

Review of the Norwegian Development Fund portfolio in Ethiopia

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Acronyms

ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Association
AIPDP	Afar Integrated Pastoral Development Programme
APDA	Afar Pastoralist Development Association
APRP	Afar Pastoralists Rehabilitation Project
BMZ/GTZ	German Ministry for Economic Cooperation / Germany Agency for Technical Cooperation
BoANR	Bureau of Agriculture and Natural Resources
BoFED	Bureau of Finance and Economic Development
CBD	Convention on Bio-Diversity
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CMI	Chr. Michelsen Institute
CSO	Civil-Society Organisation
DA	Development Agent
DCG	Drylands Coordination Group
DF	Development Fund
DHP	Dryland Husbandry Project
EARO	Ethiopian Agricultural Research Organisation
ENCCD	Ethiopian NGO/CBO Coordination Committee to Combat Desertification
EOSA	Ethio-Organic Seed Action
EPA	Environmental Protection Authority
EPP	Ethiopian Pastoralist Programme
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
ERAD	Environmental Rehabilitation and Agricultural Development
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations
FARM-Africa	Food and Agricultural Research Management–Africa
FFW	Food for Work
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
HAPCO	HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Office
HIV/AIDS	Human Immuno-deficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
IADP	Integrated Agriculture Development Project
IBC	Institute of Biodiversity Conservation
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
IGA	Income-Generating Activity
ILRI	International Livestock Research Institute
IPMS	Improving Productivity and Marketing Success
IRMA	Institute of Rural Management Anand (India)
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MU	Mekelle University
NAP	National Action Plan

NCA	Norwegian Church Aid
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NOK	Norwegian kroner
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NORDEM	Norwegian Resource Bank for Democracy and Human Rights
NPA	Norwegian People's Aid
NRM	Natural Resource Management
NUFU	Norwegian Council for Higher Education's Programme for Development Research and Education
PCDP	Pastoral Community Development Project
PFE	Pastoralist Forum Ethiopia
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
REST	Relief Society of Tigray
RPU	Research and Planning Unit (of REST)
SNNPR	Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional [State]
STD	Sexually-Transmitted Disease
SWC	Soil and Water Conservation
SWDF	Sadguru Water and Development Foundation (India)
TARI	Tigray Agricultural Research Institute
TBA	Traditional Birth Attendant
TEPLAUA	Tigray Environmental Protection, Land Administration and Use Authority
ToR	Terms of Reference
TP	Triangular (Institutional Cooperation) Project
TPLF	Tigray People's Liberation Front
UK	United Kingdom
UMB	Norwegian University of Life Sciences
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for Development
VSD	Volunteers for Sustainable Development
WAT	Women's Association of Tigray
W/ro	<i>Woizero</i> ; Amharic form of address for married woman (Mrs)

0. Executive summary

In August–October 2005, a team of two men and one woman from Norway, Ethiopia and the Netherlands reviewed the portfolio of the Norwegian Development Fund (DF) in Ethiopia, on behalf of the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD). The main purpose was to assess the extent to which the DF's strategy and organisational structures and procedures are effective in reaching its development goals. The team reviewed documents pertaining to the DF and the projects it supports in Ethiopia. During 13 days of fieldwork in Ethiopia, the team met with staff of the Relief Society of Tigray (REST), the Women's Association of Tigray (WAT), the Afar Integrated Pastoral Development Programme and Voters' Education Project coordinated by Mekelle University (MU), the Afar Pastoralist Development Association (APDA), FARM-Africa, the Norwegian Embassy and members of the Dryland Coordination Group (DCG) Ethiopia. The team visited some project sites in rural areas of Tigray and Afar Regions, where it spoke with project beneficiaries. It also met with people in other organisations and offices in Ethiopia involved in related research and development work. In Norway, the Norwegian team member met with staff of the DF, NORAD and Noragric at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences, DCG Norway and some Ethiopian partner representatives currently in Norway.

The team found that the DF portfolio in Ethiopia has evolved from supporting relief work by one Tigrayan organisation in the 1980s to supporting now ten projects with several organisations in Tigray and Afar Regions and networking with other organisations in Ethiopia and beyond. The portfolio focuses on socio-economic development to alleviate poverty and increase food security, primarily through agriculture, and on natural resource management (NRM) in dryland areas, including maintenance of biodiversity. The DF is giving growing attention to strengthening civil society and pastoral livelihood development.

Institutional and professional capacity. The DF is reasonably well endowed in terms of institutional and professional capacity relevant to its Ethiopian portfolio. To the extent that in-house expertise is lacking, the DF has successfully enlisted external complementary expertise. However, in the case of voters' education activities in five regions of Ethiopia, it ventured beyond its scope of expertise and has not been able to give sufficient advisory support.

Although it has no resident representation in Ethiopia, the DF has been managing the portfolio in a satisfactory way through good communication and regular monitoring visits. Its partnership model, built on mutual trust, involves considerable delegation of managerial responsibility to its Ethiopian partners. This model is probably cost effective, although it involves certain risks. Some deficiencies in administrative procedures were made evident by an incident in 2004 when funds foreseen for emergency aid were not transferred to Ethiopia.

Core operations in Ethiopia. All DF-supported projects are highly relevant to Tigray and Afar regional priorities, operating in drought-prone areas with poor, marginalised people. They all address one or more of the DF's priority themes. They are relevant to most of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) but especially to reducing hunger and poverty, promoting gender equality, enhancing environmental sustainability and combating HIV/AIDS.

On the whole, the resources provided through the DF have been used efficiently to achieve its objectives. The efficiency is increased by: local contributions to complement DF resources; flexibility in using resources in a process approach to development; attention to building the organisational capacities of the Ethiopian partners; and the fact that DF seed money has stimulated other agencies to continue some of the activities. The DF-supported projects are rendering local people better able to manage their natural resources in a sustainable way, although the process of handing over responsibility to local communities could be speeded up.

The current policy in Ethiopia to decentralise government administration creates fertile ground for reaching DF objectives of community empowerment.

Processes and instruments. The DF's participatory approach helps anchor projects in local communities. It starts with needs identified at the grassroots. The planning procedures provide space for dialogue and mutual influence. By promoting local ownership of the projects, the DF lays a basis for successful and cost-effective implementation and long-term sustainability. The research that accompanies the development work is contributing to a greater understanding of social and ecological dynamics in the drylands.

The DF seeks to work with local organisations not affiliated with political parties. Owing to the unique history of its work in Tigray, not all of the DF's criteria for partner selection fit to its major partners there. However, the links between these partners and the government increase cost effectiveness, impact and sustainability.

Information flow between DF and its partners is satisfactory, although sometimes erratic owing to fluctuating Internet connectivity. Information storage and retrieval at DF headquarters could be improved. The M&E being carried out with various stakeholders in community and government agencies could give more attention to examining the validity of indicators for environmental, economic, sociocultural and empowerment issues; to assessing the environmental impact of introduced technologies before wide-scale promotion; and to processes of institutional change.

The DF partners have given too little thought thus far to issues of "exit strategies" in the sense of charting changes in partnership relations. A major weakness of the DF is its vulnerability to funding fluctuations and shocks. The financial framework agreement with NORAD (now with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) provides medium-term predictability, but the high degree of DF dependency on one source of funding is a matter of concern.

Cooperation and networking. The DF is involved in several networks, the most important ones for the Ethiopian portfolio being the DCG and the Triangular Institutional Cooperation Project. The Ethiopian partners have benefited from these links – some partners more than others – but information dissemination to other organisations not supported by Norway could be better. The membership base of DCG Ethiopia is too narrow and too Norwegian, and includes organisations working mainly in the highlands. It should involve more Ethiopian organisations, especially those concerned with pastoralism, to build a stronger national platform for dryland development. This is particularly relevant in view of the Norwegian Embassy's role as UNCCD *chef de file* and the pilot plan for Norwegian support to Ethiopian agriculture, focused on dryland systems.

Relations between the DF and the Embassy are generally good, although the latter would like to have closer communication through resident representation of the DF in Ethiopia. The DF's Ethiopian partners are divided on this issue. They see many possible advantages, but also many disadvantages. The DF is therefore faced with a difficult trade-off.

Gender and HIV/AIDS. Much of the DF partners' work focuses on empowering women in economic, social and political terms. WAT, APDA, REST and the MU are enhancing women's organisational capacities and recognition of their role in public decision-making. Women benefit from training and credit for small-scale business. Literacy training has helped qualify women for posts in mixed-gender organisations and for development activities. WAT and APDA address issues of women's rights, particularly in campaigns against harmful practices. In pastoral areas, however, most of the project work seems to be near towns rather than with mobile groups.

Most Ethiopian partners have integrated HIV/AIDS-related activities into their programmes, although not always into their own organisations. Awareness about HIV/AIDS has been raised but there is little evidence of resulting change in behaviour. More could be done to give HIV-affected families livelihood options by promoting technologies adapted to their circumstances.

Policy and strategy. The DF is broadening its range of partners to include NGOs in different ethnic and geographical contexts, focusing on dryland and civil-society development and seeking a balance between service delivery and advocacy for social change. It wants to support

government decentralisation and to create synergies with traditional governance institutions, especially in pastoral societies. There is a need for more dialogue with partners about this strategy and about addressing human-rights issues in the specific context of Ethiopia.

The strategies of the DF and the Embassy in relation to the UNCCD are mutually reinforcing. Partly as a result of the DF's lobbying, the Embassy has assumed the task of collaborating with the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) to facilitate implementation of the UNCCD in Ethiopia. The DF gives priority to the UNCCD rather than the CBD, which seems to allow NGOs less room in its implementation.

In preparing and implementing plans for Norwegian support to Ethiopia's agricultural sector, the Embassy would benefit from drawing upon the experience of the DF and its Ethiopian partners in development activities in the drylands in Tigray and Afar Regions and on the DF's experience in facilitating multi-stakeholder partnerships for mutual learning and coordination.

Major recommendations

- **Re DF as an organisation.** The DF should focus on the environment-poverty nexus. Where it has inadequate expertise to advise and follow up, such as in election-related matters, it should link its partners with other, more experienced institutions. It will need to deepen its expertise in pastoral development, decentralisation and governance, and the legal and social science aspects of the rights-based approach to development, and ally itself with external sources of relevant expertise.
- **Re project work in Ethiopia.** The DF should encourage REST to expand the "food-for-livelihood" approach, so that the households that receive the food for work also benefit directly from the results of the work they have done to obtain the food. More attention should be given to enhancing business-management skills of individuals and especially community-based organisations. A stronger conceptual framework for local organisational development is needed that is translated into practice, with local people rather than project staff deciding on activities, use of funds, etc. Community-level learning-by-doing should be enhanced by facilitating joint reflection on processes and outcomes, possibly combined with community-based documentation, drawing out the lessons learnt and defining the way forward. The DF-supported work would have greater impact if the good practices of the Ethiopian partners and the rural groups they support were better documented and disseminated. In all areas in which it works, the DF should promote plurality in supporting civil-society development, as it is through checks and balances by diverse and outspoken actors that a strong democracy can grow. In absence of vibrant civil society in Afar Region, the DF's cautious approach of experimenting with local institutional development in a pilot district seems warranted.
- **Re processes and instruments.** As there seem to be differences between the DF and its partners in their understanding of some concepts, e.g. the rights-based approach, the DF should make more efforts to clarify these concepts jointly with partners within the local context. It should encourage its partners to build local people's ability to access information about their rights and to analyse policy and government action, starting at village level. In the context of elections, this could be combined with civic education focused on issues.

The M&E systems of the DF and its partners include indicators to address environmental, economic, sociocultural and empowerment issues, but the validity of these indicators needs closer examination. Better ways should be sought to capture dynamics beyond the project interventions, e.g. local innovation and technology adaptation. More attention should also be given to assessing the environmental impact of introduced technologies before wide-scale promotion. The DF should consider funding "formative process / monitoring research" (process documentation and analysis) in selected interventions.

Donors need to take a long-term view of development support to marginal areas with huge challenges in terms of food security and civil-society development. When planning the length of partnership, the DF and its partners should involve the back-donors in laying some time-horizon premises. The DF and its partners should develop self-monitoring systems to examine the process of institution building, with the ultimate goal of self-reliance. From the

start, there should be plans for a gradual decrease of external funding and a gradual increase of own contributions. The roles within the partnerships should change, with the recipients assuming increasing responsibility. This change should be monitored and evaluated jointly by both sides. As its partners gain in institutional strength, the DF should shift its support accordingly, giving more attention to building the institutional capacity of weaker partners. The knowledge and experience that current partners have gained over years of working with the DF should be used to strengthen new partners' work.

The DF's efforts to link its partners to other sources of information and funding should be stepped up so as to reduce their dependency on DF, but also as an avenue to innovative ideas from other sources. The DF, too, needs to reduce its own dependency on a sole donor.

- **Re cooperation and networking.** The DF should help its partners plan how better to organise and resource their networking to allow wider learning, e.g. through more cross-visits on experiences in dryland development, especially within Ethiopia. DCG Ethiopia should link with other networks with similar mandates and together seek ways to become an Ethiopian lobbying force, rather than a forum of Norwegian-supported organisations. The DF should encourage its partners to connect to initiatives such as the regional committees for research–extension linkages to bridge research, policy and application gaps in tackling food insecurity.

The DF should, together with its partners, consider the pros and cons of different options to deal with the new constellation regarding the Embassy's administration of funds for the DF's partners and the DF's strategic partnership with the Embassy as UNCCD *chef de file*, and reach consensus. Resident representation would be only one option. Whatever decision is reached, the DF and the Embassy should spell out clearly their respective roles and responsibilities in communication with the DF's partners and with each other.

- **Re gender and HIV/AIDS.** The DF and its partners should assess how their activities related to agriculture influence gender relations and women's status in economic, social and political terms, to help strengthen DF's contribution to gender equality. WAT's and APDA's activities in addressing girls' rights should be stepped up in view of the Norwegian development policy emphasis on children's rights and achieving universal primary education for girls. Project activities should give more attention to improving the situation of pastoral women who live in more remote lowland areas, without obliging the women to move to settlements.

The DF and its partners should review its work in combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases and consider the role that agriculture could play in mitigating the effects of disease on household capacity to make a living. The situation and needs of children orphaned by HIV/AIDS should be assessed and appropriate action taken. The DF should encourage collaboration of its different partners in a given region on the cross-cutting issues of gender and HIV/AIDS, in order to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of their work.

- **Re DF policy and strategy.** The DF, its partners and external experts should develop a strategy for a rights-based approach adapted to Ethiopian circumstances. Caution should be exercised in advocating civil and political rights not related to work on the ground. The DF and its partners should examine their project work in the light of the rights-based approach and make their relevant contributions explicit. In this process, they would probably recognise aspects to which they need to give more attention.

The UNCCD and CBD are broad-based conventions that encompass dryland farming and NRM in the highlands where mixed farming prevails and pastoral systems in the lowlands. DF support to implementing these two conventions should give attention to the interface between these two agro-ecological zones. Within its Ethiopia portfolio, the DF already pays good attention to implementation of the UNCCD, but should pay more attention than it does at present to the CBD, if it takes its commitment to agricultural biodiversity seriously.

- **Re future contribution to Norwegian support for Ethiopian agriculture.** The Embassy is looking to the DF to help realise the pilot action plan for Norwegian support to Ethiopia's agricultural sector. The DF should be involved already in the early stages of designing this plan, so that it can bring in its experience in working in dryland areas of Ethiopia. The DF may have to take a pro-active role to ensure that it is contributing to the planning process, and the MFA should encourage this collaboration.

1. Introduction

The Norwegian non-governmental organisation (NGO), the Development Fund (DF), receives financial contributions from Norwegian development assistance through the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). These contributions have made up about 85% of the DF's total income in the past five years or so. The current framework agreement between NORAD/MFA and the DF covers the period 2003–06.

Over 40% of the Norwegian government funds allocated to the DF goes to programmes and projects in Ethiopia. For the period 2003–06 the portfolio of work supported by the DF in Ethiopia has an indicative budget of 68 million Norwegian kroner (NOK). This is mainly for activities in the DF's thematic programme area "Drylands", but the portfolio is guided by the principles of its other thematic programmes such as "Civil Society" and "Biodiversity in Agriculture".

The Norwegian aid administration has recently been restructured. In January 2005 the administrative and financial responsibility for the Norwegian government's support to the DF's work in Ethiopia was shifted from NORAD in Oslo to the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Addis Ababa (referred to after this as "the Embassy"), as part of a newly established arrangement for "strategic partnerships" between the MFA and its embassies, on one hand, and Norwegian development NGOs, on the other.

1.1 Objectives of the review

NORAD, in conjunction with the Embassy, commissioned a review of the portfolio of DF-supported activities in Ethiopia, a portfolio that makes up by far the largest country programme of the DF. The main purpose was to assess the extent to which the DF's strategy and organisational structure and procedures are effective in reaching its development goals in Ethiopia. The team was asked to assess:

- the institutional and professional capacity of the DF office in Oslo and its interaction with other Norwegian organisations working in Ethiopia
- the achievements and performance of the DF's operations and programmes in Ethiopia
- the DF's planning processes and instruments; monitoring, evaluation and reporting systems; and funding mechanisms
- the partnership relations and cooperation with local and international NGOs, research and government institutions at various levels
- the DF's new strategy for Ethiopia for 2005–09 in relation to the United Nations Conventions on Combating Desertification (UNCCD) and on Biodiversity (CBD) and possible contributions of the DF to the Norwegian Action Plan for Support to Ethiopia's Agricultural Sector.

The findings of the review should offer the DF an opportunity to make any necessary changes in existing policies, strategies, programmes and operations, and should provide a solid basis for future cooperation between the DF and its donors – particularly its major back-donor, the Norwegian government. The Terms of Reference (ToR) for the review are given in Annex 1.

1.2 Approach, methods and limitations of the review

The review was carried out in August–October 2005 by a team of three consultants: a male sociologist from the Norwegian research organisation Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI), as the team leader a female agricultural sociologist from the Netherlands-based NGO ETC Foundation, and a male geographer from the University of Addis Ababa. The first mentioned is an expert in institutional analysis and development policy with experience in several countries in eastern Africa. The latter two have extensive experience in working with Ethiopian NGOs and government agencies in projects related to agricultural research, extension and education. Their earlier assessments of federal and regional policy, particularly regarding dryland agriculture and

pastoral development, in connection with networks and projects supported by bilateral and international donors, has given them insight into the policy context in Ethiopia.

Before the fieldwork in Ethiopia in the first half of September 2005, the team reviewed numerous documents (project proposals, progress reports, studies, evaluation reports, etc.) pertaining to the DF and the projects it supports in Ethiopia. Further documents were obtained during visits to the projects and were reviewed during and after the fieldwork. A list of documents consulted is given in Annex 4.

During 13 days of fieldwork in Ethiopia, the team flew from Addis Ababa to Tigray, where it visited project staff and partners in Mekelle and drove to Aba'ala Woreda (district) in Zone 2 of Afar National Regional State (referred to after this as Afar Region) and to Kolla Tembien Woreda in the Central Zone of Tigray National Regional State (referred to after this as Tigray Region). The team then travelled overland to Loggia in Afar Region, where it visited project staff and field sites and met with government officials in Samara. In both regions, team members divided up to meet simultaneously with several beneficiaries – both male and female in different age groups from youths to elders – of DF-supported projects. After travelling overland to Addis Ababa, the team met with further persons working in Afar (but then in the federal capital for the Ethiopian New Year's celebrations), other NGOs collaborating with DF-supported projects, and Embassy and DF staff. The itinerary can be found in Annex 2

The review team tried to cover all projects being supported by the DF in Ethiopia, including those that are in the preparation stage. Because it did not have full information about DF activities in Ethiopia before its fieldwork, it did not visit one NGO – Ethio-Organic Seed Action (EOSA) – that is discussing collaboration with the DF.

Prior to and after the joint work in Ethiopia, the Ethiopian team member interviewed various partners and resource persons in Addis Ababa and Mekelle, and the Norwegian team member carried out interviews in Norway with staff of the DF, NORAD and Noragric at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (UMB), the Drylands Coordination Group (DCG) Norway coordinator and some Ethiopian partner representatives currently in Norway. The persons consulted are listed in Annex 3.

The findings in this report are derived from the documents reviewed, semi-structured interviews, focus-group discussions and mini-workshops of multiple stakeholders (staff of various projects in Tigray, members of DCG Ethiopia in Addis Ababa) to explore specific issues. The team collated its main findings on the field visits in Tigray and Afar Regions, respectively, during the several hours while *en route* to the next destination. In Addis Ababa, the team agreed on its main findings before the debriefing session at the Embassy, and subsequently agreed on the structure and contents of the report. This was written in the home countries of the three team members, collaborating through e-mail, and was collated by the team leader. The draft report was sent not only to NORAD and the DF but also to the Ethiopian partners, and – after debriefing discussions with NORAD and the DF in Oslo in early November 2005 – the team considered the responses of the various stakeholders while preparing the final version of the report.

Every effort was made to corroborate information found in the reports and to triangulate by comparing information from different sources. However, the very limited time for fieldwork in Ethiopia meant that the review team could not explore many issues in depth.

As the DF received notification about the review fairly late and preparation for the mission coincided with the summer vacation period in Norway, the review team did not receive a reply to its enquiries about an overview of DF-supported activities in Ethiopia. Only after the team's return from the field to Addis Ababa, when it learned of a DF staff member's visit to Ethiopia, was it able to obtain more complete information about the DF's activities in the country.

This report is structured primarily according to the objectives laid out in the ToR. After a brief description of the DF portfolio in Ethiopia, subsequent chapters deal with the institutional and professional capacity of the DF, the achievements of the DF's operations in Ethiopia, the processes and instruments of the DF in working with its partners in Ethiopia, cooperation and networking, handling of the cross-cutting issues of gender and HIV/AIDS (Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome), and an assessment of the DF strategy for Ethiopia in 2005–09. It concludes with a chapter on major conclusions and recommendations for the future. A description of the project areas and details about the projects are not included in this report, which focuses on assessing the overall portfolio, structures, procedures, strategies, approaches and relationships between the partners rather than the individual activities.

The report also does not include a detailed analysis of the political context. The review team assumes that the readers are aware of the volatile political climate in Ethiopia as the country struggles to democratise, the ethnic distinctions in politics and administration, the difficulties encountered in implementing the government policy of decentralisation, and the insecure position of NGOs in Ethiopia. These are themselves reasons why organisations like the DF are important partners to support initiatives of civil society within Ethiopia, working primarily at the grassroots to strengthen the voices of economically and politically marginalised people.

The review team thanks all office and field staff of the DF's partner institutions in Ethiopia and the farmers and pastoralists in Tigray and Afar Regions for the time and thought they gave during the discussions. It extends special thanks to REST for providing a good vehicle and a very capable and seemingly tireless driver for the overland journey from Mekelle through Afar Region to Addis Ababa. The team is also grateful to the Embassy staff in Ethiopia, the staff of the DF and NORAD in Norway, and the members of the DCG in both countries for the information and support that they made available.

2. The Development Fund's portfolio in Ethiopia

2.1 Evolution of the portfolio

In 1982, the DF – in cooperation with other Norwegian NGOs – started supporting the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), which was fighting to overthrow the Derg¹ regime in Ethiopia. At that time, the DF was engaged in cross-border operations working out of the Sudan and entered into partnership with the Relief Society of Tigray (REST), a humanitarian organisation set up by the TPLF. Over the last 14 years since the fall of the Derg in 1991, REST has worked in harmony with the regional government formed by the TPLF. REST is the dominant NGO in Tigray and, compared to government agencies, is fairly rich in financial and human resources. Over the course of its long relationship with the DF, REST gradually shifted the emphasis of its activities from relief operations to development, including research in support of development. Initially, all DF support to Ethiopia was channelled through REST. In 1994, the DF began to support a new partner in Tigray Region, the Women's Association of Tigray (WAT), which – like REST – had been born during the struggle. In 1998, the DF commenced direct collaboration with the Mekelle College of Dryland Agriculture, which has now become part of Mekelle University (MU), a federal institution of higher learning based in Tigray Region. At governance level, both the MU and WAT have close links with REST.²

In 2003 the DF moved more decidedly into Afar Region, where it now also supports work of the Afar Pastoralist Development Association (APDA) to improve pastoral livelihoods. In 2005 it started collaborating with the UK-based NGO FARM-Africa, which has several years' experience

¹ Derg: the "Coordinating Committee of the Armed Forces, Police and Territorial Army", referring to the military officers who ruled Ethiopia from 1974 to 1991.

² REST informed the review team that the President of the MU and the Executive Director of WAT are members of the REST Board, but the latter later informed us that she had resigned.

in working with Afar pastoralists. They are preparing a pilot project on decentralisation in a way that integrates traditional and modern systems of governance. The DF and EOSA are also exploring possibilities of collaboration on issues of agricultural biodiversity in lowland areas.

Apart from these partnerships, the DF interacts with other Ethiopian and Norwegian-supported institutions in the country, primarily through DCG Ethiopia. The frequency and depth of interaction is no doubt limited by the fact that the DF has no resident representation in Ethiopia.

Perhaps because it worked for many years with a single and strong local partner in Tigray Region, the DF did not set up resident representation in Ethiopia. It does not assign expatriate staff to the projects it supports there. The Oslo office handles the development, management and monitoring of its portfolio in Ethiopia and maintains close communication with its partners through frequent correspondence and regular visits (on average, 2–3 times a year to each partner). Moreover, the DF promotes mutual understanding through the Volunteers for Sustainable Development (VSD) programme, which has allowed young people from Norway to become acquainted with life in Tigray and to support partners' work there, and *vice versa*.

2.2 Focus of the portfolio

Over the years, the DF shifted its initial emphasis on relief assistance to a focus on rehabilitation and development. Relief activities are still funded when the need arises, e.g. during droughts, but are closely integrated with development activities. For example, Food for Work (FFW) is allocated for activities that further the development programme of the implementing organisation. The focus of the DF's attention has been on socio-economic development, primarily through agriculture, and on ecologically-sound natural resource management (NRM) in dryland areas, including maintenance of biodiversity. It has taken a process-oriented approach – addressing new issues as they arise out of joint assessment of previous development work by their partners in a given area. It encourages participatory approaches that stress the decision-making roles of local men and women and the development of self-reliance.

In recent years, the DF is giving increased attention to local institutional development, especially in building up the organisational capacities of marginalised groups. Seven years ago, it started to support work in pastoral areas. The initial project in Afar Region is implemented through an academic institution based in Tigray Region and deals mainly with settled livestock-keepers who also practise some small-scale horticulture. Two years ago, the DF started exploring possibilities of supporting more mobile forms of pastoralism through a local NGO.

The DF is now developing a new strategy that involves further diversification of activities and reorientation in terms of geographical coverage. For a long time, most of its work has been in Tigray Region. It now intends to give more attention to pastoral livelihood systems in Afar and possibly other regions. As the DF branches out to new thematic emphases and new geographic areas where it is difficult to find strong local partners, it has been reconsidering how it will operate. Does it need a focal point in Ethiopia? If so, does this mean a local representative? Or establishing a strategic partnership with a strong organisation within Ethiopia that is working on the same themes and in the same areas as the DF?

2.3 Components of the portfolio

Table 1 presents the recent, current and emerging projects that the DF is supporting in Ethiopia. In order to give an idea of the relative magnitude of the projects, the total amount spent in 2004 (according to the auditors' records) is given. As can be seen from this table, about 95% of the funds transferred by the DF to projects in Ethiopia in 2004 went to activities in Tigray Region and 83% of the total funds went to REST. This total does not include funds for activities under the DCG; auditors' reports on these were not available to the review team. Brief descriptions of the DF's partner institutions in Ethiopia and their DF-supported projects, highlighting the planned activities and major achievements, are given in Annex 6.

Table 1: Recent, current and emerging projects supported by the DF in Ethiopia

No.	Project title	Location in Ethiopia	Partner(s)	Start of col-laboration/ project ^a	End of current project	DF funds transferred in 2004
1	Integrated Agriculture Development Project (IADP)	Central Zone, Tigray Region	REST	1982(coll'n); 1998 (IADP)	2006	12,280,196
2	Research Development Project	Tigray Region	REST	2002	2006	603,623
3	Volunteers for Sustainable Development (VSD)	Tigray Region	REST, MU	2000	n/a	49,360
4	Waterpoint Aba'ala	Zone 2, Afar Reg.	REST	2003	2003	135,276 (2003)
5	Institutional Capacity Building Project	Tigray Region	WAT	1996	2006	645,968
6	Workshop on increasing women's participation in the regional parliament	Tigray Region	WAT	2004	2005	138,690
7	Afar Integrated Pastoral Development Programme (AIPDP)	Zone 2, Afar Region	MU Faculty of Dry-land Agriculture & Natural Resources	1998	2006	858,738
8	Voters' Education, 2005 Election	Afar, Amhara, Oromia, Tigray & SNNPR	MU Law Faculty	2004	2005	250,000? ^b
9	Socio-economic study of four districts / Water source construction	Zones 1–4, Afar Region	APDA	2003	2003	224,051 (2003)
10	Developing Viable Household Economy for Afar Pastoralists	Zone 1, Afar Region	APDA	2004	2007	514,144
11	Afar Community Radio Development Plan	Afar Region	APDA	2004	2004	63,260
12	Triangular Institutional Cooperation Project Ethiopia/India/Norway	Tigray Region	REST, MU	1997	2005	REST: 786,775 MU: 121,197 ^c
13	Drylands Coordination Group (DCG) Ethiopia	Ethiopia	REST, MU, ADRA, NCA, NPA, CARE, WAT, EPA, ENCCD	2000	2006	(auditors' report not available)
14	Pilot Pastoralist Development Project	Zone 5, Afar Region	FARM-Africa	prep. study	n/a	296,746 (according to budget in ToR)
15	Biodiversity	not yet clear	EOSA	in dialogue	n/a	-

^a Preparatory activities in designing a project

^b About half of total amount requested according to project application for 2004–05; auditors' report for 2004 not available

^c Spent by the MU from the balance from 2003.

3. The institutional and professional capacity of the DF

The DF was started in 1978 and has since grown to become a medium-sized Norwegian NGO. At present, it has a total staff of 21 (including a conscientious objector) based at headquarters in Oslo. The number of person-years totals 19.25, of which 8.75 are devoted to partnership relations, project planning, preparation, monitoring and follow-up. The administrative staff, including the managing director, make up 4.5 person-years, while the public relations and information staff handling projects and North-South relations make up 2.5 person-years. Marketing and resource mobilisation requires 2 person-years, the VSD Programme one person-year and the Youth Programme 0.5 person-year.

Over the years, the DF has built up a professional staff complement with expertise in its priority areas: dryland agriculture, biodiversity, environmental issues and pastoralism. As can be seen in Annex 5, several experienced persons in the NGO are making inputs into the Ethiopia portfolio. Rather than trying to maintain in-house cutting-edge expertise across all its priorities, the DF maintains links with external professional milieux and individuals in Norway and abroad, and draws upon them when required. Although it does not possess an exhaustive list of the most competent international sources of expertise in its priority areas, its search for relevant external expertise has been reasonably successful, judging by the documentation and by the assessment of the partners in Ethiopia.

At home, the UMB has been a particularly useful for professional backstopping. Similarly, the DCGs in Norway and Ethiopia have been helpful networks, as has the Triangular Institutional Cooperation Project. The DF Board includes several highly competent professionals with relevant expertise that has been exploited in addition to that of the regular DF staff. One informant characterised the DF staff in the organisation's infancy as "a collection of happy amateurs with more enthusiasm than professionalism". The Board members have been instrumental in building competence since the earlier years. They also serve as links to other sources of expertise, both in research institutions and in government departments.

The DF has had a generally stable staff because of strong commitment and high job satisfaction. Low staff turnover has not led to conservatism, as perceived by the leadership. Innovative thinking has characterised internal strategy processes. The leadership deems the combination of enthusiasm, commitment, political sensitivity and technical expertise a potent mix that forestalls conservatism. Internal professional development is taken seriously. It is acknowledged, however, that additional legal and other expertise is required as the DF moves further into human rights issues, especially with regard to land rights.

With its grassroots orientation, the DF is sensitive to the politics of the micro level, albeit within a macro context. It is commendable that the DF, in its endeavour to make politics work for the poor, has identified partners rooted in local communities and has linked them to centres of professional expertise, be they local, Norwegian or international. This blend of political and professional competence is a hallmark of the DF. It appears to have been successful over the years in reaching resource-poor farmers and, more recently, pastoralists.

The DF's current expansion of its portfolio in Afar Region will make even higher demands on professional competence within the organisation, as it must deal with dynamic systems of pastoral resource use that are more difficult to understand and address than is sedentary dryland farming in Tigray Region. The political situation in Afar Region is complex: traditional and modern institutions are vying for power. The government administrative structures are still weak and the local civil-society organisations (CSOs) are embryonic. Pastoralists have long been marginalised within the context of federal Ethiopia but, recently, the government has stepped up efforts to develop irrigated farming along the main rivers in pastoral areas. Several other external development agencies – both bilateral and international – are now bringing considerable funds into the pastoral areas, including Afar Region. This creates a challenge to participatory approaches to pastoral livelihood development and strengthening of local CSOs. As the DF becomes more active in Afar Region, it will need to build up its internal expertise and ally itself with external sources of expertise not only in pastoral ecology and livelihood systems but also in local institutional development and conflict management.

A case in which the DF appears to have overstretched its expertise is the Voters' Education Project in collaboration with the MU Law Faculty. In this area of governance, it would probably have been preferable to link the Law Faculty with the Norwegian Resource Bank for Democracy and Human Rights (NORDEM) of the Norwegian Centre for Human Rights in Oslo. This unit has long-standing experience and is specialised in election-related matters. Alternatively, there are numerous African institutions with similar expertise. Although it is recognised that this project emerged at short notice in response to needs prior to the 2005 federal and regional elections in

Ethiopia, it serves as an example of a substantive field in which the DF has no comparative advantage and in which it should not try to develop one. The DF would be well advised to remain focused on the environment-poverty nexus. In this context, there is a case for civic education (information about issues, differences between parties, etc.) at the appropriate level, linking the development work at the grassroots to rights issues and contributing to democratic debate.

It seems odd that a medium-sized Norwegian NGO is supporting a public institution such as the MU, whose student population has grown from about 40 students in 1993 to currently 7000 full-time and 6000 part-time students (Mitiku 2005). Likewise, MU's scope in terms of teaching and research programmes has expanded tremendously. A DF–MU partnership may have been warranted at the early phases of the MU's development but not to the same extent now. As the MU develops further, the DF is likely to have progressively less to offer. It would make more sense for the MU to develop institutional agreements with universities in Africa and beyond. It already has links with Norwegian universities through the facility of the Norwegian Council for Higher Education's Programme for Development Research and Education (NUFU) and direct links for some time with the UMB and NORAD. The MU likewise takes advantage of similar institutional-linkage facilities in other countries, e.g. Belgium, the Netherlands and the USA. To the extent that the DF continues its partnership with the MU, it should focus on applying research findings with a view to improving NRM and enhancing food security in dryland areas, i.e. on efforts to bridge the gap between research, policymaking and knowledge application at the grassroots. The AIPDP in Aba'ala could fit into that category.

For financial auditing of the partners' accounts, the DF has contracted an Addis-based chartered accountants firm, selected on the basis of a tender. The firm makes statutory audits of the DF-supported projects, i.e. it certifies that the accounts have been kept in accordance with Ethiopian laws. The auditors make spot checks to ascertain that expenditure has actually been incurred for the purpose recorded and that physical structures are in place to verify expenditure. Generally, the auditors have made few remarks on the accounts of the DF partners; they are generally satisfactory – impeccable in the case of REST. Some partners are weak in terms of financial accounting skills, which has spurred the DF to fund training carried out by the auditors.

The DF administrative staff seem competent. However, a recent incident raises doubts about internal DF routines and procedures. In May 2004 the MFA granted 5 million NOK to Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) and the DF for a joint project of agricultural rehabilitation and procurement of food grain and seeds under REST's auspices in Tigray Region. Administrative responsibility was with the NPA, to whose account the amount was accredited. In June 2005 the two NGOs notified the MFA that the project had not been implemented. The money was still in the NPA account. Despite the fact that frequent meetings were held between the two organisations and REST in Oslo, Mekelle and Addis Ababa during the latter half of 2004, including a visit to Oslo by REST's director in September 2004, the matter was not raised on any of those occasions.

The DF deeply regrets the occurrence, not least due to the plight of the intended beneficiaries of the planned project. The joint management of the project led to an unfortunate misunderstanding between the two organisations. The principal responsibility for informing REST and transferring the grant rested with the NPA, while the role of the DF was in the follow-up. Since the grant was credited to the NPA's account, the project was never entered into the DF's financial accounting system and was thus "forgotten". Nevertheless, the DF accepts its part of the responsibility for the total failure of the two organisations' administrative procedures. The DF has now revisited its administrative procedures and reassured the MFA and the review team that such a highly embarrassing episode will not recur. When asked about the matter, REST appeared oblivious of what had happened and had just assumed that the application had been turned down.

In conclusion, it can be said that the DF is reasonably well endowed in terms of institutional and professional capacity relevant to its Ethiopian portfolio. Notwithstanding its lack of resident representation in Ethiopia, the DF has been able to manage the Ethiopian portfolio in a satisfactory manner through good communication and regular monitoring visits. The partnership

model applied by the DF – built on mutual trust – involves a higher degree of delegation of managerial and administrative responsibility to the Ethiopian partners. This model is probably cost effective, although it involves certain risks, which the DF appears to be handling well.

4. Achievements of the DF's operations in Ethiopia

4.1 Recent achievements at partner and project level

An overview of the objectives and main activities of the most recent, current and emerging projects supported by the DF in Ethiopia is given in Annex 6. The review team did not make a detailed examination of the progress of each project according to plan. However, based on project reports, earlier evaluations of some projects and own observations in the field, it gained the following impression of the major recent achievements by the DF partners in Ethiopia.

Relief Society of Tigray (REST). The main objectives of the current Integrated Agricultural Development Programme (IADP), which started in 1998, are to rehabilitate the natural resource base and to increase food security of households in targeted watersheds in drought-prone parts of the Central Zone of Tigray Region. In 2000, a third objective was added: to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS. With DF support, REST is carrying out activities in soil and water conservation (SWC), reforestation, crop and livestock production, irrigation and potable water supply, capacity building, gender and development, lobbying and policy advocacy, and HIV/AIDS prevention. As can be seen in Annex 6, REST reports to have achieved almost all of its objectives to at least 100% of plan for 2004, sometimes higher.

According to its monitoring data, in the IADP areas, the food-security status of households has improved, as indicated by improved nutritional status of children below five years of age, and less need for households to resort to coping mechanisms to deal with periods of food shortage. One-third of farmers use improved crop-farming practices promoted by the project and over 90% of farmers claim that they apply SWC measures on their farms. Large areas of degraded land have been enclosed over the years, and some of the mature protected areas are being handed over for management by the local communities. More food is available per household primarily because the households are keeping more livestock and practising more income-generating activities (and presumably generating more income to buy food). More people have access to potable water and women's time spent fetching water has been reduced. A large percentage of the people in the project areas know how HIV/AIDS is transmitted and can be prevented and claim to be using at least one prevention mechanism.

Already in 1994, the DF and Noragric supported REST in gathering data for a socio-economic baseline survey in the Central Zone of Tigray Region – according to REST, the first such survey ever made in the Region. This was the beginning of research as a supportive function within the Planning Department of REST. Further baseline studies in the Eastern and Southern Zones and several thematic studies have been completed with DF support. The baseline surveys and studies help to guide and improve REST's development activities. The data are useful for project planning and for monitoring what has been achieved, although it is difficult, if not impossible, to separate out the contribution of DF-supported work to overall development.

Women's Association of Tigray (WAT). The DF is supporting WAT through the Institutional Capacity Building Project, aimed primarily at strengthening women's capacity to organise themselves and to carry out development work. This includes leadership and management training for WAT members, training of women and men in women's rights, and training of women in petty trading and in small ruminant and dairy cow production. The women are then provided with start-up capital or livestock on credit. The DF has also supported some activities designed to increase women's participation in regional and federal politics. WAT records considerable advances in management capacity within the organisation from the grassroots to regional level, greater socio-economic independence of women, more participation of women in political life,

later age of marriage, and higher and longer enrolment of girls in schools. More information about the achievements of the projects implemented by WAT is given in Chapter 7.

Mekelle University (MU). With DF support, the MU Department of Animal and Range Sciences in the Faculty of Dryland Agriculture and Natural Resources is collaborating with the Aba'ala Woreda Department of Agriculture in implementing the Afar Integrated Pastoral Development Programme (AIDPD). This is meant to build the capacity of the local administration, prevent environmental degradation of the rangelands, increase food security and strengthen the relations between Afar and Tigray people. Development activities include river diversion for irrigation, SWC measures, promotion of vegetable production, HIV/AIDS prevention, community-based animal health care, local institutional development and further education of Afar students to diploma or degree level. Monitoring data on achievements more recent than the 2001 evaluation were not available to the review team. At that time, the nursery and SWC activities were described as moderately efficient and, in the case of SWC, non-sustainable; very positive results were achieved in the activities focused on women (vegetable production, small-scale credit) and in capacity building; water development had a positive impact in terms of crop and animal production and thus improving food security but sustainability was questioned; and the impact and sustainability of the community-based veterinary services were rated as low. The project reportedly had made little progress in preventing rangeland degradation, but good progress in integrating Afar and Tigray people (Dioli & Ayele 2001).

In addition, the MU Law Faculty received funds from the DF for a Voters' Education Project to enhance public awareness about concepts of democratic rights, election laws and standards of free and fair election. This ambitious project is behind schedule, but it is hoped that it can still have a positive impact in the lead-up to the woreda elections in 2006.

Afar Pastoral Development Association (APDA). The DF initially supported two small projects carried out by this indigenous NGO in 2003: a socio-economic baseline study and construction of a water source with water-storage facility. The DF then entered into a four-year agreement with APDA to help develop the household economy of Afar pastoralists, primarily through improving their market access. Thus far, three mixed-gender marketing associations have been formed, and two ponds and an enclosed livestock-fattening area were established at one market site. An Afar National Development conference was held in December 2004; the outputs fed into the formulation of APDA's current five-year plan.

Volunteers for Sustainable Development (VSD). Since the VSD programme started after revision of the Peace Corps (Freskorpset) in 1999, three volunteers from Ethiopia spent about a year in Norway – two from REST, one from the MU (one woman, two men) – and four volunteers from Norway (three women, one man) spent about a year in Ethiopia, all hosted by REST. In Norway, the Norwegian volunteers shared their Ethiopian experiences, also in numerous articles. An evaluation of the programme is not known to the review team, which did not have an opportunity to speak with any of the current or former volunteers.

Drylands Coordination Group (DCG). The Tigray-based partner organisations of the DF are involved in the NORAD-funded DCG Ethiopia. People from member organisations have carried out several studies, followed up by workshops and publications. Members have also been involved in preparing Ethiopia's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and in formulating the National Action Plan for implementing the UNCCD. The MU and REST have made good use of this possibility for research, exchange and documentation on issues of dryland development. WAT has only recently taken the initiative to become actively involved, with a study on female-headed rural households in Tigray Region. APDA is interested in joining DCG Ethiopia.

Triangular Institutional Cooperation Project (TP). With DF-support, two of the partners in Tigray Region – REST and the MU – are involved in this project to promote South-South cooperation and to strengthen the capacities of NGOs in facilitating NRM in semi-arid areas. The MU has prepared drafts of manuals on managing area enclosures, good agronomic practices

and SWC. Both the MU and REST have been involved in watershed research and monitoring and, in collaboration with the Barefoot College in India, have set up a pilot solar electrification system in a village in the Eastern Zone of Tigray Region.

4.2 Relevance of the current DF portfolio

Relevance in relation to Ethiopian priorities. All DF-supported projects are highly relevant in relation to Tigray and Afar regional priorities, operating in drought-prone areas with poor and/or marginalised people. On the whole, the local people seem to feel that the activities address their priorities and needs. Until recently, the partners did not have the impression that the DF was imposing any external ideas or agenda. REST, WAT and the MU are working fully within the framework of the Tigray Regional Government's strategies for agricultural development, NRM and improving food security. The relevance of the activities is not confined to the areas where the projects are implemented. The experiences are also useful for other dryland areas in Tigray Region and elsewhere, as examples of agricultural development and NRM. These are being capitalised upon within the DCG, and some efforts are being made to share the experiences more widely beyond this group, so that the approaches and methods can be scaled up.

In Afar Region, the DF is giving increasing attention to pastoral development and promotes pastoral mobility as a form of cultural identity and as a contribution to the national economy, in the sense that highly mobile pastoralism allows effective use of natural resources in dryland areas with low or no potential for other forms of production. These DF-funded activities in Afar Region being carried out by APDA and under preparation by FARM-Africa are challenging the Ethiopian government's strategy to settle pastoralists.

Relevance in relation to the DF's priorities. All of the projects in Ethiopia are addressing one or more of the priorities of the DF:

1. **NRM in the drylands.** This is central to the work of REST and the MU and, with DF funding, is becoming stronger in the work of APDA. The project being prepared with FARM-Africa will reinforce this work by helping to integrate traditional and modern management and administration systems in Afar Region.
2. **Strengthening civil society.** This is reflected in the fact that the DF works primarily with indigenous NGOs and seeks to build their institutional capacities. Moreover, the DF is giving support to civic education, including political empowerment of women. Efforts to strengthen civil society focus on local organisational development at the grassroots, in most cases to achieve concrete activities of economic development. The DF's growing attention to the situation of pastoralists is designed to strengthen the capacity of marginalised groups to have a voice in national development policy, and in broadening its democratic legitimacy.
3. **Increasing food security.** In settled farming, the DF and its partners seek to increase food security by improving dryland farming through watershed management, water harvesting and integrated animal husbandry and by promoting supplementary income-earning activities. With regard to pastoralism, the emphasis is on waterpoints, community-based animal health care and livestock marketing. Food production has thus been intensified and income sources have been diversified, making the farming and pastoral households more resilient to drought.
4. **Maintaining and enhancing biodiversity.** Examples of activities in this line are enclosure of degraded land, afforestation, seed banking and use of good-potential local livestock breeds, all examples from the work of REST. The possible collaboration with EOSA will presumably be focused on this theme.
5. **Volunteers for Sustainable Development.** The DF lists this as its fifth programme, but it is of a different order than the others. It is not concerned with a particular theme but is rather an exchange programme meant to contribute to intercultural learning and mutual understanding. REST and the MU are the only Ethiopian organisations involved thus far. Although the idea emanates from Norwegian society, VSD can benefit partners in Ethiopia by strengthening their lobbying voice and facilitating project-related communication after the exchange visits.

Relevance in relation to Norwegian development policy. Norwegian development policy is guided by the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The projects supported by the DF in Ethiopia are relevant for contributing directly to:

- MDG 1 “Reducing poverty and hunger” (all projects);
- MDG 3 “Promoting gender equality and empowering women” (all projects, through increasing the skills and economic power of women, building their leadership and organisational capacities, literacy training and lobbying for women’s rights);
- MDG 6 “Combating HIV/AIDS” (activities of REST, the MU, WAT and APDA); and
- MDG 7 “Ensuring environmental sustainability” (activities of REST, the MU, APDA, the TP and the DCG).

The DF-supported work in Ethiopia is also relevant for making indirect contributions to:

- MDG 2 “Achieving universal primary education”, mainly through WAT’s and APDA’s activities to hinder child marriage and encourage young girls to continue schooling;
- MDG 8: “Building global partnership for development”, by improving linkages and coordination of development activities through the TP and the DCG, in the framework of the VSD programme and through DF’s advocacy work in Norway.

In the DF’s strategic deliberations, the degree of congruence with official Norwegian policy and priorities is a major consideration. At the overriding level, there is nearly complete convergence between the priorities of the DF and those of the Norwegian government. Both give high priority to poverty reduction and environmental protection, with emphasis on biodiversity in the context of dryland-farming systems. These two priorities form the environment-poverty nexus that is the hallmark of DF policy. Support to civil society is also a point of policy convergence. The DF not only is an NGO, it also works primarily with NGO partners and contributes to strengthening civil society in Ethiopia. The relevance of the DF’s current strategy is discussed further in Chapter 8.

4.3 Efficiency within the current DF portfolio

The review team could not examine the efficiency of each project activity in detail. The remarks here are therefore confined to a general assessment of the use of resources compared to budget, and efficiency of achieving results in relation to resource use, based on the auditors’ reports for 2004, the project reports and general impressions gained during the brief field visits.

In most cases, the amount of resources used is roughly what was budgeted for the activities, although not all activities planned were carried out in the reporting year. In all cases, less than 10% of the budget went towards costs for overheads and contingencies. In some cases, such as in the REST Research Project, no expenses for overheads are accounted, but two-thirds of the budget are for salaries and wages. The Afar conference organised by APDA cost almost 50% more than the (small) amount originally budgeted (150,000 Birr). This discrepancy is probably due to the lack of the NGO’s experience in organising such a large gathering. According to the auditors’ reports, DF funds are being used for the purposes intended, with only a few discrepancies in terms of shifting budget allocations without DF permission.

It is noteworthy that APDA is making a significant own contribution to project costs: members’ contributions in the form of goats and in-kind veterinary services amount to about one-fourth of the total receipts for “Developing Viable Household Economy for Afar Pastoralists”. REST’s and WAT’s own contribution in 2004 came to less than 1% of total receipts; there is no record of own contribution from the MU. However, it is likely that counterpart inputs that allow more efficient use of donor funds, such as the Norwegian Church Aid’s providing office space for the DCG Ethiopia coordination unit, are not being quantified in monetary terms. Also the contributions of community members to the development work in the form of labour and locally available materials are not being quantified but also increase the efficiency of the use of DF funds.

The DF allows some degree of flexibility in the use of funds, but does require that partners seek

approval for budget adjustment by more than 20% change in the amount in any line item. This flexibility enhances efficiency and is essential for a process-oriented approach to development.

The external auditors make a statutory audit but not a performance audit on the use of DF funds. The auditors pay a great deal of attention to accounting systems and procedures; if they judge these to be good and see that the partner organisation adheres to the procedures, they assume that the organisation is functioning efficiently. They have found this to be the case in all the Ethiopian partner organisations of the DF. They have made a performance audit of USAID-funded activities implemented by REST, and found that the organisation works very efficiently. This may be indicative of how also the DF funds are spent by REST – which is by far the largest recipient of DF funds in Ethiopia. It is commendable that the DF has assigned the task of auditing to an independent Ethiopian firm, which is also helping render the partner organisations better able to keep transparent accounts.

The DF's attention to building the organisational capacities of its Ethiopian partners and, through them, the capacities of beneficiary groups at the grassroots – including systems of accounting and reporting – helps increase efficiency. Working with existing institutions and drawing on their administrative capacities – such as in the case of an experienced organisation like REST – saves on overhead costs, enhances efficiency and leads to greater sustainability. Particularly in the case of REST, costs are saved by virtue of the fact that it works closely with government services and does not pay such high salaries as foreign NGOs, yet has highly committed staff.

Differentiation needs to be made between short-term versus long-term efficiency. Working with participatory approaches is time- and resource-consuming in the short term, involving much consultation and dialogue among stakeholders. However, participation creates a feeling of local ownership of outputs and increases the chance of longer-term sustainability. If the DF were to seek only quick outputs, these would probably not be sustainable. Because a relationship of mutual trust and mutual responsibility has been built up in the partnerships – referring to both the DF's partnerships with Ethiopian organisations and their partnerships with grassroots-level communities and groups – less resources have to be spent later on follow-up and control.

Another factor that contributes to high output in relation to resource use is the fact that seed money, such as that for activities under the TP, has generated support from other donors for implementing and scaling up some activities. For example, officials and villagers from Afar Region are now introducing solar electrification, after having witnessed the success in Tukul village in Tigray Region. This example is also being followed in other “emerging” regions of Ethiopia, under the UNDP-supported Decentralization Programme coordinated through the Ministry of Federal Affairs (UNDP 2005). A total of 34 Ethiopians from the lowlands have now completed training in India as solar technicians.

4.4 Effectiveness of the DF-supported work

A major achievement of the DF-supported work has been to render local people better able to manage their natural resources in a sustainable way. REST has handed over responsibility for some activities – e.g. management of some area enclosures – to local communities. However, it still seems to control other activities or services sited in the communities. For example, REST is still financing and running seed banks and nurseries, even though committees of community members are involved in decision-making about their operation. The local people would be more likely to regard themselves as responsible for maintaining the development achievements if they would be asked to make greater contributions “up front”, at least in kind if not in cash.

In the past, REST has tended to decide on behalf of local people rather than encouraging them to make their own decisions and to learn from possible mistakes. For example, according to Meehan (2005), REST staff demanded that women involved in income-generating activities (IGAs) save half their income by depositing it in a bank and ask permission of REST staff to withdraw money. Some by-laws of local groups, such as dairy cooperatives, appear to be based

on the strong advice of REST staff rather than on the members' preferences, e.g. about the amount of milk that may be kept for family consumption and the amount that must be brought to the cooperative. The efforts to strengthen local people's capacities to manage their own development would be more effective if the partner organisations would put more trust in the potentials of the local people, just as the DF trusts the potential of the Ethiopian NGOs to manage the development-support activities.

Rather than paying food for obligatory labour inputs from households (FFW in environmental rehabilitation), REST is now – with the support of another donor – experimenting with paying “food for livelihoods”. Under this programme, women are investing their labour inputs into self-identified activities to improve their household environment (e.g. building shelters for goats or chickens) and to bridge over the period of starting new IGAs. This is a promising approach that could be considered in the IADP's current FFW activities, so that the households that receive the food also benefit directly from the work they do to acquire it.

In Afar Region, there are already signs that farmers – both men and women – are taking their own initiative to expand and innovate, based on what the DF-supported projects started. For example, some farmers around Aba'ala have established their own tree nurseries, and Afar women have set up a livestock marketing association. It is too early to assess the effectiveness of the DF-funded work among more mobile pastoralists, but – in view of the approaches being taken, particularly the efforts to link indigenous and modern systems of knowledge and governance – the likelihood of being effective in the long run is high.

The expected achievement of objectives and their sustainability are heightened by the fact that the DF partners are working with existing institutions, both traditional and modern, such as religious leaders and local government bodies. They are not only cultivating good relationships with traditional leaders but are also strengthening what is happening in the traditional system, such as in NRM, dealing with conflicts and helping to adapt traditional law. They are also giving good attention to farmer-to-farmer sharing of information within the project areas and between projects – and well as sharing between partner organisations through exchange visits and other networking activities such as workshops.

The effectiveness of DF-supported work is enhanced by the fact that it takes a flexible approach with its partners rather than trying to impose “blueprints” upon them. Its practice of following the logic of development in a particular area – addressing new issues as they arise out of joint assessment of previous development work, rather than veering off to address other issues coming from outside – has been a strength of the DF.

Many of the activities being supported by the DF are of a pilot nature, which must allow for learning by all actors involved. For example, largely because of the guidance given by the DF, REST no longer sees its mandate as providing technical services and is learning to give more attention to social and psychological (motivational) aspects of development. Time needs to be invested in understanding local socio-economic factors and how these affect and are affected by project interventions. The research conducted by REST's Research and Planning Unit (RPU) and the studies made by the MU and REST within the framework of the TP and the DCG are contributing to a greater understanding of social and ecological dynamics.

The DF has popularised information about development and engaging in policy dialogue in Norway. It operates a website, and a section of headquarters staff is devoted exclusively to information activities. Its lobbying *vis-à-vis* Norwegian authorities has been effective, e.g. in encouraging the Norwegian government to accept the UNCCD *chef de file* role in Ethiopia.

The DF partners are engaged in policy dialogue in Ethiopia, on their own account as well as via the DCG. At regional and national level, the partners have exerted influence on development policy and approaches to development, such as reorientation of the extension approach in watershed management, allocation of hillside land to youth, recognition of the role of local

practices in seed conservation, use of good-potential local breeds of dairy cattle, development of user-groups and cooperatives, development of micro-finance organisations, revision of family law, improving rural women's access to legal procedures, and drawing attention to pastoral issues, e.g. through the Afar conference held by APDA in December 2004. Particularly REST is visited by people from numerous young organisations and projects in other parts of Ethiopia as well as elsewhere in eastern Africa, e.g. in the Sudan, in order to learn about these various activities, many of which have been piloted and refined with DF support.

The DF and its Ethiopian partners are starting to become active in disseminating information on promising practices of the partners and the groups they support.³ The outputs in terms of documentation to capitalise on partners' experience in approaches to development are fairly limited thus far. The work could have a wider impact if more attention were given to this.

The DF-supported work in Ethiopia is being carried out on multiple levels and with various types of organisations – with both strong and emerging institutions, with both NGOs and government organisations, with organisations involved in development, education/training, research and policymaking. This allows mutually reinforcing effects. To be effective in both the short and the long term in improving NRM and food security in the drylands, it is necessary to work with strong local organisations for immediate high achievements at the same time as building the capacity of weaker organisations, and linking these with the former so that they can draw on and learn from their strengths. In the short term, channelling resources for development through REST will be highly effective, because of this organisation's long-standing experience and large number of qualified staff. The MU is now also a large institution with relatively well-trained staff and well-established management systems. APDA and WAT are much weaker in this respect. To achieve the aim of strengthening civil society, the DF will need to give more attention to institutional capacity-building and staff training in the weaker CSOs, from the grassroots to the regional level.

All in all, the DF-supported projects are following good trajectories towards achieving their multiple objectives. To the extent that the individual projects have been effective in this regard, the review team assumes that their partnership with the DF has likewise been effective.

Two major external factors are influencing the effectiveness of DF-supported work:

1. On the negative side, some delays and setbacks in achieving project objectives have been due to droughts. These are normal events in the drylands and should have been expected. Contingency plans should be integrated into development project planning;
2. On the positive side, the current policy to decentralise government administration to woreda level is working in favour of reaching DF objectives of community empowerment. Much more decision-making is being made at woreda and tabia⁴ levels, where local people have a better chance to exert influence. Moreover, as a result of decentralisation, more qualified people are being posted to government positions at woreda level. This creates a pool of competent staff with which the DF partner organisations can work more effectively.

5. Processes and instruments in DF-supported projects and partnerships

5.1 Building partnerships

The partnership concept. In recent years, partnership has become the donor community's pre-eminent and "politically correct" model for its relationships with collaborators (Brinkerhoff 2002). From the erstwhile donor-recipient liaison, through which the donor provides resources – often with conditions attached – and the recipient accepts more or less passively, a paradigm shift

³ For example, REST distributed a newly published four-page brochure on "Empowering landless youth by distributing hillside land" at the UNCCD conference in Nairobi in October 2005.

⁴ Village area; lowest level of government administration in Tigray Region, and accountable to the woreda (district) level.

seems to have occurred towards an association based on greater equality between the parties. Yet, the partnership term is poorly defined and operationalised so as to subsume all sorts of relationship. What it really means, how relations are negotiated, and who wins and loses when the nature of power is so divergent and the distribution of power between parties so unequal, are far from clear (Fowler 2000).

Partnership is about working together to achieve common goals developed from a shared vision. Some idealistic features that are typically found in concepts of partnership include: information sharing, mutual understanding, transparency, accountability, interdependence, complementarity, equity, respect, trust and flexibility. In real-life partnerships, however, some deviance from the ideal-type partnership is to be expected.

A partnership need not entail complete equality. A partnership can *never* be equal as long as one partner provides the funds and the other receives. But it should be geared towards just and equitable sharing of information, technical skills and values. Whenever conflicts or divergences of opinion arise, they should be resolved through open and continuous dialogue. Frictions are often based on subjective perceptions that may be based on misunderstandings, inadequate information or faulty communication. Moreover, perceptions are often determined by interest and vantage point, thus reflecting different “realities”. There may also be divergent perceptions *within* partner organisations. It is not surprising that the DF and the leadership of the Ethiopian partner organisations often share the same notions of reality, but it does not follow that the field staff share this understanding, unless determined efforts are made towards that end. For example, the leadership of REST is aware of the future direction of the DF’s portfolio and the reasons for this, but many field-staff and local community members are probably oblivious of it.

Whatever their basis, perceptions must be acknowledged as “realities” because people think and act on them. Even if some perceptions may be incorrect (such as the impression of some REST staff members that the DF’s new strategy means cutting off resource flows to Tigray Region), the DF cannot afford to ignore them, because they will have affect the country portfolio adversely. Action must be taken to correct wrong perceptions through good communication, and this has to be continuous, partly because new persons keep entering the scene. In the Ethiopian context, perceptions stemming from the political environment may be just as difficult to redress as those emanating from the partnerships.

Some key points for building strong and effective partnerships include:

- The entry point into a partnership may be informal and based on good relationships between individuals in each organisation but – to assure sustainability of the relationship over several years, at least until the end of the agreed period of partnership – the relations should be institutionalised rather than personalised. This may be difficult in a country like Ethiopia where personal relationships are given such high value. However, relations based on friendship between individuals are fragile;
- Dialogue between the partners needs to be maintained and improved continuously;
- Roles and responsibilities within the partnerships need to be re-examined periodically and, if necessary, changed;
- Fixed-term partnerships are more focused because the partners are conscious of their temporary nature. This consciousness should stimulate planning for the period after the possible end of the partnership and what preparations must be made for it.

Putting the concept into practice. Long before the partnership concept became the fashion in donor circles, the DF has been practising partnership with Ethiopian organisations, based on a fervent commitment to the above-mentioned principles.

Already before entering into a formalised partnership, the DF regards mutual recognition and respect of each others’ positions as key preconditions for reaching agreement. The DF and prospective partners hold extensive discussions to define the nature and substance of their

planned association. If there appears to be a “meeting of minds” in the sense that common values and shared goals are identified and if the partnership criteria (see Box 1) are satisfied, discussions continue about the partners’ needs and the joint activities to be undertaken. The outcome of these discussions is set out in a formal partnership agreement signed by the two parties. This forms the basis of interaction for the duration of the partnership. Agreements of such a nature are rarely specific enough to guide every step along the way and to anticipate any eventuality. In practice, there is scope for interpretation and flexibility, because the partners evolve and change over time. Indeed, flexibility is a defining feature of a dynamic partnership.

The DF enters into new partnerships carefully. The initial agreement is usually about one or two small projects of short duration (e.g. baseline study, point development such as a water source). During this period, the partners can become better acquainted with each other’s way of work and can build mutual trust. Through participatory institutional analysis, an assessment is made of needs for institutional strengthening. The DF makes good use of established partners to share information with new partners about mode and methods of programme implementation.

Once a partnership agreement and a larger programme have been forged, the bulk of the work and the majority of the decisions are devolved to the Ethiopian partner. In other words, based on trust, the DF has adopted a “hands-off” approach to its partners. There is no micro management from DF headquarters. For monitoring and follow-up purposes, however, the partner is visited regularly, on average 2–3 times a year. DF makes it clear that, if agreements are kept, it is prepared to commit itself to a long-term partnership and to work in solidarity, also in facing unexpected adversities. The Ethiopian partners value this highly, as they feel confident that DF support will be continuous. If one phase of a project comes to an end and another phase is still awaiting approval for transfer of funds from the back-donor, the partners feel that they can count on continued support from the DF during the transition period.

The Ethiopian partners state that the DF has shown genuine commitment to partnership, not only in rhetoric but also in practice. Unlike other foreign NGOs or donors, it has not imposed single issues or solutions upon its partners. Its approach has been one of dialogue in which it genuinely listens and is open, taking the partners’ needs as a point of departure when filling the partnership with substance. The partners greatly appreciate this approach.

While both the DF and its Ethiopian partners acknowledge that there is an in-built asymmetry in their relationship because of the donor-recipient status, both parties insist that their relationship involves far more than the flow of funds. Through dialogue, new ideas have been broached and the DF has been instrumental in linking its partners with other relevant professional milieux and NGOs working in the same field, e.g. through the TP and the DCG. Although less endowed in terms of material resources, the Ethiopian partners have been able to bring in their insights and know-how. This blend of different – not solely monetary – resources provides a good basis for a more equal relationship.

DF contributes to achieving greater equality by supporting capacity-building within the partner organisations, including both in-service training and academic upgrading – even up to PhD level – for professional staff. Over the years, the DF has included sizable institution-building components into its work with its Ethiopian partners.

Selection of partners in Ethiopia. The selection of partner organisations in Ethiopia has often been serendipitous. Through networking events, also abroad – e.g. at a conference in Beijing – DF staff members have met people from Ethiopian NGOs and forged links which, in some cases, have evolved into partnerships.

The DF prides itself as taking a people-to-people approach, working with local organisations that are not affiliated to political parties and that work with groups at the grassroots. This is reflected in its criteria for selecting partner organisations (see Box 1).

Box 1: DF criteria for selecting partner organisations

- The organisation shall be locally based, preferably officially registered, with an identifiable administration, not just individuals, families or informal groups;
- The organisation shall not promote or be affiliated to specific political parties or religious groups;
- The organisation must be willing to and capable of adhering to internationally accepted standards of reporting and financial accounting;
- The organisation shall have an established collaborative relationship with the target groups in the relevant project area, either on account of the organisation's being established by these very target groups or by having worked in the area for some time;
- The organisation must be able to document previous experience from development work, in order to demonstrate its capability to implement planned activities;
- The organisation must be willing to build on and adhere to the Development Fund's objectives and guidelines;
- The organisation must be willing to work towards enhancing its own economic sustainability by seeking support from local, private and/or public sources of funding;
- The organisation must be willing to exchange experiences with, contribute to, and learn from [the DF's] network of collaborators.

These criteria are applied somewhat flexibly in Ethiopia. For example, one can hardly say that FARM-Africa is locally based in the sense of being an indigenous NGO. It is a UK-based NGO working in several African countries. However, it is growing roots in Ethiopia, increasingly with local staff, and has good experience in participatory development work with pastoralists and resource-poor farmers in marginal areas. It is doubtless for these reasons that the DF regards it as a suitable collaborator in Ethiopia. Besides, the DF maintains that FARM-Africa should not be considered a partner proper but rather as a provider of services the DF will need to implement its strategy, especially in Afar Region, where there are few indigenous NGOs that might be suitable partners for the DF. FARM-Africa appears a good second best to a locally-based organisation.

Many people in Ethiopia argue that REST resembles a parastatal closely affiliated to the TPLF, the party in power in Tigray Region. This would suggest that the DF is not adhering to one of its own selection criteria. REST's history cannot be undone. It was formed as the humanitarian arm of the TPLF during the struggle against the Derg. Since the fall of the Derg in 1991, REST has changed considerably. Its relief work continues because of the recurring droughts in the region, but its portfolio has gradually shifted toward development work across a wide range of activities, mainly related to dryland farming and environmental rehabilitation. It is this shift that fits so well with the DF's focus and priorities. Some key leadership positions in REST are still occupied by the "old guard" from the pre-1991 period and, judging from the composition of the Board, the links to the ruling party remain strong. Even so, over the past decade, many new staff members have been recruited on professional merit. It is very likely that this has had an impact on the outlook and operations of the organisation. It would therefore not be correct to characterise REST as a parastatal, nor would it be correct to portray it as a pure CSO. The picture must be nuanced. The bottom line relevant for the DF is the impact of REST's work on the ground.

REST's links to the government – whatever their strength and nature – bring both advantages and disadvantages. A distinct advantage is that collaboration with line bureaux and other state structures is smooth and thus likely to enhance cost effectiveness, impact and sustainability. This would be entirely in line with the efforts of other NGOs to work closely with line bureaux that can continue supporting the rural communities after the NGO has withdrawn from the area. On the other hand, a popular perception of REST as a government agency might raise scepticism among some local actors and might impede or distort project implementation. The review team did not have occasion to investigate in depth whether such perceptions are widespread and the degree to which they hamper development work. It heard credible evidence, however, and read numerous reports that suggest that REST has been highly effective in its development work.

5.2 Planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting

The process of planning by the DF and its partners is guided by the principles inherent in the partnership concept on which their relationship is based. They jointly carry out situation analysis, planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E), using the logical framework approach. The partners feel that they have the scope to integrate project activities in a holistic fashion and to create synergies between them.

The principles of participation are applied in identifying who should benefit from the projects. The partners and the local community jointly identify the beneficiaries. The community participates in setting priorities, proposes possible solutions to jointly identified problems, and is involved in the processes of decision-making and mobilising labour and locally available material inputs. The local leadership (*Baito* or People's Council) is also involved in mobilising the community and in selecting beneficiaries. Similarly, the line bureaux provide technical support and collaborate closely in the intervention process. The DF's partnership concept dictates that the Ethiopian partner is responsible for implementation, but the DF is informed about every stage of the implementation through progress reports submitted by the partners at regular intervals.

Different instances from the grassroots level to woreda line offices and administrations are involved in the M&E process. In addition to continuous monitoring by the partners themselves, periodic internal mid-term reviews and final evaluations are conducted, the latter by independent external bodies including auditors. The DF takes part in the M&E through different means of communication (e-mail and telephone) and regular visits to the project sites every 4–6 months.

In recent years, the larger partner organisations have devoted considerable effort to developing M&E indicators to address environmental, economic, sociocultural issues and empowerment issues. However, more attention could be given to examining the validity of these indicators and to assessing the environmental impact of introduced technologies before wide-scale promotion. Ways still need to be found to monitor institutional development and endogenous dynamics such as local innovations, adaptation processes and diffusion outside the target areas.

Although a standard format for reporting exists, NORAD has been fairly flexible in applying it. Ethiopian partners have criticised the format, as it does not serve to capture developments important to them, such as innovative ideas. The DF is just as dissatisfied. Submission of reports in this format is somewhat ritualistic. The DF has developed a checklist for the partners to follow in order to ensure that they address the concerns of NORAD and the DF alike.

Although the monitoring by the partners themselves, complemented by DF monitoring missions, appears adequate, the approach to evaluation appears to be less systematic. A number of projects under the partnerships have been reviewed or evaluated over the years, but it was difficult for the review team to determine the system and pattern of evaluation.

5.3 Funding sources and processes

In 2005 the DF's total turnover will reach about 70 million NOK, including a sizable addition of 23 million NOK for aid to Tsunami victims in Sri Lanka. About 90% of the DF's current revenue comes from Norwegian public sources: NORAD and the MFA (through the Embassy under the current decentralisation policy). The remaining 10% is made up of private donations and large-scale campaigns to mobilise resources, using state television as a medium to reach out to the public. Such a large proportion of revenue stemming from public sources calls into question the non-governmental nature of the DF. This dependency has implications for policy autonomy and long-term financial sustainability. Moreover, the DF staff may feel more accountable to the Norwegian government than to the general assembly of the NGO's members.

The DF enters into a framework agreement with NORAD, normally for a four-year period, which contains indicative annual grant figures. For the period 2003–06, the annual figure rose from 35

million NOK in 2003 to 36 million in 2004 and 37 million in both 2005 and 2006. Having such a framework agreement is beneficial to the DF in that it provides for medium-term predictability of revenue. However, applications for funds have to be submitted on an annual basis, specifying activities. Audited accounts are submitted annually.

The DF acts as a conduit for money to its partners in Ethiopia. The amounts are specified in the partnership agreements based on project proposals, institution-building needs, etc. According to both the Ethiopian partners and the auditors, there have been no serious delays in transfer of funds from Norway to Ethiopia – with the sole exception of the “forgotten” 5 million NOK on the NPA account. In their reports for 2004, the auditors mention only one case of delay in transfer of funds from the partner organisation in Ethiopia to the intended beneficiaries – a five-month delay in transfer from the MU to the Aba’ala Woreda Credit Scheme. The review team therefore gained the impression that the processes for transfer of funds are functioning reasonably well.

5.4 Mechanisms for information flow

The mechanisms for information flow differ according to level. At the level of community-based organisations (CBOs) communicating with the DF’s partner institutions, information exchange is informal and takes place during farming activities, social gatherings and markets. The reliability of the information is judged according to its carrier and how accountable this person is to the community. The review team could not assess the extent to which information from the CBOs is indeed flowing to the DF, and *vice versa*. Through links to wider networks, staff in the Ethiopian partner institutions as well as their direct partners in government extension services had become aware of national and global issues such as strengthening local voice to claim human rights. The DF played a role in making these links but – in view of the multitude of donor contacts of the Ethiopian partner institutions – was by no means the sole player.

The Ethiopian partners had opportunities for intensive exchange of information with the DF during joint proposal development, joint studies, face-to-face monitoring *cum* backstopping visits, M&E activities, and attending various training courses, workshops and conferences. Particularly the networking activities under the DCG and the TP have enhanced the exchange of information both South–South and South–North, beyond the other networks and fora in which the Ethiopian partners are involved, e.g. the Pastoralist Forum Ethiopia (PFE).

The DF and its partners are linked directly or indirectly to the global communication and information network (as senders and receivers) through the Internet. Although the Internet connections in Ethiopia are still periodically problematic, particularly outside of Addis Ababa, this means of communication has improved greatly in recent years and e-mail has proved to be a tremendously effective tool. The DF in Oslo and its partners in Ethiopia are able to communicate with remarkable speed and with satisfactory reliability. No problems were mentioned by either side with respect to the quantity, quality or speed of information flow.

Particularly but not only during visits of DF staff to Ethiopia, the DF has maintained close liaison with the Embassy, and face-to-face meetings are likely to become even more frequent when the strategic partnership comes on stream. The review team could see no hindrances to continued smooth communication, even if the DF does not establish resident representation in Ethiopia.

5.5 Mechanisms for institutional learning

Stimulating learning processes in institutions is a big challenge. Since institutions are made up of people, much information is stored in the minds of those people. Consequently, when staff leave, valuable information is not available to new staff members unless measures are taken to ensure that it is transferred from human minds to institutional storage and retrieval systems.

Much is stored in DF’s information system but retrieval is not easy. It is not intuitively obvious where reports and documents are located. A couple of years ago, considerable funds were

spent at headquarters on setting up an electronic archive system, but it was abandoned after 18 months as unworkable. New attempts are now underway to improve the system for storing and retrieving documents. This is not to say that things are chaotic, but the 5 million NOK for relief in Tigray Region that went missing in 2004 is a serious reminder that all is not as it should be.

When DF staff make field visits, they write travel reports upon their return. These are not standardised, but guidelines exist. The purpose of such trips is discussed carefully before departure. After return, the reports are circulated in electronic form and discussed at meetings before they are stored electronically.

The review team did not examine in any detail the storage and retrieval systems of the partners in Ethiopia, but when requesting specific documents and information, it gained the impression that the institutional memory is reasonably good. Even in a fairly young organisation like APDA, the information storage system was very functional and in good condition, so that information could be quickly accessed.

The regular visits by DF staff to the partners in Ethiopia provide opportunities to reflect on the approach and methodologies taken in the development work and the strengths and weaknesses of the partner organisations in carrying out the work. This provides an excellent opportunity for institutional learning, as do the periodic external reviews. Also a review such as the current one, looking at the functioning of the DF itself and its relations with its partners, gives an opportunity for institutional learning within the DF.

5.6 “Exit strategies” or strategies for evolution of partnerships

In development circles, the term “exit” is increasingly used to refer to termination of support (funds, material goods, human resources, technical assistance, etc.) provided by an external donor to a country, programme, project or partnership (Sida 2005). The discontinuation of external support may be initiated unilaterally by one of the partners or may result from a joint decision. An “exit strategy” is a plan for ending external support. This should be planned from the very outset – at the entry point. An exit strategy should prepare both the donor and the recipient for the exit point. A primary purpose of an exit strategy is thus to ensure predictability.

If sustainability is an overriding objective of a project or partnership, the recipient partner should have been made capable to continue the relevant activities by the time the external partner withdraws its assistance. The external partner gradually phases out in an orderly fashion, while the recipient partner correspondingly takes over responsibility.

The notions of planning, project design and exit strategies are all informed by the “blueprint” thinking typical of the logical framework approach to intervention. Although this approach is useful for planning, the planned interventions usually do not unfold as expected. This may be because of poor monitoring mechanisms, lack of reviews *en route*, poor management, external political environment, etc. Even if the change *en route* is not of the contingency type, the circumstances change gradually as part of an evolutionary process. Small incremental changes add up to qualitative change over time and could alter the parameters of an intervention in unforeseen ways. These could upset any planned exit strategy and also need to be taken into account. Flexibility is needed to adjust to gradual change. Moreover, most interventions generate new needs – or make them visible – as old problems are solved. It is impossible to determine *a priori* what such new needs might be. Hence, it is also not possible to take them into account when charting exit strategies. These points are not meant as arguments against exit plans but are important caveats that professionals must keep in mind. No amount of planning can anticipate unforeseen change, although the degree of uncertainty can be reduced.

A distinction must be drawn between exiting from project collaboration and exiting from a more comprehensive partnership. A project is defined as a set of coherent activities intended to achieve an objective and to produce an output within a given timeframe, which can be short or

long. By contrast, a partnership is broader in scope, different in nature and usually longer in duration because the very concept requires the patient and time-consuming building of mutual trust. Any number of projects can be subsumed under a partnership. It is generally accepted that local communities ought to be able to maintain certain components or activities after receiving intensive support through a project for a period of time. However, it appears to be only fairly recently that the DF's partner institutions in Ethiopia have given serious thought to planning systematically for phasing out their support to specific components, activities or communities, rather than simply doing so because external funding is coming to an end.

As the partners and the partnerships evolve, the relationships change and partners take on different roles. Rather than thinking in terms of "exiting" from a partnership, it may be more appropriate to think of evolution into new types of relationship. The strategic themes of DF will remain common interests of the current partners even after a donor–recipient relationship ends and DF funds are redirected to different geographical locations or production systems. Old partners can become information providers, trainers, mentors, advisors, etc. for new partners and can work together with them and with the DF in new ways, e.g. with a stronger emphasis on mutual learning and/or joint lobbying. The Ethiopian partners know that the DF cannot support specific projects indefinitely and are beginning to realise that partnerships will change over time and may eventually come to an end.

Partnerships should be able to continue without the grease of money, but some stakeholders in Ethiopia asserted that most of the partnerships could not be sustained without some external funding for running not only the activities but also the institutions. The review team found it striking that, although all the Ethiopian interviewees expressed the "politically correct" view on the multi-faceted value of partnership, their top priority with regard to the DF's contribution to future partnership was still money.

Changing roles away from donor–recipient to other forms of partnership can be a painful process. Moreover, the change should be made only if it is evident that the partner can continue to function without continuing to receive DF funds. However, since the DF is a conduit for flow of funds to partners from a back-donor, it will not be entirely up to the DF to decide when it is time to stop the flow. The back-donor may have the final say. Ethiopian partners are not always aware or, at least, do not want to believe that continuation of their friendship with and support through the DF is so little under the control of the DF.

The persuasive argument was voiced by the Tigray partners that donors need to take a long-term view of development assistance to marginal areas with huge challenges to food security. Tigray Region was neglected for decades before the fall of the Derg and needs a long time to rebuild, especially after the set-back caused by the recent war with Eritrea. Food insecurity persists in large parts of the region. REST has a proven record as an effective relief agency and change agent in the limited areas where it has been working thus far. Consequently, when the review team raised the issue of exit strategies, REST staff asked: "Why should REST be penalised for being successful?" In view of the formidable problems facing the region, a 20-year partnership is not long. Donors often think in short project cycles defined in terms of years, whereas the magnitude of the challenges in Tigray Region calls for a time horizon in terms of decades. Moreover, the knowledge and experience that REST has accumulated can be important inputs to strengthen the work of organisations in other regions trying to address similar challenges. This argument has some merit and supports the idea of gradually changing roles within partnerships rather than completely exiting from them.

In any case, it was clear from the review team's interviews with the Ethiopian partners and the DCG that they have given relatively little thought to "exit strategies" or entering new forms of partnership that do not hinge on funds, and this regardless of the fact that the DF itself has given considerable thought to this issue. The partners seem to be preoccupied with managing ongoing activities and securing continued flows of resources. As one interviewee put it: "When getting married, one does not think about divorce." While the marriage analogy may seem compelling, it

does not really fit the partnership situation. The heads of the partner organisations know this full well, even if they are reluctant to act upon this insight. In any case, the DF and its partners should take steps to chart “evolution-of-roles” strategies – whether the time horizons are short or long – and preparations for this should start from the very inception of the partnership.

6. Cooperation and networking

6.1 Relations between the DF and its Ethiopian partners

Generally, the relationship between the DF and its partners in Ethiopia can be characterised by mutual trust developed through long-standing communication and mutual understanding (see details in Chapter 5). Unlike many donors and NGOs that tend to apply a top-down approach and impose project activities on their collaborators, the Ethiopian partners found the DF to be exceptional and ranked it highest compared to other donors. The partners also regard it as a distinguishing feature of the DF that it becomes involved in multi-purpose relationships. The DF not only provides funds but is also involved in exchange of information, thinking through plans and processes together, and capacity-building. In terms of substance, the partnerships cut across several concerns, as the DF is not a single-issue NGO. Instead, by taking the needs of the grassroots as a point of departure, the projects include many components in a holistic view. Norwegian government representatives, e.g. in the Embassy, could probably not have engaged in the same kind of close relationship with the partners as the DF has done.

With regard to facilitation and networking, the DF has assisted in creating linkages between its partner organisations and other donors and sources of expertise. A case in point is REST’s connection with the Barefoot College in India, which resulted in a pilot solar electrification project at village level. This came about within the framework of the Triangular Institutional Cooperation Project (see below). Another example is the visit of WAT members to Manaovadaya, a long-term partner of the DF in India, which led to WAT’s piloting of women’s self-help groups in Tigray.

6.2 Strengthening civil society within Ethiopia

According to the Norwegian government’s White Paper (MFA 2004b), CSOs play an important role in monitoring policies and as “watchdogs of government activities”. In the current political climate of Ethiopia, it will be difficult for the DF to encourage this role overtly. The Ethiopian government still regards most NGOs as threats and is keen to close down those that do not toe the line.⁵

The DF can make a long-term contribution to strengthening civil society within Ethiopia by encouraging its partner institutions to build local people’s capacities to access information about their rights and to analyse policy and government action, starting at the community and village level. At the same time, in the international arena, the DF should step up its campaigns to strengthen poor people’s rights of access to resources, including information. The information-related activities could be done in combination with literacy work but would also have a large impact if combined with radio.

In the past, the DF worked primarily with local organisations in Tigray Region which, in turn, worked through existing government institutions. This approach appears to have created an enabling environment for sustainability in an area where the dominant NGO and the governing political party have a common history of struggling against oppression and working in close collaboration. REST has become a strong and effective development organisation within the

⁵ The June statement of the NGO umbrella organisation CRDA (Christian Relief and Development Association) about civil rights during the aftermath to the recent federal election has led to a “last warning” by the Ethiopian Ministry of Justice that the CRDA’s licence will be revoked because of “illegal activities” (*Ethiopian Herald*, 21.09.05).

political context of Tigray, but this model is not necessarily applicable to other regions with different political conditions. In all areas where it is working, the DF should be aware of the need for plurality in the organisation of civil society, as it is through checks and balances by diverse and outspoken actors that a strong democracy can develop.

With the unfolding government policy of decentralisation and empowerment of grassroots institutions, especially the envisaged key role of the woredas, there is further opportunity for the DF to relate to these levels of the state structure in conjunction with its partners. This appears to be the intention in Afar Region, where the DF has chosen so-called “unspoiled” woredas as entry points for its “pilot woreda” approach, using FARM-Africa as a service provider. Efforts will also be made to develop horizontal linkages between the woreda administration and traditional clan leaders. The DF sees this as an experiment to be monitored carefully in years to come.

Taking a rights-based approach to development. Recently, the DF initiated discussions with its partners about a rights-based approach to development. This move is partly prompted by the emphasis that the international donor community attaches to international human rights as the normative foundation of aid. Most international NGOs subscribe to the same view. Although the concept is embraced in general, its operationalisation remains a challenge. It is quite complex and controversial: debates are raging in donor, NGO and academic circles (Bleie *et al.* 2002). Guidelines have been drafted for the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights but they have not yet been adopted, let alone applied. Few donors and NGOs have gone far in spelling out the operational implications of a rights-based approach under different conditions. The DF is still at an early stage of its thinking about this approach and how to integrate it in their partnerships. The review team recommends that the DF seek external expertise, in Norway and/or internationally, when moving ahead towards a rights-based approach. In the Ethiopian context, the right to land will no doubt be a contentious issue to handle.

The Ethiopian partners are not necessarily averse to a rights-based approach; rather, they are ambivalent. Some make the strong point that they have actually been involved all along in helping to fulfil the economic, social and cultural rights of the people with whom they work. The right to food is at the core of these activities. By helping people organise themselves to manage their own affairs, the partners increasing the means and capacities of rural communities to make demands on the government. This can be seen as a contribution to the democratisation process in Ethiopia. The partners have been giving greater emphasis to strengthening local groups and institutions, reinforcing people’s (especially women’s) confidence, giving them more economic independence and, in this way, empowering them to claim their social and economic rights. Even if not explicitly stated or even intended, civil and political rights will be strengthened in the process. Thus, in essence, the DF partners interpret the rights-based approach to development in the same way as in the Norwegian development policy White Paper “Fighting Poverty Together”: “...the most serious challenge to human rights in the world today is extreme poverty.”

The Ethiopian partners’ ambivalence emerges most strongly when political and civil rights are put on the agenda. There is justified apprehension that the advocacy of certain political and civil rights might lead to repercussions – in extreme cases, the deregistration or closure of an NGO. The partners also take exception to some NGOs’ rhetorical promotion of political and civil rights without a concomitant practice underpinning them. The review team does not wish to argue against the adoption of a rights-based approach, but there is no doubt that this is a delicate matter which calls for circumspection. The team recommends that the DF and its partners thoroughly discuss the rights-based approach to development and arrive at a common strategy adapted to the specific circumstances of Ethiopia.

Still, the Ethiopian partners concede that they have rarely made the rights perspective of their current work explicit. The review team recommends that, in their reporting and public-awareness work, the Ethiopian partners make it more explicit that their activities are indeed rights-based by relating them to specific articles of international human rights conventions.

Promoting good governance and combating corruption. The DF partners try to promote good governance and prevent corrupt practices in a very practical, bottom-up way by helping to build local institutions and establishing systems of control. The training of community groups in managing development activities and services – particularly in handling funds, accounting and reporting – nurtures a culture of honesty, transparency and accountability. It increases local people's capacity to be critical about transparency at higher levels. It was not clear to the review team, however, to what extent transparency is actually achieved at the local level, e.g. through making the budget and expenses of group/community projects known to all local members.

At the level of the DF partners, some of the institution-building efforts have been devoted to designing administrative systems that involve controls and checks. For example, tendering procedures have been designed to prevent conflict of interest, and their application has been examined by the auditors. In financial management, the principle of separation of duties has been instituted, i.e. the persons with authority to incur expenditure are not the same as those who actually incur it, and a third party keeps the record of the expenditure. The fact that the independent auditors visit the activities in the field and train the partner organisations in financial reporting also promotes non-corrupt behaviour.

In other words, the administrative systems are the main anti-corruption methods used by the DF and its partners. Judging from the auditor's reports, those methods seem to have worked. The auditor's few comments on the partners' accounts amount to nothing that can be termed corruption. They have pointed, however, to weaknesses in the financial reports in some cases (e.g. not stamping documents with "Financed by DF" to avoid the possibility of re-using the documents; not requesting permission for substantial changes in use of the budget; lack of breakdown of budget expenditures). With a view to promoting transparency, it would behove the DF to follow up on these points.

6.3 Networking within the Drylands Coordination Group

An important role in strengthening the relations between the partners of the DF and of other Norwegian-supported organisations in Ethiopia and elsewhere is played by the DCG (see www.drylands-group.org). Formed in April 2000 by five Norwegian NGOs concerned with dryland development, it has entered into cooperation agreements with NORAD and the MFA. Its secretariat in Norway has 2.5 person-years and coordinates all activities of the four constituent country-specific groups (in Mali, the Sudan, Eritrea and Ethiopia) and DCG Norway. The membership criteria vary from country to country but, in principle, all partners of the Norwegian NGO members are to be included. However, APDA is not yet an active member of DCG Ethiopia despite the fact that it has been a partner of the DF since 2003. In Mali the membership is much broader than in the other countries and comprises 30 local NGOs, whereas in Eritrea – where civil society is less vibrant – some member organisations are semi-public. In 2005 NORAD provided 5.8 million NOK for the DCG activities in all countries, and the MFA granted an additional 580,000 NOK for information work.

Although the DF regards the primary motivation for engaging in the DCG to be a thirst for mutual learning, the Ethiopian partners seem to regard it primarily as a source of funds for research and networking activities. The members of each country group are encouraged to submit proposals for research, training, workshops, exchange visits, networking etc. by 1 July of each year. The country group vets these proposals and those found acceptable are forwarded to Norway for further assessment. There appears to be lobbying and jockeying for projects in Ethiopia. The ability of member organisations to write proposals and to lobby for them is uneven. The MU has been more successful than other members of DCG Ethiopia in formulating acceptable projects, but this pattern is less pronounced now compared to earlier years. The point to stress, however, is that the project results, regardless who carries out the project, are to be shared within the group. In principle, all activities are to be concluded by a workshop with a view to arriving at recommendations. Also, a plan is to be made for applying the recommendations.

Reports and findings are uploaded on the DCG website and are thus accessible worldwide. Furthermore, the coordinator of DCG Ethiopia – as in the other country groups – now has a budget for printing and disseminating reports and manuals. As not all of these outputs will be equally relevant to all categories of recipient, it would probably not be economical to operate with one general mailing list. The mailing list of organisations outside of DCG Ethiopia members should be tailor-made, depending on the nature and subject of the document. The review team is pleased to see that work is now being devoted to this. Moreover, preparing shorter documents (policy briefs, summary booklets, etc.) based on lengthy and sometimes academic reports is a useful means of dissemination to policymakers and to practitioners at the grassroots. Such briefs must be written in accessible language and highlight the policy and/or practical implications of the findings. In Mali and the Sudan, the work done on documenting so-called “promising practices” has already gone some way towards extracting implications for policy and practice.

As the formal contract partner, DCG Norway has the overriding professional and financial responsibility *vis-à-vis* NORAD and the MFA; it is a matter of accountability to the funding sources. As a corollary, in the last instance, DCG Norway takes the decisions on which activities to fund (or rather makes recommendations to NORAD, which is essentially the same, because NORAD invariably accepts DCG Norway’s recommendations). However, members of country-specific groups are always consulted when applications are below standard, and some flexibility is exercised in this regard. Well-prepared proposals are welcome, but DCG Norway is not preoccupied with formats. If an application is considered promising, it may pass even though the formal criteria are not met. In such cases, the organisation concerned is often paired up with one that has relevant expertise, in order to assist in project implementation. In assessing proposals, it has been challenging to distinguish between research and advocacy. The NGOs are inclined to the latter, while the government research and academic institutions are inclined to the former, and the tension between these functions is often pronounced. Even though the distribution of project funds to different member organisations of DCG Ethiopia is not as skewed as it used to be, there is still a case for organising training courses in writing proposals for development-oriented research, particularly for the NGO members.

Judging by responses of the Ethiopian partners, the strongest link within the DCG “family” is between DCG Ethiopia and DCG Norway as a source of funding and advice. At the time of its establishment in 2000, DCG Ethiopia and Sudan included only one organisation from Sudan. In 2004, several Norwegian-funded NGOs operating in Northern and Southern Sudan established a separate DCG Sudan. In view of this history, the closest links of DCG Ethiopia to other southern DCGs is to the group in Sudan.

Every other year, the entire network meets to discuss experiences, challenges and plans. The strategies are jointly formulated through a participatory process. Over time, DCG Norway has become keener to emphasise policy issues, which often take on a political overtone, e.g. the plight of pastoral communities. The national group members are not always at ease about this. They are hesitant for political reasons, much in the same way that embracing an overt rights-based approach to development has proved problematic.

Other NGOs and even its own members sometimes voice the perception that DCG Ethiopia is too closed and too Norwegian in orientation. There are plans to broaden the membership base in 2006, but it is still unclear what the selection criteria will be. The DCGs in Ethiopia and Norway will discuss this in November 2005. The Norwegian plan to support Ethiopia’s agricultural sector will probably influence the choice of new members. The Ethiopian NGO/CBO Coordination Committee to Combat Desertification (ENCCD) is an associate member of DCG Ethiopia, but is weak and has meagre resources at its disposal. DCG Ethiopia has given it some support, e.g. helped fund its annual meeting, even though institution building is not part of the mandate of the DCG. The PFE is on the list of potential new members in DCG Ethiopia. A study undertaken by the Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) is currently underway to map important NGO stakeholders at the regional level with regard to UNCCD activities.

DCG Norway and its constituent groups in Africa are preparing a new strategy as from the beginning of 2007 for the next 3–5 years. In terms of exit strategy, DCG Norway has often been talking about “making ourselves superfluous” in the sense that the national groups are expected to carry on business by themselves. To manage that, they would probably need other sources of funding. There is otherwise no concrete thinking yet about exit strategy.

6.4 The Triangular Institutional Cooperation Project

Improving dryland farming has been a challenge worldwide. Towards that end, the idea was mooted in the mid-1990s of forming a tripartite collaborative research relationship between NGOs and research organisations in Ethiopia (Tigray), India (Gujarat) and Norway. Six partners – Mekelle University and REST from Ethiopia; N.M. Sadguru Water and Development Foundation (SWDF) and the Institute of Rural Management (IRMA) from India; and the UMB and the DF from Norway – were involved in discussions that led to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding in early 1997. The chair of the Triangular Institutional Cooperation Project (TP) has been rotating between countries (Ethiopia and India) and type of member (NGO and research organisation). Each item of the work programme has had a lead agency.

The objective of the TP was “to promote South-South cooperation and to strengthen the capabilities of non-governmental organisations in management of natural resources in semi-arid areas.” The first phase ran from 1997 to 2002. The current second phase, with a total budget of 4 million NOK, comes to an end in December 2005. A completion report is being prepared.

Both Ethiopian collaborators state that they have benefited from this project. Contacts with other research institutions and NGOs working on similar problems have proved fruitful. The benefits have not been confined to the collaborating partners. For example, REST has included other stakeholders in their visits to India and thus helped create ripple effects. According to the President of the MU, the TP has been very important to the university in three main ways:

- 1) In working with NGOs at the grassroots level, which helped in understanding the social mechanisms of change;
- 2) In redressing constraints to development;
- 3) In teaching young Ethiopians through the development of curricula and exposure to experiences elsewhere.

After this year, many of the functions of the TP will be filled by a new DF-supported African network composed only of NGOs. These will be able to make exchange visits, as well as to draw on the expertise of research institutions in their own countries and beyond, e.g. through thematic workshops, to address issues identified by the NGOs. In order to encourage this, the DF invited an Indian research organisation (IRMA), which has been particularly receptive to NGO requests, to present the TP at its last international meeting. The initial three countries of the new African network are Eritrea, Ethiopia and Malawi, but other countries may be brought in over time.

6.5 Relations of the DF and its partners with research institutions

Generally, learning through North–South and South–South linkages involving both NGOs and research organisations is judged positively by the Ethiopian partners. However, their internal linkages with regional and national research institutions such as the Ethiopian Agricultural Research Organisation (EARO) and the Tigray Agricultural Research Institute (TARI) appear to be very weak. It would be wise for the DF partners to connect to the initiative taken by the President’s Office in Tigray Region to strengthen linkages between research and development. The research, policy and application chain is difficult to establish and maintain in any country, but the bridge between these elements is critical and needs to be built if progress is to be made in tackling the huge food-insecurity problem. A good start is the agreement by TARI and the MU to make joint staff appointments. However, both of these institutions still have a long way to go to bring research findings to the farmers and pastoralists outside of their limited research sites.

Not all DF partners have benefited equally from research collaboration. Neither WAT nor APDA has been part of the TP to date, and WAT has only recently initiated research relevant to its work through DCG Ethiopia, whereas APDA is not involved in this at all. APDA engages in some research of its own, but this appears not to be of the required quality to make a significant impact on improving development approaches. The research is more descriptive than analytical, albeit useful as baselines for planning and monitoring interventions.

Research efforts need to involve more than just monitoring outcomes by way of empirical indicators. To be able to address the problems at hand, research must seek to understand the underlying dynamics and social mechanisms that produce the outcomes. It is also important to understand how new dynamics are created in the communities after intervention. Therefore, it is critical to carry out “formative process / monitoring research”, i.e. process documentation of what is happening and why. To do so, the development partners need to forge stronger links with research centres or incorporate research into their development work. Although research efforts tend to be costly, the review team would recommend that the DF consider including the funding of monitoring research in selected interventions. There will be a golden opportunity for doing so when moving into pastoral systems in Afar Region and strengthening horizontal linkages between the woreda administration and traditional clan leaders in the context of an evolving policy of decentralisation. FARM-Africa will be a useful research partner for this purpose.

6.6 Relations of the DF with the Norwegian Embassy

The relationship between the Embassy in Addis Ababa and the DF is generally as good as it can get between an NGO and an embassy as representative of the state. The Embassy appreciates the DF’s work in Ethiopia and is poised to develop a new strategic partnership which entails even closer links. While not belittling the substantive work of the DF, the Embassy is favourably disposed towards the DF also for practical reasons. At present, the Embassy is constrained in terms of staff, especially in view of its new responsibility as *chef de file* for the UNCCD and in designing and implementing the pilot action plan for support to Ethiopia’s agricultural sector. Thus, by developing a strategic partnership with the DF geared towards UNCCD-related matters and the pilot action plan, the Embassy would be relieved of some of its work burden.

Having said that, the Embassy has in the past been critical of the DF on two counts:

1. The concentration of DF activities in Tigray Region has been regarded as impolitic as seen from the federal level. From the DF side, the suspension of Norwegian government aid owing to the war with Eritrea was not taken lightly. The Embassy would prefer a deconcentration of the activities in Tigray Region. The review team is not in a position to say with confidence that the DF’s diversification strategy into Afar Region has been spurred by the Embassy’s view, but it certainly accords well with its preference.
2. The Embassy has been critical of the DF’s not having a resident representative in Ethiopia, which – from the Embassy’s viewpoint – makes communication more difficult.

For its part, the DF appears to be proud that it has been selected for a strategic partnership with the Embassy, although it harbours some apprehensions about being co-opted by the state. A radical NGO is supposed to keep a critical distance to the state. Nonetheless, the DF attaches so much importance to the UNCCD-related work and to improving dryland farming and pastoral systems that it is prepared to enter into a strategic partnership. The DF, primarily through DCG Norway, has been very active in lobbying for Norway’s taking on the role as *chef de file* for the UNCCD. It is only logical, therefore, that the DF would be keen to follow up this commitment.

The Embassy is looking to the DF to help realise the new pilot action plan for support to Ethiopia’s agricultural sector. It would be important that the DF is involved already in designing the plan, firstly, so that it can bring in its experience in working in dryland areas of Tigray and Afar and, secondly, so that it is not just relegated to a role as implementing arm of the Embassy.

Thus far, the DF has had no resident representation in Ethiopia, unlike most other Norwegian NGOs with a sizable portfolio in the country. The DF has always maintained that its partnerships are based on trust and that a physical presence in Ethiopia would be superfluous. The Ethiopian partners are divided on this matter.

There are both pros and cons of a DF resident representation. It would probably indeed ease the flow of communication, not only with the Embassy but also with other stakeholders in Ethiopia. It could strengthen and deepen relations, enable first-hand inspection of activities at more frequent intervals, facilitate better M&E by the partner organisations, speed up trouble-shooting and allow for rapid situational assessment at short notice. Development support agencies need a very good understanding of the political dynamics at federal and regional level in Ethiopia and the underlying reasons for them, in order to have a solid basis for decision-making in attempts to maintain continuity of work at the local level. The Embassy clearly sees the benefits of resident representation, mainly as a vehicle of rapid communication and liaison but also as a source of drylands expertise close at hand.

However, the cons are also many. Above all, a resident representation would be costly (salaries, allowances, office staff and maintenance, vehicle, etc.); comparative calculations could be made of maintaining a DF office as opposed to regular visits by DF staff from Norway. Any additional costs of resident representation would be at the expense of support to project work in Ethiopia. There might be a danger that the DF would get too close to the activities on the ground and be perceived to be controlling them. If so, the solidarity and trust inherent in existing partnerships might be compromised and gradually lost. REST, in particular, voiced the opinion that a DF office in Addis Ababa might be influenced by the political hotbed of the capital, which is biased against Tigray Region. On the other hand, some REST staff saw the utility in a DF office in Addis in lobbying on behalf of Tigray Region. Apart from the implications of a resident representation on the partnership relationships, the added burden of the strategic partnership with the Embassy at close range must be considered.

With these pros and cons, the DF faces a difficult trade-off. In view of its ethos of partnership and joint decision-making, it is advised to consider carefully – together with its existing and prospective partners – the advantages and disadvantages of different options to deal with the new constellation regarding a) the administration of Norwegian funds for DF-supported projects, and b) the DF's strategic partnership with the Embassy as the new *chef de file* for the UNCCD in Ethiopia, and to arrive at a consensus. Various options should be considered, including:

- Establishing a Norwegian or an Ethiopian representative in Ethiopia, whereby the probability of finding an impartial person with respect to Ethiopian politics would have to be factored into the decision-making process, and the representation may need to be for only one or two years to build up the new programmes and partnerships;
- Increasing the frequency and/or length of visits of staff from the DF office in Oslo to Ethiopia, and giving more attention than in the past to communication with Embassy staff;
- Making an agreement with a like-minded organisation in Ethiopia to carry out certain functions the DF feels can be better achieved through continuous presence in the country.

Whatever decision is reached, the DF and the Embassy should lay out clearly their respective roles and responsibilities in communicating with the partner organisations and with each other.

7. Handling of cross-cutting issues

7.1 Gender issues

One of the goals of the DF's Dryland Programme is to enhance the social and economic empowerment of women relative to that of men. Expected results are that:

- women will gain knowledge in small-scale business, marketing, credit and cooperatives;

- women will identify and carry out new IGAs;
- rural households will have increased purchasing power; and
- local people will gain knowledge in gender, HIV/AIDS and women's social, economic and political rights.

Within the partner organisations, both male and female staff show awareness of gender issues in development. In all projects, attention is given to gender issues, including specific attention to disadvantaged women such as female heads of household and poorer women. In some cases, however, the gender balance in terms of staffing and management of the partner organisations leaves room for improvement. By far the majority of field and management staff and Board members of REST are male, likewise in the case of the MU.

WAT: During the struggle for liberation from the Derg, considerable advances were made towards more equitable involvement and treatment of men and women in society. The WAT Chair reported that, after liberation, the leaders and members of WAT tended to relax instead of continuing to struggle against poverty and illiteracy. The initial capacity-building support of the DF to WAT helped overcome this attitude that women no longer needed to organise themselves. Currently, the DF is supporting the strengthening of women's leadership and management capacities, which WAT regards as its greatest need as an organisation at the current time.

The structure of WAT goes from regional level to six zones to 48 woredas to 688 tabias and then to the *kushet* (hamlet) and *gujille* (group of 10–15 women). This structure gives the organisation tremendous potential to reach out to the majority of households in Tigray.

The activities designed to make women and men aware of women's role in political life are very much at the beginning. The DF-supported workshop before the recent election was attended by both women and men, including members of the woreda councils. It provided an opportunity for discussion about gender roles in politics and reasons for women's hesitation to be candidates or even to vote. Men admitted that they discouraged women from participating. The incumbent party at federal level, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), had decided that 30% of the candidates for parliament would be women, so the work of WAT was focused on convincing women to be candidates. WAT's awareness-creation work included distribution of posters and leaflets before the election. This reportedly led to a higher registration rate of women voters and a high number of votes for the female candidates.

Surprisingly, there has been no collaboration between WAT and the MU Faculty of Law in their respective work on voters' education – in both cases funded by the DF. Moreover, despite the fact that the Executive Director of WAT was on the Board of REST and both organisations were born out of the liberation movement in Tigray, there was little collaboration between the two organisations at regional level, e.g. in coordinating activities, including training.

REST: The interventions in dairy development were specifically designed for women-headed households. Priority is reportedly given to these households also in the goat-related work. The work on vegetable growing and beekeeping includes both men and women. REST has noted that women are stronger than men in managing livestock near the home, and plans to include a larger proportion of women in the livestock programmes. Committees for managing the revolving credit and savings schemes at tabia and woreda level are of mixed gender. At both these levels, there is reportedly good collaboration between REST and WAT in finding ways to give women and men equal access to training and credit. In its FFW-supported activities, REST encourages women's participation in building assets in and near the home that benefit the women's families directly. From various options, the women are free to choose the types of activity in which they would like to engage, including the mix of IGAs in which they invest the credit they receive.

In the solar electrification project financed under the TP and facilitated by REST and the MU, one woman and one man were trained as solar technicians. They have established and are maintaining solar electrical systems that benefit 52 households, a school and a clinic in Tukul

village in the Eastern Zone of Tigray Region. The woman technician has also travelled to Afar Region to convince rural women there to take up the same vocation. This is literally a shining example of gender-balanced vocational training that improves community life.

MU: In the AIPDP in Aba'ala Woreda, woman-targeted activities include support to vegetable and fruit production for home consumption and to earn income, and revolving credit for small-scale business. Women are trained in home economics, IGAs, leadership and business management by staff of the MU and small businesses. Ninety women have received small loans of up to 1000 Birr each. The women interviewed in Aba'ala were very positive about the credit scheme: the loans allowed them to carry out petty trade in foodstuffs and thus to improve their livelihoods (house construction, buying school materials for the children, paying for piped water, buying and raising goats, accumulating savings). They reported an immense change in their lives as a result of the project – “from dependence to independence”. According to the DF, it was the first funding organisation to support credit schemes for women in Afar.

APDA places heavy emphasis on women's literacy. It has employed 112 pastoral Afar women who are now literate and work as multi-functional advisors, especially to women but also to men, on home economics, health and social issues, including marital conflict. It has even managed to set up 14 women extension workers in Konaba, a part of Afar Region where many women live in seclusion. DF support is given to start off this important work, but it is not clear whether – from the outset – it has been considered how the work will continue without DF funds. The Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) who received some training from APDA are not being paid a salary; the women whom they assist give them goats or other payment in kind. The DF is thus not disrupting a local institution that is still functioning. Community-based development workers and service providers should be able to function without long-term support from external donors.

The literacy training of APDA has helped qualify women for executive posts in mixed-gender local organisations. Encouraging women to form groups such as marketing cooperatives and credit groups creates fertile ground for learning by engaging directly in new activities, a learning reinforced by appropriate training and coaching. In these organisations, women are gaining confidence in their own capacities to plan and implement activities and are learning from each other even about things not directly related to the work of the organisations.

The APDA-supported Livestock Marketing Association visited by the review team started on women's initiative but now seems to be predominantly male: 39 of the 51 members are men, although the executive committee made up of three men and two women (treasurer and cashier) is fairly balanced. The women are now thinking of forming a separate marketing organisation. This may indicate some differences of opinion within the mixed-gender association. The matter deserves further investigation, so that an appropriate gender balance in decision-making can be found in local organisations for marketing and other activities to generate income from livestock.

FARM-Africa attaches great importance to gender issues in its development activities in Afar Region and includes a specialist in women's development in the outreach team that works directly with pastoral communities. The Mobile Outreach Camp moves to where the communities are. Local men and women can become involved in training and can seek advice without having to leave their home areas. This is especially important for Afar women, who are traditionally more tied to the home camp than are Afar men.

The concept of “woman-headed household” is not very useful in the rural areas of Afar Region, where widows and their children (and livestock) are traditionally taken in by a male member of the deceased husband's clan. It is more meaningful to focus on building the capacities of widowed and divorced women, whatever their status in a household, focusing on training in literacy and IGAs to give them greater chances of some economic and social independence.

In the case of REST, the MU, APDA and (in its earlier project among the Afar) FARM-Africa, the work in local organisational development is not purely for the sake of setting up organisations. It

is designed rather to help local people manage their development activities better. It starts with an activity of common interest to a local group. The organisation is built around this, taking advantage of different roles and strengths of men and women. The local people themselves, through examining their experience in trying to organise themselves, are realising the need for training in management, accounting, leadership, etc. In the case of WAT, the emphasis is more directly on women's organisational development, which in turn contributes to enhancing the management and decision-making capacities of women at the grassroots.

Both WAT and APDA are addressing issues of increasing women's literacy and women's rights (often in a combined way). They are involved in campaigning against female genital mutilation (FGM), bride abduction and child marriage. If successful, this will increase the levels of formal education among girls and women and improve women's health. Awareness is being raised among the girls, their parents (especially their mothers) and male traditional leaders about the physical, psychological and social disadvantages of the traditional practices. In the campaigns, WAT and APDA use a variety of methods and media, including video film. The DF has funded an assessment of WAT's work in two woredas. It was estimated that WAT helped 5000 girls postpone their marriage so that they could continue schooling. The importance of registering births was stressed, so that parents cannot claim in social courts that their girls are old enough to marry according to modern law. No data were found on the success rate in preventing FGM.

Non-formal literacy and other forms of training for women and girls offered by all the DF partner organisations serve as a springboard for entering income-earning and community development activities. According to the women interviewed and the project reports, particularly the women's involvement in organising their own revolving savings and credit schemes has strengthened institutional and commercial development. Their involvement in local organisations – both women's groups and mixed-gender associations such as marketing cooperatives – is giving women greater independence, strengthening their voice in public decision-making and enabling them to advocate for their own needs. However, in the pastoral areas, the women most involved in these activities appear to be those living closer to major settlements. More attention will need to be given to improving the situation of rural women who live in more remote areas, without obliging them to move to the settlements.

The DF-supported activities are helping to reinforce processes that are already underway to achieve greater equality between men and women, supported by the Ethiopian government, donors and other NGOs and CSOs in the country.

7.2 HIV/AIDS issues

Norwegian development cooperation is aligned with the MDGs, the sixth of which is to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. According to the HAPCO (HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Office) in Mekelle, the prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS in Tigray is 12.6% of the urban population and 2.6% of the rural population. The rate has stabilised in urban areas but is rising in rural areas. The large concentration of troops – both Ethiopian and international – in border zones is greatly increasing vulnerability to HIV infection, especially among poor women who can see no better way to earn some income than through commercial sex work.

All the Ethiopian partners of the DF in Tigray and APDA in Afar Region are addressing HIV/AIDS issues, not only with DF funding:

- **REST** has developed a strategy for HIV/AIDS-related work and has integrated relevant activities into the Rural Socio-Economic Services in the IADP in Central Tigray. The HAPCO Head in Mekelle reports that REST collaborates closely in creating awareness, producing IEC (Information, Education and Communication) materials, distributing condoms, arranging care and financial support for orphans, training commercial health workers in other ways of earning an income and providing them with start-up capital. REST also engages in dialogue with local religious leaders to gain their support for education about HIV/AIDS, but is still facing opposition regarding the use of condoms.

- In 2004, **WAT** reported that it trained over 100 vulnerable women in IGAs such as small-scale trade and provided start-up capital. HAPCO reported that WAT's voluntary counselling activities have been very successful and, as a result, many women have checked their HIV status. An evaluation of WAT's DF-supported activities (Fetien *et al.* 2001) bore witness to how the training made women more open to discuss AIDS in public, particularly with religious leaders and elders. HAPCO regards WAT as a strong partner in fighting AIDS and, with its more than 450,000 members, as the CSO with the widest potential outreach to rural homes in Tigray. Through WAT, it aims to scale up "community conversations" about HIV/AIDS.
- The AIPDP implemented by the **MU** in Afar Region has also supported activities, especially by youth, to create awareness about HIV/AIDS. As a result, according to a youth group member, 76 local people have gone for free testing; this would be somewhat less than 2% of the population in Aba'ala town. Information about HIV/AIDS is reportedly widespread in the town but not in the rural areas. The AIPDP used to pay youth to conduct house-to-house discussions. After this support from the DF ceased last year, some group members are continuing the work within walking distance of the town (they travel by foot), as they feel that the need for and the impact of information about HIV/AIDS is greatest in rural areas.
- The HAPCO NGO coordinator in Afar Region values **APDA's** ability to reach out into rural areas and to work with mobile pastoralists, particularly women, in combating HIV/AIDS. This is of great importance, as the Afar people are still in the denial stage with respect to AIDS. APDA pays about 400 workers at least part-time to provide services, including healthcare and advice, mainly in rural areas. It has gone to remote parts of Afar Region with a youth band to campaign against AIDS. APDA's dialogue with traditional leaders has led to a "new traditional law" that wives of men who have died at a young age must be tested for HIV/AIDS before they re-marry or are "inherited" by other men in the clan. This is an example of stimulating the traditional social and legal system to adapt to new challenges.

FARM-Africa appears to regard HIV/AIDS as a reproductive health issue (in which it does not specialise) rather than a development issue. The HAPCO NGO coordinator in Afar reported that there is no collaboration with this NGO. Neither the final evaluation (Bayer & Dubale 2005) nor the terminal report (FARM-Africa 2005a) on the NGO's work in Afar mentions HIV/AIDS.

The widespread IEC and condom-distribution activities of Ethiopian partners, funded by the DF and other donors, may have helped stabilise HIV/AIDS prevalence rates in towns. There is little hard evidence, however, of the effect of these activities on change in sexual behaviour and reduction in stigma for the people affected. To a limited extent, antiretroviral drugs are being distributed but, according to APDA and to the HAPCOs in Tigray and Afar Regions, not in the amount needed – not only because of a lack of drugs but also because people are not ready to test themselves and admit that they have HIV/AIDS.

In view of the stigma attached to the disease, the Ethiopian partners do not openly target HIV/AIDS-affected households, but they do claim to target households that are headed by women and/or have few able-bodied members and are likely to be among those households that have been weakened by HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. Socio-economic studies in Tigray (Meehan 2005) reveal that the percentage of households supported by REST through the IADP is lower than the estimated percentage of women-headed households in Tigray (30%). This indicates considerable room for improvement in targeting by REST.

There are conflicting reports about the need to support Afar children orphaned by the disease. According to APDA, there are few child-headed households in the rural areas, as the orphans are taken care of through traditional social relations. According to the youth group in Zone 2 of Afar, orphans are not receiving appropriate help and are in particular need of support for further education, as well as testing and – if necessary – treatment.

According to HAPCO, the governmental organisations and NGOs in Tigray Region have not yet assessed their internal situation and how HIV/AIDS is affecting their own staff. They have not yet

addressed issues of mitigating the effects of HIV/AIDS on their staff members and their families, let alone the effects on their “target groups”. It is striking that REST’s (2001a) strategy for HIV/AIDS-related interventions does not make any reference to dealing with HIV/AIDS in its own ranks. This would be a logical first step in combating and mitigating the effects of the disease.

An advantage of working in HIV/AIDS issues with NGOs that deal with economic and social development – rather than organisations that focus only on health issues – is that the NGOs can integrate the HIV/AIDS-related work into their development activities. They can go beyond awareness-raising and can provide livelihood options for families stricken by HIV/AIDS as well as help strengthen community-support systems for victims and orphans. However, none of the DF partner organisations is strong in developing and promoting technologies adapted to the circumstances of HIV/AIDS-stricken households, i.e. with little or weak labour and in great need of good nutrition to increase resilience and improve effectiveness of antiretroviral drugs. This could include support in keeping poultry, bees, goats and other small stock in backyards.

8. Assessment of the DF’s new strategy for Ethiopia 2005–09

The DF’s existing portfolio in Ethiopia is based on its overall strategic plan for 2003–07, which has five thematic pillars: 1) drylands development; 2) biodiversity in agriculture; 3) civil society; 4) food security; and 5) Volunteers for Sustainable Development. In September 2004, however, the DF sent a memorandum to its partners, suggesting a revision of the country-specific strategy for Ethiopia. The stated reason for the revision had to do with the political developments in Ethiopia since the mid-1990s, especially the decentralisation process now in train. This revision does not mean a dramatic departure from the current strategy and priorities. It rather signals a shift of emphasis and a clearer focus on certain issues. Hence, the DF refers to “diversification” to indicate the limited nature of the change. Existing partnerships and projects will be carried forward within the foreseeable future, but the range of partners will be broadened to include other NGOs in different social, ethnic, political and geographical contexts.

The main emphasis in Ethiopia will be on the drylands and civil-society development. The main goal is improved food security for rural households in the drylands. The strategy seeks to strike a balance between service delivery and policy advocacy for social change. The DF would like to help reinforce the decentralisation of state structures by creating synergies between state structures at the woreda level, NGOs and traditional governance institutions. In other words, the DF’s entry points are three-pronged while underlining the complementary interaction between them. In all project activities, conservation of biodiversity in agriculture, including pastoralism, will be a key objective. Such project work at the grassroots will be combined with advocacy work at the federal and international levels with respect to the UNCCD and the CBD. The envisaged beneficiaries include rural arable-farming and pastoral households in the drylands, in particular women and women-headed households, youth and the landless. In any community, the poorest and most vulnerable will be given priority. During 2005–09, the expansion of DF activities will target mainly pastoralists and agropastoralists as direct beneficiaries.

Issues cutting across all activities include the rights-based approach to development as the normative foundation; gender sensitivity and equality; HIV/AIDS prevention, care and coping; participation, transparency, accountability and good governance; assessing and minimising adverse environmental impacts; and linking relief to development.

The intention is to retain the partnership approach but develop new partnerships in new substantive fields and geographical areas. Apart from the individual partner institutions in Ethiopia, the DCG will continue to play a significant role. A strategic partnership will be developed with the Embassy in Addis. The DF’s special relationship with the NPA as a like-minded NGO will be continued, and new relationships will be fostered with government agencies, traditional leaders and other stakeholders.

8.1 General assessment in the light of review findings

The DF's new Ethiopian strategy is still in its infancy, and it is difficult to say how it will be further specified and operationalised. With that qualification, however, a preliminary assessment can be made in light of the review team's findings. Overall, the new strategy is well conceived, but the team has certain reservations regarding some aspects of it and the process leading up to it:

1. The tone of the September 2004 memo deviates somewhat from the partnership spirit of discussion and mutual trust. It refers to decisions by the DF Board on 27 May 2004 and appears to present the partners with a *fait accompli*. The tougher language of the memo is also reflected in the final strategy document, which states that prospective new partners should "be willing to comply with the policy of the Development Fund."
2. The rights-based approach to development should be introduced with circumspection. The current partners are clearly uneasy about this approach. Moreover, the DF needs greater expertise in legal and social science aspects of the matter. In Chapter 6, the review team recommends that the concept of the rights-based approach and its operationalisation be subjected to careful examination by the DF and its partners in conjunction with external expertise. The purpose of such an examination would not only be to make it more applicable to the circumstances in Ethiopia but also to allay the apprehensions of the partners. Only after such an examination has been done would it be advisable to implement the approach.
3. It follows from the discussion on the rights-based approach in Chapter 6 that caution should be exercised with regard to civil and political rights that do not stem from project-related work with the partners. Even when they do stem from projects, they could be very controversial, e.g. land rights. The current tense political situation in Ethiopia currently reinforces this point. The partners have clearly voiced reservations about "abstract" advocacy work not anchored in concrete activities in local communities.
4. When shifting attention to the pastoral areas, specifically to Afar Region, the complexity of pastoral systems and their interaction with other economic activities dictate that the DF increase its professional competence in this field. A modicum of such expertise is needed in-house but it will also need to draw on other professionals within Ethiopia and internationally. In the same vein, additional expertise on decentralisation is needed to help develop good working relations with the woreda administrations.

With these caveats, the review team finds the future strategic plans of the DF sensible, and supports continued movement in that direction, albeit slowly so as to address the above-mentioned reservations.

8.2 Assessment in relation to the UNCCD and the CBD

The Norwegian Embassy has recently taken on responsibility as *chef de file* to facilitate the process of implementing the UNCCD in Ethiopia, working together with the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA), the national government focal point for the Convention. What this responsibility entails is still to be defined, but the decision to form a strategic partnership between the DF and the Embassy is, in part, related to this new responsibility. Although the content and nature of the strategic partnership are yet to be agreed, a substantial part of it will certainly relate to the implementation of the UNCCD in Ethiopia and the role of the NGO community in this process.

In addition to its strategic partnership with the DF, the Embassy has selected the NCA as the UNCCD *chef de file* for NGOs until Ethiopian NGOs have selected their own representative. Since neither the Embassy–DF nor the Embassy–NCA strategic partnership has yet been filled with substance, the division of labour between them remains undefined. In any case, the DF and the Embassy have a common interest in fulfilling the obligations that go with the Embassy's *chef de file* task, even though they may differ regarding scope and priorities. No doubt the DF will carry on its partnership portfolio and infuse it with still more anti-desertification and biodiversity objectives. The Embassy, for its part, is likely to relate more to other bilateral and multilateral

donors in Ethiopia and to Ethiopian authorities dealing with these issues. None of the findings of the review team suggests that DF support to the Embassy's endeavours as *chef de file* by way of a strategic partnership would run counter to the DF's mode of operation and priorities thus far. Indeed, its portfolio to date fits like hand in glove with its UNCCD-related work. They are complementary and mutually reinforcing.

The DF appears to give priority to the UNCCD over the CBD. Three main arguments were heard in favour of this stance:

1. The UNCCD is said to give NGOs greater scope in the implementation of the convention. Both conventions are inter-governmental treaties, but recognise in their preambles the role that NGOs may play in implementation. Whereas the UNCCD treaty text is interspersed with several references to possible contributions of NGOs, the same is not true of the CBD. There is therefore some merit to the DF argument that – as an NGO – it seems to fit better within the UNCCD framework, particularly as the convention is useful as a tool for DF advocacy work on food security and NRM in the drylands.
2. The DF expressed the view that little progress has been made in implementing the UNCCD and that renewed efforts are needed to revitalise the convention. As an NGO with a focus on dryland development, it sees a niche for itself towards such a revitalisation.
3. The review team also heard notions by two DF staff members that the UNCCD is a Southern convention, whereas the CBD favours Northern interests with its bias towards biotechnology and patenting genetic material. This may be one reason for greater sympathy to support the UNCCD. It was also striking that the DF's Ethiopian partners working in the field did not give high priority to engaging in the CBD debates, but did express interest in maintaining biodiversity and indigenous knowledge about it within the context of dryland development.

Both conventions are highly relevant to the DF's agendas of combating desertification and safeguarding agricultural biodiversity. Even if the perception were correct that the CBD reflects Northern interests, it does not follow that the DF would be justified in ignoring the convention. Rather, from the viewpoint of the DF's value foundation and profile, "knowing one's enemy" in order to fight it would be a more logical response. The DF probably sees the World Trade Organisation as predominantly representing the rich and powerful trading nations, but does not dismiss it as irrelevant for that reason. The DF ought to work with both the UNCCD and the CBD, if it takes its commitment to agricultural biodiversity seriously. The fact that Ethiopia is exceptionally rich in terms of agricultural biodiversity only reinforces this argument.

8.3 Assessment in relation to Norwegian development strategy in Ethiopia

Norway has singled out Ethiopia as a pilot country for preparing a strategy for support to the agricultural sector. This is an attempt to operationalise the *Plan of Action for Agriculture in Norwegian Development Work* in a country context. Work on this strategy for Ethiopia is in progress; a draft is expected in mid-2006. Indications are that Ethiopia's extensive drylands will figure high in the order of priority. This would fit well with the DF's priorities as outlined in its strategy. The strategic partnership between the DF and the Embassy is expected to encompass preparatory work on the pilot plan to support Ethiopian agriculture and later its implementation. The review team considers that the DF has considerable contributions to make in this regard.

For more than two decades, the DF has been involved in development activities in the drylands of Ethiopia, predominantly in Tigray but more recently also in Afar Region. These activities have centred on dryland-farming systems in a wide sense, including technical inputs, NRM and socio-economic issues. Through its partners, the DF has thus accumulated considerable experience in both preparation and implementation of projects, often in a facilitating role within partnerships. This long-standing experience could very well be drawn upon in the preparation of the pilot plan for Norwegian support to Ethiopia's agriculture sector. Although the DF experience is confined to Tigray and Afar Regions, some of this is likely to be relevant also to other parts of the country.

Of relevance is not only the DF's project experience but also its network of NGOs and professional contacts within Ethiopia and beyond. India is an obvious case in point. These networks could be exploited to bring in external expertise if it is not available closer at hand.

In the fields of combating desertification and safeguarding biodiversity, the DF has also accumulated much competence. Assuming that these challenges will form an integral part of the pilot plan, the DF would be well placed to make a contribution to it.

While the Embassy will have overall responsibility as *chef de file* for implementing the UNCCD in Ethiopia, plans are afoot to allocate regional *chefs de file* to various bilateral donors. Norway is poised to focus on Afar Region. This accords well with the DF's intention to expand its activities in this region as well as with the Embassy's contemplated strategic partnership with the DF for collaboration in activities related to dryland-farming and pastoral systems.

The review team has noted a certain apprehension among the present partners in Tigray Region that the new orientation is likely to work to their disadvantage. Not entirely without foundation, there is a sense of a zero-sum game, i.e. that when resources are shifted to Afar Region, there will be correspondingly less available for the Tigray partners. The review team does not know whether the Norwegian government will increase the amount channelled through the DF for its Ethiopia portfolio. That said, however, there is some merit to the argument that, since the Embassy is now *chef de file* and also plans a Norwegian focus on Afar Region in implementing the UNCCD, it would be logical to follow up with additional funds destined for this region.

8.4 The DF in a changing environment of donor policies and strategies

The prevalent view in civil society is that NGOs should assume a critical posture to the policies and strategies of states. However, there is a large grey zone between a disassociated and critical stance, on the one hand, and being co-opted, on the other. Owing to its high dependency on state funding, the DF's room to manoeuvre appears limited. However, in the political culture and tradition of Norway, the state tolerates even harsh criticism from the NGOs that it funds. Norwegian aid policies have been progressive compared to the mainstream in the international donor community. Both of these factors tend to work towards a convergence of state and NGO policies and views. Although the DF is generally regarded as a "radical" NGO in Norway, its policies and programmes do not depart all that much from those of other Norwegian NGOs. The fact that NORAD has continued to fund the DF is testimony to its acceptable profile, given its focus on environmental issues and poverty reduction, which are consonant with state priorities.

To the extent that there is any divergence between the DF and official Norwegian policy, it is rather in emphasis and speed of action. Stemming from its profile, the DF has – mainly through DCG Norway – actively lobbied for more decisive Norwegian action with regard to the UNCCD, leading to the Embassy's accepting responsibility as *chef de file* for UNCCD matters in Ethiopia. This is an example of how the DF – together with other Norwegian agencies – has influenced the Norwegian state, rather than *vice versa*.

The DF's strong focus on networking to coordinate and harmonise agendas but also to lobby with respect to national and international development policies fits well into the increasing attention that is being paid by donors to multilateral coordination of development activities.

9. Conclusions and recommendations

9.1 Conclusions

The portfolio of the DF in Ethiopia has evolved from supporting relief work by one Tigrayan organisation in the 1980s to supporting development work by several organisations in Tigray and Afar Regions and networking of its partners with still more organisations in Ethiopia and abroad.

The focus of the portfolio is on socio-economic development to alleviate poverty and increase food security, primarily through agriculture, and on ecologically-sound NRM in dryland areas. In recent years, the DF has given greater attention to strengthening civil society and pastoral livelihood development. It currently supports ten projects involving Ethiopian organisations; two more projects / partnerships are in preparation.

Institutional and professional capacity of the DF. The DF is reasonably well endowed in terms of institutional and professional capacity relevant to its Ethiopian portfolio. To the extent that in-house professional expertise is lacking, the DF has successfully enlisted complementary assistance from external sources. However, in the case of the voters' education activities, it ventured beyond its scope of expertise and has not been able to give sufficient advisory support.

Although it has no resident representation in Ethiopia, the DF has managed its portfolio in a satisfactory manner through good communication and regular monitoring *cum* backstopping visits. The partnership model applied by the DF – built on mutual trust – involves a high degree of delegation of managerial and administrative responsibility to its Ethiopian partners. This model is probably cost effective, although it involves certain risks.

Some deficiencies in administrative procedures were made evident by the incident in which 5 million NOK foreseen for emergency aid were “forgotten” in a bank account in Norway, but the DF has reassured the MFA that such an incident will not recur.

Achievements of DF-supported project work in Ethiopia. All DF-supported projects are highly relevant to Tigray and Afar regional priorities, operating in drought-prone areas with poor and/or marginalised people. The activities are relevant beyond the confines of the project areas. All the projects address one or more of the DF's priority themes. They are relevant to most of the MDGs, especially to reducing hunger and poverty, promoting gender equality and empowering women, enhancing environmental sustainability and combating HIV/AIDS.

On the whole, the resources provided through the DF have been used efficiently to achieve its objectives. Efficiency is increased by: local contributions to complement the DF resources; the flexibility allowed in the use of resources in a process-oriented approach to development; the attention given to building the organisational capacities of the Ethiopian partners and – through them – of the beneficiary groups at the grassroots level; and the fact that seed money provided through the DF has stimulated other agencies to implement and scale up some activities started with DF support.

The DF-supported work in Tigray Region has rendered local people better able to manage their natural resources in a sustainable way, although the process of handing over responsibility from project staff to local communities could be speeded up. It is too early to assess the effectiveness of the work among pastoralists in Afar Region, but the approach being taken is likely to lead to enhancing the well-being and self-reliance of the pastoralists.

The projects supported by the DF appear to be following good trajectories towards achieving their multiple aims. The current policy in Ethiopia to decentralise government administration offers enabling conditions for reaching DF objectives of community empowerment, although close attention will have to be given to ensuring that the policy is actually implemented. The DF and its partners could do more to integrate plans for contingencies (e.g. droughts) into project planning; the lack of such contingency planning has led to some unexpected setbacks.

Processes and instruments in projects and partnerships. The DF's participatory approach helps anchor projects in local communities. The approach takes the needs identified at the grassroots as point of departure. The procedures of planning by the DF and its partners provide space for dialogue and mutual influence. By promoting local ownership through partner and community involvement, the DF lays a basis for successful and cost-effective implementation and creates good prospects for long-term sustainability. The DF-funded research accompanying

the development work contributes to a greater understanding of social and ecological dynamics in the drylands.

The DF prides itself in working with locally-based organisations that are not affiliated with political parties but – as a result of the unique history of its interaction with NGOs in Tigray Region, starting as part of a liberation movement which has since assumed power – this does not apply to the DF's major partners there. However, the close collaboration between these partners and the government enhances cost effectiveness, impact and sustainability.

The flow of information between DF and its partners is generally satisfactory, but has sometimes been erratic owing to fluctuating Internet connectivity. There is room for improvement in the system of information storage and retrieval at DF headquarters.

M&E is carried out with the participation of different stakeholders at community and higher government levels, but insufficient attention is given to processes of institutional change. The DF's partner organisations have given too little thought thus far to issues of "exit strategies" in the sense of ceasing to receive DF funds for implementing development projects and taking on new roles in partnership relations.

A major weakness of the DF is its vulnerability to funding fluctuations and shocks. The financial framework agreement with NORAD (now with the MFA) provides medium-term predictability, but the high degree of DF dependency on one source of funding is a matter of concern.

Cooperation and networking. The DF is strong in linkages and is involved in several networks. The most important ones for the Ethiopian portfolio are the DCG and the TP. Both have been fruitful and assisted the partners in their programmes, some partners to a greater degree than others. The DF has also helped link its partners with other sources of expertise and resources.

However, the dissemination of information to other organisations not funded by Norway could be improved. Moreover, the interconnection between research and application of research findings is still weak. DCG Ethiopia could do much more to reach target groups in government and the NGO community. The membership base of DCG Ethiopia is too narrow and too Norwegian in orientation, and consists of organisations working mainly in the highlands. It should include more Ethiopian organisations, especially those concerned with pastoralism, with a view to building a stronger national platform for dryland development. This is particularly relevant in the light of the Embassy's role as UNCCD *chef de file* and the new plan being drawn up for Norwegian support to Ethiopia's agricultural sector with its emphasis on dryland and pastoral systems.

The relations between the DF and the Embassy are generally good, although the latter would like to have closer communication through resident representation of the DF in Ethiopia. The DF's Ethiopian partners are divided on this issue. They see many possible advantages, but also many disadvantages. The DF is therefore faced with a difficult trade-off.

Gender and HIV/AIDS. Much of the work of the DF's partner organisations (not all of it funded through DF) is focused on empowering women in economic, social and political terms. WAT is undertaking some promising activities to enhance women's organisational capacities and to increase both women's and men's recognition of women's role in public decision-making. Through DF-supported projects implemented by WAT, APDA, REST and the MU, women are benefiting particularly from training and credit for small-scale business, and literacy training for women has helped qualify them for posts in mixed-gender organisations, such as marketing associations, and for development activities such as community-based social workers. Both WAT and APDA are addressing issues of women's rights, and are achieving some success in campaigns against FGM, bride abduction and child marriage. In the pastoral areas, however, most of the project work seems to be near towns rather than with more mobile groups.

The DF-supported activities are helping to reinforce processes that are already underway to achieve greater equality between men and women, supported by the Ethiopian government, donor agencies, and other NGOs and CSOs in the country.

Most of the DF's partners have integrated activities related to HIV/AIDS into their programmes, although not always into their organisations. Much has been done to raise awareness about the dangers of HIV/AIDS and how to prevent it. However, there is little hard evidence of resulting change in behaviour. Much more could be done to give HIV/AIDS-affected families some livelihood options by developing and promoting technologies adapted to their circumstances.

Policy and strategy. The DF is broadening its range of partners to include other NGOs in different social, ethnic, political and geographical contexts. It is focusing on dryland and civil-society development, seeking a balance between service delivery and advocacy for social change. It seeks to reinforce the ongoing decentralisation of state structures, creating synergies with traditional governance institutions, with a particular focus on pastoral societies. However, there is a need for more dialogue with partners about the DF strategy and the intentions behind it, as well as about how best to address human-rights issues in the specific context of Ethiopia.

The strategies of the DF and the Embassy in relation to the UNCCD are complementary and mutually reinforcing. This is hardly surprising, as it was partly as a result of the DF's lobbying through the DCG that the Embassy has assumed the task of working closely with the EPA to facilitate implementation of the UNCCD in Ethiopia. At the moment, the DF is giving priority to the UNCCD rather than the CBD, which seems to allow NGOs less room in its implementation.

The DF and its Ethiopian partners have accumulated considerable experience in preparing and implementing development activities in the drylands in Tigray and more recently also in Afar Region. This experience will be valuable to the Embassy in preparing and implementing the pilot plan for Norwegian support to Ethiopia's agricultural sector, as will the DF's experience in facilitating multi-stakeholder partnerships for mutual learning and coordination.

Strengths and weaknesses of the DF. Some key strengths and weaknesses of the DF in handling its portfolio in Ethiopia can be summarised as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Major strengths and weaknesses of the DF

Strengths	Weaknesses
Listening and responding to partners' concerns, taking their needs as point of departure, following a process-oriented approach	Some partners feel that DF is now coming in with preconceived ideas
Dialogue and flexibility in preparing and implementing projects, providing ideas as basis for discussion of content and methods	Lack of clarity regarding shift in strategy, so that some partners perceive it as abandonment
Trust in partners' potentials and support to capacity building	Vulnerability to funding fluctuations and shocks
Building on personal relationships/ friendships, with a strong sense of history of the relationship	In some cases, weak institutionalisation of relationships
Good-quality communication with partners, but not so frequent that they feel controlled	Gaps in procedures and follow-up routines regarding flow of funds
Openness to new themes (e.g. marketing) that build on past achievements (e.g. higher yields)	Possibly stretching itself too thin (new themes); limited in-house capacity to handle larger portfolio
Combining relief and development activities	Weak in contingency planning
Good attention to issues of gender and HIV/AIDS at level of awareness-raising	Insufficient attention to issues of mitigating the effects of HIV/AIDS
Building civil society primarily through local institutional development	Lack of attention to planning change in roles and responsibilities of partners over time
Capacity to facilitate national and global networking, linking with other expertise	Weak interconnection between research and application of research findings

9.2 Recommendations

Regarding the DF as an organisation

- **Thematic focus.** The DF would be well-advised to retain its thematic focus on areas in which it has a comparative advantage, which lie in the environment-poverty nexus. Rather than moving into areas in which it does not have adequate expertise to advise and follow up, such as in election-related matters, it should link partners interested in these areas with other supporting institutions that are more experienced.
- **Additional expertise.** As the DF gives increasing attention to pastoral areas, it will need to deepen its relevant expertise and ally itself with external sources of expertise in Ethiopia and internationally. It will need more expertise in decentralisation to help develop good working relations with the woreda administrations, particularly in Afar Region where the links between traditional and modern governance systems are weak. The DF should also seek external expertise in the legal and social science aspects of the rights-based approach, particularly regarding rights of access to land.
- **Institutional memory.** The DF should address some weaknesses in its information storage and retrieval system. It should also pay more attention to induction of new staff members so that they are fully aware of the history and relationship that have been built up with partners and of the principles and values underlying those partnerships, inculcating an organisational culture of solidarity.

Project work in Ethiopia

- **Scaling up “food-for-livelihood”.** The DF should encourage REST to expand the “food-for-livelihood” approach, so that the households that receive the food for work also benefit directly from the results of the work they have done to obtain the food.
- **Enhancing local business skills.** More attention should be paid to enhancing the business-management skills of individuals and especially CBOs, e.g. in managing group-owned funds so that these generate income rather than being “dead” capital.
- **Local organisational development.** The work on local organisational development in the DF-supported projects needs a stronger conceptual framework that is translated into practice, with decisions about activities, use of funds, etc. being made by the local people concerned, rather than by project staff. The DF needs to develop and implement a strategy such that partner organisations shift from deciding for and representing disadvantaged people to helping them decide for and represent themselves. In all areas in which it works, the DF should promote plurality in supporting civil-society development, as it is through checks and balances by diverse and outspoken actors that a strong democracy can grow. In absence of vibrant civil society in Afar Region, the DF’s cautious approach of experimenting with local institutional development in a pilot woreda seems warranted.
- **Community-level learning.** Greater emphasis should be put on community-level learning-by-doing by facilitating joint reflection on processes and outcomes. This could well be combined with community-based documentation of what local groups are doing and how, drawing out lessons learnt and defining the way forward. Documentation can be an effective form of participatory self-evaluation, as the different perspectives on what happened have to be pieced together to approach the “truth”.
- **Documentation.** The DF-funded work in Ethiopia would have greater impact if the good practices of the partner organisations and the rural groups they are supporting would be better documented and widely disseminated. The good practices should include not only effective technologies, such as using high-potential indigenous breeds for milk production, but also effective approaches, such as helping local women establish small-scale rotating credit facilities. It would also be useful if the DF’s partners would analyse and document how their activities are contributing to overarching goals such as strengthening human rights, combating desertification and maintaining biodiversity, as this would give other development actors some concrete examples of how to reach these goals.

Processes and instruments

- **Conceptual clarity.** There appear to be differences between the DF and its partners with respect to their understanding of various issues, such as the rights-based approach to development and the significance of the UNCCD and the CBD for work at the grassroots. The DF needs to make greater efforts to clarify concepts jointly with its partners within the context of local perceptions and actions.
- **Access to information.** The DF should encourage its partners to build local people's capacities to access information about their rights and to analyse policy and government action, starting at community and village level. In the context of elections, this could be combined with civic education focused on issues. At the same time, in the international arena, the DF should campaign to strengthen poor people's rights of access to information.
- **M&E.** The M&E systems used by the DF and its partners include indicators meant to address environmental, economic, sociocultural and empowerment issues, but the validity of these indicators needs closer examination. Better ways should be sought to capture qualitative changes, e.g. institutional development, and dynamic issues that are beyond the project activities but (could) influence them, e.g. local innovation and adaptation processes and diffusion outside the project areas. In addition, more attention should be given to assessing the environmental impact of introduced technologies before wide-scale promotion.
- **Monitoring research.** The DF should consider including the funding of "formative process / monitoring research" (process documentation and analysis) in selected interventions. To do so, the development partners would need to forge stronger links with research organisations.
- **Need for long time horizons.** Donors have to take a long-term view of development support to marginal areas with enormous challenges in terms of food security and civil-society development. For their planning with regard to length of partnership, the DF and its partners ought to involve the back-donor(s) in laying some time-horizon premises.
- **Evolution of partnerships.** The DF and its partners should develop self-monitoring systems to examine the process of organisational strengthening aimed at self-reliance. From the start, the proportion of financial contributions from each side of the partnership should be planned for a gradual decrease of external funding and a gradual increase of own contributions. This refers to relations between the DF and its partner organisations as well as between these and local community organisations. The roles within the partnerships should change, with the recipients assuming increasing responsibility. Both parties should assess this change jointly.
- **Priorities in institution building.** The DF is but one of several organisations contributing to the institutional development of its partners. It should monitor institutional dynamism and adjust its relations accordingly. Those partners that, through the support of the DF and other agencies, have developed into strong institutions do not need DF's capacity-building support to the same extent as do weaker institutions. The DF should re-consider its support in this light. In view of the DF's focus on disadvantaged groups, it should give particular attention to building the capacities of WAT, which has good potential for bringing about positive change for women and girls. To the extent that the DF continues partnership with well-established academic and research institutions, it should focus on applying research findings in order to improve NRM and enhance food security in dryland areas, i.e. on bridging the gap between research and knowledge application at the grassroots.
- **Capitalising on partners' experience.** The knowledge and experience that current partners – particularly REST – have accumulated over the years of collaboration with the DF should be used as inputs to strengthen the work of new partners addressing similar challenges.
- **Reducing dependency.** The DF has helped link its partners to various sources of funding and information. These efforts should be intensified so as to reduce dependency on DF but also as an avenue to innovative ideas from other sources. The DF itself should explore ways to diversify its revenue base and make itself less dependent on government funding.

Cooperation and networking

- **Wider learning.** The DF should help its Ethiopian partners think through and plan how networking can be better organised and resourced to allow wider learning in other parts of Ethiopia and elsewhere in northeast Africa. This could include cross-visits by partners as well as cross-visits by members of farmers' and women's organisations for sharing experiences in sustainable dryland development, especially within Ethiopia. To enhance networking, the DF and its partners should consider how to improve the flow of information within each institution to which individuals in the networks belong.
- **Linking with other fora.** DCG Ethiopia should link up with existing networks and fora with similar mandates and jointly seek ways to become an Ethiopian network and lobbying force for dryland development, rather than a forum of Norwegian-funded organisations. In addition, also for mutual learning and greater strength in lobbying, the DF should encourage DCG Ethiopia to link more with other DCGs in the South, rather than primarily with DCG Norway.
- **Research and policy linkages.** The DF should encourage its Ethiopian partners to connect to such initiatives as the regional committees for research–extension linkages to bridge gaps between research, policy and application in tackling food insecurity. Training in formulating proposals for development-oriented research should be organised for the NGO partners.
- **DF–Embassy communication.** In view of its ethos of partnership, the DF should – together with its Ethiopian partners – consider carefully the pros and cons of different options to deal with the new constellation with respect to a) Embassy administration of funds for the DF's partners, and b) the DF's strategic partnership with the Embassy as UNCCD *chef de file*; and reach consensus. Resident representation would be only one option. Whatever decision is reached, the DF and the Embassy should spell out clearly their respective roles and responsibilities in communication with the DF's partners and with each other.

Gender and HIV/AIDS

- **Assessing gender impact.** The DF and its partners should assess how the development activities related to agriculture, including livestock husbandry, are influencing gender relations and the status of women in economic, social and political (public decision-making) terms. This would help them strengthen their contribution to gender equality.
- **Girls' rights.** WAT and APDA are addressing girls' rights (preventing FGM, bride abduction and child marriage) but these activities should be stepped up in view of the special emphasis that the Norwegian development policy gives to the rights of children and to the MDG to achieve universal primary education for girls.
- **Pastoral women.** DF-supported project activities should give more attention to improving the situation of pastoral women who live in more remote areas of the lowlands, without obliging the women to move to settlements.
- **HIV/AIDS.** The DF and its partners should review its work thus far concerned with combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other debilitating diseases, prioritise activities, assess where impact will be greatest and consider giving more attention to the role that agriculture – including small-scale livestock-keeping – can play in mitigating the effects of disease on household capacity to make a living. Particular attention should be given to assessing the situation and needs of children orphaned by HIV/AIDS and taking appropriate action.
- **Coordination of related activities.** On the cross-cutting issues of gender and HIV/AIDS, the DF should encourage collaboration or at least coordination of the different partner organisations that it is supporting in a given region, in order to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of their work in this connection.

DF policy and strategy

- **Civic education at the appropriate level.** DF's work in civic education should be linked to its development work at the grassroots, focusing on information about issues and differences between parties in this respect, to contribute to the democratic debate at the local level.

- **Clarifying the rights-based approach.** The rights-based approach to development should be introduced with circumspection. The DF and its partners, together with external experts, should examine carefully the concept and its operationalisation. They should develop a strategy adapted to the specific circumstances in Ethiopia. Caution should be exercised with respect to advocating civil and political rights that do not stem from project-related work.
- **Making rights-based work explicit.** The DF and its partners should examine the extent to which their work entails an inherent rights-based approach. They should make this explicit in the way they present their work publicly, relating it to specific articles of international human rights conventions. In the process of examining their work in this light, they are likely to recognise aspects to which they need to give more attention – ways in which they could adjust their approach at local and regional level so that especially the poorer and more marginalised people can make their voices heard.
- **UNCCD and CBD.** These are broad-based conventions that encompass dryland farming and NRM in both the highlands (where settled mixed farming prevails) and the lowlands (where more mobile forms of pastoralism prevail). The DF's support to implementing the two conventions should give attention to the interface between these two agro-ecological zones. Within its Ethiopia portfolio, the DF already pays good attention to implementation of the UNCCD. It should, however, pay more attention than it does at present to the CBD, if it takes its commitment to agricultural biodiversity seriously.
- **Future contribution to Norwegian support for Ethiopian agriculture.** The Embassy is looking to the DF to help realise Norway's Pilot Action Plan for Support to Ethiopia's Agricultural Sector. It would be important that the DF is involved already in the early stages of designing this plan, so that it can bring in its experience in working in dryland areas of Ethiopia. The DF may have to take a pro-active role to ensure that it is contributing to the planning process, and the MFA should encourage this collaboration.

Annexes

- 1. Terms of Reference**
- 2. Itinerary of review mission**
- 3. Persons consulted**
- 4. Documents consulted**
- 5. Expertise of DF professional staff and inputs into the Ethiopia portfolio**
- 6. Ethiopian partner institutions and their DF-supported projects**

Annex 1: Terms of Reference – Review of the Development Fund’s portfolio in Ethiopia

1. Background

The Development Fund (DF), established in 1978, is a Norwegian non-governmental organisation operating in several countries in Africa, Asia and Central America. The Development Fund has from the 1978 received financial contributions from Norwegian development assistance funds through NORAD. The assistance from NORAD has been given in terms of a programme-based framework agreement. It amounts to NOK 37 mill. in 2005, of which NOK 15 mill. is allocated specifically for programmes and projects in Ethiopia. As from January 2005, the administrative and financial responsibility for Norwegian support to the DF’s work in Ethiopia has been shifted from NORAD/Oslo to the Norwegian Embassy in Addis Ababa as part of the newly established arrangement of strategic partnerships between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs/Embassies and Norwegian development NGOs.

The Development Fund started its support to Ethiopian partners such as the Relief Society of Tigray (REST) in 1982, in cooperation with the Norwegian government and other Norwegian NGOs. In 1991 REST was registered as an NGO and started to focus on long-term development. The Development Fund has continued its involvement in Tigray to date in supporting innovative work in the drylands, facilitated and implemented mainly by local organisations. In 1998, the DF expanded its geographical scope in Ethiopia to encompass the Afar region as a new area of work.

The Development Fund has for several years engaged in facilitating exchange of experience and learning through networking, not only across the regions of Ethiopia but also between countries and continents facing dryland challenges. The Triangular Institutional Cooperation between Ethiopia, India and Norway, intended to foster South-South links in the management of natural resources in semi-arid areas, is an example of such networks. The Development Fund is also playing a role in facilitating participation by network partners in relevant international forums as well as assisting local partners in leveraging funds from other donors/sources.

The partnerships between the Development Fund and Ethiopian partners – especially in Tigray – have developed over the years and the close interactions are said to have significantly influenced the development of the DF and its strategies. As of 2004, the partners of the DF in Ethiopia include the Relief Society of Tigray (REST); the Women’s Association of Tigray (WAT); Mekelle University as the implementing partner in the Afar region through the Afar Integrated Pastoral Development Programme, as well as a partner in the triangular collaboration between Ethiopia, India and Norway; the Afar Pastoralist Development Association (APDA); and local/regional government bodies in the absence of NGOs as partners.

The Dryland Coordination Group (DCG) of Norway and Ethiopia has also been an important partner in the DF’s work in Ethiopia, and the DF work is closely linked to the DCG strategy. Moreover, the DF is also collaborating closely with Norwegian People’s Aid in Ethiopia.

The Development Fund’s current strategic framework is set out in the *Strategic plan 2003–2007* and *Development Fund’s strategy for Ethiopia 2005–2009*.

The mission of the Development Fund is to contribute, with emphasis on long-term measures, to promoting a fairer distribution of the world’s resources, supporting sustainable development and local participation aimed at promoting democracy and human rights, reducing poverty and safeguarding the environment. In accordance with the DF’s Strategic Plan (2003–2007), all DF projects are organised into five thematic programmes which reflect and incorporate the Development Fund’s vision and purpose. They are organised with a view to ensuring good coordination of related projects, and to creating synergy and exchange between them.

The five thematic programmes are as follows:

Programme 1: Drylands

To strengthen efforts towards sustainable development in dryland areas. To improve participation and follow-up at all levels regarding the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

Programme 2: Biodiversity in Agriculture

To promote conservation and the development of biological diversity, and to contribute to involving all levels of production in line with the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Food security takes centre stage through the conservation and development of biodiversity on arable land, which is considered part of the whole ecosystem.

Programme 3: Civil Society

To strengthen democracy and popular participation in the policy-making process at the local, national, and international level in order to promote sustainable development.

Programme 4: Food Security

To advocate national and international policies securing everyone's right to food, based on sustainable agriculture, national food sovereignty, and the values of the Development Fund.

Programme 5: Volunteers for Sustainable Development

To bring about reciprocal learning, cultural exchange and personal ties between partner organisations in Norway and in the South.

The current framework agreement between The Development Fund and NORAD covers the period from 2003 to 2006 and is based on the DF's Multi-annual Plan 2003–2006. The priority for the DF's work in Ethiopia, as agreed upon in the frame agreement, falls under the thematic programme area *Drylands*, amounting to an indicative budget of NOK 68 mill. for the period 2003–2006. However, the portfolio is also guided by other thematic programmes such as *Civil Society* and *Biodiversity in Agriculture*.

The following external evaluations and reviews of the DF's work in Ethiopia, most relevant to the current review, have been conducted:

- Evaluation of DF-funded Development Programmes implemented by the Relief Society of Tigray (REST) – May 2001
- Evaluation of DF-funded Afar Integrated Pastoral Development Programme – October 2001
- An evaluation of The Triangular Institutional Cooperation Project – September 2002
- Evaluation Report on impact of Leadership and Financial Management Training for Women Association of Tigray (WAT) – undated

A missing element in previous reviews and evaluations is an investigation into and an assessment of the efficiency (relationship between input and output) and effectiveness (relationship between output and outcome or durable impact) of the DF's core operations and programmes in Ethiopia. It has been decided, therefore, to include this element in the current review.

This review is commissioned by NORAD/Oslo in conjunction with the Norwegian Embassy in Addis Ababa. The findings of the review will offer an opportunity for the DF to make any necessary amendments in existing policies, strategies, programmes and operations, and to provide a solid basis for defining future cooperation between the DF and donors. The review will be carried out by a team of international consultants.

2. Purpose and objectives of the review

The main purpose is to review the extent to which the Development Fund's strategy and organisational structure and procedures are effective in reaching its development goals in Ethiopia. It is envisaged that the review findings will provide a basis for learning by the DF and donors with a view to designing improved future programmes.

The objectives of the review are:

- To assess the institutional and professional capacity of the DF office to manage and develop the organisation's Ethiopia portfolio and the interaction with other Norwegian institutions working in Ethiopia, with a view to enhancing institutional learning.
- To assess the achievements and performance of the DF's operations and programmes in Ethiopia in terms of efficiency, effectiveness and relevance, and to assess the DF's strengths and weaknesses in these respects.
- To assess the DF's planning processes and instruments, monitoring, evaluation and reporting systems, and funding mechanisms. Specific recommendations are expected in respect of the DF-donor information flows, and the targets, indicators and (quantitative) monitoring necessary to judge performance and to support adaptive management.
- To assess the partnership relations and co-operation with local and international NGOs (including the Dryland Coordination Group), research institutions and government institutions at various levels.
- To assess the Developments Fund's new strategy for Ethiopia 2005–2009 in the light of the review findings and in relation to the objectives of the CBD and UNCCD conventions, as well as possible contribution to the Norwegian Action Plan for Support to Ethiopia's Agriculture Sector.

The review shall in particular:

- Provide factual (quantitative and qualitative) information on the efficiency (the relationship of input to output) and effectiveness (the relationship of output to outcome or durable impact) of the DF's core operations and programmes in Ethiopia. This will include a review of the planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting systems and mechanisms for institutional learning.
- Provide information on the DF's practices and strengths and weaknesses with respect to its potential for influence and dialogue with Ethiopian stakeholders – while making a distinction between REST and smaller partner organisations – including:
 - ü criteria for partner selection;
 - ü initiation and planning systems;
 - ü capacity building in partner organisations;
 - ü role and approach of the DF and its partners related to decentralisation and co-ordination with national, regional and local authorities;
 - ü human rights advocacy at relevant levels;
 - ü anti-corruption measures;
 - ü gender policies;
 - ü handling of HIV/AIDS issues;
 - ü models of participatory local development; and
 - ü exit strategies.
- Assess the role of the DF in a changing environment of donor policies and strategies (co-ordination and harmonisation of agendas, various types of strategic partnerships, results-orientated monitoring and evaluation, etc.), including:
 - ü implications of not having resident representatives in the field;
 - ü its strong focus on networking;
 - ü its strengths and weaknesses.
- To recommend and justify possible policy and operational changes in order to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the DF's activities.

3. Scope and planning of the review

3.1 Scope

The time period to be covered by the review is 2003–2005.

The review shall take into account the fact that the DF's strategy review process in 2004 for Ethiopia resulted in the formulation of a new strategy: *Development Fund's strategy for Ethiopia 2005–2009*.

In addition, the team may evaluate any other matter considered relevant to the tasks listed under item 2 above.

3.2 Planning

Throughout the review process, the evaluators must make efforts to allow the review to become a learning experience for persons, institutions and organisations involved as stakeholders in the DF network. This includes organising presentations concerning the review framework and process as well as key findings for the DF's employees in Oslo. A debriefing session should also be organised for network members in Ethiopia and the Norwegian Embassy in Addis Ababa.

In Oslo, the review will entail interviews with relevant DF staff, members of the DF board, and key persons in Noragric/Norwegian University of Life Sciences (formerly Norwegian Agricultural University).

In Ethiopia, the review will include in-depth studies of selected DF activities. Target groups will be DF partner organisations (board members, directors, project directors and field officers, members of DCG and UNCCD, Norwegian Embassy staff, and other relevant stakeholders).

The review shall be implemented during August/September 2005 by a team with relevant institutional, economic, development, local and professional expertise. The team shall comprise two international consultants and one local consultant.

The length of fieldwork will be approximately 13 working days.

4. Reporting

The review is to conclude with a concise and well-documented report (approx. 40 pages, including an executive summary of maximum 4 pages) with a few prioritised recommendations.

A draft report written in English shall be submitted to the Development Fund and NORAD/Addis Ababa Embassy three weeks after the completion of the fieldwork: 15 October 2005. Following two weeks for comments by the Development Fund and NORAD/Addis Ababa Embassy – i.e. by 29 October 2005 – the final report shall be submitted by 15 November 2005.

NORAD/MN/BNAE/8.7.2005

Annex 2: Itinerary of review mission

30.07–30.08.05	Various meetings in Addis Ababa and Mekelle by Ethiopian team member
01.09.05	Arrival of team leader in Addis Ababa
02.09.05	Addis Ababa: Initial meeting and briefing at Royal Norwegian Embassy
03.09.05	Arrival of team member from Norway Addis Ababa: Document review; preparing outline and guide questions
04.09.05	Team planning session Flight to Mekelle Planning meeting with REST
05.09.05	Mekelle: REST, WAT, TARI, MU (Law Faculty), BoFED
06.09.05	Mekelle: MU re Afar IPDP, DCG and TP; Food Security, HAPCO, BoANR, TARI (Rural Technology) , ILRI, TEPLAUA, REST
07.09.05	Kolla Tembien Woreda, Central Tigray: REST + WAT activities and beneficiaries Tukul: Solar Electrification Pilot Village
08.09.05	Aba'ala Woreda, Afar Region Zone 2: AIPDP staff and beneficiaries Mekelle: Mini-workshop with REST, WAT and MU
09.09.05	Travel to Loggia; team review of findings from Tigray Region <i>en route</i> Loggia: APDA; Semera: HAPCO
10.09.05	Eliwaha, Zone 1, Afar Region: APDA activities and beneficiaries Semera: Afar Region Pastoral Bureau, PCDP Regional Coordination Unit Travel to Awash; team review of findings from Afar Region <i>en route</i>
11.09.05	Travel to Addis Ababa; document review; field notes
12.09.05	Addis Ababa: FAO, APDA; document review
13.09.05	Addis Ababa: REST, NCA, FARM-Africa; preparation for DCG meeting
14.09.05	Addis Ababa: Project auditors; meeting at NCA with DCG members Preparation for debriefing
15.09.05	Addis Ababa: Preparation for debriefing Debriefing at Royal Norwegian Embassy
16.09.05	Initial compilation of report Meeting with DF Programme Responsible Drylands
17.09.05	Departure of international team members from Addis Ababa
to 15.10.05	Various meetings in Oslo by Norwegian team member Follow-up in Ethiopia by Ethiopian team member Further review of documents and writing of draft report

Annex 3: Persons consulted

Date 2005	Place	Name	Organisation
30 July	Addis	Yonis Berkele (Chair)	ENCCD
30 July	Addis	Diress Tsegaye (AIPDP Coordinator)	MU
04 Aug.	Addis	Dawit Kebede (Programme Manager)	NCA
18 Aug.	Addis	Tezera Getahun (Head) and Abdi Ahmed (expert)	PFE
18 Aug.	Addis	Kebu Balemie (expert)	IBC
19 Aug.	Addis	Oyvind Eggen (Programme Director)	DF
24 Aug.	Mekelle	W/ro Teamrat Belay (Chair)	WAT
24 Aug.	Mekelle	Yemane Solomon (Head, Planning & Coordination)	REST
28 Aug.	Addis	Ayele Gebre-Mariam (consultant)	Africa Consultant
29 Aug.	Addis	Dubale Admasu (APRP Coordinator)	FARM-Africa
30 Aug.	Addis	W/ro Sara Emiru and Asgedesh Eshete (Advocacy and Mobilisation Department)	HAPCO
		Tilahun Fursso (Monitoring & Evaluation)	"
		Mesfin Asefa (Project Coordination Unit)	"
30 Aug.	Addis	Tarkegn Yemesel (Liaison Officer)	APDA
02 Sept.	Addis	Ketil Eik (Development Cooperation)	Royal Norwegian
		Johan Helland (Senior Research Fellow)	Embassy
04 Sept.	Mekelle	Yemane Solomon and Haile Tesfay	REST
05 Sept.	Mekelle	Yemane Solomon (Head, Planning & Coordination)	REST
		Haile Tesfay (Head, M&E)	"
		Getachew Haile (Head, Water Resource Development)	"
		Mulegeta Berhanu (Head, ERAD)	"
		TewoldeBerhan (Head, Health Department)	"
		GebreMichael Giday (Head, Finance & Purchasing)	"
		Mintesenot Behailu (Acting President)	MU
		Getahun Kassa (Dean, Law Faculty)	"
		W/ro Teamrat Belay (Chair)	WAT
		W/ro Kiros Hagos (Secretary and Accountant)	"
		Amare Belay (Director)	TARI
		Mekonnen Abreha (Head)	BoFED
06 Sept	Mekelle	Kindeya GebreHiwot (Acting Vice-President; Head Research & Publ.; Chair AIPDP Steering Committee)	MU
		Kefelegn Kebede (AIPDP Coordinator)	"
		Fassil Kebede (Dean, Dryland Agric.& Natural Resources)	"
		Yemane Solomon (Head, Planning & Coordination)	REST
		Haile Tesfay (Head, M&E)	"
		Mulegeta Berhanu (Head, ERAD)	"
		Legesse Yihdego (General Manager)	TEPLAUA
		Yirgalem Nega (Head, Land Admin. & Registration Dept)	"
		Berhane Haile (Head)	BoANR
		GebreMedhin GebreHiwot	IPMS / ILRI
		Amare Belay (Director)	TARI
		Berket Hailselassie (Head, Mekelle Centre)	"
		Jemale Mohammed (Rural Technology Centre)	"
		Gebre GebreTadik (Rural Technology Centre)	"
		Samson Tarkegn (Head)	Food Security
		Hayelom Assefa (Head)	HAPCO
07 Sept.	Abiadi	Tewelde Kiros (Project Coordinator)	REST
		Berket Hagos (Livestock Expert)	"
		GebreMeskel GebreMichael (SWC Expert)	"
	Workamba	Two farmers	Peasant Association
		Tekeste Hagos (DA, SWC)	BoANR
		Yohannes Meberhatu (DA, Livestock)	"
		Kefle GebreGeorgies (DA, Beekeeping)	"
		W/ro Leteselase Marasa	Woman farmer
		W/ro Hada Araya (member)	Milk Association
		W/ro Mulu Tsegai (Chair)	Tabia Women Assoc.
	Tukul	W/ro Birhan Gebregziabher	Solar Technician
08 Sept.	Aba'ala	Hussien Ahmed (Site Manager)	AIPDP

		<p>Pastoralist representatives (elders, women & youths) Two elders Abedela Mohammed (Steering Committee member) W/ro Esha Dawud (member) W/ro Nuria Ibrahim (member) Mohammed Haji (member) Haji-Amin Ibrahim (member) W/ro Befana Belay and Abadi Gebreyesus (woman household head and adult son)</p>	<p>Pastoralists Village men Vet. Service Assoc. Savings & Credit Association HIV/AIDS Youth Club Women's vegetable growing group</p>
	Mekelle	<p><i>Mini workshop at REST:</i> Yemane Solomon (Head, Planning & Coordination) Haile Tesfay (Head, M&E) Getachew Haile (Head, Water Resource Development) Mulegeta Berhanu (Head, ERAD) GebreMichael Giday (Head, Finance & Purchasing) Ms Maria Strintzos (Public Relations) W/ro Teamrat Belay (Chair) Kindeya GebreHiwot (Acting Vice-President)</p>	<p>REST " " " " WAT MU</p>
09 Sept.	Loggia	Ismael Ali Gardo (Director)	APDA
	Semera	W/ro Zahera Humed (NGO Coordinator)	HAPCO
10 Sept.	Eliwaha	<p>Mohammed Awole (Manager) W/ro Mariam Wolelo (Cashier) W/ro Fatuma Umer (Accountant) W/ro Torre Issa (member)</p>	<p>Livestock Marketing Association</p>
	Semera	Awar Aliaba (Head)	Afar Region
			Pastoral Bureau
12 Sept.	Addis	<p>Wondessen Gululat (Afar Region Coordinator) Herrie Hamedu (Project Coordinator)</p>	<p>PCDP FAO Livestock Recovery Project APDA</p>
			"
13 Sept.	Addis	<p>Ms Valerie Browning (Coordinator) Melaku GebreMichael (former Desk Officer) Tekelewine Assefa (Director) Dawit Kebede (Programme Manager) Ms Sally Crafter (Country Director) Ahmed Jemal (EPP Coordinator) Dubale Admasu (APRP Coordinator)</p>	<p>REST NCA FARM-Africa " "</p>
14 Sept.	Addis	<p>Tesfaye Alemu (Audit Manager) Getachew Kassaye (Director)</p>	Chartered Accountants
		<i>DCG members debriefing:</i>	
		Abiye Alemu (Coordinator)	DCG Ethiopia
		Zelege Tesfaye (Coordinator)	NPA
		Hans Birkeland (Country Representative)	NCA
		Dawit Kebede (Programme Manager)	"
15 Sept.	Addis	<p>Mateos Mekiso (NRM expert) <i>Debriefing:</i> Ketil Eik (Development Cooperation)</p>	<p>EPA Royal Norwegian Embassy</p>
			DF
16 Sept.	Addis	Ms Gitte Motzfeldt (Programme Responsible Drylands)	REST
28 Sept.	Oslo	<p>Ms Maria Strintzos (Public Relations) Ms Gitte Motzfeldt (Programme Responsible Drylands) Trygve Berg (Associate Professor) Mitiku Haile (President) Direess Tsegaye (former AIPDP Coordinator)</p>	<p>DF UMB MU PhD student, UMB</p>
29 Sept.	Oslo	<p>Knut Nyflot (Project Coordinator) Ms Alice Ennals (Project Coordinator) Arvid Solheim (Director) Oyvind Eggen (Programme Director) Jan-Gustav Strandenaes (member)</p>	<p>DF " (TP) " "</p>
04 Oct.	Oslo	Grete Benjaminsen (Coordinator)	DF Board
			DCG Norway

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Annex 5: Expertise of DF professional staff and inputs into the Ethiopia portfolio

Position in the DF	Academic discipline	Main area of expertise / countries of work experience	Inputs into Ethiopia portfolio
Director	Agriculturist	Many years' experience in agricultural development / Mali, Niger, Ethiopia, Somalia, Nicaragua, Costa Rica	Executive
Programme Director	Social anthropology	Health and social sectors; development approaches and methods / Malawi, Botswana, South Africa, Southeast Asia	Executive
Information Director	Political science	Policy and advocacy / Latin America	Advice on international advocacy
Project Coordinator	Agriculture, education	Many years' experience in agricultural development / Uganda, Tanzania, Namibia, Kenya, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Bangladesh	Project development, backstopping and M&E
Project Coordinator	Social sciences	NRM and pastoralism in drylands; UNCCD processes; gender issues / Ethiopia, Eritrea	Project development, backstopping and M&E
Project Coordinator	NRM	Several years' experience in FAO (Rome); research; consultancy and evaluation	Technical advice in NRM; coordination of networking and TP
Project Coordinator	Geography, social sciences, religion, alternative medicine	Relief aid; development assistance; marketing / Eritrea, Ethiopia, India	Coordination and quality management of relief aid
Project Coordinator	Social sciences	Conflict management in Norway and abroad; research / Malawi, Afghanistan	Technical advice in conflict management
Project Coordinator	Environmental economics	Farmer organisation; microfinance / Central America	Technical advice in microfinance
Project Coordinator	NRM	NRM; participatory approaches; institutional development; microfinance / Thailand, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Philippines, Vietnam, Laos	Technical advice in rights-based approach
Project Coordinator	Social anthropology	Several years with UNDP; diplomat at Norwegian Embassy; biodiversity research / Zambia, India	Technical advice in biodiversity
Project Coordinator	Development studies, international relations	Peace work with various NGOs / Nicaragua, Central America	Potential role in youth empowerment
Project Coordinator (25%)	Political economics, development studies, pedagogy	Environmental planning in several countries; community development and project management / Nepal, Ethiopia, Eritrea, China	Technical advice on environmental policy and community development

Annex 6: Ethiopian partner institutions and their DF-supported projects

The following profiles of DF's partner institutions in Ethiopia have been extracted from their websites or publications (see Annex 4). The information on the major achievements of the projects comes from the most recent reports available to the review team, in most cases, referring to 2004. In cases where no annual reports were available, the information comes from interviews with project coordinators.

1. Relief Society of Tigray (REST)

During the civil war in Ethiopia (1974–91) between the former military (Derg) regime and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), hundreds of thousands of people in the TPLF-controlled areas were victims of disasters caused by the war and by drought. The Relief Society of Tigray (REST) was established in 1978 to support people in the TPLF-controlled areas of northern Ethiopia and Tigrayan refugees in the Sudan. After the war, REST gradually shifted its emphasis from providing emergency aid to promoting long-term sustainable development. Since that time, the organisation has undergone rapid change in terms of diversity and intensity of activities and geographical coverage. It is officially registered as an NGO since 1992. Since 2000, REST has a full-fledged Research and Policy Unit (RPU) which is directly responsible to the Executive Director.

REST's mission is to empower the people of Tigray to achieve self-reliance based on their participation in tackling the root causes of poverty through promoting sustainable rural development. It seeks to do this by providing financial, material and technical assistance; providing emergency relief assistance to prevent displacement and famine; ensuring provision of adequate social services; and empowering women in the rural communities.

According to REST's current strategic plan, the major programmes are:

- Integrated Rural Development Programme, including agricultural development, education, health, rural credit and saving, policy advocacy and water development
- Integrated Agricultural Development Programme, including crop and livestock development, extension, irrigation, water supply, SWC, reforestation, seedbanks, community-based HIV/AIDS prevention and institutional capacity building
- Rural Water Development Programme, including spring development and construction of hand-dug wells and boreholes
- Relief and Rehabilitation Programme, including early warning/nutrition/crop assessments, community beneficiary targeting, emergency assistance/repatriation and relief operations/food distribution
- Participatory Planning and Monitoring.

Gender, HIV/AIDS mainstreaming, training and grassroots institutional empowerment are crosscutting themes.

REST works closely with line bureaux and local development committees, which eventually take over responsibility for implementing project components. It has strong partnerships and networks with various national and international organisations. REST's development activities are well supported by numerous donors, in addition to community contributions in the form of labour and know-how. About 10–15% of its total funding currently comes through the DF.

Integrated Agricultural Development Project (IADP)

The overall objectives of this DF-supported project are to rehabilitate the natural resource base, to improve household food security in targeted watersheds on a sustainable basis and to create awareness about and prevent HIV/AIDS. The project is being implemented in four woredas of the Central Zone: Ahferom, Wereleke, Kola Tembien and Tanqua-Abergele. Specific objectives in the targeted watersheds are to:

- build capacity of all stakeholders to support sustainable, community-owned development
- increase and diversify agricultural production and productivity in a sustainable way
- enhance the natural resource base by improving degraded land and promoting sustainable use of natural resources
- reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS and its socio-economic impact
- increase access to and use of clean potable water through waterpoint development and training of water committees.

According to REST's annual report, the following **achievements** have been made in 2004:

- SWC: Physical and biological treatment of catchment areas in selected watersheds (stone bunds, terraces, sowing grasses, planting trees etc) were achieved to 100% of plan. This created employment opportunities (FFW) for selected food-insecure households. To conserve moisture, water-harvesting structures (over 30 km) and compost pits (1260 m³) were constructed on farmland. A total of 449 technical leaders and model farmers were trained in watershed management; this was almost 50% above plan. A total of 80 ha of hillsides treated with SWC measures were distributed to 321 young, previously landless household heads; this gave them income-earning possibilities and contributed to better protection of hillsides from degradation (95% survival rate of trees planted). A total of 6376 households benefited from the SWC activities. The figures are not differentiated according to gender of household heads.
- Reforestation: Seven nursery sites are functioning. About 500,000 seedlings were planted on communal and private land (105% of plan). Overall survival rates are not reported. In a pilot programme, in accordance with the annual target, agroforestry tree seedlings were planted on 20 ha farmland of an unreported number of volunteer households, and free grazing was prohibited. The effects in terms of improvement in soil, livestock productivity and fuel supply are not reported. In the targeted number of 22 household backyards, tree species with promise of higher economic returns were planted and ponds were constructed for dry-season watering of the trees. The survival rate is not reported. The exact targeted area of land to be enclosed for rehabilitation of natural vegetation (2750 ha in 2004) was achieved. A total of 3243 ha of mature area enclosures were handed over for community management.
- Crop production: A workshop was conducted for tabia cooperative leaders and staff, BoANR and local administration staff on seedbank management with the aim of handing over the seedbank to the community. The targeted number of fruit-tree seedlings was supplied to the nurseries, with a view to increasing and diversifying farmers' income. Slightly less than the targeted amount of vegetable seeds was distributed to 500 farmers. In accordance with the 2004 target, 15 treadle pumps were purchased (but only 9 were distributed to farmers) and 2 small water pumps were provided to 2 groups of 20 farmers each, and 77 model farmers and DAs were trained in pump operation and maintenance. Likewise according to plan, 90 tied ridgers and 80 mouldboard ploughs were distributed to groups totalling 440 farmers, and 22 experts and DAs (122% of plan) were trained in use of these implements. A total of 277 farmers (115% of plan) were trained in root-crop production. Ten woreda experts (50% of target) were trained in horticultural crop propagation and management.
- Livestock development: Slightly more than the targeted number of farmers (80) were trained in undersowing forage legumes and in planting and using backyard tree legumes. Training in range management was given to 162 community members (107% of target). A workshop on how to hand over enclosed areas to communities was held according to plan. Beekeeping training (plus equipment) was given to 145 cooperative members, and 66 farmers took part in experiencing-sharing visits (100% of plan). A total of 80 Begeit dairy cows and 7 Begeit bulls (a high-producing local breed from western Tigray) were distributed to 70 men and 10 women on a long-term credit basis (up to 5 years). Farmers were trained in dairy husbandry, milk processing and marketing (83% of plan). A total of 79 farmers and experts from REST and line bureaux (176% of plan) visited rural dairy enterprises in Oromia Region. Training in backyard poultry-keeping was focused on women-headed households, who were provided with chickens. A total of 456 small ruminants (48% of plan) were distributed to 91 farmers, and relevant training was given to 367 farmers; the beneficiaries of this programme are not

differentiated according to gender. A workshop was organised for 24 farmer innovators (100% of plan) to share ideas on livestock development.

- Irrigation development: A total of 68 community ponds meant to benefit 200 households, 120 underground water tanks and 80 hand-dug wells to benefit 120 and 80 individual households respectively, and 8 spring reservoirs to benefit 157 households were made 100% according to plan. Two irrigation pumps were installed and canals dug to benefit 50 households.
- Potable water development: The planned number of 11 shallow boreholes was constructed, and 11 water and sanitation committees of 6 members each were set up and given 3 days' training in pump operation and maintenance, health and sanitation. The boreholes reportedly benefit 6643 people.
- HIV/AIDS prevention: Twenty woreda health service staff and 100 community health workers were trained in techniques of home-based care and counselling for HIV/AIDS. Two hundred community peer educators from village level were trained on basic facts of HIV/AIDS and sexually-transmitted diseases (STDs), and all are reportedly delivering the information further in their localities. Sixty clinic-based staff were trained in STD syndrome management, and 50 in HIV/AIDS counselling techniques. A total of 100 adolescents in anti-AIDS clubs in and out of school were trained about HIV/AIDS prevention and impact, and 20 REST staff members were trained in food security and HIV/AIDS. Together with the woreda health offices, REST designed, pre-tested and finalised IEC materials (posters, flipcharts, booklets, curricula and 2 video films). Condoms (432,000) were distributed in 2004 through clinics and community health workers, peer educators and adolescents in anti-AIDS clubs. The prevention work is focused in towns and villages with high concentration of schools and military troops. REST works with CBOs to identify HIV/AIDS-affected households and individuals, including orphans; thus far, 175 persons have been given support in cash and school materials.
- Capacity building: REST staff members have benefited from short- and long-term training through DF support. In 2004, four were studying in Ethiopia for an MSc degree, one for a BSc and six for a diploma. Three staff members took part in short-term training in planning, 32 in rights-based approach to development, and 38 REST staff and stakeholders in M&E.
- Gender and development: In 2004, 443 persons from REST and partner organisations (70% of target) were trained in gender sensitisation, and 56 participants (95% of plan), including also gender committee members, in participatory gender auditing. A workshop was held for 26 people from the regional Women's Affairs Office, REST gender committee members and WAT for networking about gender mainstreaming and sensitisation experiences. REST gender committee members visited a community in South Gonder (Amhara Region) with exemplary progress in attaining gender equity.
- Lobbying and policy advocacy: REST reports that, in the past two years, it has convinced the Tigray government to promote water-harvesting technologies that REST piloted. As a result of REST's raising gender issues in Regional Council meetings and various workshops, the EPRDF endorsed that 30% of candidates for the 2005 election be women. Because REST repeatedly raised the issue of agricultural marketing, the Regional Council established a Regional Market Agency.

REST regularly monitors the outcomes and impacts of the IADP work. Success in improving the food-security status of households in the targeted areas is measured according to: 1) nutritional status of children under five years of age; and 2) number of months that households have enough food and do not need to resort to coping mechanisms:

- In 2004, the rate for underweight children decreased by over 10% compared to 2003 as a result of the work of REST and other development actors.
- A clear trend in change in the number of months that households have enough food is not clear: the percentage of households in the IADP woredas projected to require food aid in 2005 was almost 50% higher than in 2004, yet the number of people needing food aid in 2004 was 40% below the baseline figure of over 390,000 people in 2001. In 2004 compared with 2003, a lower percentage of households had to resort to coping mechanisms such as decreasing diet diversity (24% lower), off-farm labour (36% lower), consuming seed stocks

(15% lower) and selling firewood and charcoal (11% lower). This was due to good rains and therefore good harvests and to increased availability of diverse foods from own production and from improved income.

Success in disseminating information on food, agricultural and environmental technology is measured according to: 1) percentages of farmers who adopt recommended practices; 2) area of land enclosed for rehabilitation; and 3) area of land treated with SWC measures:

- REST reports that 33% of surveyed farmers are using technology recommended through the IADP (composting, agroforestry, integrated pest management) and 93% of farmers say they are using SWC and NRM practices on their farms, an increase by 7% and 2% respectively over 2003.
- In 2004, 2750 ha of degraded land were enclosed, and REST pays guards through FFW to prevent grazing. The neighbouring communities have established bylaws on rights of access to and distribution of benefits from the enclosures. REST started handing over previously enclosed and now mature protected areas (3243 ha) for management by the communities.
- The targets for planting trees and for treating degraded land with SWC measures were exceeded.

The figures referring to adoption of technologies, SWC and enclosure of common land do not indicate to what extent these measures are alleviating or exacerbating the poverty of very poor households, particularly those without livestock.

Success in increasing household food availability is measured according to: 1) yield of major crops per hectare and production per household; 2) livestock holdings per households; and 3) number of IGAs per household (assuming that these allow households to buy more food):

- Crop production in the IADP woredas was projected to be 493 kg/ha or 214 kg/ household. This is 28% less than the target for 2004 and a 19% decline compared to 2003, but 12% above the baseline figure from 2001. The decline is attributed to moisture stress, poor land preparation, and shifts from long-cycle to short-cycle and low-yielding crop varieties.
- The number of cattle, equines and chickens per household increased by 130% compared to the baseline, the number of small ruminants increased by 25% and equines by 6%, whereas the number of chickens remained about the same. REST's interpretation is that the IADP's livestock-related interventions are appropriate for boosting rural livelihoods and that project achievements are being sustained. These figures are not differentiated according to male- and female-headed households.
- Diversification of household income sources is being promoted through dairy cows, dairy goats, improved beehives and high-value fruits and vegetables. All these activities were implemented according to plan. On average, each household in the project woredas was operating three IGAs in 2004 compared to two in 2003. From the IGAs, each household is earning about 2100 Birr per year.

Success in improving rural socio-economic services is measured according to: 1) health status in the project areas; and 2) risk and impact of HIV/AIDS:

- Compared to 2003, 30% more people in the project areas had access to potable water, and the average travel time to fetch water was reduced from three hours to half an hour. No data are given on actual change in health status.
- Monitoring activities suggest that 90% of people in the project areas are aware of how HIV/AIDS is transmitted and can be prevented, an increase of 2% over the knowledge base in 2003. From the sample respondents, 87% claimed to apply at least one prevention mechanism (condoms, abstinence, faithfulness to partner) and only 27% admitted to stigmatising HIV-positive people.

Research Development Project

According to REST's current Five-Year Plan (2001–05), the objectives of the RPU are to assess development impact in REST operational areas, to help set up a nutritional assessment system to contribute to early warning and disaster prevention, to make surveys to promote development and diversification of the rural economy, to implement a pilot project on economic diversification in chronically food-insecure households, to conduct studies in response to issues identified during project work, and to promote understanding of development issues through publication and networking. The DF support is intended to increase the capacity of the RPU to:

- produce good-quality reports and documents and thus contribute relevant and timely information for development
- initiate, change and more effectively target REST development activities by making economic profiles and resource maps
- show the impact of integrated development by making studies and collecting data.

The RPU aims to achieve these results through conducting economic development studies of selected programme areas, establishing tabia profiles, conducting a pilot household economy development study with a small group of poor rural households, making development resource maps, developing a database, training field staff in research methodology, and sharing results through 6-monthly research bulletins and annual fora.

Achievements: In 2004, the RPU conducted socio-economic surveys among 377 households in 20 tabias in the four IADP woredas, and nutrition surveys among 3849 households. A rapid vulnerability assessment was conducted in two woredas to gain beneficiary views on the IADP, to assess impacts on mitigating disaster and assisting livelihoods, to identify areas needing to be improved and to assess REST's performance in dealing with causes and consequences of food insecurity. The review team did not see results of these studies and did not receive any report on achievements of the Research Development Project and therefore cannot comment further on it.

2. Women's Association of Tigray (WAT)

The Women's Association of Tigray (WAT) was established in 1977, during the civil war against the Derg, as a component of the struggle against gender inequalities and discrimination. It now has almost half a million members throughout Tigray Region who are involved in planning, implementing and managing its programmes. Since 1997, WAT had been legally registered as a humanitarian, non-political and non-religious indigenous rural development organisation.

WAT is run by an Executive Committee that acts as a Board of Directors. This is elected every three years by the general assembly in congresses held at regional, woreda and tabia levels. The organisational structure of WAT and its leadership goes from regional to *gujille* (grassroots cell) level in all parts of Tigray Region. The major source of funds for the development activities run by WAT comes from members' contributions, from some income-generating activities of the association, and from donors. It operates three training centres: in Shire (Inda Selassie) in Western Tigray, in Maichew in Southern Tigray, and in Adigrat in Eastern Tigray.

WAT's vision is to see fundamental changes in the livelihoods of women in Tigray in general and association members in particular through their equal participation in and benefit from the political, economic, social and cultural development undertaken in the Region together with their male counterparts. Its overall goal is to improve the political, socio-economic and cultural situation of women in all spheres of poverty-reduction efforts in the Region.

Under its current Five-Year Strategic Plan, WAT's major programmes include:

- Capacity building and awareness creation
- Advocacy and networking
- Economic diversification and skills training

- Access to credit facilities
- Enhancement of education (formal and non-formal)
- Health-related development interventions
- Strengthening relationships of the association with others
- Recognition of males' involvement in mainstreaming gender
- Issues of sustainability of WAT and its development activities.

Institutional Capacity Building Project

The DF-supported activities aim to contribute to: 1) securing gender equity in Tigray Region by reducing inequalities between men and women and by empowering women to take part in development activities; 2) strengthening WAT's capacity to undertake development activities; and 3) improving the livelihood of women in Tigray Region.

Achievements: In 2004, WAT trained 153 women and 23 men (99% of planned participants) in women's rights, trained 101 women (84% of plan) in petty trading and small-ruminant production (including also family planning and HIV/AIDS issues) and provided 47 women with start-up capital in cash (78% of plan) and kind (sheep and goats for a value of 89% of plan). An unspecified number of women have started to repay the credit and to save money in bank accounts. With project funds, three staff members from WAT headquarters were able to make monitoring visits to the field. A study on the impact of child marriage was carried out in 2004–05. By July 2005, an additional 175 women had been trained in petty trading, small-ruminant production and dairy-cow production (half of the annual plan), ten WAT staff members were receiving computer training and four self-help groups of very poor women were being set up in response to a study that revealed that conventional development activities were not reaching the poorest women.

3. Mekelle University (MU)

Mekelle University was established in May 2000 by the Ethiopian government after integration of two colleges: Mekelle Business College and Mekelle University College. The former had been established in 1987 as a School of Economics and the latter in 1993 as an Arid Zone Agricultural College, offering three degree programmes to 42 students. Today, the MU has more than 700 academic and administrative staff members and 14,000 students, about half of them enrolled in the regular academic programme. The MU has six faculties (Business and Economics, Dryland Agriculture and Natural Resources, Veterinary Sciences, Science and Technology, Education, Law), a College of Health Sciences and 3 institutes for Distance Education, Microfinance and Paleontology. The MU is one of the fastest-growing universities in Ethiopia. The fundamental elements of the MU's mission are teaching, research and consultancy. Its ultimate goal is to pursue standards of excellence in teaching and research for the betterment of the society.

Afar Integrated Pastoral Development Programme (AIPDP)

Since 1998 the DF supports collaboration between the MU and the Department of Agriculture on Zone 2 of Afar Region in community-based development in Aba'ala Woreda. This overlapped with and follows up on the Dryland Husbandry Project (DHP) that operated in Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, Uganda and Eritrea from 1995 to 2003 and was facilitated by the MU in Aba'ala Woreda. The DHP aimed to promote cooperation among pastoralists, extension workers, researchers and policymakers in community-based pastoral development and range management; train local people in basic animal healthcare and water management; and study ethnoveterinary practices, socio-economic aspects and NRM.

The overall objectives of the AIPDP are to:

- build capacity of the local administration in Aba'ala
- prevent environmental degradation of the rangeland
- increase food security in the project area
- strengthen the relations between Afar and Tigray people living in the project area.

Achievements: The review team did not see a project report for 2004. According to the project coordinator, in the first half of 2005, a study on traditional range management was prepared, a study for river diversion was started, some reseeded and SWC measures were undertaken to rehabilitate rangeland, home economics training for 15 women was prepared, vegetable production demonstration and training for 25 women was prepared, 15 people from the woreda were selected for training in financial management and accounting, a proposal for support to the HIV/AIDS club was approved, a plan of action was being drawn up to strengthen the “paravet” cooperative, and Terms of Reference were drawn up for a study on traditional governance systems and their operational linkage with formal governing structures in Aba’ala Woreda. Fifteen Afar students supported by the project are taking further education at diploma and degree level. The project intends to catch up on its plans by the end of 2005.

Voters Education Project

This DF-supported project aims to enhance awareness of the general public in Ethiopia about concepts of democratic rights, election laws and standards of free and fair election. It is carried out by six instructors (as supervisors) and 35 students (as data collectors) from the Law Faculty, working in one woreda each in Afar, Amhara, Oromia, Tigray and Southern Regions.

Achievements: No annual report was available to the review team. The project coordinator reported that the baseline surveys were completed and laws relevant for elections compiled in Amharic and English (not yet in Tigrinya). A training programme was designed; training sites are still to be identified. A document was to have been made available before the 2005 regional and federal elections, but is delayed. The focus is now on the woreda elections in 2006.

4. Afar Pastoralist Development Association (APDA)

The Afar Relief Association was set up in 1993 on a voluntary basis to handle emergency activities, including non-formal education and primary health education, around Assab and Eli Daar areas in Afar Region. It first accepted international assistance in 1997. In June 1998, when developing a new five-year strategic plan, the association renamed itself the Afar Pastoralist Development Association (APDA). APDA values pastoralism as a viable way of life and is convinced that development must be based on existing traditional grassroots institutions and indigenous knowledge and practices. Its main office is located in Loggia.

Over the years, the programme gradually grew from the core group of volunteers to around 400 staff (many on a part-time basis), over 95% of whom are in the field, i.e. not based in Addis Ababa or Loggia. APDA estimates that it reaches around 27% of Afar pastoral society. It is supported by some 15 international NGOs and agencies. In addition, the community supports the association by contributing more than 3500 goats per year. About 15% of APDA’s total funding currently comes through the DF.

The first projects carried out by APDA with DF support in 2003 were: 1) a socio-economic study as a basis for project planning and monitoring, resulting in a development status report (APDA 2003); and 2) construction of a water source with storage facility that can also be filled by transporting water to the site. In addition, an Ethiopian consultant made an institutional analysis to ascertain APDA’s needs for capacity building.

In 2004 APDA and its stakeholders developed its 5-year plan for 2005–09. The programme was diversified to include mobile education and Afar language development, mobile primary health, women’s issues, HIV/AIDS concerns, animal husbandry, water development, pasture protection and regeneration, rural feeder-road construction, marketing, and relief interventions in different parts of Afar Region.

Developing Viable Household Economy for Afar Pastoralists

The main objective of this DF-supported project is to improve Afar pastoralists' access to market and thus create a vibrant pastoral household economy. Over four years (2004–07), it plans to establish nine livestock-marketing sites, each with water source and animal-fattening area, and to build the capacity of community members, including the market associations and APDA staff. In the first year (2004), two marketing associations of 20 persons each (including at least seven women) were to be established, registered, trained and provided with start-up funds to operate at two market sites. In addition, a conference on Afar pastoralist development was to be held.

Achievements: One marketing association was formed in 2004 (with 39 male and 12 female members) at a market site close to which ponds were dug and a grazing area was enclosed. The group was given 60,000 Birr as start-up funds to buy animals. Two more associations were set up in 2005, and one was legally registered. Association members were trained in cooperative formation, banking and accounting procedures. People have been employed to assist the associations as managers for one year. The ponds for the two new marketing sites are not yet constructed. An Afar National Development Conference was held in December 2004 with about 120 participants, including representatives from the pastoral communities, the Afar National Regional Government and invited Afar people from Djibouti and the diaspora. A conference statement was issued and a report completed. The outputs were fed into APDA's current 5-year plan. In addition, a feasibility study was carried out for setting up an Afar community radio programme; the costs for setting one up turned out to be much higher than expected.

5. FARM-Africa

FARM-Africa (Food and Agricultural Research Management–Africa) is an international NGO with headquarters in London, UK, and country offices in Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa and Uganda. Its vision is a prosperous rural Africa. Its aim is to reduce poverty by enabling African farmers and herders to improve their well-being through better management of their renewable natural resources. Its priority areas are pastoral development, community forest development, smallholder development and land reform.

FARM-Africa was established in Ethiopia in 1988. Its activities include rural development and responsive emergency initiatives, development of successful models of participatory and farmer-led research, participatory processes in developing community and government institutions, and piloting of innovative approaches. The programmes in Ethiopia include:

- Ethiopian Pastoral Programme (EPP)
- Integrated Control of Malaria and Trypanosomiasis
- Participatory Forest Management
- Training and Advocacy
- Women's Enterprise Development
- Woreda Capacity Building.

The DF has initiated a pilot project with FARM-Africa designed to support the Ethiopian government's decentralisation effort by aligning procedures of planning and decision-making by formal government and community-based institutions in Afar Region. The pilot project should assess, identify and prioritise the Afar pastoral communities' constraints in a selected woreda and, together with the stakeholders, produce a project proposal. Inclusive and participatory planning by communities and government officials should lead to improved pastoral livelihoods.

FARM-Africa made a study tour to other DF-supported projects in Tigray and Afar Regions, as well as to NGOs and institutions promoting a rights-based approach and decentralisation through community empowerment. A baseline study was made in a marginalised woreda (Semi Robi) in Zone 5 of Afar Region, an inception report was being compiled at the time of the review mission, and a consultative workshop on the findings and proposal was being prepared. The pilot project should start in early 2006.

6. Ethio-Organic Seed Action (EOSA)

EOSA is an NGO founded in 2001 and based in Addis Ababa. It evolved out of the work on *in-situ* conservation of landraces that started in 1988 with a farmer-based programme implemented by the Canadian-funded Seeds of Survival Programme and the Institute of Biodiversity Conservation. This project was closed in 1997. This work was enriched from 1994 to 2002 by a UN Global Environment Facility programme focused on indigenous crop varieties maintained by farmers in dynamic agro-ecosystems. With a guiding principle of "conservation through use", EOSA works with community groups, government agencies, researchers, other NGOs and private enterprise to promote integrated conservation, use and management of agricultural biodiversity, particularly integration of producers with the market. It recognises that recovery and protection of agricultural biodiversity by farmers has to take account of market realities. EOSA works together with about 4500 small-scale farmers in various regions of Ethiopia. The DF and EOSA are considering collaboration on issues of agricultural biodiversity in lowland areas.

7. Dryland Coordination Group (DCG)

The DCG is an NGO-driven forum for capacity building through exchange of practical experiences and sharing of appropriate knowledge on food security and NRM. Its overall aim is to contribute to improved food security of vulnerable households and to sustainable resource management in the drylands of Africa. The specific objectives of the DCG are as follows:

- It will contribute to improving the capacity and quality of development interventions carried out by its members and their partner organisations.
- It will become a recognised competence forum on food security and NRM in the African drylands and on the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).
- DCG Norway members will support their partners in contributing to the follow-up of the National Action Programmes for the UNCCD.
- The DCG shall actively seek to strengthen its institutional viability.

The highest governing body in the DCG is the forum in Norway, which consists of the DF, the Adventist Development and Relief Association (ADRA) Norway, CARE Norway, Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) and Norway People's Aid (NPA). The board members meet several times a year for planning, budgeting, etc. Noragric provides technical support to the DCG.

National DCGs have been established in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mali and Sudan. They work closely with DCG Norway and are mandated to conduct applied research, organise and facilitate workshops and seminars, and engage in networking and lobbying on national and international policy issues on dryland themes. All DCG activities are funded by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD). The national DCGs meet with DCG Norway in a workshop once every two years.

The members of the Ethiopian DCG are the NCA, CARE Ethiopia, REST, WAT, the MU, ADRA Ethiopia, the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) and the Ethiopia NGO/CBO Coordination Committee to Combat Desertification (ENCCD). The coordinator is hosted by the NCA. The position of chair rotates between members and is currently held by REST.

Achievements: Members of DCG Ethiopia have participated in preparing Ethiopia's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and are involved in the PRSP monitoring taskforce. The group is engaged in formulating the National Action Plan (NAP) for implementing the UNCCD. Group members have taken part in international conferences, e.g. the Conference of Parties and the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention meetings. It trained trainers in NAP and UNCCD, prepared a manual on this and held a workshop for the Pastoralist Standing Committee of Members of Parliament on UNCCD implementation. From 1999 to 2003 DCG Ethiopia brought out six study/workshop reports and in 2004–05 it published four reports

(on resource-based conflict management, HIV/AIDS and food security, female-headed households and livelihood interventions in Tigray, and area enclosure management). Reports are under preparation on transplanting sorghum, on-farm water harvesting, the role of *Dobera glabra* fruits for household food security, and assessment of the effect of training of trainers in implementing the UNCCD.

8. Triangular Institutional Cooperation Project

The Triangular Institutional Cooperation Project (known as the Triangular Project or TP, for short) involves REST and the MU from Ethiopia, Sadguru Water and Development Foundation (SWDF) and the Institute of Rural Management (IRMA) from India, and the Development Fund and Noragric from Norway. It aims to promote South–South cooperation and to strengthen the capabilities of NGOs in facilitating NRM in semi-arid areas. It focuses on: 1) field-based action and development; 2) research and documentation; and 3) training and human resource development.

Achievements: In 2004 the MU prepared drafts of manuals on area-enclosure management, good agronomic practices and SWC. Watershed monitoring activities comprised: 1) digitisation of contours to generate a digital elevation model (REST and the Norwegian Centre for Soil and Environmental Research); 2) assessing and documenting indigenous knowledge in crop production (Noragric); and 3) identifying major yield determinants and crop potential (MU). REST and the MU, in collaboration with the Barefoot College in India, set up a pilot solar electrification system in Tukul village in the Eastern Zone of Tigray.