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# Assessment of Government and NGOs Joint Efforts and Role in Drought Mitigation Program: The Case of East Guji Zone Drought Vulnerable Areas

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## Abstract

The focus of this paper is to examine the responses of NGOs and governmental bodies joint efforts in drought mitigation programs of southern Ethiopia, East Guji Oromo drought vulnerable areas in the 20th century. The manuscript also explores the role of thus bodies and the perceptions of local communities towards those organization intervention extents and ways of assistance to occurred hardships. Likewise, the article also tries to look, assess and well exhibit a well-known and still active NGOs in the area and their individual paramount participation, efforts and roles in the drought vulnerable areas of East Guji Zone, and types of aid, assistance, donation and empowering of the vulnerable communities; joint works with governmental organizations like RRC or DPPC and others in crisis anticipation, intervention and rehabilitation activities.

**Keywords:** Drought; NGOs; Government; Negele; Eastern Guji; Oromo; Ethiopia

## Introduction

Like other African countries, Ethiopians have a tradition of helping and supporting mean in times of difficulties or normal times through religious and community-based organizations or civil society's institutions for long periods of time. Some of those Ethiopian traditional self-help associations are, Idr, Mahibar, Equb, Dabo and others [1]. Thus traditional self -help institutions and religious organizations have played a great role by leading a good ground for the introduction of local and international NGOs, modern financing systems like: -banking and macro and micro financial enterprises, and by facilitating Ethiopia's development and growth [2,3].

As an example, equb is considered as an effective traditional saving association. Members contribute a certain amount of money usually every month and they give priorities for poor and the needy members to take the first collected money [1]. It is also common that members of this group support and subsidize orphans, oldest man or elders and disable members of a society through groups' monthly contribution, and even sometimes they give their monthly collected deposit as donation for emergency accidents and problems (Ibid).

The other communal self-help organization is idir. Idir is a non-profit institution organized by group of people who want to help each other during the times of death and marriage. Although, the principal objective of Idir is provision of social services for communities (they buy different gifts usually household utensils during a times of marriage and death) by collecting small sums of money from members. Mostly members of Idir are known in assisting family members of the deceased like orphan children. They cover their school fees, house rents and other expenses. Dabo is also another way of society's self-help institution in a form of labor sharing. Free labor service was given to the poor, the elderly and widowed women [1].

The person in need asks his neighbors to help him in agricultural activities. Activities like weeding, harvesting, house construction, farming and others are among the most well-known activities which are performed by this institution [1]. Generally, before the introductions of local and International NGOs, all of these Ethiopian native self-help associations and organizations played a vital role in solving communal economic and social problems, and by strengthening and cooperating people's union, interaction and relationships. All of those local institutions are still now

active in both urban and rural Ethiopian areas [1].

However, these indigenous self-help associations did not solve serious problems (like, famine, poverty, and drought) due to lack of financial power. In order to fill this gap and for other social, cultural, economic and political problems NGOs take such responsibilities. For this reason, various NGOs came to Ethiopia around the second and third decades of the twentieth century. Sources indicate that, during the times of Empress Zawditu foreign missionaries entered Ethiopia through the support of Ras Tafari who was supportive of foreign missionaries [4].

After 1941, the number of foreign NGOs and missionaries increased. Emperor Hayla Sellase was worried by the great flux of NGOs and missionaries into Ethiopia. In 1960, the government introduced a regulation to control the activities of NGOs, public associations and missionary religious organizations. Similarly, during that year various international, local NGOs and missionary organizations were registered officially and opened their branch offices in Ethiopia [1]. Among those organizations some of them were, Swedish Save the Children (SSC), International Red Cross Society (IRCS) or the Ethiopian Red Cross Society (ERCS), Makana Eyasus Evangelical Church (MEEC), Christian Relief and Development Agency (CRDA) and other relief organizations were set up in Ethiopia [1].

But, most of their participation or activities were hampered by the Emperor's strict control mechanisms in fear of the Emperor feudal-bourgeois opposition against the imperial regime. The 1973/74 famine affected ten provinces of the country. The famine claimed the lives of thousands of people in Wallo, Tigray and other parts of the country. However, through the efforts of foreign Ethiopian students (Ethiopian students studying in Europe and USA) and Jonathan Dimbleby's "Hidden Famine" documentary films and after it was opened or released in different European countries TV screens. Then this event brought to the attention of the international public societies through extensive humanitarian appeals supported by broad media coverage which detailed the extent of the catastrophe. An organizational network was formed, to coordinate activities and programs and intervention policies.

Then Emperor Hayla Sellase accepted that the arrival of relief organizations to alleviate the pestilence of famine. Because, the tragic famine was growing to be beyond the ability of his government to manage, forced the imperial government to open its doors to relief organizations or NGOs. In 1984/85 another devastating famine broke out in Ethiopia. The Darg was forced to allow a large influx of Western NGOs into the country. Between 1980 and 1990s

the number of NGOs operating in Ethiopia grew from forty above to 106. As various pastoral studies and sources indicate that since 2000 the number of local and international NGOs in Ethiopia shows a dramatic increment. For instance, in the year 2009 more than 4,677 humanitarian and other NGOs were registered under the Ministry of Justice to operate and participate in development and public service activities rather than relief operation [1].

### International and Local NGOs in the East Guji Zone

The first half of the twentieth century is considered as a turning point for the arrival of foreign relief organizations in Ethiopia. In the twentieth century, mainly because of modern communication and transportation the number of foreign missionaries coming to Ethiopia increased. These missionaries expanded their religious activities through missionary schools. But most of the activities conducted by those missionary schools were highly religious oriented. For instance, the Swedish and German Herman burg evangelical missionaries are among early comers. However, the 1960s witnessed the arrival of modern international organizations like MEEC, IRC, and CRDA others in Ethiopia. Most of them were based in Addis Ababa until the 1970s famine, but the Makana Eyasus Evangelical Church (MEEC) set up its branch in different parts of Ethiopia (i.e. even in peripheral areas) mainly in southern and western provinces after it was renamed the Ethiopian Makana Eyasus Evangelical Church [1,4].

To teach its doctrine for local communities, the Church opened various temporary shelters in some areas. The Church did not only give religious teaching but also modern education side by side, and beyond this the church also supported local peoples economically when they faced difficulties [5].

One of the churches was established at Hagara Maryam (current Bule Hora). Previously, Hagara Maryam Makana Eyasus Church embraced larger areas of the southern Sidamo provinces. It includes Borana, Jamjam, Gedeo, Sidama, Arero awrajas and other waradas. Among these awrajas, Jamjam or the current East Guji zone is the one which still has close connection with the church of Makana Eyasus ( Gemechu, 2002; Ayinalem, 1998).

As sources indicate the church of Makana Eyasus is the first religious organization which set up its office in the remote lowlands of East Guji and Borana (i.e. Dolo-Odo MEEC and Hostel) followed by the 1970s Ethiopian Red Cross Societies and other non-permanent relief organizations. In the 1970s famine period there were three local and international INGOs that opened their offices in the East Guji-Borana areas. However, during the 1984/85 famine,

the numbers of relief organizations operating in the areas increased greatly [4]. Following the separation of both East and West Guji Zone and Borana Zones from Sidamo province and after a change of government in 1991, various foreign NGOs arrived to operate in the marginalized pastoralist areas and few numbers of local NGOs also emerged in the East Guji areas [6].

According to the East Guji Zone Governmental and NGOS registration office until 1999 around sixteen permanent international and local NGOs were registered to operate in East Guji areas. In addition, eight NGOs opened temporary offices. Save the Children both USA and UK and Sweden, SOS-Sahel, Dubaf, Coopii, Pastoral Community Development Project, AFD, IIRR, and others are some of the relief organizations which set up their office both in the lowland and highland areas of East Guji. Those voluntary agencies worked in different developmental fields and social service activities beyond relief operations. Some of these areas were education, medical service, integrated rural development, water development, infrastructure development, livestock diversification, micro credit service, drought and early warning, children development, women empowerment, integrated urban development and human rights defense program [5,6].

### Overview of NGOs Response to the Eastern Guji Periodical Droughts

For long periods of time the East Guji pastoralist people were not beneficiaries from the central government incentives and other benefits. For instance, governmental social service institutions like: School, health care, infrastructural and water supply facilities were mostly unknown among the East Guji. There was only one, health care center at Adola-Wayo or Kibra-Mangest [5,6]. As a result, majorities of the East Guji people have been suffering from lack of medical and education facilities. However, for a long time, they were forced to pay taxes and tributes both in cash and in kind for the central government. In addition to inter clan conflicts and security problems, periodical droughts and famine affected the East Guji communities severely [5].

Like famine victims in Wallo and Tigray and the central government failed to provide emergency food to East Guji communities. According to the 1980 EMEEC annual report, in the years of 1972/73, and 1976/78 drought and famine period's more than 13,500 East Guji peoples faced acute food shortage. And the responses of NGOs were scarce or rare due to insecurity in the area caused by the Somalia irredentist rebels, shiftas (bandits) and robbers. Relief efforts were further hampered by the outbreak of the Ethio-

Somalia war in July 1977. As a result, a military base was set up at Nagale town. Somali irredentists tried to bring the East Guji and Borana ethnic groups into conflict. But Ethiopian officials could manage to avoid the conflict [2].

As Ogaden areas became the main battle grounds conditions were difficult for relief assistances and food distribution. But, the Ethiopian Makana Eyasus Evangelical Church sheltered more than 3,678 drought affecteds and war displaced people for two years. And side by side the church also gave both regular and religious education for more than hundred orphans and children from poor families [6].

The other relief for the East Guji people next to Makana Eyasus Church came from the Ethiopian Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC). For the first time the RRC tried to support the East Guji people in 1978 by distributing around one and half quintal of sorghum and wheat grain per family. But as informants and written documents stated that the donations of RRC for the East Guji communities was not fairly distributed and did not reach to the hands of poor people. Rather half of the grain remained among the hands of local state officials and their families. The second RRCs aid was robbed by the Somali insurgents [5,7]. During that time of hardship many East Guji people migrated to the stable and fertile Gedeo and Sidama Awraja, and generally the 1970s drought and famine claimed the lives of many people and livestock.

### My East Guji informant Jarso Dhuka explains the severity of the 1970s drought as follows: -

My name is Jarso Dhuka and my birth place is Siminto village of southern Guji people. When the 1972/4 East Guji drought and famine occurred, my age would be around 18 or 19 but I don't know my exact age. However, the harsh effects of those famine and silence governmental and NGOs response to drought and famines are recorded in my mind. The East Guji lowlanders were displaced from their village by the Somali bandits and their cattle were raided by those shiftas or robbers. And drought and famine claimed the lives of thousands of livestock. For instance, due to lack of water and pasture my family alone lost 76 cattle out of 83 and the same is true for our Siminto village and Liban societies in particular and East Guji in general. And my father sold seven of the remaining cattle with cheap price and he bought sorghum and other cheap cereals for our family. In the middle of 1974 due to lack health center in our district and Awraja my father died of Malaria's infection (locally called "Boke Buussa"). Later our households' burden was shouldered by my mother and she began to

make charcoal with my elder brother and exchanged two sacks of charcoal for three kilograms of grain and she was doing that dangerous work for more than eight years. But, in 1975 through our traditional relief assistance mechanism of “Dabare”, we collected around 32 heads of cattle from our clans and other donors (locally called “Dureessa”). Again in 1976 another severe drought destroyed 17 of our cattle, and as a response to that famine and to save our life, we moved to Ganale River banks and we lived there for one decade and at the ends of 1986 we came back to our previous and present village of Siminto [5].

Six years later another catastrophic famine occurred in East Guji lands in particular and Ethiopia in general. The major causes of 1984/85 Ethiopian famine were the occurrence of unfavorable climatic condition, and crop failure. Numbers of famine victims and in need of relief assistance rose up from six million in 1984 to ten million in 1985. The 1984/85 famine was much more devastating than previous famines. It affected more than 90% of Ethiopian territories. Among these areas Sidamo was one of the provinces highly affected by the famine with more than 185,800 affected people. Among the awrajas of Sidamo, Wolayita, Nagale-Borana, Arero and Jamjam were severely affected by an extended famine [8].

As a response, ERCS, CRDA, EMEEC and OXFAM, distributed large amounts of maize, barley and pulses for famine victims in Wolayita, and camp was set up at Dollo-Odo where more than 8,500 famine victims were sheltered. There were also more than 23,000 famine victims who came to the camp monthly to take grain, palm oils and other food items. During that time the Dollo-Odo camp gave service for more than 16 months. The relief camp was closed in 1987 [5].

Later in the year 1992 the camp was reopened and still it shelters refugees from Somalia Republic and other needy people. The church of EMEEC also opened three distribution points at Shakiso, Nagale Borana and Kibra Mangest towns and starting from the ends of 1984 the church distributed more than 9,700 tons of grains (like:- Maize, Wheat, Pulses, Barley and other food items) for more than 6,836 (i.e. around two quintals were given for each family) affected peoples. Drought and famine affected the East Guji people until the beginnings of 1986 [5].

A relief camp was distributed wheat to Gedeo and maize, sorghum and wheat for the Jamjam drought affected people. In addition to the food, cloth, and medical care provided by those NGOs and church relief organizations, the Darg also allocated around \$ 65,000,000 for grain purchase and \$ 46,000,000 for internal transportation

costs. And, between the two famine years, more than 1,050,208 metric tons of food and medical services were distributed for famine victims through RRC and other voluntary agents and channels [2]. According to the 1986 RRC’s report, in the year 1984/5 alone, more than 761,594 tons of grain was distributed for more than 167,600 Jamjamtu and Borana famine victims at Nagale-Borana military base distribution center and different awraja and warada police stations. However, it is difficult to ascertain that all the grain had reached the hands of affected people. Documents and informants stated that some state officials had misappropriated the grain and used relief food for their own benefit [8].

For instance, in the year 1985, the then Awassa police station captured large amount of grain from illegal merchants’ which was sold for them by the Borana Zone (i.e. Jamjamtu, Moyale and Liban awraja) officials. After Darg’s down fall in 1991, particularly in the pastoralist East Guji areas continuous droughts were occurred (i.e. 1992/97 and 2000). During those drought years large numbers of livestock were affected by cattle diseases (like:-Anthrax, Foot and Mouth Disease and Bleeding diseases) and shortage of pasture and water poles. International NGOs like: COPPI, SOS-Sahel, AFD, PCDP and others were involved in digging of deep hand pumped water points both for livestock and human beings. Animal fodder was distributed for drought affected East Guji zone cattle, particularly among Goro Dolla Warada, Liban Warada, Nagale town and Wadara Waradas [8,9].

Besides, large veterinary medicines were given for affected waradas. Animal health care centers were set up. Direct medical treatment was given for infected cattle by NGOs veterinary doctors and skilled personals [2]. Local NGOs like EMEEC and DUBAF also played a vital role through establishing warehouses and distribution stations(both to human and livestock) for donor organizations and through coordinating NGOs assistance and directing them which pastoralist areas was in need of emergency livestock and human food assistances. During both drought seasons the numbers of affected people was low because the northern parts of East Guji were receiving rain and the price of crops in local market was stable.

As soon as the drought season began and many people moved with their cattle to Kibra Mangest, Ganale and Bale areas. But peoples of northern East Guji were in conflict with Gedeo people both in 1995 and 1997, that is why the southern drought affected people did not move to Gedeo areas [9]. According to the 1998 COPPIs annual reports, the cost of the total assistance given by four NGOs (COPPI,

PCDP, and ERCS) for the East Guji pastoralists in the form of silage, hay and veterinary medicine was estimated to be around 1,876,106.48 ETB. This indicates that after 1991 the effects of famine for human beings were not as severe as the previous years and large numbers of NGOs were active to give support in the East Guji areas [5].

In 2000/2001, another drought and famine occurred in the East Guji zone. The 2000/2001 drought was more devastating than the earlier ones and a large number of livestock perished due to lack of rain both in East Guji and Borana areas. As the East Guji zone Agriculture and Pastoralism Bureau documents indicate, during the above two years drought and famine period large number of cattle perished. In an attempt to mitigate the effects of the drought in the area, local and international NGOs tried to support the local people by distributing wheat, maize, haricot beans and other grains for human beings, and grasses and fodder for affected livestock.

For instance, in the year 2000 drought/famine period more than 516 East Guji people from Liban, Shakiso and Goro-Dolla faced an acute shortage of food and as a response the then Borana Zone RRC office distributed more than 37 tons of wheat grain among affected peoples at Nagale Aid Distribution warehouse. Similarly, relief organizations like:- COPPI and SOS Sahel highly participated in digging underground water points to save the lives of livestock. Later due the collaboration efforts of NGOs and DPPC and the East Guji Zone Agriculture and Pastoralists Bureau the lives of large numbers of cattle could be saved. Another drought occurred in the year 2001 mainly in the three pastoral districts of East Guji Zone (namely, Goro Dolla, Liban, Wadara and Nagale) and a large number of livestock died but due to the collaborative efforts of more than sixteen NGOs and DPPC there was no human casualty.

For instance, during the 2001 drought/famine, the RRC distributed more than 126 tons of wheat, barley and 3,158 K.G Oil for hundreds of famine victims in Liban warada. Local and international NGOs also tried to supply water for thirsty livestock using tanker trucks and distributing fodder [8].

Even then, a great number of cattle had already perished. The death of livestock came to an end after the beginning of rain. In 2009/10 another drought also affected pastoralists' living in the same three waradas of East Guji Zone (i.e., Goro-Dolla, Wadara and Liban). Due to the failure of Ganna and Hagayya rainy seasons and more than 32,236 pastoralists and semi-pastoralists faced shortage of food. But many lives were saved due to the collaborative efforts of DPPC, ERCS and other humanitarian relief organizations.

For instance, in the year 2010, ERCS distributed huge amounts of nutritional foods and grain for affected peoples. Especially, children, mothers with babies and elders were the targets of ERCS food distribution. However, livestock deaths were high in the three waradas of East Guji Zone.

In the East Guji Zone, local and international NGOs were highly involved in different developmental activities. For example, COPPI, Save the Children/US, PCDP, SOS-Sahel, PCAE, PLPRP, and IIRR have been in rural water integrated developments, livestock diversification, drought early warning system and risk management. DPPC is also involved in EWS besides relief aid. Other NGOs are involved in social service activities. These include Save the Children, DUBAF, AHEAD, PLWHA, General Bacha Dabele Pastoralist Girls Hostel and German Hostel, EMEEC and others). Among other things, they are involved in Women empowerment, education, human health care, STDS and female harmful practices and Child care program. Generally, in the East Guji pastoral areas, today NGOs have become one of the main food relief, development and public service providers [5].

#### Governmental and NGOs Joint Efforts in Drought Mitigation Program

Ethiopia has been dependent on rain feed agriculture for a long time. Similarly, plow agriculture remained unchanged for centuries in terms of equipment and productivity. As a result, there has been no meaningful development in the country's economic development for a long time. The life of peasants remained subsistent. In addition, the expansion of tenancy in southern Ethiopia contributed to the sluggish development of the economy [10].

A considerable portion of the peasants' production was consumed by the land lords (ballabats). As a result of this, the processes of land degradation were aggravated (mainly caused by high population density and traditional techniques of cultivation) in different parts of the two awrajas in particular and the province in general. That made the local people highly susceptible to various problems like drought, crop failure, chronic food shortage and hunger. During times of hardship government bodies made their own best to support the people. This support ranges from ordering people to hold mass prayers, and distributing food for affected people [8,9].

Although, in the second half of the twentieth century, the government response to the East Guji drought and famine was ineffective; and as a result, a large number of livestock and people lost their lives in different parts of Ethiopia. The same is true with the southern Ethiopia East Guji people. Like other peripheral areas of the country, East

Guji pastoral people were also affected by various periodical droughts and its results for many years. And, there was no tangible governmental intervention to solve their periodical drought which claimed the lives of large number of livestock [8,5].

However after the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Ethiopian revolution, Comrade Mengestu said, “Thousands of our countrymen have possibly perished as a result of recurrent droughts and we shall control the forces of nature” and “We must mobilize our collective efforts to free agriculture from the effects of natural disaster, to expand irrigated agriculture and to increase production by constructing dams by re-routing surrounding rivers and by collecting annual rain water in reservoirs”[3].

Then, RRC and other NGOs began relief operation in famine affected areas including the pastoral areas of East Guji. In order to combat recurrent drought, the government also started reforestation program. For two decades (i.e. from 1970s--1990s) the assistance of RRC and NGOs among the East Guji peoples was relief based. But after 1991, RRC started to work on drought and crisis anticipation (early warning) program [5].

#### **DPPC’s Crisis Anticipation and Early Warning System**

After the downfall of Emperor Hayla Sellasse in 1974 the new military government took several measures to minimize the effects of the 1973/74 famine and the consequent droughts in different parts of the country. To solve those all-rounded problems of the country, the government established the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC) in August 1974 E.C. Then, the RRC opened its office in various provinces of the country to help and assist peoples, who were affected by the results of natural factors, and to organize or coordinate both local and abroad humanitarian organizations donation. Similarly in 1975 E.C. RRC opened its branch office at Nagale-Borana and Hagara Maryam (Bule Hora) Awraja towns of Sidamo administrative province. And many years these two RRC’s branch offices were coordinating various famine mitigation programs [3,11].

For instance, they coordinated the local people to plant trees, to construct check dams and other mechanisms to control soil erosion and deforestation which was the root causes for periodical droughts and acute food shortage. The RRC offices also distributed relief assistance for the 1984/85 drought and famine affected people. Later on, following a change of government the National Policy for Disaster Prevention Management (NPDPM) was set up in 1993.

The NPDPM took early warning and preparedness as a key element to respond to climate-related hazards. National Meteorological Services Agency, Ministry of Agriculture, Ethiopian Mapping Agency, RRC or the latter DPPC were some of the members of NPDPM. On the other sides, of the coin, RRC continued its operation until it was renamed as DPPC in August 1995. DPPC worked as a secretariat of NPDPM and it assesses the status of weather, agricultural operations, crop prospects and subsequently recommended possible responses. DPPC’s early warning systems have various chains at every corner of Ethiopian areas starting from Federal level up to Regional and Zonal levels (Ibid).

For instance, in the year 1995 the previous Nagale-Borana RRC Office was renamed as Nagale Borana Zonal Disaster Prevention Preparedness Department and Bureau and fifteen Offices were opened among the fifteen waradas of East Guji Zone with a great priority of early warning system (EWS) [5]. EWS is a method of futuristic prediction of food security and early indication of disaster situation so as to develop preparedness to minimize risks, and avoid drastic and irreversible measures that the communities, may take to save their life and livestock. Starting from 1990s up to now those local DPPC offices are playing a great role in early warning system detection program through detecting and studying the climatic conditions or rain fall, crop availability in the local markets and buying and selling situations, human health, livestock, water and pasture conditions and field crops and after their harvesting results and other indicators. When things were/are not in good situation they told the local peoples to take various preventive measures and preparedness activities.

Through such mechanisms, waradas early warning offices create awareness by disseminating information among their warada communities. However, currently DPPC and NGOs are doing a good job among the East Guji people. For instance, DPPC was highly involved in the activities of crisis anticipation or drought early warning systems intensively in collaboration with the East Guji Zone governmental and NGOs Registration Office. DPPC also encouraged other local and international humanitarian organizations to participate in early warning system and to engage in livestock and people lifesaving activities.

#### **Save the Children and Funds**

Save the children Fund (SCF) of USA arrived in Ethiopia and opened its first office at the capital in late 1984, in front of Bisrate Gabriel Church. Its main target was to give relief assistance for the 1984/5 famine affected Ethiopians with due emphasis on children and mothers. Between 1984 and 1991, SCF/USA was distributing relief assistance (both in

food and non-food items) mainly to mothers and children and other destitute families. The financial source of this organization is the government of United States of America. Currently; this organization is working almost in all regions of Ethiopia, and has more than twenty-seven branches in Ethiopia alone [1,11].

Since 1991 SCF/USA has changed its previous relief assistance operation and started participating in various developmental activities. It also works to reduce child mortality, to increase the literacy and decision-making level of females and to control malpractices, HIV/AIDS and other sexual transmitted diseases both in rural and urban areas. Regarding gender issues, the organization has been working with Ethiopia Women affairs. It has also been jointly working with Ethiopian Ministry of Health, Zonal and Warada Level Health Offices to solve health related problems. In addition to this, starting from 1991 the organization also expanded its offices into various remote areas of Ethiopia where health care facilities and education coverage were highly scarce [12].

Among these areas Southern Guji (East Guji Zone) was one of them. SCF/USA opened its offices at Nagale Borana the seat of East Guji zone administration in 2001. Until recently, the organization main focus was forming women's groups in various villages of East Guji zone (mainly in Goro Dolla, Liban, Nagale and Wadara waradas) and giving seminar and life skill training for a week. The training included the difficulties of traditional mal practices, child birth through traditional midwives, extravagance, illiteracy, gender-inequality, and STDs, HIV/Aids causes and preventive measures. In addition, the organization gave revolving funds for poor women households to help themselves and families. However, since 2004, SCF/USA was largely involved in various development activities like women empowerment programs, natural environment management and conservation, drought and early warning systems, agro-pastoralism, rural women's literacy campaign and other child and women touch activities, and the organization achieved tangible life and thinking progress from the targeting groups' project. Currently, SCF/USA is mainly engaged in three types of projects, namely, women empowerment, literacy class, and early warning system units [5,12].

For instance, in women empowerment unit, the organization is assisting them financially, technically and materially to generate their own incomes. In East Guji zone there are more than 8 women's group who participated in different income generation works, such as petty trade, bee keeping, and fishery around Dawa-Ganale River, animal

fattening, and cereal crop trade. In addition, starting from 1999 E.C, SCF/USA gave revolving funds (15,000 -25,000 ETB) under a binding agreement. Every year SCF/USA has been giving a total of 200,000ETB for eight groups as revolving fund. Each group included 18-25 women [12].

Informants stated that, at the initial stage each group was a combination of both sexes and most of those organized groups did not get enough profit from their group. Later all groups were rearranged and men were excluded from all groups. For example, cereal crop groups buy crops and other home consumption materials from Nagale and they sold them to rural communities far from markets with a small profit. This process saves time power and transportation costs of the rural people who are mostly far from towns. For those groups, SCF/USA constructed around seventeen containers or warehouses at the cost of 70,000ETB to easily store and distribute their cereal crops for consumers [5].

Even during bad times the groups continued to sell cereals to avoid food shortages both in market and rural distribution warehouses. To do that, SCF/USA always helps them by studying market places which have enough cereals at cheap prices and buy and bring for them within short periods of time. Women cereal groups only pay cereal and transportation costs for the vehicles which brought them cereals from far away markets. Due to this reason both rural people as well as women trading groups are beneficiaries. As a result, many women changed their living condition and economic status.

Side by side with this program there is literacy class. SCF/USA covered 50 percent of the costs and the communities paid the rest fifty percent for satellite class teachers who received a monthly salary of 3, 00 birr each in the four warada villages and qabales. There are more than ten literacy classes in every waradas and in this program SCF/USA allotted yearly more than 1,460,000 ETB. Those adult groups are learning up to grade three levels in those satellite schools. The main beneficiaries of this program are adult females and males, and this program enabled large numbers of people (including women cereal group uneducated peoples) to read and write [5,12].

**For example, Guyatu Boro stated how her life is changed after she joined both the women's income generation groups and literacy classes as follows; -**

My name is Guyatuu Boro and I am 39 years old woman from Liban warada of Dhaka Kala qabale. I have a husband and 8 male and 3 female children. My livelihood activity is agro-pastoralism. Before I joined El-Sarite women's group around 2009, I did not have any knowledge about

money and I was economically dependent on my husband. Formerly, when my husband wanted to sell the cattle, he did not inform me how and how much he sold and I did not have a confidence to ask him. However, after I became a member of El-Sarite cooperative I have a right to participate on meeting cereal marketing or trainings which concerned me and I have got a right to make decisions equally with my husband. Once, I received trained by Save the Children and I was given 350 birr. I used 50 for tea and I bought female goat by 300 birr. After 8 months the goat gave birth and I sold them for 700 birr and bought two mobile apparatus for my children. Generally, I got advantage being the member of ElSarite cereal marketing co-operative, I can now read and write (because now I am grade two) thanks to this adult literacy program. Now I am better off economically and socially and that built my confidence.

Similarly, another woman informant stated her current situation five years after she joined the Goro Dolla women's cereal marketing as cashier and adult literacy group member. She compared her previous life with the present as follows: My name is Edatu Girja and I am a 27 years old woman. And I am a mother of six children (5 boys and 1 girl) and joined the Goro Dolla Warada women cereal marketing group in the year 2008. When I joined this group I know nothing about business and I had never been to school. There was no school around our village. Besides, our culture discouraged girls' education. At the age of 20, I could not read and write. After I joined this group and side by side with other activities, I started literacy and numeracy class in 2009 E.C. Then, I began to read and write, and now when I compare and contrast my seven years progress from my previous life, 'I can say I was in the darkness of ignorance for 20 years. But now my eyes are open because of my exposure to education. Now I can write and read confidentially without any problem. I have even started taking notes of my house hold issues, and now I am inspired to continue my education. Really, I thank my association as well as SCF/US that enabled us to stand by our selves and solve our all-rounded problems partially.

Other east Guji females are also involved in fishing activities in Ganale-Dawa Rivers using the revolving funds of SCF/USA. Besides financial aid SCF/USA also supports those groups by giving them modern British made fishery materials like, hooks, tapes and webs. In order to avoid their market problems, SCF/USA also created awareness about the importance of fresh-fish meat and its nutritional value for the Nagale-Borana town dwellers and surrounding communities by distributing pamphlets and posting flyers on various poles and walls [5].

According to my informants Aynalam, Wario and Wande, SCF/USA has been helping the local people in various ways to bring about a meaningful change in their lives. The organization has also been working to ensure gender equality. This indicates currently the Guji peripheral area women have got a special consideration from the organization to enable them and to change their lives starting from decision making, economic empowerment up to reading and writing.

As those informants told me, the organization is also actively working on drought and crisis anticipation system in collaboration with the East Guji Zone DPPC, mainly on four selected waradas (i.e., Goro Dolla, Liban, Wadara and Nagale) of East Guji Zone. SCF/USA is actively engaged in this activity to minimize the risks of disaster and consequential problems in the East Guji zone. The organization uses various indicators to forecast the occurrences of drought and food insecurity. For instance, it uses livestock related indicators (unusual shortage of pasture and water), crop and market related indicators (like erratic rain fall and scarcities of cereal crops in the market and increments of their prices).

When SCF/USA found those signs of drought and food insecurity, it alerted the communities through various mechanisms by calling a seminar of the four waradas local village representatives and Abba Gadas and informing them about the impending crisis and the tackling mechanisms they should use as an early preparedness and timely action, and to disseminate the warning in their respective villages and localities.

In this regard the organization was successful during the times the 2001, 2009 and 2010 drought and famines.

### **DUBAF/a Local NGO and its Funds**

Dubaf was established on June 2, 1994 at Goro Dolla Warada of East Guji Zone by the joint efforts of local communities, educated youth groups and another devoted humanitarian personal (particularly, Duba Gololcha). After its establishment the organization of Dubaf was legally registered with the Federal Ministry of Justice as an indigenous humanitarian development organization to operate in Oromia, Somali and SNNP Regions. According to my informants Messa Kilta, Jamjam Udesa and Haro Badhu, among the East Guji Oromo local communities' language Dubaf means "for future, for the next and for the forthcoming" However as an organization Dubaf means "Development by Unity and Brotherly Action for the Futures".

In addition to this, Dubaf is a non-political, nonracial, non-profit making, non-religious and non-partisan

humanitarian organization, dedicated to help the marginalized communities and to enable them to make their social and economic life better, through supporting self-help initiatives and promoting indigenous skills, and to create community participation green environment and protection, and to improve primary health care and enhance literacy level (mainly female students through supporting materially, financially, psychologically and even through hostelling service). In 1996 Dubaf signed an operational agreement with the NPDPM and get a certificate of legal identity to work with DPPC in relief operation and early warning systems. Currently, this organization is working in Goro Dolla, Wadara, Adola and Libn Waradas of East Guji Zone, Yabello and Liban areas of Borana Zone, Bale Zone of Oromia, and in Worabi Waradas of Silti Zone and AlataWondo Waradas of Sidama Zone.

The organization has also a plan to start its humanitarian operation in Somali Region and in other parts of East Guji and Borana Zones. The main financial sources of the organization are members' monthly contribution, annual fundraising programs, and project partners (PCAE, Cordiad/Netherlands, Save the children/USAID, AED/USAID, IIRR, Rotary club/Canada, AHEAD/UK and other international NGOs and Governmental agencies). Starting from its establishment until now, through the funds of those voluntary and partnership donors. Dubaf implemented various projects.

Now it is carrying out different developmental activities, like, women empowerment, girls' education, and sponsoring students from poor family to pursue their higher education, early warning, and livestock diversification and restocking programs (Ibid). For instance, from the year 1995--2002, Dubaf has sponsored more than fifteen students from East Guji, and Borana zones of extremely poor families (who were incapable to follow their studies through economic problems) and assisted them to finish their higher education programs by covering their stationary costs, transportation expenses and providing essential materials for their education.

Dubaf has also constructed one Girls' Hostel at Goro Dolla Warada of East Guji zone and it gives a hostelling services (with free bed and bed room clothes like blanket, pillow and others, cosmetic materials and sanitation materials like soap, foam, educational materials like pen, pencil, exercise book, reference books, school uniforms),... for fifty female students. Those students were screened from extremely poor pastoralist families. In addition, clever female students who came from remote areas and those students who have completed their eighth grade were also

selected by the organization for assistance. For example, in 2003, 2004 and 2005, around 57, 51 and 42 female students respectively, joined Dubaf's Goro Dolla Warada Girls Hostel (Ibid).

Even those students who joined preparatory programs received full support. Currently; Dubaf is supporting both financially and technically rural as well as urban East Guji women households to empower themselves and their families by giving cash for working capital, and to participate in animal fattening, petty trade and other livestock diversification programs. The organization also helps the drought affected marginalized poor women and sometimes severely affected men households through restocking programs (buying cattle, goats and other livestock, and distributing them among drought affected cattle loser men and women households and other poor families).

The organization is engaged in giving technical advices for those pure pastoralist peoples (to sell some of their livestock and put their money in a bank and other micro finances, and to diversify their livestock (from cattle, to drought resistant goats, sheep and camels). More than this Dubaf is also working in drought or crisis early warning system with East Guji zone DPPC office. Since the organization is set up and led by the local people, it has a good communal knowledge and experience, and it is so effective (than other governmental and non-governmental agencies) in this program. Such people are using the local people's traditional crisis anticipation mechanism jointly with the scientific method to easily predict the occurrences of drought and hardship.

And when drought occurring signs were observed they give warning for the local people to take good preventive mechanisms like to use water points wisely, to store enough food for livestock and themselves, to settle around river banks and to sell their cattle before the decline of cattle prices in the market and to buy drought resistant livestock like goats and sheep. In addition, the organization also preserves or protected some grassing and rich pasturing areas for difficult times with local communities' participation. In the years of 2000/2001 and 2009/10 East Guji droughts period, Dubaf predicted about the occurrences of drought and advised the local peoples to make preparation and other preconditions before the coming of those bad times.

Later, it carried out a relief operation by distributing water for humans and livestock in highly affected areas. Besides, the organization also informed federal and regional disaster prevention and protector agencies about the impending drought in the area, and advised them to be

on standby position for relief and intervention activities. Still now the organization is participating in many of the above-mentioned activities like, girls' education, women empowerment, livestock diversification, restocking, in inter-ethnic conflicts reconciliation process, in community based environmental protection programs, primary health care and provision of medical services and first aid materials, in drought and early warning systems and other developmental activities).

The organization Executive Director, Jamjam Udas stated that, for the future the aims of Dubaf is to expand in various zones, waradas and villages of the three region (Oromia, Somali and Southern Nations and Nationalities and peoples) and focusing on natural resource management and conservation programs, infrastructural programs, girls education through constructing girls hostel, women households empowerment through petty trade and other small business organizations, promotion of micro finances and enterprises in various remote desert and semi desert areas of East Guji, drought and early warning system and in other developmental operations.

#### Cooperazione Internazionale /COOPI/ and Funds

COOPI is an international NGO that opened its office in 1993 in East Guji Zone. Currently, Coopi has more than three branches and works in eight waradas of East Guji. This organization is funded mainly by the European Commission Humanitarian Aid (ECHA) and Italian Development Cooperation (IDC) to work on rural water sanitation and integrated developments, livestock diversification, drought early warning system and risk management. Between, 1996 and 2000; the organization has implemented various relief and pastoral livelihood intervention programs both in East Guji and Borana zones. During the last East Guji-Borana drought, the organization played an irreplaceable role in pastoral livelihood intervention and in digging water points or water supply emergency projects [5].

However, since 2000, COOPI has been engaged intensively in various developmental and drought prevention activities. As informants Shukriya, Edatu and Wario stated, between 2000 and 2004, COOPI has constructed over seventy-three water harvesting installation (each with a capacity of carrying 20,000 liters) for fifty seven governmental junior, high school and four non-governmental primary schools and twelve governmental organizations at the cost of 978,000 ETB. In addition, COOPI also constructed more than 187 hand pumped deep-water points both for human and livestock population in different pastoral areas as a response to the Guji periodical droughts and famine. As a result, the lives of thousands of livestock were saved.

Besides, mainly during the 1999, 2000/2001 and 2009/10 drought years, COOPI distributed huge amount of animal fodder and veterinary and human medicines to treat human and animal disease in East Guji zone.

More than this COOPI also constructed more than four gravel roads (more than 26 kilometers) two of them connected rural areas with urban centers through modern transportation and the other two linked rural areas with medical care centers. Currently, COOPI is trying to change the drought susceptible pastoralist livelihood system of East Guji communities into agro-pastoralism and pure agrarian economic system by constructing irrigation canals at various pastoral areas [5]. COOPI also supplied best seeds, fertilizers, herbicides and other modern agricultural systems at subsidized prices. Every year, the organization has been awarding effective farmers who gained more production using COOPI's material, moral and technical support. Similarly, COOPI also expanded best and model practices to warada and qabales. The organization encouraged women participation in development activities. As informants stated, COOPI has more than seven agro-pastoral groups, which each of them with 23 female and 38 male members. These groups are mainly practicing cattle beefing, livestock diversification (rearing of various types of animals than mono species) and modern agricultural practices. Besides, COOPI has also been working on drought and early warning systems in collaboration with Guji Zone DPPC. It played a significant role in creating awareness among communities to prepare and equip themselves during times of drought and food insecurity. This activity brought various polio economical and socio-cultural changes among the pastoral communities [5,12].

In addition to COOPI, Dubaf and Save the Children, there are various local and international NGOs, and humanitarian groups, which are playing a vital role in alleviating the East Guji communities' periodical drought, in increasing the literacy rate of pastoral-female students and reducing other socio-cultural, polio-economic and environmental problems in the area. For instance, as part of the female empowerment and literacy program, there are two hostels (i.e. General Bacha Dabale female students' hostel and German hostel). These hostels are funded by the General Bacha Dabale women and Childs aid, and Germany Makana Eyasus followers' humanitarian and civil societies' group respectively [5].

As my informant Zarihun Bakala and Fatiya Umar stated,

General Bacha Dabale female students' hostel was set up in 2006 at Nagale town to help the East Guji girls

from poor pastoralist families. There are three groups or committees who are responsible for selecting female students who are in need of hostel service.<sup>41</sup> Members of the committee are composed of the hostel administration support staff, students and family association. This girls' hostel has more than four criteria during a times of registration. The main criteria were loss of mother or father or both, extreme poverty, absence of high school in their pastoralist area, distance from Nagale town, and health problems. Accordingly, the hostel accepts yearly more than 160 female students from pastoralist families. For instance, between 2003 and 2005 E.C. more than 390 female students were admitted to the hostel.

According to informants, girls from poverty affected families received a monthly stipend of 250 ETB each and the hostel allocated 1200 ETB at the beginning of each year (i.e. September) for each girl in order to cover various expenses. The same is true for the MEEC Nagale-Borana Girls Hostel (Germany Hostel). Since 1970s, this hostel has been playing a vital role among the East Guji marginalized and drought affected pastoral peoples. The hostel has been accepting yearly more than 425 girls from the poor East Guji pastoralist communities and giving them free educational service [5].

Students received free dormitory, bed room, clothes, café or feeding room, educational materials and other spiritual and non-spiritual materials and services. For the services of the hostel, the organization yearly allotted a budget of more than 330,000 ETB. Students from poor families are now getting such types of educational opportunity. However, the local community members are not satisfied with the selection process. Members of the selection committee usually selected students from their clan. Anyhow, the hostel plays its own role in helping children from poor pastoralist families to get free educational service, which would help them to fight droughts and to take themselves and their families out of drought susceptible economic activity of livestock rearing to engage in other types of economic fields [5].

Generally, besides the above mentioned local and international NGOs, there are also other humanitarian organizations which are playing their own irreplaceable role for the mitigations of periodical droughts in the East Guji zone. Currently they are operating in several community projects throughout the East Guji zone. For instance some of them participate in the fields of education, infrastructural and developmental activities, health, and gender related issues and on other types of humanitarian programs [13-18].

## Community Perceptions of the Response

The East Guji communities strongly blamed the regimes of Emperor Hayla Sellasse, Darg and somehow the current government, because the responses of those governments to the droughts and famines that broke out between 1970s, and 2000s were ineffective. And due to this reason, a large number of livestock and human population died. However, the East Guji people have a good outlook or perception towards local and international NGOs (like, ERCS, CRDA, EMEEC, OXFAM and others) for their irreplaceable support, aid and drought interventions. But, according to East Guji elders that the emergency assistance provided by those humanitarian organizations was relatively low compared to the magnitude of the drought and famine that affected East Guji people. Especially in remote areas of East Guji, many people and livestock died during the 1984/85 famine [5,8].

As all informants argued that, previously food aid was always considered as the ultimate target for various local and international NGOs and humanitarian relief organizations. But food aid alone did not solve the problem of the East Guji people. Rather it makes them dependent. That means food aid solves only their short-term problem but in the long run it brought nothing to them and did not avoid their periodical droughts. However, after 1991, various NGOs are trying to shift more than 95% of their project to developmental and service-related activities, and due to this reason, the life of East Guji pastoral peoples is showing some progress, and communities who have gained this chance are somehow happy. But, some conservative East Guji people opposed those humanitarian organizations for various reasons. For example, they oppose the expansion of westernization and civilization at the expense of age-old East Guji culture. As a result, they are against the large influx of relief organizations to their area [18-23].

In addition, they blamed them for not supporting people living in remote areas. Some of the NGOs also failed to implement their projects like asset diversification programs, destocking and restocking systems, hay and silage preparation, income source diversifications, establishing various and large member inclusive cooperatives, strengthened their transformation from pastoralism to agro-pastoralism and agriculture developing saving traditions in modern banks and community owned savings and other significant economical livelihood activities. The above-mentioned problems are the real causes for the persisting East Guji drought and famines or food insecurity problem of the area [24-27].

## Conclusion

Starting from, 1970s until this contemporary period

more than ten recognized or local droughts occurred in the lands of Guji. So to save their lives as well as livestock, Guji peoples practiced various local coping mechanisms (early warning system, survival mechanisms like eating fruits, and recovery methods) which they adopted from their predecessors. Due to the scarcity of governmental and other relief organizations intervention, in that hardship time, women were highly vulnerable (especially widow and divorce women's). Of course, in the 1980s Guji drought and famine period few numbers of relief organizations (EMEEC, CRDA, OXFAM and others) and also RRCs intervened and distributed food and non-food item aids to affected peoples at Dolo-odo camp and Nägälè town relief center. And due to that collaboration effort large numbers affected peoples were saved from distraction. From those famine periods, (1970s and 1980s) large number of cattle were perished. And, due to this reason Guji peoples have not a good perception for the previous government drought and famine responses.

However, after 1990s, various NGOs opened their office in Guji Zone and their project is mainly focused on development activities than relief service. Some of them are participating in social service, agriculture, women empowerment and other beneficiary activities. In the year 1990s and 2000s Guji famine and drought, they (NGOs like DUBAF, COOPI, Save the Children/US, and others) also participated in relief service activities and played an irreplaceable role through saving human and livestock live from distraction. Currently, both Guji Zone DPPC and other humanitarian organizations are jointly working in drought and famine mitigation program using early warning system as pillar to their work.

In connection with this, relief organizations are working on enabling local peoples to confront hardships through designing and operating various development-based projects. Their work on women empowerment and related activity is also so attractive. Because, unlike the previous time, currently Guji women are relatively getting various support and assistance, starting from informing their constitutional rights and duties up to empowering them economically and politically and educating them through giving hosteling services. This has been possible through the support of local and international NGOs. And such support enables females to equally decide with their husbands on livestock, land to participate in development activities. Generally, the Guji peoples' periodical drought and famine catastrophic effect are reduced from to time and this is due to the collaborative efforts of both governmental and non-governmental organization hard work.

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