are not common.

Eritreans are very hospitable and the coffee ceremony is a social event. It is customary to say "te-oom" (delicious) when served. A host may insist that seconds and thirds be taken; if claims to be full ("sagibay") go unheeded, the more emphatic "sagibay allohu" should work. Traditional Eritrean food includes "injerra," the national staple which resembles a very large, spongy crepe with a sourdough taste; a peppery meat sauce of beef, lamb or chicken called "zigni;" or "shuro", a chickpea-based sauce. National drinks are "sea," a home brewed beverage, and a honey-based fermented drink called "meis." When eating injerra, it's considered rude to use the left hand, to touch fingers to mouth or lick them, to reach across the tray or put food back on the tray, or to stuff both cheeks full of food.

If a meal is served in full Eritrean style, guests sit around a low table with a communal tray of food and do not use utensils. A basin, pitcher of water, and towel will be brought to you to wash your hands. A prayer may be offered by the head of the household, and the eldest male in the family may then break off a piece of injerra to be eaten. The host may select a choice morsel and put it in a guest's mouth. This is a sign of special friendship and honor and is usually done twice. A thoughtful gift to bring with you in appreciation for a lunch or dinner invitation would be sugar, coffee beans, fruit, pastries, or a small cake.

ERITREA

Proposed Schedule for the First Lady of the USA March 29th 1997

- 10:45 a.m. Arrive Asmara International Airport**
- 11:15 a.m. Depart Airport for Martyrs' cemetery**
- 11:30 a.m. Arrive Martyrs' Cemetery, ~~Tree-planting~~ with National Service Youths**
- 12:05 p.m. Depart for Bana Woodwork Center**
- 12:20 p.m. Arrive Bana Woodwork Center**
- 01:15 p.m. Depart for Embadorho**
- 01:35 p.m. Arrive Embadorho; Health Center opening**
- 02:35 p.m. Leave Embadorho for Embassy Compound or Ambassador's Residence**
- 03:05 p.m. Arrive Embassy Compound or Residence; Meet with American Community, FSN Staff, and Peace Corps Volunteers.**
- 04:05 p.m. Depart for Guest House**
- 04:15 p.m. Attend Women's Round Table Meeting at State Guest House**
- 06:00 p.m. Meet with President Isaias Afwerki at State Guest House; Deliver letter**
- 06:50 p.m. Cultural events and light snacks at State Guest House**
- 07:45 p.m. Leave for airport**
- 08:00 p.m. Arrive airport; Press Statement**
- 08:30 p.m. Depart Asmara**

Updated: 03/11/97 6:26 PM

Event: Ribbon Cutting and opening of Embaderho Health Clinic

Location: Embaderho Health Clinic

Date: March 29, 1997

Time: 12:10 PM

Site Advance: Graham

Press Advance: Streett

Press: Open

Public: Open

Participants: The FLOTUS, The Hon. Saleh Meky, Minister of Health, Abeba Ghebreigziabiher, Embadero Village National Union of Eritrean Women(NUEW) Representative, Mussa Nurhussein, Serejeka Sub Zone Administrator, Dr. Mincab Sebatu, Maekel (Central) Zone Medical Officer, and Berhane Ketema, Manager of Health Clinic..

Greeters: The Honorable Saleh Meky, Minister of Health for Eritrea

Scenario: Upon arrival The FLOTUS is greeted by The Hon. Saleh Meky, Minister of Health for Eritrea and is escorted by the Minister to the Podium. Minister Saleh Meky welcomes the crowd for 30 seconds.(English)

Minister Saleh introduces Abeba Ghebreigziabiher for 2 minute remarks.(Tigrigna)

Minister Saleh Introduces Mussa Nurhussein for 2 minute remarks.(Tigrigna)

Minister Saleh introduces Dr. Mineab Sebatu for 2 minute remarks. (English)

Minister Saleh introduces The FLOTUS for remarks.

Minister Saleh gives a translation of The FLOTUS remarks.

Minister Saleh invites The FLOTUS, and two children and mother from the local village to cut the ribbon opening the clinic.

Local village women's drum band begins playing, public and children at front throw popcorn in celebration and refreshments are served.

The FLOTUS, DR. Michael Sebatu, and Minister Saleh and Berhane Ketema, Manager of Health Clinic enter the Clinic for a short tour. In the Immunization Room 3 Children will receive Polio Vaccination(oral).

OPTION: After Tour The Flotus walks to the area behind the Health Clinic for a panoramic view of the surrounding countryside.

Upon departure Abeba Ghegreigziabiher will present The FLOTUS with a traditional Eritrean dress as a gift.

**PRESIDENT ISAIAS AFWERKI
PRESIDENT
STATE OF ERITREA**

President Isaias was born February 2, 1946 in Asmara. He attended Addis Ababa University, but cut his studies short to join the Eritrean Liberation Front in 1966. He was a deputy division commander in the ELF. In 1977 he helped co-found the EPLF.

From 1977 to 1987 he served as Deputy Secretary General before being elected Secretary General in 1987.

In May 1991 he became Secretary General of the Provisional Government of Eritrea. In April 1993 he was elected as the first President of the State of Eritrea.

President Isaias is married and father of three children.

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**H.E. FAWZIA HASHIM ABDULKADER
MINISTER
MINISTRY OF JUSTICE**

[001]

Minister Fawzia was born in 1956 in (b)(6) After graduation from high school, she joined the EPLF in 1975, and from 1980 to 1985 she was an executive member of the National Union of Eritrean Women. In 1987, she was elected to the EPLF Central Committee.

From 1990 to 1991, she served as Vice Administrator of Barka Province. Since 1994 she has served as Minister of Justice. She is also a member of the National Assembly.

H.E. Minister Fawzia is divorced.

**MS. WORKU TESFAMICHAEL
COMMISSIONER
ERITREA COMMISSION FOR RELIEF AND REFUGEE AFFAIRS**

Ms. Worku was born

(b)(6)

She joined Addis Ababa University in 1974 and studied for two years in the field of Economics. From 1975 - 1979 she studied at Moscow State University and graduated with a First Degree in Economics.

Immediately after graduation she joined the EPLF, serving in various positions until Independence when she became Administrative Head of the Economic Development and Cooperation Division of the Provisional Government. Ms. Worku served as Head of the Department of Tourism and, from 1994 to 1997 was Minister of Tourism.

She currently serves as the Commissioner of the Eritrean Relief & Refugee Commission and is a member of the National Assembly.

Ms. Worku Tesfamichael is single.

**ASKALU MENKERIOS BERHANE
CHAIRPERSON
NATIONAL UNION OF ERITREAN WOMEN**

Currently a member of the National Assembly and the Executive Committee of the Peoples' Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ), Ms. Askalu was born in 1950 in (b)(6). She attended elementary and secondary school in Asmara and later studied Business Administration for two years in the U.S.

In 1975 she joined the EPLF and until 1988 worked as a "bare-foot doctor" and served as Head of Social Affairs and Vice-Chairperson of the Eritrean Relief Association. Since 1988 she has served as the Chairperson of the National Union of Eritrean Women.

Ms. Askalu is divorced and has two children.

**HIWET ZEMICHAEL
DIRECTOR GENERAL
CENTRAL PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATION**

Mrs. Hiwet was born 1955 in (b)(6) and studied for a Post Graduate Diploma in Development Management at Glasgow Caledonian University from 1993 to 1994.

Joining the EPLF in 1975, she served in various positions until 1988 when she was elected to the Executive Committee of the National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW) and became Branch Head of Sudan Region. In December 1992 she was elected to the National Assembly and became an Administrator of the Department of Economic Development and Cooperation of the Provisional Government.

Since July 1994 she has served as Director General of the Central Personnel Administration to the Central Committee of the Peoples' Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ).

Mrs. Hiwet is married with one child.

**LEUL GEBREAB
DIRECTOR GENERAL
ERITREAN COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT**

Mrs. Leul was born [REDACTED] (b)(6) where she remained until completing high school in 1975 from Haile Sellassie I Secondary School.

After joining the EPLF in June 1976, she worked as a Public Administrator until September 1978 when she became an EPLF Platoon Leader in Brigade 31. For eight years (1979-1987) she served as Chairwoman of the National Union of Eritrean Women and later became Mayor of Adi-Caieh.

From September 1992, she filled positions with the Eritrean Post and Telecommunication Authority until she was appointed to her present position as Director General of the Eritrean Communications Department in September 1996.

Mrs. Leul is married with three children.

**WENNI GEREZGIHER
DIRECTOR OF
TIGRIGNA LANGUAGE, RADIO
MINISTRY OF INFORMATION**

Mrs. Wenni was born in 1960 in (b)(6) She attended elementary and secondary schools in Asmara and finished high school with the EPLF.

She joined the EPLF in June 1976, working first as a journalist in the Department of Information and later becoming a narrator for the "Voice of the Broad Masses of Eritrea." After liberation, she became head of the Tigrigna Language Section in the Ministry of Information.

She assumed her present position as Director of Tigrigna Language, Radio at the Ministry of Information in 1992.

Mrs. Wenni is married with two children.

**MEHRET IYOB
SECRETARY
SOCIAL & CULTURAL COMMITTEE
CONSTITUTIONAL COMMISSION OF ERITREA**

Mrs. Mehret was born

(b)(6)

After graduating in 1973 with a diploma in Business Education from Addis Ababa University, Mrs. Mehret held positions in private industry until 1978 when she joined the EPLF and became an English language teacher.

In 1994 she received a Masters in Education from the University of Birmingham, Birmingham, England and was nominated to the Council of the Constitutional Commission of Eritrea (CCE). Her present position is that of Secretary, Social and Cultural Committee of the CCE.

Mrs. Mehret is married and has two children.

**YESHI HAILE
HEAD
PROGRAMMING AND MONITORING
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION**

Mrs. Yeshi was born [REDACTED] (b)(6). She graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in English language from the University of Asmara and completed her studies in 1993 at the University of London with a Masters Degree In Education and Development

In 1978 she joined the EPLF, becoming Head of English Language Curriculum In 1985 where she remained until 1988. Later, in the Department of Education she served first as Head, English Panel and later as Head of Research and Planning. Beginning in 1993 at the Ministry of Education, she was Acting Head of Planning and Programming and later was named Head of Programming and Monitoring Division.

In 1995 she assumed her present position as Secretary General of the National Commission of UNESCO and Program Planning Officer in the Ministry of Education.

Mrs. Yeshi is divorced and has one child.

**HAILE WOLDENSE OGBU
MINISTER
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

Haile Woldense Ogbu, aka "Duru" (ragged) was born (b)(6) in (b)(6). He is a graduate of the College of Technology in Addis Ababa.

After graduation, he joined the Eritrean Peoples' Liberation Front (EPLF), and in 1973 was imprisoned by the Haile Selassie regime but after a dramatic escape in 1975 fought the Ethiopian Derg regime under the *nom de guerre* "Haile Duru." After Independence he headed the Department of Economic Affairs until 1993 when he became Minister of Finance in 1993. He became Minister of Foreign Affairs in February 1997.

He is a member of the Central Committee and speaks excellent English.

Minister Haile is married and has three children.

**RUTH SIMON (CEE-MONE)
CHAIRPERSON
BANA SHARE COMPANY**

Ms. Ruth was born [REDACTED] (b)(6) She completed elementary and secondary school in Lycee Gebremariam French school in Addis Ababa.

Currently serving as Chairperson, Head of Public Relations and Training of the Bana Share Company (of which she is co-founder), Ms. Ruth began her career in journalism and mass media in 1978 as a film maker/editor and video reporter with the Department of Information. As Head of News Desk Office for Radio "Voice of Broad Masses of Eritrea," Ms. Ruth traveled to the U.S. in 1993 for UN-sponsored training of "Journalists from Developing Countries" and participated in the "Women Journalist Conference" in Germany in 1995.

Ms. Ruth presented a study on "Literature in Eritrea" for the *Horn of Africa Literature*, 1996 in Djibouti and worked as a researcher with the WFP for the documentary film "Eritrea: Challenges of Re-construction."

She also currently serves as a regional correspondent for Eritrea and Sudan for *Agence France Presse (AFP)*

**MAHMUD AHMED SHERIFO
MINISTER
MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

Mr. Mahmud serves as an unofficial deputy or vice president to President Isaias.

Leaving the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) in 1970s, Mahmud helped now President Isaias organize the Eritrean Peoples' Liberation Front (EPLF) serving first as a field commander and later as foreign affairs chief.

Minister Mahmud is in his 50s and a Muslim.

He speaks little English.

**SALEH MEKI
MINISTER
MINISTRY OF HEALTH**

Mr. Saleh was born

(b)(6)

He spent 15 years in the United States and graduated from the University of California at Santa Cruz with a degree in Marine Resources. He served as Minister of Marine Resources from 1991 to 1997 and was named Minister of Health in February 1997.

He played an active role representing Eritrea in working out an arbitration agreement with Yemen over sovereignty of the Hanish Islands.

Minister Saleh speaks excellent colloquial English.

**ABEREHET HAILE
CIVIL COURT JUDGE**

Mrs. Aberehet was born (b)(6)

Having spent most of her adult life in the field as a fighter, she also served as an EPLF administrator.

Mrs. Aberehet speaks Tigrigna, Amharic and has a fair proficiency of English.

Mrs. Aberehet is married.

*Embassy of the United States of America*

Asmara, Eritrea

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