

# TEN YEARS WITH THE SAHEL-SUDAN-ETHIOPIA PROGRAMME

## Development Assistance through Norwegian Non-Governmental Organisations



Jens B. Aune and Sidsel Grimstad

November 1997

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Photo front page: Food preparation in Tigray

## Sammendrag

### 10 år med SSE programmet - bistand gjennom norske frivillige organisasjoner

Sahel-Sudan-Etiopia (SSE) programmet var et utviklingsprogram i regi av Utenriksdepartementet som ble startet in 1986 på bakgrunn av tørkekatastrofen som rammet regionen i 1984-1985. Programmets hovedformål fra starten var å bedre matvareproduksjon og matvaresikkerhet samt miljørehabilitering. Fra 1991 ble utvikling av lokal kompetanse føyd til som et tredje mål for programmet. Årlige bevilgninger i de siste tre årene har vært i gjennomsnitt 140 millioner kroner, noe under halvparten til multilaterale organer (FN systemet), en liten del til forskning og den resterende delen (over halvparten) til utviklingsprosjekter i regi av frivillige norske organisasjoner. SSE programmet ble avsluttet i 1996, men prosjektene har blitt ført videre som en del av landprogrammene (unntatt Mali). Landene som har mottatt støtte gjennom SSE programmet har vært Mali, Sudan, Etiopia og Eritrea. Frivillige norske organisasjoner som har deltatt i SSE programmet er Adventistsamfunnet, CARE, Kirkens Nødhjelp, Norsk Folkehjelp, Pastor Strømmes Minnestiftelse, Redd Barna, Røde Kors og Utviklingsfondet.

Ti år har nå gått siden SSE programmet ble startet, og det er grunn til å spørre hva som har blitt oppnådd som resultat av prosjekter i regi av frivillige organisasjoner i denne perioden. For å kunne svare på dette ble det gjennomført en spørreundersøkelse, som innbefatter alle prosjektene som har hatt en tilknytning til SSE programmet. Resultatene som her blir presentert gir seg ikke ut for å gi et objektivt svar på effekten av prosjektene, men må i hovedsak betraktes som prosjektenes egne rapporter. Størst troverdighet er knyttet til rapportering av fysiske forbedringer som bygging terrasser, utvikling av vanningsannlegg etc. Kommentarene som blir gitt i tilknytning til prosjektene er Noragric's vurdering og gir ikke nødvendigvis uttrykk for prosjektenes egne syn.

I løpet av denne tiårs perioden har det skjedd store forandringer i måten bistandsprosjekter planlegges og implementeres. Lokalbefolkningen har fått en større rolle prosjektplanlegging og bruk av norsk personell har blitt sterkt redusert. Et annet karakteristisk trekk er at prosjektene i økende grad gjennomføres av lokale frivillige organisasjoner. Dette gjelder særlig prosjekter i Etiopia hvor de fleste SSE prosjektene i dag gjennomføres i regi av lokale organisasjoner. I Mali står fortsatt norske eller internasjonale frivillige organisasjoner for gjennomføringen av prosjektene fordi det har vært vanskelig å identifisere lokale organisasjoner med tilfredsstillende organisatorisk kapasitet. I Eritrea har prosjektene blitt gjennomført som samarbeidsprosjekter mellom frivillige organisasjonene og offentlige institusjoner. Det har vist seg å være kostnadseffektivt at nasjonale organisasjoner står for gjennomføringen av prosjektene, blant annet fordi det reduserer personell kostnadene i betydelig grad. Dessuten har ofte nasjonale organisasjoner en sterk lokal forankring, som muliggjør god kommunikasjon med lokalbefolkningen.

Det er store variasjoner fra land til land og mellom prosjekter med hensyn til hvilke aktiviteter som har blitt gjennomført. Dette avspeiler store forskjeller i naturgitte- og kulturelle forhold.

Prosjektene i Nord- Mali har vært fokusert på å bedre utnyttinga av vann til ris- og fôrproduksjon ved Niger elva. Dette har bidratt til å sikre matvareproduksjonen til mer enn 10 000 familier. Prosjekter lengre sør i Mali har bidratt til å gi bøndene tilgang til bedre jordarbeidingsredskaper gjennom bruk av kreditt. Forbedrede sorter av ulike kornarter har videre blitt introdusert gjennom prosjektene og noen av disse sortene er i utstrakt bruk.

I de nordlige delene av Etiopia og i Eritrea har en stor innsats blitt gjennomført for å redusere problemene med jorderosjon. Det har blitt bygget 11000 km med steindiker tilsvarende distansen Oslo-Trondheim 22 ganger. Disse dikene øker avlingen med 50 % i forhold til områder uten diker fordi tapet av vann med overflateavrenning har blitt redusert.

Et tiltak av stor betydning for å bedre miljøtilstanden i Etiopia er opprettelsen av flere midlertidig vernede områder. Dette er områder som er svært nedbeitet av husdyr. Prosjektene har gjort avtaler med befolkningen om at disse områdene blir vernet i en 3 til 4 års periode for at vegetasjonen på nytt skal etableres. Etter denne perioden blir kontrollert bruk av områdene tillatt for høsting av fôr og ved. En del av disse områdene er nå 3-4 år gamle og store forskjeller i vegetasjonsdekke mellom de vernede og de ikke vernede områder kan observeres. Treslag som var som var i ferd med å forsvinne kommer tilbake og dyrelivet øker.

Folk på landsbygda har ofte ingen tilgang til kreditt gjennom banker og mange av prosjektene i SSE programmet har særlig i 90 årene tilbudt kreditt til landsbygdbefolkningen. Denne kreditten har blitt brukt til innkjøp av dyr, redskaper, støtte til handverksvirksomhet og småhandel. I starten av de fleste kredittprogrammer ble det ikke krevd renter på kreditten og ofte ble innkjøp subsidiert. Tendensen i dag er at det blir krevd renter på kreditten og at subsidene faller bort. Dette er en avgjørende forutsetning for at kredittinstitusjonene skal være bærekraftige uten ekstern støtte på lang sikt. Erfaringene med å gi kreditt til landsbybefolkningen er at lånene stort sett blir betjent på en tilfredsstillende måte selv om det er forskjeller mellom prosjektene. Det har også skjedd en betydelig bygging av egenkapital i noen kredittprosjekter. Egenkapitalen for Relief Society of Tigray's kredittprogram ligger på ca 30 %. Lån til kredittgrupper hvor deltakerne gjensidig garanterer for hverandre har vært en effektiv måte for å sikre tilbakebetalingen. En indirekte virkning av kreditt gjennom prosjektene i Tigray har vært at rentene på lån fra lokale pengeutlånere har blitt redusert. Rentene som lokale pengeutlånere krevde har ofte ligget på over 100 % i året men etter at kreditt ble tilbudt gjennom prosjektene har renta lokale pengeutlånere kan kreve gått ned til 30-50 %.

Brønngraving har vært en viktig aktivitet i flere av prosjektene, og i landsbyer som har fått tilgang til rent drikkevann har det skjedd en klar reduksjon av sykdommer relatert til urent drikkevann. Disse brønnene er også av stor betydning for å redusere kvinners arbeidsbyrde.

Prosjektene rapporterer om klare forbedringer i matvaresikkerhet. Antall måneder hvor egen matvareproduksjon i husholdet dekker forbruket har økt fra 4 måneder ved prosjektenes begynnelse til 8 måneder i 1996. Noe av denne forbedring skyldes nok opphør av krigstilstanden i landene, men det er grunn til å anta at prosjektene også har gitt et vesentlig bidrag til å bedre matvaresikkerheten. Til tross for disse forbedringene må områdene fortsatt karakteriseres som svært matvareusikre. Strategier som befolkningen bruker i dag for overleve fra år til år er å redusere matinntaket i vanskelige perioder, selge egen arbeidskraft, salg av husdyr og matvarebistand.

SSE programmet har også bidratt til å bygge lokale institusjoner. Antall lokale organisasjoner har økt fra 155 ved prosjektenes begynnelse til 699 i 1996 og antall deltakere i lokale organisasjoner har blitt økt fra 127 000 ved prosjektenes begynnelse til 397 000 i 1996. Det rapporteres også at lokale institusjoner har fått en økt rolle i lokalsamfunnene. Imidlertid er nok de fleste lokale organisasjonene som har blitt bygd opp i tilknytning til SSE programmet fremdeles svake. Dette skyldes delvis det generelt lave utdanningsnivået, problemer med lederskap og at det tar tid å bygge sterke lokale institusjoner. Prosjektene har gradvis gitt lokale institusjoner en større rolle i prosjektgjennomføringen, men det er fremdeles et gjennomgående problem at prosjektene tar et for stort ansvar for gjennomføringen. Dette gjelder for eksempel innkjøp av driftsmidler som såfrø og jordbruksredskap. Dette skaper avhengighet til prosjektet og slik innkjøpsvirksomhet bør derfor fortrinnsvis overlates til lokale organisasjoner eller lokale kjøpmenn.

SSE programmet er et eksempel på at bistandsarbeid også kan ha en fredsskapende virkning. En borgerkrig brøt ut i de nordlige områdene i Mali i 1991 mellom tuaregene, songraiene og den maliske regjeringen. Både Kirkens Nødhjelp's (KN) prosjekt og CARE's prosjekt i nord-Mali ble svært mye berørt og prosjektpersonell ble også drept. Den tidligere norske direktøren (Kåre Lode) i KN's prosjekt i Mali spilte en viktig rolle i meglingen mellom partene (finansiert av norsk UD), og det lyktes i 1995 å få til en avtale som gjorde slutt på stridighetene. Rollen som fredsmegler ville vært vanskelig uten å ha den tillit i begge leirer som var blitt opparbeidet gjennom KN's utviklingsprogram.

Et viktig spørsmål i bistandspolitisk sammenheng er de frivillige organisasjoners rolle i bistandsarbeidet. SSE programmet har i en del tilfeller vist at frivillige organisasjoner kan ha komparative fortrinn sammenliknet med offentlige institusjoner og det kan derfor forsvares at noe av bistanden kanaliseres gjennom frivillige organisasjoner. Som eksempler kan nevnes prosjekter implementert i regi av REST og den etiopiske ortodokse kirken. REST er den humanitære greinen av den tidligere frigjøringsbevegelsen i Tigray og har på denne bakgrunn en særlig kunnskap om og støtte av befolkningen i Tigray. Et prosjekt gjennomført i regi av den ortodokse kirken i Wollo i Etiopia er også av stor interesse fordi en drar veksler på det sterke nettverket til kirken. Prestene blir mobilisert i utviklingsarbeidet ved at de får opplæring av prosjektet i utviklingsspørsmål og tjener deretter som veiledere på dette området. Prestene har generelt stor tillit blant lokalbefolkningen og kan derfor kommunisere på en effektiv måte. Offentlige organer har ikke alltid den samme tillit.

Det kan regnes med at ca 1 million mennesker har blitt nådd direkte gjennom SSE programmet. Noen har fått bedret sin livssituasjon i betydelig grad, andre i mindre grad. Til tross for de forbedringer som har skjedd må områdene fremdeles betegnes som svært matvareusikre og fortsatt støtte er nødvendig. utfordringene fremover ligger på flere plan. Det er her behov for utvikle ny kunnskap om hvordan disse områdene kan forvaltes på en best mulig måte og det ligger store utfordringer i utvikle lokale organisasjoner som kan videreføre og utvikle prosjektene.

## 1. BACKGROUND OF THE SSE PROGRAMME

The SSE Programme was initiated in 1985 as a mechanism for channelling Norwegian assistance to countries in Sub Saharan Africa affected by severe drought, poverty and environmental degradation. Due to the complex nature of the problems in the Sahel area, it was desirable to have an inter-disciplinary approach and to channel aid through different organisations; multilateral organizations, research institutes, international non-governmental organisations (NGO) and Norwegian NGOs. Activities were organised in a Programme where the various components were seen as a whole such that the projects would mutually strengthen and supplement each other. The idea behind the SSE Programme was unique in the sense that a single donor launched a Programme to be implemented by different organisations to exploit the comparative advantages of different bodies in pursuing the same overall objective.

Geographically, priority was given to Mali, Sudan, Eritrea and Ethiopia, hence the name of the Programme; the Sahel, Sudan, Ethiopia (SSE) Programme. The overall objectives as formulated in the original Programme documents were:

- to improve local food production and food security
- to improve the natural ecological base in order to develop sustainable production systems

In 1991 a new objective was added:

- to improve competence building related to the programme

The main principles for implementation of the SSE Programme were stated in the last SSE strategy document (1991-1996) as:

- minimised dependence of future aid
- recipient orientation and local participation
- specific targeting of women
- poverty alleviation.

The SSE Programme is administrated by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the Norwegian Directorate for Development Cooperation (NORAD). MFA is responsible for the management of the multilateral organisations. NORAD is responsible for the management of the NGO component. In 1991, the MFA decided to commission an evaluation of the first phase of the programme 1985-1991. After the Cowiconsult Evaluation Report 2.92, NORAD contracted Noragric as a coordinator and professional advisor for the Norwegian NGO component. The intention was that the Norwegian Universities Committee for Development, Research and Education (NUFU) should have the responsibility of managing and coordinating the SSE research component. The programme organisation and responsibility was thus spread over different bodies.

In 1996, eight Norwegian NGOs (CARE Norge, Norwegian Church Aid, the Strømme Memorial Foundation, Norwegian Peoples Aid, the Development Fund, Norwegian Red Cross, Save the Children, and ADRA Norge) were implementing 23 projects. Eighty-five percent of allocations to the NGOs were



channelled through these organisations. The report presented here was commissioned by NORAD to summarise the results of 10 years' assistance through Norwegian NGOs in the SSE Programme.

Table 1. Distribution of the SSE grant to national and international NGOs per country and regions, 1996.

Country	Implementing NGOs	Project name	Total allocation 1996 Mill. NOK
<b>Ethiopia</b>	REDD BARNA  CARE Norge NCA  NPA  DF UICN	Gender/ Agriculture Bolossa Sora Awash Rama WAG Adi Alherom Rural Dev. Credit Programme Gender Int. agriculture Nat. Cons. Strategy	<b>25 mill NOK</b>
<b>Eritrea</b>	NCA REDD BARNA NPA  DF	Zula region Asmat Saseba SAH Barka region Veterinary center	<b>15 mill NOK</b>
<b>Sudan</b>	Norwegian Red Cross ADRA	Sinkat nomads Irrigation	<b>2,4 mill NOK</b>
<b>Mali</b>	CARE Norge CARE Norge CARE Norge Strømme Foundation SMF NCA UICN IIED	Timbuktu, Rural Development Macina, Agriculture Koro, Agroforestry PIDEB Action against grasshoppers Gossi Sci. Techn. Env. Network PRA-Mali	<b>32,6 mill NOK</b>
<b>Regional grants</b>	ELCI-RIOD Network Desertification PANOS  IIED  PENHA	Comm. Plur. For sustainable development Res. Tenure & Natural Res. Manangement Pastoral and environmental. Networks in the Horn of Africa	<b>3,6 mill NOK</b>
<b>Noragric</b>			<b>2,5 mill NOK</b>
<b>Total allocation</b>			<b>81 mill NOK</b>

NCA Norwegian Church Aid  
DF Development Fund

NPA Norwegian Peoples Aid  
SMF Strømme Memorial Foundation

## 2. SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND RELIABILITY OF RESULTS

In May 1997, a questionnaire was sent to projects funded by the SSE Programme. The projects were asked to present the main outputs from the projects, such as the establishment of soil conservation structures, tree planting, training of people, institution building etc., and report on the impact on food security,

environmental rehabilitation and institutional building. Questions related to impacts were phrased as closed questions, with response alternatives given. Not all the projects answered the questionnaires, but all the larger projects reported.

The questions were answered by the project management staff, and this report is therefore not based on surveys in the project areas. In many cases, answering these questions may have been difficult because of the absence of baseline data. Projects have in general been much better at monitoring and documenting physical outputs than impacts on food security and environment. It is relatively easy to provide objective estimates for outputs such as km of terraces constructed. Impact estimates are, to a greater extent, based on judgement.

Given the subjective nature of responses related to impacts, the associated results should be treated with caution. There is a risk that staff may overemphasise the positive aspects of their projects and suppress the more problematic aspects. This report can therefore be viewed as a catalogue of the achievements of the SSE Programme, as seen through the lenses of project personnel. A more in-depth understanding of the problems associated with the projects can be attained through a reading of individual project reviews. Note also, however, that the existence of previous project reviews and the prospect of future evaluations is likely to curb response bias. The comments given in relation to each project are those of Noragric' and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the NGOs.

### 3. MAJOR FINDINGS AT THE PROJECT LEVEL

#### 3.1 MALI

##### 3.1.1 Results and impacts at the project level in Mali

Six projects have been operating under the SSE umbrella in Mali: the Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) project in Gourma, CARE's projects in Dire, Koro and Macina, and the Strømme Memorial Foundation's PIDEB and Grasshopper Control Projects.

As a result of the COWIconsult evaluation in 1992 there was a discussion on the future of the programme. After several discussions between the NGOs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and NORAD, an agreement was made to phase-out projects and activities in a way that would not be detrimental to the sustainability of the activities.

#### Norwegian Church Aid

##### *The Gourma Programme*

The involvement of Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) in Gourma started with relief and food-aid distribution. In 1987, after a base-line study had been undertaken, NCA began the process of converting their involvement into a development project in close collaboration with the local development

committee. The project has since focused on securing rice and fodder production along the Niger river, strengthening and developing local institutions to ensure continuation of the main activities, agricultural (animal) credit, cereal banks, women credit groups, and fodder production. In 1995 an evaluation of the project was carried out which looked into the phase-out of the project. A twoprong approach has been agreed upon. Some activities will eventually be handed over to local communities or groups, while other activities will be continued through the establishment of a local NGO comprising current NCA staff. NCA's phase-out year is planned for 2000.

An important activity of the NCA project has been to improve the utilisation of water from the Niger river. Deep-water rice is an important cropping system in the area and the project has been working on controlling the entry of water to the rice-producing area by constructing sluice gates. Entry of water is now controlled on 1,800 ha, benefiting 2,300 households. The NCA project has also assisted in the regeneration of a fodder grass (Bourgou) grown on the river banks, and 3,000 households have benefited from this activity. The project has furthermore been active in the inner areas of Gourma where pastoralism is the dominating livelihood system. Many of the pastoralists are harvesting fonio, a wild cereal harvested for the grains. The project has assisted in securing the productivity of the fonio growing areas by the use of water harvesting techniques. The total number of beneficiaries from this activity has been 4,800 families. Outputs from forestry activities include the protection of 2,003 ha of forests and afforestation activities implemented on 900 ha. Six thousand adults, of which 2,000 are women, have been attending literacy courses in the local language. The project has distributed 108 million CFA as credit. More than half of this has been used for purchasing animals for very poor families. The repayment rate of this form of credit has been about 30 percent. Health-related activities include the vaccination of 35,600 people and establishment of four medical centres. Village water supply has been improved through the construction of 169 wells.

The survey indicates improvements in food security in the project area. There has been a decrease in the number of months with insufficient food supply from 10 to 4, and number of animals has increased in the project area. More indirect indicators which point in a positive direction are reduced outmigration from the project area, improved water supply and decrease in infant mortality. The project has contributed substantially to institutional building in the project area. There are now 128 village organisations and 50 women groups. The number of participants in village organisations is 44,000, and 24,000 of these are women. The functioning of the village organisations has been improved throughout the years by increasing transparency in decisions making, competence of leaders, and responsibilities of village organisations.

## CARE

CARE has had three project funded through the SSE Programme in Mali since 1987. They all started as relief projects but changed to development projects in an early stage. CARE's implementation strategy has always involved a substantial degree of project personnel implementing the activities. CARE receives technical backstopping from CARE International and has in many areas developed

guidelines and procedures to improve project planning, monitoring and implementation. Thus, throughout the years implementation has changed: from top-down to participatory; from a high degree of subsidies and handout to local participation and credit-based activities; from an individual approach towards directing assistance to the community as a whole the approach; from a conservative environmental protection approach towards a multisectorial development strategy; through introduction of a more gender sensitive approach.

The reason behind these changes has been better to reflect the local population's priorities, and to promote local ownership of the activities in order to attain a more sustainable result. A problem with a more participatory approach to planning is that the local population in many instances give highest priority to increased agricultural productivity - short-term income-earning activities rather than long-term environmental rehabilitation activities.

Project phase-out was originally planned during the years 1999-2001 for all three projects. In 1995-96, CARE developed a new implementation strategy, moving away from a clear-cut phase-out of each project, remaining as a resource base in the area, but implementing activities in selected villages for only a short period of time (2-3 years). Selection of villages is done after negotiations with the villagers and after an agreed plan of intervention and division of responsibilities (work and economic) between the villagers and CARE staff has been agreed.

#### *Tombouctou (Diré) project*

In the earliest phase of the project, emphasis was given to environmental rehabilitation. The project assisted in the planting of 145,000 trees and in the construction of 3,144 wood saving stoves. The results obtained were disappointing and the project was reoriented to give project beneficiaries a more central role in deciding which activities to undertake. A major concern of the population was to secure the rice production in the area and, as in the NCA Gourma project, the focus in CARE's project in Tombouctou (Diré) is now on improving agricultural production through better utilisation of water from the Niger river. Entry of water to the deep water rice-producing areas is now controlled on 8,000 ha, benefiting 8,749 families. In addition, 44015 metres of irrigation channels have been rehabilitated. Food for work projects have generally been phased out, but are still used to support major physical work. The total number of families which have benefited from food for work is 18,700. Food for work is now only used in order to undertake major physical works. In CARE's project, 54 million CFA has been used for credit, half of this being allocated to women groups. The repayment rate of this credit has been 100 percent. The main contribution to improve health has been the construction of 88 wells. Committees for maintenance of the wells have also been established.

Noragric has earlier commented that increased emphasis should be given to securing irrigation in the deep water rice-producing systems. As the rice production system now functions it is very much dependent on a good synchrony between the rainfall and the raising water of the Niger river. The production system must be considered as the main production activity along the Niger river zone and if this system fail some of the other project activities such as the women credit groups and grain banks may also disintegrate.

The project has had a marked impact on the food security situation. The number of months with insufficient food supply at the household level has been decreased from 9 months to 2-4 months, and cereal banks are able to supply food in the villages for 3-4 months. Outmigration has decreased substantially and there is an increase in the number of animals. The health situation has improved as testified by a decrease in the incidences of water born diseases and a reduction of infant mortality. The project has contributed to institution building through the establishment of 52 village organisations and 88 women groups. The total number of participants in these village groups is 52 000. The functioning of the village groups has been improved.

#### *Agroforestry project in Koro*

The objective of the Koro project has been to increase agricultural production and to increase the competence of villagers in the management of natural resources. The project has been focusing on agriculture and forestry. New agricultural practices have been introduced on 4,500 ha, benefiting 1,358 households in the last season. Sixty percent of households are now utilising improved varieties as compared to no use at the initiation of the project. Veterinary services have been improved, involving 3,743 households. Soil and water conservation activities have been implemented, and forestry activities have been undertaken on 6,582 ha involving 1,484 households. The total amount of credit distributed through the programme has been 10 million CFA allocated to 935 women and 145 men.

Food security has increased, as shown by the decrease in the number of months with insufficient food supply from 3 - 5 months to 1 - 2 months. Yields have increased, erosion has decreased, and forest cover has improved. Fuelwood does not seem to be a major concern in the project area, as there is no price increase in the local market for fuelwood. The project has contributed to the establishment of 80 local groups, 35 of these groups being women groups. The number of women participating in groups is 1080 and the number of men 396.

#### *Macina project*

The objectives of the project are to increase agricultural production, improve management of financial resources, and establish grain banks. The project has assisted in the construction of 88 km of living fences (trees with thorns) for preventing access of animals to the gardens. This activity has involved 3,624 households. Extension has been provided on gardening and agriculture to 6,500 families. Sixty percent of the farmers are now using improved varieties. One hundred and thirty wells for gardening have been constructed. The amount of credit distributed has been 65,000 USD, of which almost 80 percent were used for the establishment of grain banks. The repayment rate of the credit has been 100 percent. Interest rates on credit have been increased from 5 percent to 10 percent. Credit is now increasingly being given to women groups.

The number of months with insufficient food supply has decreased from 5 to 3 - 4 months and the animal stock has increased. Yields have increased and soil erosion decreased. Less land is now being abandoned than at the time of project initiation. 44 village organisation and 11 women groups have been established. Participants in village organisations include 7,611 men and 1,061 women. The

functioning of the village organisations has improved through the years. Infant mortality has decreased in the project area.

### The Strømme Memorial Foundation

The Strømme Memorial Foundation (SMF) has two projects in Mali; the Grasshopper Control Project in Kayes and the PIDEB project (Projet Integre de Developement de Bafoulabe), both of which have received funding from the start of the SSE Programme.

#### *The PIDEB project in the Cercle of Bafaloubé*

SMF's PIDEB project began as a relief project, running from 1984 to 1987. When the SSE Programme was initiated, the project became a development project, with a strategy to give sectorial assistance to individuals and groups in particular need. In 1993, the project was reoriented to give assistance to specific areas (sectors). Important objectives of the PIDEB project are to increase food security, rehabilitate the environment, improve health services, improve access to clean drinking water, improve education, and strengthen women's status. A long-term development plan from 1993-2007 (with phasing out planned for 2007) has been prepared. During the first phase, relief was given. In the next phase, free handouts of agricultural inputs and tools were given to those in need. From 1993 onwards, inputs have increasingly been provided on a credit basis.

The project has provided extension for improved agricultural practices. Improved varieties have been introduced, and one sorghum variety is used by 75 percent of the farmers in the project area. The project has promoted gardening through training and distribution of seed and equipment. The number of households involved in gardening is 1,166. The major activity of the credit scheme has been to provide agricultural equipment. About 37 million CFA have been distributed for this activity. Credit has been given on a 15 percent subsidy. Credit is also provided to cereal banks (3.1 million CFA) and women groups (2.3 million CFA). In the project review from 1997, Noragric pointed to the need to change the credit system and give the farmers and farmers' groups the responsibility for providing agricultural equipment and seeds. The credit groups for women have included 189 women. The project has assisted the national health service in vaccination programs. Eighty percent of the children between 0 and 11 years have received vaccination against the major diseases. Altogether 1,334 people, including 411 women, have participated in literacy courses.

Food security among the target population has improved, as the number of months with insufficient food supply has decreased from 3 months to 1.5 months. Infant mortality has decreased, and there are fewer incidences of water-borne diseases. The project has contributed to the establishment of 144 village organisations and 75 women groups. The functioning of these village groups seems to have improved over the years.

#### *Locust and Grasshopper Control Project in Kayes*

The objective of the Grasshopper Control Project was to deal with the grasshopper pests that occurred after the droughts in the mid-eighties, which threatened to destroy crop yields. Implementation strategies have changed from massive

aeroplane spraying of large areas in the years 1987-90, through more targeted spraying of affected areas with local participation 1991-93, to a strong emphasis on empowering the local population with knowledge on Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and preventive measures to reduce pest problems from 1994 onwards. A total of 775,000 ha of land have been treated with locust control measures. If fields were left untreated, average yield decline was 30 percent. In line with the transformation of the implementation strategy, the use of incentives has changed. Whereas it previously was common to provide free pesticides, knapsack sprayers, and food for IPM work, no free incentives are given today. The project been implemented through the regional offices of the Plant Protection Agency, assisted by staff from the SMF. Phase-out of the project will take place in 1997.

### **3.1.2 General comments to the projects in Mali**

A problem all projects under the SSE umbrella in Mali are facing is to identify local partners that can continue the development assistance after the NGOs cease to be operational. The NGO projects in Mali have been fairly large projects, making it difficult for local institutions to take on all project activities. There is no simple answer to this problem. In some cases it can be possible to establish or collaborate with a local NGO, which can assume some of the responsibilities of the project. In other cases assistance can be provided through farmers' groups. A third option would be do provide assistance through public institutions. If the NGOs want to continue to provide support after ceasing to be operational, the NGOs need to identify the channels through which support will be continued at a very early stage.

The overall impact of the SSE Programme in Mali is positive. Even if all project support were to cease, many of the results produced would benefit the local population on a permanent basis. All projects report improvements in terms of food security, the most clear effects being observed in Northern Mali. Even though food security has been increased in the project areas in Northern Mali, the food security situation remains insecure.

The number of animals in the project areas in northern Mali has increased. In the past, considerable emphasis was given to overgrazing, but there is now an increasing body of scientific information showing that overgrazing is less of a concern than what was earlier believed. The condition of pastures in northern Sahel is mainly dependent on rainfall and much less on animal pressure.

### **3.1.3. Effect on peace and stability in Northern Mali**

Probably the biggest achievement of the SSE Programme in Mali is the indirect effect of contributing to increasing peace and stability in the northern areas of Mali. A civil war broke out in the Northern areas of Mali in 1991 involving the Tuareg and Songrai ethnique groups and the government of Mali. Both the Norwegian Church Aid's (NCA) programme in the Gourma area and CARE's project in Diré were seriously effected and project personnel were killed. Negotiations started in 1993 under the auspices of Kåre Lode, a former director of the NCA's programme in Mali. It would have been impossible for him to play the

role of successful mediator without the wide-spread support and credibility established through NCA's Gourma Programme. This illustrates the importance of country knowledge and personal contacts in these kinds of negotiations.

### **3.2 SUDAN**

Two projects have been funded through the SSE Programme in Sudan; the Sinkat project of the Norwegian Red Cross (NRC) and the Um Ja Wasir project of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA).

Sudan has a long-standing internal conflict between northern Muslim areas and the southern Christian/animist areas. The projects funded through the SSE Programme have been located in the North, and have not been directly affected by the conflict. The Cowiconsult evaluation in 1992 proposed to phase out projects in Sudan. This was further recommended by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for political reasons.

#### **3.2.1 Results and impacts at the project level in Sudan**

##### *The Um Ja Wasir Project*

The only on-going project in Sudan is ADRA's Um Ja Wasir project. The goal of the project is to assist nomadic tribes which lost all their animals during the drought in the early 1980s to resettle around irrigated land in the desert. Planning started in 1986, and a pilot phase saw four wells put in place by 1990. In 1992 the first commercial crop from the area was produced. The project was proposed to be extended with more land and wells through three phases from 1994 to 1998, 1998 to 2000, and 2001 to 2004. The strategy would be that if the phases were successful, a revolving fund would finance an increasing share of the investments over time and after phase 4 further expansions should be fully financed by the revolving fund. The most recent review undertaken in June 1997 reported that the build-up of revolving funds was not taking place as rapidly as expected, due to reduced harvests.

The main focus in the ADRA project is the development of an irrigation scheme in the desert areas of Sudan. The number of households benefiting from the project has been 72, and 125 ha is currently under irrigation. In addition, training has been provided in nutrition, health, child care, handicrafts, and small industries.

It appears that the families involved in the ADRA project have greatly improved their food security. There has been an increase in the number of months the households can produce sufficient food from 0-6 months to 8-12 months, and migration to other areas for work has ceased. The project also contributed to the formation of a village organisation in which 620 persons are participating.



### *The Sinkat Project*

The SSE Programme initially funded one project in Sudan, namely the Red Cross Sinkat project. It started up in 1986-87, with baseline studies and community mobilisation and organisation. It involved heavy infrastructure development of dams in the period 1987 to 1990. From 1990 to 1995, activities shifted towards small-scale earth dams and an increasing focus on women, the rural sector, health and education. In the later years from 1996-97 the project has emphasized institution building and local participation in order to facilitate the phasing out of NRC assistance. From 1997, the project has been transferred to the separate agreement between NORAD and NRC, and is as such no longer funded through the SSE Programme.

Major project activities have been the construction of concrete dams and earth embankment dams. These dams can provide irrigation for 357 ha. Other project activities have been the distribution of seeds and tools to 9,000 household. Children from 6 schools have received training in planting and cultivation of trees. Land reclamation actives on 5,000 ha have increased yields by 200-300 percent and benefited 4,000 families. Adult training has been given to 10,000 persons and 60 students have received support for studying at the University of Sudan. Important health activities has been the vaccination 3,538 children, rehabilitation of 145 wells, and the construction of 15 wells. A health centre has been built which is supposed to give support to 7,000 families. A total of 11 million Sudanese pounds has been distributed as credit. Credit has been used for establishing grain banks, the number of participants in the banks being 70,000. In addition, 1,200 farmers have received agricultural credit. A revolving fund for women activities has been established, involving 428 women. A revolving fund for 3 medical centres able to serve 20,000 people has also been established.

The number of months that households' agricultural produce lasts has been increased from 3-4 months to 6-12 months. There is still considerable outmigration for work. The incidence of water-born diseases has decreased. There has been an exceptional decrease in the number of hours a household spends per day on collecting fuelwood: from 10-12 hours to 1 hour. Land use plans have been agreed upon by 90 percent of the villages.

### **3.2.2 General comments to the projects in Sudan**

The ADRA project has greatly improved food security for participating households, but a major problem is that the income from sales of produce is not yet able to cover production costs. The long-term sustainability of the project therefore appears to be uncertain. As compared to other SSE projects, relatively few households have benefited from the project.

It is difficult to assess the sustainability of the Sinkat project. A major achievement of the project has been the reclamation of 19,200 ha of land. The land has been reclaimed by the use of heavy machinery and it is questionable whether the local people have the capacity to maintain the physical structures. It will depend on the solidity of the structures and how much resources the population is able to mobilise to maintain the structures. An evaluation carried out in 1996 pointed to increased commitment of the local people in project

activities, but the people still considered the structures and the groups formed as being part of the project and not the community.

### 3.3 ETHIOPIA

At the initiation of the SSE Programme (1986), Ethiopia was fighting the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front (EPLF) and the Tigrayan Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF). In Ethiopia, NCA and Redd Barna (Norwegian Save the Children, or NSC) received funding through the SSE Programme for projects implementation in Southern Ethiopia. These were in part working through local NGOs and in part implementing projects themselves. The Development Fund (DF) and the Norwegian Peoples Aid (NPA) organized projects in areas under TPLF control that were implemented by TPLFs humanitarian branch REST (Relief Society of Tigray). The Mengistu regime fell in 1991, and a provisional government was formed. In 1995 elections were held in Ethiopia.

Norwegian Save the Children (NSC) initially had two projects in Southern Ethiopia; the Wolayta and the Wogda projects. NSC implemented these projects themselves with a substantial number of NSC staff present in the area. NSC projects were generally well-planned, and a phase-out year was decided at the initiation of the projects. Phase-out would follow NSC guidelines on handing over/phasing out of activities. This involved handing over activities either to local organisations (credit groups or co-operatives) or local authorities (schools, health centres etc.). Baseline surveys were undertaken and staff were given skills in participatory planning. In 1995-96 these two projects were phased out according to the guidelines, following a decision by NSC centrally to focus more specifically on child-oriented projects. A new SSE-funded project was initiated in Gonder in 1995, based on a more child-oriented concept including a greater emphasis on schools and nutrition in the area. A workshop was held in the area to train NSC staff on monitoring of food security (undertaken by Noragric).

Table 2. Some outputs from the projects in Ethiopia.

	km of terraces built	Area closure ha	Micro basins no.	Distribution of tools no. of tools	Credit distributed thousand birr	Liter- acy trainee s
REST	9632	1129	6		3296	
RAMA	92	3040		415	435	
WAG		38		6400		1803

#### 3.3.1 Results and impacts at the project level in Ethiopia

##### Relief Society of Tigray

Norwegian Peoples Aid (NPA) and Development Fund (DF) projects have since initiation been implemented through the local partner, the Relief Society of Tigray (REST). REST has also implemented projects for NCA. REST has historically (as TPLF's humanitarian branch supplying relief and other aid to the

population of Tigray during the war) a very strong contact with and knowledge of the local population. Work is organised through the local *weredas*, comprising elected members from the community. Initially in 1987, NPA and DF supported selected components (seedbanks and a bull-servicing programme) of a larger agricultural development programme implemented in Tigray.

From 1992, following peace and stability in Tigray, implementation has shifted towards funding the totality of the Integrated Agricultural Development Programme (IADP) in selected *weredas*. The project also incorporated new components such soil and water conservation and natural resource management activities. In 1995, NPA funded REST's Rural Credit Programme in selected *weredas*. In addition, NPA and DF have supported institutional strengthening of REST and provided assistance to undertake baseline surveys and nutritional surveys in the area. In 1996, follow-up of this work led to the inclusion of an adaptive research unit within REST. REST has been a front-runner in developing strategies to reduce dependency of relief aid. In 1992-93, an assessment of the dependency syndrome was undertaken and a new strategy was developed. A main element of this strategy was full integration of relief activities with development programmes. Food assistance was provided free to the community rather than as payment for labour, and targeted the most needy and vulnerable sections of the population. Free handouts of agricultural inputs ceased in 1995, and was replaced by distribution on a credit basis at subsidised prices. When it comes to strategies for phasing out, NPA, DF, and REST are developing a strategy where some activities are handed over to the local population and other activities are transferred to the credit institutions being developed. New farming practices need to be developed. However, REST states that phasing out all support in the area would not seem sensible before adequate food security for the whole population has been achieved, at least 10 or 15 years from now.

The results from the various projects implemented by REST have been grouped together. These include the Integrated Rural Development Project, the Root Crops Development Project, and the Credit Programme.

Soil and water conservation has been a major activity in the Integrated Rural Development project. Approximately 9,600 km of terraces have been constructed in the period between 1992 and 1996. The number of households involved was 26,000. Prior to 1992, funds from different donor organisations were not accounted for separately, making it impossible to identify the number of km of terraces constructed with SSE funds. Afforestation activities have resulted in the planting of trees on 643 ha of land, involving 8,617 households. Bulls for ploughing have also been provided to vulnerable households, and the total number of beneficiaries from this activity was 1994 last year. Six microdams, with the capacity to irrigate 2,820 ha, have been built, benefiting 5,000 - 7,000 households. Vegetable seeds have also been provided to households, and two root crop multiplication centres have been established. A rural credit scheme has been established, allocating a total amount of 3.3 million birr and involving 2,584 households. The own capital of credit scheme is about 30 %. The repayment rate has been 97 percent. An indirect effect of the credit scheme has been that the interest rate claimed by the local moneylenders has been reduced from above 100 % per year at the initiation of the scheme to at a current level of 30 to 50 %. Seed

banks have also been established as a form of credit activity. The number of people served by this activity is 75,426. In this case the repayment rate has only been 70 percent.

Food security has increased in the project area as result of REST's Integrated Rural Development Project. The number of months the households' own agricultural production lasts has increased from 0-1 month to 6-8 months, and the number of months with insufficient food supply has decreased from 10 to 5 months. Yields have increased and households now spend three hours per day to collect fuelwood as compared to 6-8 hours at the initiation of the project. There are now 215 women groups in the project area, and the total number of participants in village organisations is 283,277.

### Norwegian Church Aid

Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) has implemented activities through local partners. In 1987, NCA had three projects in Southern Ethiopia, implemented through local branches of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY). These projects were phased out of the SSE Programme, and included among the regular NCA/NORAD agreements, during the years 1994-95. In 1994, NCA initiated three new projects in the North of Ethiopia, namely the Rama Integrated Agricultural Rehabilitation Project in Tigray (implemented by EECMY), Adhiaferom Integrated Agricultural and Environmental Rehabilitation Project in Tigray (implemented by REST), and Wag Integrated Agricultural Project in Wollo (implemented by the development organisation of Ethiopian Orthodox Church, or EOC). As part of the strategy to work through partner organisations, a major effort is also done to assist partner organisations in developing implementation skills, such as planning, monitoring, and reporting. In addition, NCA provides professional and technical backstopping through their Project Support Unit (PSU) and assists in undertaking baseline surveys.

An obstacle in the process of choosing a suitable partner organisation is the assessment of the organisation's grassroots contact, values, intentions, and qualifications in implementing rural development projects. Project implementation tends to reflect the varying skills and attributes of the partner organisation. On the other hand, NCA has, through a series of planning workshops (in 1995-97) using participatory methods, assisted partner organisations in developing these skills and targeting their activities more towards local needs. We would particularly like to point to the Wag project, which has initiated a training programme for EOC priests to become development agents for disseminating improved farming techniques.

#### *The Rama project*

Important objectives of the Rama project are to increase agricultural production, to rehabilitate the environment, and to develop human resources. The project has assisted in the construction of 96 km of terraces, protecting 1,450 ha of land. The project has distributed 4,415 pieces of agricultural equipment and 3,040 ha have been set aside as area closures. A credit scheme has been established. Most of the credit has been allocated for the purchase of irrigation pumps, benefiting 104 persons.

The Rama project reports that general food security has increased and that the yields have increased. The number of people participation in village organisation is 132, and 5 women groups have been formed.

#### *The WAG project*

Important objectives of the WAG project have been to rehabilitate the environment, to increase agricultural production, to improve health status of people and animals, to develop human resources, and to promote income-generating activities. The project has terraced 1,450 ha, benefiting 2,400 households. Tools for soil conservation and seeds have also been provided. This has benefited several thousand households in the area. More than 1,800 persons have received adult training. Two human health clinics have been constructed, and one veterinary clinic has been built and furnished.

For the WAG project, a clear improvement in food security is reported. The period for which households can rely on their own agricultural production has increased from four to nine months, and the number of months with insufficient food supply has decreased from eight to three. The health situation has improved, as manifested by a reduction in the infant mortality rate and fewer incidences of water-borne diseases. The number of people participating in women organisations is about 250 .

The majority of the people in the project area are members of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. A problem for development assistance in the area has been that there are so few working days in the month due to the celebration of different saints. Between 17-20 days per months have been used for such celebrations. These days have been strictly respected and no work could be undertaken on these days. NCA entered into a dialogue with the archbishop of Woldia, and it was decided to reduce the number of holidays to 11-12 days per month. The priest are also more tolerant than they used to be in the past with regard to allowing people to work on holidays. This effort has made implementation of the project more easy and has contribute to increase the amount of development work that can be undertaken in the project area.

### **3.2.2 General comments to the projects in Ethiopia**

As opposed to the projects in Mali, the Norwegian NGOs have not been operational within the SSE Programme in Ethiopia. The only exception is the project implemented in Southern Ethiopia by NCA, which has now been removed from the SSE umbrella. Support has been provided through REST, the Orthodox Church and the Mekane Yesus Church.

Despite the improvement, food security in the area is still inadequate. For example, in the REST project area an average household has sufficient food supply for only seven months per year. Further improvement in food security will depend on increasing agricultural production and creating other income-generating activities. The low level of food security in the project area is also a threat to those results which have already been achieved. The soil conservation structures can be affected because food-insecure household will have limited

resources to maintain the structures. Credit schemes are also at risk, because households will not be able to save money but will rather draw on available capital to make ends meet. There is also a risk that food-insecure households will be forced to eat the seed to be used in the next season. It can therefore be concluded that a lot remains to be done in Northern Ethiopia.

### 3.4 ERITREA

Implementation of projects in Eritrea has been heavily influenced by the fact that Eritrea from 1970 to 1991 was at war with Ethiopia. In 1991, Eritrea was liberated from Ethiopia, and a Provisional Government (PGE) was set-up to rule the country until elections were held. On May 24, 1993, a national referendum voted in favour of independence and Eritrea was granted independent membership in international organisations such as the UN and OAU.

From the start of the SSE Programme in 1986 up to May 1991, NGO assistance was given through the humanitarian branch of the EPLF — the Eritrean Relief Association (ERA) — in areas that had been liberated from Ethiopia. During this period there was extensive need for relief aid, due to both military activity and to failing rains in 1987, 1989, 1990, and 1991. It is estimated that during the period 1986-1991, military activity caused the destruction of land equal to 74,000 average Eritrean farms, and that 465,000 livestock were confiscated or killed. In addition, military action caused the disruption of agricultural activities. During the years 1987 to 1991, approximately 2 - 2.5 million Eritreans annually received relief and development assistance in the liberated areas.

Already in 1987, the Agricultural Commission of EPLF initiated an Agricultural Rehabilitation Programme (ARP) in addition to the relief aid that was necessary. In the beginning, ARP included the handing out of agricultural equipment and animals. In 1991 it expanded to include extensive soil and water conservation components, afforestation, water supply, and oxen and camel credit components. Most of the work was undertaken through food-for-work programmes, which were regulated through detailed guidelines. The Norwegian NGOs present in Eritrea at that time (Norwegian Church Aid, Norwegian Save the Children, Norwegian People's Aid, and the Development Fund) contributed to the ARP and to relief aid. Their contribution was targeted towards regions that were liberated, and financed ARP activities implemented by ERA staff. As such the Development Fund and Norwegian People's Aid funded parts of the ARP in the Seraye-Akele Gusay-Hamassien (SAH) and the Sahel-Senhit-Semhar-Barka (SASEBA) regions. Norwegian Save the Children funded ARP in the Asmat region. Norwegian Church Aid were involved in relief aid and in institutional strengthening.

In 1992, after independence, the responsibility for implementing the ARP shifted from ERA to the new Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) established under the PGE. ERA retained the responsibility for fund-raising and co-ordination of international NGOs. The change of administration caused serious delays and problems in reporting, monitoring, and accounting of projects. It also created problems in terms of assessing which parts of the ARP were funded from the government or other donor sources, and which were funded through the NGOs.

On request from the MoA in Eritrea, the Development Fund initiated the construction of a veterinary training centre in Asmara. The scope would be to provide Eritrea with a programme for Diploma students in veterinary skills, which was in high demand in all regions. The project was set back during the following years, due to unclear administrative responsibility for the project. In 1996, it was decided that responsibility would remain with the MoA.

The Norwegian NGOs have not had independent and direct responsibility for implementing the projects in Eritrea. Norwegian Save the Children and Norwegian Church Aid did, however, have country-offices and regional co-ordinators, which provided a certain degree of monitoring ability and contact with the local population. Problems of implementation were by the NGOs viewed as a result of the lack of local participation in planning and implementation (a top-down approach was adopted by the Eritrean authorities), lack of baseline data, and gradually problems inadequate reporting and monitoring by from the Ministry of Agriculture. This was particularly difficult for those NGOs with no representation in the country, such as Norwegian People's Aid and the Development Fund.

During the years 1994-96, Norwegian Save the Children initiated an evaluation of the Asmat project and, as a result, started a participatory planning process to develop a project which would be more in line with the demands of the local population. A skills development programme for the MoA staff was also undertaken in order to improve planning, targeting of activities, and monitoring. In 1997, however, Norwegian Save the Children has been asked to withdraw from the funding of the ARP in the Asmat region as of 1998.

In 1996, the Development Fund and the Norwegian People's Aid withdrew from the ARP and instead started a process to develop a small regional project targeted to the pastoralist communities in the Barka region, thus leading to a closer collaboration with the local population, local administration, and potential local NGOs (scarce in rural Eritrea). During the pilot phase in 1995-96, a baseline study and the organisational set-up for the project were developed. In 1995, however, the administrative regions were changed and a new organisational structure had to be developed.

In April 1997, the Government of Eritrea announced that it would limit International NGOs' involvement to health and primary education projects.

### **3.4.1 Results and impacts at the project level in Eritrea**

#### **The Development Fund**

##### *Oxen and Camel Credit Scheme*

The Oxen and Camel Credit Scheme has been a joint undertaking of the Eritrean Ministry of Agriculture and the Development Fund. For the 8 years the project has been running, the total number of animals (Oxen and camels) distributed through the project has been 19,378, benefiting an equal number of households. The poorest families have received this support. Farmer benefiting from this

project have been able to increase the area under cultivation, and in one area land under cultivation increased from 30,000 ha to 40,000 ha. Until 1992, the animals were given to farmers free of charge, while from 1993 onwards, an 8 percent interest rate has been charged. A revolving fund has been established.

This appears to be an efficient way of addressing basic needs of poor people. One problem that was raised by the project evaluation was that this type of credit only benefited some types of farmers. Female headed households seemed less able to benefit from the project. The poorest households also have difficulties in repaying the credit.

### Norwegian People's Aid

#### *Saseba*

Saseba Agricultural Rehabilitation has been a collaboration project between the Eritrean Ministry of Agriculture and Norwegian People's Aid. Soil and water conservation has been a major part of this activity, and 8,050 ha have been treated with soil conservation measures. This work has been implemented through food for work. Farmers have furthermore benefited from the distribution of 15,000 sets of farm tools. Afforestation has been another important activity, the total number of trees planted being 340,000. The survival rate of trees has been above 80 percent. Construction of 16,568 microbasins and 62 km of checkdams have been other important activities. Animal services have been provided, and the number of animals vaccinated is 1,400,000.

#### *SAH agricultural rehabilitation project*

The project has been a collaborative project between the Ministry of Agriculture and Norwegian People's Aid. Main objectives of the SAH project have been environmental rehabilitation, support to agroforestry, development of small-scale irrigation, and support to animal husbandry. Construction of 1,115 km of terraces has led to 4,120 ha of terraced crop land. On non-agricultural land, 145 ha have been terraced. The project has assisted in the planting of 1.5 millions tree seedlings, distributed 890 tons of seed, provided 6,912 agricultural tool sets, built 16 wells and 12 water reservoirs, and constructed 100 km of checkdams and six microdams. 475,350 animals have been vaccinated and 220,350 animals have received medical treatment. Other animal husbandry activities include the distribution of 3,711 oxen and 37,500 chickens. Six demonstration sites for agriculture have been established.

### Norwegian Church Aid

#### *Zula*

In 1995 Norwegian Church Aid initiated a geographically limited project in the Zula area, in addition to continuing their institutional support to a few Eritrean NGOs. The project started with collection of baseline data and has from the start involved local participation as a mode of implementation and planning. The project is formally under MoA, although one NCA employee has been appointed to work in Zula to ensure co-ordination with the donor and to perform M&E tasks.



The Zula project is a joint project of the Ministry of Agriculture and NCA. The objectives of the project is to increase agricultural production by the use of a proper water management system, and to develop a strategy for environmental restoration and protection.

The project started in 1996, and the major achievement so far has been the construction a 1.5 km checkdam and embankment constructions. An agricultural demonstration site and an animal husbandry demonstration site have been established. Nine wells have been constructed. So far there have been few changes in the food security situation, but village water supply has improved. As a result of project activity, less agricultural land is now abandoned.

### **3.4.2 General comments to the projects in Eritrea**

The projects in Eritrea have been implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture. Some of the project activities can thus hopefully be continued after project support ceases. The main emphasis of the projects seems to be on direct support to improve agriculture. The project activities undertaken have definitely helped to increase food security and to protect the environment. But in order to achieve long-lasting effects, human resource development and establishment of local institutions to deal with local problems are also very relevant. It appears the projects in Eritrea have given less emphasis to these factors.

The projects were implemented as part of the ARP. This has made it difficult to know where the SSE funded projects end and where the ARP starts.

## **4. SUMMARY OF OUTPUTS AND IMPACTS OF THE SSE PROGRAMME**

### **4.1 OUTPUTS PRODUCED**

It is difficult to present the outputs from the SSE Programme in a simple way, as the activities undertaken are so diverse and cannot be grouped together. It is especially difficult to assess the number of beneficiaries in Eritrea as the SSE Programme here has been apart of Agricultural Rehabilitation Programme. The result estimates presented for the programme should also be regarded as conservative, since not all projects reported on the outputs produced.

The physical output for the SSE Programme is impressive. The most remarkable achievement is the construction of 1,100 km of terraces (stonebunds), 900 km being constructed by the REST project in Ethiopia. These contour bunds have the dual purpose of making more water available for plant growth and reducing soil erosion. Other outputs which have increased agricultural production are the establishment of irrigation structures on 10,000 ha. Approximately 30,000 people have benefited from access to irrigation facilities. Forestry activities has been undertaken on at least 34,000 has. This includes both tree planting and establishment of protected areas. About 17 million Norwegian kroner have been distributed as credit. This includes credit to grain banks, to women groups, and to agricultural activities.

The total number of direct beneficiaries from the SSE Programme is difficult to assess. Around one million people have probably benefited directly (members of households receiving assistance). The number of direct beneficiaries in Eritrea is roughly estimated to be 500,000. The number of direct beneficiaries in Mali is in the order of 100,000 to 130,000 people. In the Sudan, the programme has reached about 70,000 people, most of these being assisted through grain banks. The number of beneficiaries in Ethiopia is about 300,000.

## **4.2 IMPACT OF THE SSE PROGRAMME**

### **4.2.1 Effects on food security**

Assessing the impact of the project on food security is difficult, as no baseline surveys exist for most of the projects. However, the results from this survey indicate that food security has improved. This is reflected in the result that the households' ability to rely on own production has increased from approximately four months to eight months, and the number of months with insufficient food supply has decreased (Tables 3 and 4). The grain banks established in many villages have furthermore contributed to increased food security at the village level. At the same time, there has been an increase in the number of animals. An increase in the number of animals is a reliable indicator of increased food security, as investing in animals is the traditional way of accumulating wealth in many of these areas. When assessing these figures it is important to bear in mind that the projects in Ethiopia and Eritrea were initiated in a war or war-like situation. Food security was therefore very low when the project were started which partly explain the clear improvement in food security.

The figures on food security provided by project staff are subjective. It difficult to assess the reliability of these figures without conducting an in-depth study. However, another way to assess these encouraging results is to ask whether they seem reasonable in terms of the physical outputs produced by the projects. Judging from the outputs produced, the effects on food security may not be considered as completely out of reach. Many of the projects activities have focused on improved utilisation of water, and substantial achievements have been reached within this field.

That fact that migration has decreased from 46 percent to 10 percent also indicates increased livelihood security. Seasonal migration is normally a strategy people are resorting to facing a serious food crises. It is notable that there is a decrease in migration despite a general increase in job opportunities outside project areas (Table 4).

Table 3. Impact of project on food security (average of all projects)

Indicator	At initiation of the project	In average last few years
How long does the households own agricultural production last (in months) ?	4.2	8.1
Number of months with insufficient food supply of an average household?	7.4	3.4
For how many months can the grain bank in the village provide food for the villagers	2.3	7.8
Percent of household income derived from agricultural activities	69.6	74.1
Percent of village population which migrate to other regions for work. (Seasonal)	46.3	10.2

Table 4. Social indicators and project impacts. Comparisons apply to time of initiation of project and present state. Distribution of answers according to projects.

	worse	same	improved
Job opportunities in other areas	0	1	10
Village Water Supplies	0	0	13
Overall Impact on Food Security	0	0	13
	decrease	same	increased
Incidences of Water-born diseases	9	1	0
Number of animals per household	0	1	11

#### 4.2.2 Effects on environment

Indicators for environmental rehabilitation generally point in a positive direction (Tables 5 and 6). Yields have increased in all the eleven projects. This should normally reflect either improvements in the resource base or improved management of the resources. Many of the projects have implemented soil and water conservation, and seven of 11 projects report that soil erosion is lower now than at project initiation. Four projects report an increase in soil erosion, however. Lack of control data from similar areas makes it difficult to determine how conditions would have changed in the absence of project interventions.

The establishment of the area closures has been a success in Ethiopia. The majority of these closures have been established during the 1990s on severely degraded land. Once the area closures are established, tree cutting and animal grazing are prohibited. Regeneration of the vegetation takes place within a 3-4 year period, and after this protection period, controlled use of the land for cutting and grazing is allowed. The area closures have contributed to increased vegetation cover, protection of endangered species of trees and shrubs, and to some extent the restoration of wildlife. In the long run, the area closures will also reduce flooding and help to stabilise the discharge of water to the rivers.

Another interesting result is that less agricultural land is abandoned now than was the case at the initiation of the projects. This might indicate the development of sustainable land husbandry systems. All projects report an increase in cultivated area. From an environmental point of view, this might be detrimental, since expansion of the agricultural land may imply that more marginal land is taken into production. This marginal land can be on steep, erosion-prone slopes, or on land which is for other reasons is unsuitable for arable agriculture. On the other hand, the expansion of the agricultural land might also indicate that farmers have obtained access to a wider range of resources and technology.

The projects have been efficient in promoting improved crop varieties. The danger here is that traditional varieties are lost. In Tigray, however, local grain banks have been established. The survey indicates that the forest cover is increasing and that there is a marked decrease in how much time women spend on collecting fuelwood.

Some of the projects have assisted the villages in establishing land use plans. If well-planned and respected, such plans can be an important element in improving resource management at the local level. Establishment of land use plans are important in order to establish new forests, to minimise the conflict between agriculture and animal husbandry, and to regulate access to water resources.

Table 5. Impact on environmental conditions (average/total for all projects)

How many hours did the household use per day to collect fuelwood at initiation of project?	5,1
How many hours did the household use per day to collect fuelwood last year?	2,0
Percent of households using improved varieties compared to traditional varieties	64
How many villages have agreed on a land-use plan?	208

Table 6. Impact on environment. Comparisons apply to time of initiation of project and present state. Distribution of answers according to projects

	lower	same	increased
Impact on yields	0	0	11
Impact on soil erosion	7	0	4
Price of fuelwood to price of grains (local)	5	0	5
Agricultural land abandoned	10	0	0
Agricultural land opened due to project	0	0	11
	worse	same	improved
Impact on forest cover	0	0	10
Impact on pastures	0	1	8

### 4.2.3 Institution building and the role of women

There is no doubt that the SSE Programme has contributed to institutional building and strengthening of women's status. Nine out of 10 projects report that the status of women has increased. About 400,000 men and women participate in village organisations and about 500 women groups have been formed (Table 7). These organisations are of many types, from well managing committees to grain banks and credit groups. An important finding is that the projects feel self-sustaining capacity of these organisations has improved over the years, so that organisations may continue to operate when project support ceases (Table 8). This increased self-sustaining capacity can be ascribed to increased transparency of decision making and increased competence of leaders. The responsibilities of the village organisations have also grown.

The new institutions and the training of local people in institution building have probably contributed to participants' increased confidence in own problem solving capacity. Of special importance is the establishment of the many women groups. Many of the women groups are credit groups, which give participating women increased economic freedom and status. Institution building can also be regarded as training in the establishment of democratic institutions.

Strong local institutions are of vital importance if the results achieved during the project period are to be sustained in the long run. Many of the problems rural people are facing cannot be solved at the individual level but require community action. This applies to areas such as management of water resources, rangeland management, credit institutions, and cereals banks. Credit can theoretically be obtained on an individual basis, but the transaction costs of dealing with individual farmers with modest investment demand are often considered too high by relevant lending institutions. Establishment of village credit groups may in many cases be the only way for villagers to obtain credit at reasonable interest rates.

Despite SSE program contribution with regard to building local institutions; the majority of the local institutions must still be consider as weak. There is still a problem that the projects take too much responsibility with regard to implementation of the projects. This is specially the case for the purchase of

agricultural inputs. This creates dependency towards the projects and should be avoided. The responsibility for the purchase of agricultural inputs should be given to local co-operatives or local traders.

Table 7. Effect of projects on institutional building. Sum of all projects presented.

	At project initiation	Last year
How many village organisations in the project area ?	155	699
How many women groups in the area ?	290	494
How many people participate in village organisations ?	127217	397227

Table 8. Effect of projects on institution building. Distribution of answers according to projects

Self sustaining capacity of village organisations at project initiation.	poor 7	good 2	very good 0
Self sustaining capacity of village organisations last year.	poor 1	good 8	very good 1
Transparency of decision making for members of organisations at project initiation.	low 6	moderate 2	good 0
Transparency of decision making for members of organisations in last year.	low 0	moderate 5	good 5
Competence of leaders of village organisations at project initiation.	low 7	moderate 3	good 0
Competence of leaders of village organisations.	low 1	moderate 3	good 6
Responsibilities of village organisation as compared to at the initiation of the project.	decreased 1	same 0	increased 6
Women status.	worse 0	same 1	improved 9

## 5. COLLABORATION AND EXTERNAL INPUT

One of the reasons for providing assistance to the SSE countries through a separate programme was to increase collaboration between NGOs and between NGOs and multilateral organisations. The collaboration between NGOs has increased, but collaboration between NGOs and multilateral organisations is less apparent, even though this form of collaboration also probably has increased (Table 9). A sign which testifies to the good relationship between the NGOs is the nascent Drylands Coordination Group, which aims to follow up the cooperation and shared learning initiated during the SSE Programme.

Collaboration seems also to have improved between Norwegian and recipient country NGO headquarters, and between different NGOs in the SSE countries. This is expressed in the survey, and it is also Noragric's impression after numerous project visits. The SSE seminars have furthermore strengthened the institutional and personal ties between the NGOs.

The NGOs feel that their work has been aided by project reviews, and that reports on indicators for food security and environmental rehabilitation have improved project monitoring. The effects of the reports on indicators are, however, less consistent than the effects of the project reviews. This probably illustrates the relative ease of improving a particular project component compared to the establishment of an inclusive and adequate monitoring system.

Table 9. Collaboration between NGO's and role of advice. Answers distributed according to projects

	none	same	improved
Administrative collaboration with other SSE-NGOs (sharing of office, staff etc)	3	0	9
Professional collaboration with other SSE NGOs	2	0	11
Collaboration with other SSE-org. Multilaterals	4	1	7
		none	on-going
Collaboration with SSE research component		3	8
	worsened	same	improved
Impact of project review on project implementation	0	2	9
Impact of studies on indicators on project on monitoring	0	4	8
			very
	no impact	positive	positive
Impact of SSE seminars on the project*	1	9	3

\*None of the projects reported negative effects, but this option was available in the questionnaire

## 6. LESSONS LEARNED

The SSE Programme has been a learning process for all parties involved in it. Projects were implemented in areas where the NGOs had no prior experience, and in some of the less favoured areas of the world in terms of land use potential. Rainfall is limited and highly variable, and soils are deficient in nutrients. There exist few other income generating possibilities, and the countries in the region are ranked among the poorest in the world. In Mali, the NGOs also had to struggle with the language barrier.

Summing up ten years of experiences in a few words is not an easy task. Tentatively, the lessons learned can be presented as follows:

1. Changing from relief assistance to development assistance has in part been a painful exercise. Many of the projects have had difficulties in communicating to project beneficiaries that services previously given free of charge would have to be paid for.
2. The approach in the beginning of the SSE Programme was somewhat top-down for all projects. The projects were planned and implemented with little or no consultation with the local population. Results were in many cases disappointing, and activities were only undertaken as long as there was food for work. In the 1990s, most projects have been implemented using a participatory and bottom-up approach. The project beneficiaries decide on the activities to be carried out. This approach has generally improved the involvement of local people.
3. Another important lesson is that activities which focus exclusively on the environment seldom work. People do however participate in environmental activities if their income is increased as a result of such participation.
4. It has been observed that even very poor people can be motivated to save. In some projects, credit schemes have been established and farmers' equity is growing. Credit schemes have been especially successful with women groups.
5. Political backing and public support are very important for the success of the projects. An example of this is the REST project in Tigray, where massive soil and water conservation activities have been implemented.
6. As part of the bottom-up approach, more responsibilities have been transferred to the local institution. Local institutions have also received training. This approach has given positive results, and all projects report that local institutions have been strengthened. Those projects which are implemented through the humanitarian branches of ex-liberalisation movements (EPLF and TPLF) may in this context have special relations with the local population.
7. Another important lesson has been that it is possible to cut project costs dramatically by implementing through local NGOs and local institutions. Technical backstopping, support in management issues, and training of project staff can still be a vital task of Norwegian NGOs.
8. Finding appropriate partners in rural areas to take over project activities has been and still is a difficult task, which demands a long-term perspective and consistent efforts. Local institutions are of vital importance in securing continuation of project activities, and should be assessed and preferably identified already in the initial stage of a project.
9. Despite difficulties in identifying local NGOs, the SSE programme has shown that NGOs can in some cases have comparative advantages in implementing



projects compared to government institutions. Such an example is the project implemented through the Ethiopian orthodox church, where the priests are used in promoting development work.

There are no simple solutions to the problems SSE countries are facing. Further development is dependent on strengthening all the four pillars of sustainable development: the natural resource base (soils, water, forests, genetic resources); the human capital (literacy, health, management skills); the institutions (local institutions, public institutions); the economic resources (markets, savings).

All of the pillars need due consideration if sustainable development is to be achieved. Promoting long-term development is a complex undertaking, and the SSE Programme cannot be expected to solve these problems within a ten year period. What appears to be beyond doubt, however, is that the SSE Programme has contributed to improved living conditions for a vast number of people — about one million — in arid areas of Africa, in itself a considerable achievement.