“REINTEGRATING RETURNEES AND EX-FIGHTERS IN THE PROCESS OF RECONSTRUCTION IN POST-CONFLICT ERITREA”

By

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SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF

DEGREE OF DOCTORATE OF PHILOSOPHY (Ph.D)

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December 2000

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.
Dedicated to all Eritrean Martyrs

and

To my late Mother Letekidan Hagos
Acknowledgements

I would like to express my acknowledgements to my academic supervisors Professor Lionel Cliffe and Dr. Carolyn Baylies from University of Leeds and Professor Asmerom Legesse Statistician and demography expert Weldeyesus Elisa from Eritrea for their invaluable comments.

I am grateful to Eva-Maria Bruchhaus who read and commented on the multiple versions of drafts and provided me with constant encouragement and support. She has been a wonderful friend, colleague and mentor. I also thank Kees Kingma for creating working environment and for his understanding. I would also like to thank my sisters Haregeweini Mehreteab, Elsa Mehreteab and my brother Dawit Mehreteab and Yemane Haile for their constant encouragement and support. I thank Eritrean Relief and Refugees Commission (ERREC) for releasing me from my duties to pursue my studies. Africa Education Trust Fund for paying my one year fee and Ford Foundation for awarding me Fellowship in Bonn International Centre for Conversion (BICC.)

The regional administration of Gash-Setit and the Military training of Ministry of Defense in Sawa were kind enough to facilitate and cover the expense of transport and enumerators and I would like to give them my warm thanks. Special thanks go to my children, Hanna and Bereket, who sacrificed their comfort for me to continue study.

My biggest thanks should of course be reserved for all ex-fighters and ex-refugees who shared their experience without reservation, and from whom I have learned and benefited a lot. Finally, it must be said that I alone am responsible for the opinions expressed in the report and the shortcomings, omissions, generalization and prejudices that there may undoubtedly be within it.
Map
Regional Administration of Eritrea

Eritrea

SUDAN
SAUDI ARABIA
REPUBLIC OF YEMEN

ETIOPIA

N

Gash-Barka
Anseba
Northern Red Sea
Barentu
Gash-Barka

Sudan

Central

Asmara

Keren

Massawa

Dahlak Archipelago

Zuwar Hanish Archipelago

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Abstract

After 30 years of armed struggle Eritrea attained formal independence in 1993. As a result of the war more than 700,000 people had been exiled and 150,000 to 160,000 had joined the fighting forces. At independence the EPLF fighting force numbered 95,000. With independence and the return of peace there was an opportunity as well as a need to repatriate the refugees, demobilize the fighters and reintegrate them into the main stream of the society. But by participating in the armed struggle or by fleeing into exile people had developed different values, norms and attitudes, which were not always and necessarily congruent with those of a receiving community. On the other hand they had acquired valuable skills which could become useful inputs for reviving the ‘war-torn’ country. This thesis will examine the reintegration of returnees by taking Eritrea as a case study and by placing the reintegration process in the context of rehabilitation and reconstruction process.

The analytical models followed include four interrelated and interdependent spheres: the economic, the social, the cultural, and the socio-psychological reintegration. The aim of the study is to identify and analyze variables [origin, gender, age and experience; ethnicity, experience, education and skills; living conditions and marital status; Demobilisation repatriation; organized or spontaneous; settlement…etc] that influence reintegration within each dimension.

Comparisons are made between ex-refugees and ex-fighters by analyzing these variables. In order to pinpoint the challenge of reintegration Eritrea faced after independence, historical and political background is presented briefly to chart out the social transformation undergone during the colonial era. Policies and programs developed during the armed struggle to liberate the country are reviewed and their effectiveness assessed. The question is posed to analyze what roles had the colonial era and the armed struggle played in developing factors and which in turn it would be able to help/hinder, the reintegration of returnees and ultimately the development of a cohesive society.

After placing the policies and programs that have been developed to address the problems of reintegrating returnees in context, the thesis analyses the effectiveness of the various approaches. The roles of different internal and external actors such as UNHCR, UNDP and NGOs are properly examined. In conclusion, policy recommendations are proposed to show how reintegration policies and programs could be further improved in the future development of the country -Eritrea.
### Acronym

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BMA</td>
<td>British Military Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHS</td>
<td>Community Health Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COPE</td>
<td>Consortium for Political Emergencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPA</td>
<td>Complex Political Emergencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPA</td>
<td>Department of Public Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOD</td>
<td>Department of Defense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELA</td>
<td>Eritrean Liberation Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELM</td>
<td>Eritrean Liberation Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELF</td>
<td>Eritrean Liberation Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELF-GC</td>
<td>Eritrean Liberation Front General Command</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPLF</td>
<td>Eritrean People’s Liberation Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERD</td>
<td>Emergency Relief Desk</td>
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<tr>
<td>ERA</td>
<td>Eritrean Relief Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>ERRA</td>
<td>Eritrean relief and Rehabilitation Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>ERREC</td>
<td>Eritrea Relief Refugee Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERHS</td>
<td>Eritrean ex-refugees Household Sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERRCS</td>
<td>Eritrean Red Cross and Red Crescent Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>EWDFCA</td>
<td>Eritrean War Disabled Fighters Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HC</td>
<td>Health Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>IDP</td>
<td>Internally Displaced Population</td>
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<tr>
<td>IGAD</td>
<td>Inter Governmental Authority for Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAUs</td>
<td>Mass Administration Units</td>
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<tr>
<td>MFA</td>
<td>Ministry of Foreign Affair</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOA</td>
<td>Ministry of agriculture</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOD</td>
<td>Ministry of Defense</td>
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<td>MOE</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
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<td>Ministry of Local Government</td>
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<td>MOC</td>
<td>Ministry of Construction</td>
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<tr>
<td>NUEY</td>
<td>National Union of Eritrean Youth</td>
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<tr>
<td>NUEP</td>
<td>National Union of Eritrean Peasants</td>
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<tr>
<td>NUEW</td>
<td>National Union of Eritrean Women</td>
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<td>NCA</td>
<td>Norwegian Church Aid</td>
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<td>NIF</td>
<td>National Islamic Front</td>
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<td>NGOs</td>
<td>Non Governmental Organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td>NPCC</td>
<td>National Project Co-ordination Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>OAU</td>
<td>Organization of African Unity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>OBS</td>
<td>Otte Beneck Stiftung</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAs</td>
<td>Peoples’ Assemblies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLO</td>
<td>Palestinian Liberation Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMU</td>
<td>Project Management Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PGE</td>
<td>Provisional Government of Eritrea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PFDJ</td>
<td>People’s Front for Democracy and Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRA</td>
<td>Participatory Rapid Appraisal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROFERI</td>
<td>Program for the Repatriation and Reintegration of Eritrean Refugees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QIP</td>
<td>Quick Impact Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCC</td>
<td>Sudan Council of Churches</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPCSS</td>
<td>Seraye People’s Credit and Saving Scheme</td>
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<tr>
<td>SMCP</td>
<td>Saving and Micro-Credit Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCP</td>
<td>Savings and Credit program</td>
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<tr>
<td>RICE</td>
<td>Research and Information Centre on Eritrea</td>
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<td>UN</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNHCR</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Program</td>
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<td>UNDHA</td>
<td>United Nation Department of Humanitarian Affair</td>
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<tr>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
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Appendix

Part One
Chapter One: Introduction

General Background and Methodology

1. The Land and its people
Eritrea is a torch-shaped wedge of land located in the north-eastern part of Africa between latitudes 12 degrees 42’N and 18 degrees 2’N and between longitudes 36 degree 30’E and 43 degrees 20’E. The Red Sea forms its eastern border, Sudan lies to the west and north, and Ethiopia to the South and Djibouti borders it at the extreme southern tip. The overall size of the country is about 125,000 square km. Massawa and Assab are Eritrea's two major ports on the Red Sea. The country includes about 300 islands and has over 1000km of coastline, which extends from Ras Kasar in the north to Ras Dumeira in the Bab El Mandeb straight at the southern entrance to the Red Sea. It is from this body of water that the country derived its name: in Greek “erythrea” means red.

Eritrea is divided into four principal topographic regions:
- The Central Highlands delimited to the east by an abrupt escarpment;
- The Western Lowlands;
- The mountainous mass beginning just North of Keren and extending Northwards to Sudan; and
- The coastal plains extending over the whole length of the country.

Eritrea lies in the Sahelian climatic zone and receives its rainfall from the southwestern monsoons. In normal years the rainfall ranges between 400 and 650 mm annually in the highlands and between 200 and 300 mm in the lowlands. During droughts, the rainfall can decrease to as little as 200 mm in the highlands and less than 100 mm in the lowlands. The driest areas are in the Danakil desert, which receive hardly any rain at all. The pattern of rainfall is erratic, making the country very vulnerable to droughts. Temperature varies with altitude. The average annual temperature ranges from 16 degrees centigrade at an altitude of 2325 meters above sea level to 18 degrees centigrade at an altitude of 1676 meters in the highlands, 28 degrees centigrade in the western and 30 degrees in the eastern lowlands (MOA, 1993). The warmer summer extends from April through September and the cooler winter from October to March.

The country has suffered significant environmental damage through the degradation of its land, water and forestry resources. It is estimated that in the 1920’s, about 30 percent of the country were covered with forests and woodlands. Currently,
however, forests cover only 1 percent of the total land area. The main reasons for the rapid deforestation, which started under Italian colonial rule, are the prolonged war, massive utilization of wood for fuel, and an inefficient traditional land tenure system (ibid.).

The population of Eritrea is estimated to be 3.2 million and the annual population growth is estimated 3 percent (ERREC, 1997), although no census has been conducted since the 1930’s. The population is mainly rural and subsistence agriculture is the main economic activity. More or less evenly composed of Muslims and Christians, the Eritrean population comprises nine distinct ethno-linguistic communities: Afar, Bilen, Hadareb, Kunama, Nara, Rashaida, Saho, Tigre and Tigrinya. The last two together constitute around 85 percent of the total. But the heterogeneity of Eritrean Society is of course not simply one of cultural diversity; it is intimately related to contrasting economic and social conditions, and to a complex history of settlement and resettlement.

1.1 History of the conflict

Eritrea has been under different colonial rulers for the last four centuries. From 1572 Turkey controlled parts of the area for roughly 300 years. The next colonizer was Egypt, which stayed for 29 years from 1846 to 1875. Italy, Eritrea’s colonial master between 1890 and 1941, created the current Eritrean boundaries. After a brief hiatus, the League of Nations entrusted the administration to Great Britain until 1952.

Following the victory of the Allied Powers in World War II, the question of the disposal of the former Italian colonies – Eritrea, Libya and Somalia – was first discussed by the four big powers (France, Britain, the U.S. and USSR) in the summer of 1945. The impossibility of reaching agreement between the four powers on their different proposals brought the issue on to the agenda of the fourth session of the U.N General Assembly which decided to send an inquiry of Commission. But this also proved unsuccessful. Thus the Allied Powers were unable to reach an agreement on the future fate of Eritrea, because they perceived it not from the point of view of the Eritrean people but in respect of their own interests. The US introduced a resolution for ‘federation’ of Eritrea with Ethiopia and waived Eritrea’s independence for their own strategic reasons.

The war of liberation against Ethiopian rule began in 1961. In the course of intensive fighting many atrocities were committed against the civilian population by the Ethiopian regime, and hundreds of thousands fled from their villages or hometowns, either temporarily or permanently. Many people moved to more secure areas
liberated by the Eritrean People’s Liberation Force (EPLF) and became internally displaced. Many more crossed the borders traveling to Sudan, Ethiopia, the Middle East and Western industrialized countries, seeking security and protection. Others remained in their villages despite permanent threat.

Eritrea’s claim to independence was settled militarily at the end of May 1991. After de facto independence, the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front (EPLF) leadership formed a Provisional Government for an interim period of two years, after which the Eritrean people participated in an internationally supervised referendum from 23 to 25 April 1993. Participation in the referendum was based on relatively broad and inclusive civic conception of citizenship, which applied to anyone born in Eritrea irrespective of descent and with a participation of 98.5 per cent of the 1,173,706 eligible adults. The referendum and its results confirmed what a doubt was in actuality never: an overwhelming majority (99.8 percent) voted in favor of independence.

On 24 May 1993 Eritrea declared its independence and emerged as Africa’s 52nd nation state. After a thirty-year period of armed resistance to Ethiopian occupation’s, exclusion from the international and African political arenas had ended. Eritrea became part of the global system, with national covenants and protocols, and joined central institutions such as the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and such regional organizations as the Inter-Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Total 1986-91</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Land destroyed/mined (hectares)</td>
<td>70,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Homes destroyed</td>
<td>52,000</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ANIMALS CONFISCATED OR KILLED</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>camels</td>
<td>15,100</td>
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<tr>
<td>cattle</td>
<td>86,100</td>
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<td>pack animals</td>
<td>43,700</td>
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<tr>
<td>sheep/goats</td>
<td>321,000</td>
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<td><strong>EFFECT ON INDIVIDUALS</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons conscripted (since 1984)</td>
<td>53,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>killed</td>
<td>8,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>imprisoned</td>
<td>14,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food confiscated or destroyed (tones)</td>
<td>44,100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The war has adversely affected every individual and every family in Eritrean society (Davidson, Cliffe, and Habteselassie, 1980; WSP, 1996; Iyob, 1995; Kibreab, 1987: 1996; PROFERI, 1995). Here it is next to impossible to explore all the implications of the
socio-economic disruption that have occurred. But presenting what Cliffe indicates in 1996, as well as table 1 indicates the intensity of destruction.

The consequences of the war were not restricted to the many thousands of deaths in combat, the killing, imprisonment and torture of civilians, the general repression or the flight of refugees or internal displacement, but extended to the basic fabric of the economy and everyday life (Cliffe, 1996: 21).

War not only had a devastating impact on agricultural production but also on trade. One of the many negative consequences of the war was the interruption of the inter-regional trade between the highlands and the lowlands and between liberated area and occupied areas. In many occupied parts of Eritrea the number of oxen was decimated and the outcome was a loss of productive capacity. The disruption of communication in the country also meant that there was no way of replenishing oxen from the lowlands. This was one of the many reasons why people became dependent on food aid.

Thus liberation was achieved in Eritrea against all odds with a small country defeating one of the strongest of Africa’s military powers. Military victory could not have been achieved, however, without the slow and painful process of developing a people-centered movement and self-reliant political, social and economical structures. As Eritrea proceeds into the twenty-first century, one of the primary challenges it faces is the reintegration of a huge part of its population - nearly one-third of its total population had had to leave their homesteads during the struggle for independence. Between 700,000 and 800,000 had fled abroad, 100,000 were displaced inside the country and 150,000 to 160,000 joined the liberation struggle (ERRA, 1994). According to the Eritrean Relief and Rehabilitation Agency (ERRA) 1991, 90 percent of the population was dependent on food aid for their survival.

Unfortunately after three decades of armed struggle for independence, Eritrea enjoyed only seven years of peace before war with neighboring Ethiopia resumed in May 1998. During the short peaceful interval tremendous efforts were made to establish and develop the basic institutions of the new state of Eritrea and to rebuild the material infrastructure which has been largely destroyed. Attempts were also made to rehabilitate the social tissue such as family reunion, reconciliation programs and mutual self-help, which had suffered severe wounds during the war of independence.

Unfortunately, with a return to an outright war situation in 1998 these achievements have been undermined and to a large extent reversed. This applies especially to demobilized fighters who were remobilized. At this point in time it is premature to
speculate on the full impact of renewed conflict on prospects of reintegrating ex-refugees and ex-fighters. It is, however, clear that the conflict has created new conditions which will again demand even greater need for programs and mechanisms of reintegration. For example, the deportation of over 74,000 so-called ethnic Eritreans holding Ethiopian passports from Ethiopia (to date) is already demanding additional reintegration efforts.

Also as a result of the renewed conflict, more than one and half million people were and still are internally displaced. In addition 100,000 have crossed the international border and are refugees in the Sudan. Because of the prolonged colonial rule and the struggle waged to dislodge it, the country faces numerous problems in the process of integration, rehabilitation and nation building. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to cover all of them. The main focus of the thesis is therefore the integration of ex-refugees and ex-fighters within the broader process of rehabilitation and reconstruction in post-conflict Eritrea from 1991-1998.

When considering the integration of ex-fighters and ex-refugees it is useful to regard the whole Eritrean society in its dynamic context. As the author noted in an earlier report, this includes:

Those who lived in exile scattered all over the world; those who participated in the liberation struggle or who where living in liberated areas; and those who stayed in Eritrea under Ethiopian occupation.

We have a rather homogeneous fighters society facing a multicultural civilian society, shaped by influences brought back from Europe, USA, Sudan, Saudi Arabia...etc. on one side and the civilian host community on the other side (Mehreteab, 1997: 23).

In terms of their past experiences Eritrean society can be divided into three distinct groups.

1) A fighters’ community composed of fighters and their dependants as well as of Eritreans who were living in liberated and semi-liberated areas;
2) Eritreans in the Diaspora, composed of Eritreans who went to industrial countries, Arab Gulf countries, Ethiopia and mainly the Sudan for exile; and
3) Eritreans who remained in the country under Ethiopian occupation.

The majority of the ex-refugees had lived in exile for a long period of time. Many refugees left Eritrea as early as 1967. Some ex-refugees were born in exile and had little knowledge of their country. Only a minority of the Eritrean refugees were living in organized settlements - 140,000 out of a total of minimally 500,000 Eritreans
remuneration. Although some were living in camps and had developed a dependency on donors, the majority of the Eritreans in exile were living outside the organized settlement camps. The general literature written on refugee presents their problem in simplistic way as going ‘home’. Refugees, who have lived in exile for a long time, had often become settled in their new environment. After returning home, they have to go through a further period of readjustment. As Sorensen put it:

Eritrean refugees have experienced two major relocations: one when they fled and second, when they return to their home country. Each re-location is accompanied with a loss of means of livelihood such as land, jobs, home and also often livestock and marks the start of a tough restoration process (Sorensen, 1995).

But it has been argued that forced displacement also tears apart the social fabric and the existing patterns of social organization. Life-sustaining informal social networks of mutual self-help among the people, local voluntary associations, self-organized service arrangements, etc., are dispersed and rendered inactive. Referring to Eritrean refugees in Sudan, Kibreab and Bascom echoed the same points. Cornea and McDowell’s analyses also suggest that individualized life style in exile dismantled former returnee’s social cohesion.

It is also argued that many come to lead totally different lives: for example, former rural dwellers become urbanized or pastoralists become laborers or farmers while in exile. On the other hand social networks which formerly provided support in times of crisis may have either been weakened or replaced by more commoditized relationships and moral ties which maintained extended family-life may have been set aside (Kibreab, 1996). How far this is true of former refugees returning to Eritrea is an area investigated in the research.

Different dynamics operate among fighters. The typical fighter joined the liberation struggle voluntarily with the understanding that s/he would have to sustain a total unwavering dedication to the cause of Eritrean independence. More than any other group in Eritrea, EPLF fighters were heavily indoctrinated with socialist and nationalist ideology including notions of egalitarianism, gender-equality, religious and ethnic tolerance. A strong sense of group solidarity and loyalty and commitment to Eritrean independence were the cornerstones of their political and social education as members of EPLF. Every fighter served without any salary or any other form of remuneration. Even when independence was attained, they worked for three years without salary while their civilian counterparts were paid (ERRA, 1993).

The communal way of life, common goals, mutual sacrifices and sharing of all aspects of daily life were strong unifying factors. A society was created during the period of
war in which the interests of the group were paramount and stand against individual ego. Besides, after the strategic retreat 1979 to their stronghold in Northern Sahel\(^1\) fighters led a life in their ‘sanctuary’ different from that of early 70s. Their limited physical contact with the civilian population had repercussions in the process of reintegration because their family ties and their general links with civilians was discontinued, which could have a positive impact on their process of reintegration. Bidden (1998) elaborating on social structures said:

\[\text{Structures constrain but they also enable because they open up certain possibilities for action at the same time as they restrict or deny others.}\]

\[\text{This is precisely the case for returnees, who formulate survival strategies and secure a livelihood by negotiating with, and transforming, the set of opportunities and constraints posed by the society and economy into which they move (Gidden, 1998: 233).}\]

People who remained in Eritrea under the Ethiopian occupation [during the war] experienced changes, which were shared neither by the fighters nor by the refugees. An important question then is how ex-refugees and ex-fighters relate to the local community in terms of their daily livelihood. How easily can they be resettled in their indigenous ‘home’ or in a new area? But more fundamentally, what problems do they encounter in the process of reintegration? What is the nature of their interaction with those who had remained in Eritrea, who experienced different changes from those of the fighters and the refugees?

Eritrean independence created an atmosphere where these three different groups were able to begin living together as citizens of a new nation-state. But the armed struggle had a different impact on these three groups, making the integration process complex, to say the least. The experience of Eritrea shows that in times of confrontation with a common enemy, apart from grave disruption and duress, a great deal of social interaction takes place. Some traditional forms of mutual help are preserved or revived while new and more appropriate forms are created which provide a safety net after independence (Bruchhaus, 1994; Tesfai, 1996; W/Giorgis, 1996). Additionally, ‘mixed’ groups develop different kinds of networks that can assist different ethnic and social groups to understand and appreciate each other’s different cultures and social values.

The process of restoring livelihood for ex-refugees and ex-fighters involves developing short-term survival and long-term adaptation strategies in accord with principles of co-operation and mutual self-help. One of the concerns of this study is to

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\(^1\) \text{Sahel is the northern part of Eritrea bordering Sudan.}\
investigate how far the communities, which receive ex-fighters and ex-refugees, are accommodating and how far broader social structures are enabling.

1.2 Statement of the problem

This thesis will examine the process of integrating ex-refugees and ex-fighters within the broader program of rehabilitation and reconstruction in post-conflict Eritrea. Both ex-refugees and ex-fighters often have to change their means of livelihood after returning to their receiving community through repatriation or after demobilization. There are three main reasons why integrating ex-fighters and ex-refugees are an important task for Eritrea. Firstly, in many cases social ties with their families or origin have been dislodged and their diverse experiences have made it difficult for them to settle into the sort of ‘normal’ life which they might otherwise have had. Secondly, since they form sizeable groups, Eritrea’s political stability and development depends to a large extent on their successful integration. Thirdly, their experiences during the struggle – whether in exile or in combat – have often given them skills, abilities and insight which, if properly harnessed, can assist in the process of development.

Thus, on the positive side they might be assets to the young nation if their experience is properly harnessed. On the negative side, however, they can become a destabilizing factor. For example, the exposure of ex-refugees to dissident organizations like ELF or Islamic Jihad movement while in Sudan may have created political loyalties capable of being mobilized by opposition elements. Former fighters can also become destabilizing forces if their expectations and their concerns are not sufficiently addressed in time.

Thus integration of ex-fighters and ex-refugees is taking place on three levels, which can ultimately be conceptualized as three different stages of integration.

- What happens to an individual in the first instance when s/he returns ‘home’?
- What relationships do individuals or groups develop after their return to interact with the local community?
- In what way does the interaction between ex-refugees, ex-fighters and receiving community affect the overall national project of integrating?

It is likely that there will have to be negotiated processes of adaptation, which permit the accommodation of disparate views between returnees and those communities in which they are being resettled. The goal should be to learn to live with differences, to understand and accommodate diversity. As harnessing relationships is so central, all
efforts must be guided by the three-fold human goals of **hope, healing and reconciliation** in seeking integration and the creation of a cohesive community.

One way of seeing and understanding the overall process of integration in post-conflict Eritrea is by reference to the social dynamism of the society. The ‘old way of life,’ with generally strong patriarchal and religious traditions currently confront the ‘new way of life’ associated with people in the liberated areas, particularly personified by the fighters. Both have to deal with incoming market forces, liberalism and consumerism.

But there is also a broader dimension of national integration. A sense of national political identity is most strongly represented among the fighters due to their participation in the armed struggle. The question is how far can this be sustainable once fighters are removed from the social structures and the situation that fostered this new national identity? Moreover, as the new structures are formally outside the network of social relationships within the communities in which they are being resettled, what would their potential influence be in the new sense of identity being created and retained during the armed struggle? How far is indeed this new identity extended among the population?

In the long war of liberation the fighters developed a collective identity as change agents. Now, as ex-fighters, are they still seen as change agents, role models, elite, or cadres? Will they serve as facilitators in their relationship with ex-refugees or within members of the receiving community? The question that logically follows is whether their identity or image will be used in a self-conscious way. Or has their role as change agents, elite, role models or cadres been played down? Has there been a trend to reverse the role they once played and to make them passive and subservient? Or is it that there has been no sensitivity to the potential role they might play? The experiences accumulated by ex-fighters and ex-refugees must be considered as strengths and should be taken on board when interaction and integration starts at community level if a cohesive society is to emerge.

This thesis will also incorporate a gender dimension into its analysis. The thesis approaches gender from a social relations’ framework, where ‘gender’ differences are embedded in social relations and therefore differ between different cultures, but within each culture the difference between men and women is socially constructed (El-Busshura, 2000). Uncovering gender differences in society will lead to general understanding of power relations in the respective society, and thus illuminate the contradictions and injustices inherent within it concerning gender bias.
Recent literature on integration shows that returnee women generally face constraints in the integration processes over and above those faced by men (Colletta, 1996; Cilliers, 1995). There is also specific evidence (Berhe, 1996; Mehreteab, 1997) that Eritrean women ex-fighters face more problems than their male counterparts, in their attempts to reintegrate back to the society. Women fighters seem to be on the losing side in this process, with their status of equality achieved during the struggle having been under threat since liberation. They are today only a very small minority compared to the whole society and face losing their strategic gains in the dynamics of civil life under pressure from a generally patriarchal society.

War/exile impinges in gender-specific ways and has overturned the stereo typed outlook that men are ‘breadwinners’. From a gender relation perspective, the breakdown of the male-dominated traditional authority structures in exile is a blessing in disguise. For some of the refugee women, life in exile was a liberating experience, mainly because oppressive traditional power structures were removed (Kibreab, 1996). How far the greater sense of self-confidence, an egalitarian outlook …etc., continue to be internalized after they return ‘home’ is one dimension that this study will explore.

Generally in a transition period, the ideas, values, attitudes and norms of the politically dominant group predominate. Those who were fighters are now in government and trying to reconcile old and new norms in terms of the way government and society operates. Fighters are no longer in the bunkers, fighting and dying together. Now a few of them are taking decisions for the others. This dilemma began day one, just after independence but was only felt by ex-fighters when they were demobilized.

Those in power can no longer act the way they did during the armed struggle, but have to take into consideration the different dimensions of social, economic and political interactions, as well as the ethnic, religious, class and cultural elements and, to some extent, issues of minority nationalities. After independence there are different imperatives and different forms of organization to which they have to adapt.

The process of the integration of three different sets of actors - ex-refugees, ex-fighters and local community - is under-researched. The two incoming groups share some similar experiences and expectations, which are distinct from the rest of the society. Ex-refugees and fighters have been physically uprooted from their former way of life for varying periods of time. In moving from place to place they have undergone tremendous hardship. Their very existence has often been at stake. In many cases they lost all their assets and belongings, their jobs and their homes. Some of these
points also apply to internally displaced individuals, but by and large are outside of the experience of those who remained in the country.

This research contributes to filling gaps in the existing literature concerning social and economic rehabilitation after a prolonged civil war in Africa by investigating this process in the Eritrean context. More precisely it examines the reintegration of ex-refugees and ex-fighters. Scholars such as Kumar; Doromboos; Tesfai; Colletta; Kees; Bruchhause; Collier; Mondo, Markus have addressed the problem of reintegration of ex-fighters or ex-refugees, but none have placed the analysis of the reintegration of returnees within the broader context of national integration. But in the Eritrean case it is crucial to take into account national strategies of reconciliation and national reconstruction, since it is explicitly within this context that policies of reintegration have been formulated.

There is a two-way relationship between national integration and integration of returnees to the receiving community. The thesis places the process of integration firmly within the context of national integration and explores integration programs and process of integration by examining ex-fighters and ex-refugees as units of analysis within the broader nation building process. In exploring the nature of the integration process in post-conflict Eritrea, some questions about the country’s political history are posed. It is important to look at the historical and political experience upon which nation building is unfolding.

The transition from war to peace requires a period of consolidation to revive the economy and build the institutions that were damaged or dismantled by the long war of liberation. As far as the policy of the Eritrean government is concerned, groups and individuals are encouraged to mobilize their efforts in order to improve their situation, drawing on their own resources and abilities. But given the devastated state of the economy inherited at independence, external aid also has a role to play. The long-term objective of the Eritrean government is to help the country and its people to extricate themselves from chronic dependence (W/Giorgis, 1996).

It is in this context that the government of Eritrea developed its policy for the national execution of programs, with international organizations being asked to provide the necessary technical resources and services, rather than substituting for local capacities. Such an approach means that the government of Eritrea will be fully responsible for identifying its needs and for developing its programs according to its own objectives. How these will be coordinated and implemented is an issue that will be explored. Another issue is the level of influence, which may be exerted by
international organizations and donor agencies in the implementation of the reintegration programs will be assessed.

But bilateral institutions and NGOs have different mandates, modalities, and approaches. There is a need to strike a balance between all these interventions. The question that logically follows is whether the Government of Eritrea had a national framework that defines how the overall national integration program should be executed. Does the government of Eritrea have the capacity of implementing the integration process?

Discussion with UNHCR about repatriating and integrating former refugee from the Sudan started in 1992. Despite its de-facto independence in 1991 Eritrea was not officially recognized as a sovereign state until 1993 and thus no negotiation could be done directly prior to this time. But when repatriation discussion started the relation between Sudan and Eritrea was already tense, started deteriorating in 1994 and finally lead to severance of diplomatic relations. The only option left open was to repatriate refugees from the Sudan through a tripartite agreement. But while providing the legal framework for the repatriation of refugees from the Sudan, this agreement became an obstacle to the process because the two nations were not in official communication. Thus UNHCR was promoted from facilitator to mediator. The new role negatively influenced the relationship between the government of Eritrea and UNHCR. On the other hand, repatriation of refugees was derailed and stopped at the end of 1995. Nonetheless, former refugees continued to return to Eritrea spontaneously.

1.3 Research objectives

Given the above background and aims, this research will examine the reintegration process by reference to a number of hypotheses which are given below. They will be used to focus dimension rather than limiting investigation in testing them. Central to the case of Eritrea, which, though not unique in this respect, offers an image of indomitable human will to survive as a collective entity, is the clear articulation of, shared ideas, and the gradual evolution of common identity.

Despite all the destruction and disruption, the war had one positive effect: it helped to forge a strong sense of unity and identity among various ethnic and religious groups. All across the country they rallied round the common cause of national liberation. Confronted as they were by an adversary who was immeasurably superior in terms of human and material resources, the various Eritrean groups had no choice but to put their differences aside.
The lack of external support for the Eritrean cause also contributed positively to encouraging the resistance to rely entirely on its internal capacities (Cliffe, 1988). There were several other factors that helped to create the social cement of the Eritrean nation. The liberation forces recruited from all ethnic and social strata and this, together with the egalitarian distribution system of social services and the democratic administrative structures that encouraged popular participation in the struggle had a far-reaching effect in breaking down the various barriers that had always divided the society. All four sets of hypothesis attempt to explore specific possible effects of this legacy.
The first hypothesis
“The designing and implementing of actual successful reintegration programs that accommodates ex-fighters and returnees proved to be much more difficult than anticipated, thus the specific assumptions of differing experiences and other design elements are questionable”.

The second hypothesis
“The Eritrean government regards economic modernization as the key factor to full reintegration of returnees into the mainstream of the society”.

Third Hypothesis
“The integration and settlement of returnees in Eritrean society depends on the social networks of extended family but also of new and old communities in creating effective livelihood survival strategies of the household”.

Fourth Hypothesis
“The highly motivated and politicized ex-fighters and to lesser degree ex-refugees have the potential of being agents of development and change in post-conflict Eritrea provided the reintegration process is managed properly”.

In the thesis the author uses the word 'returnee' to refer to both former refugees and ex-fighters. This study deals with the task of integrating the returnees with the rest of Eritrean population, which continued living under Ethiopian occupation during the liberation struggle.

The aims of this study are to describe and/or examine:
- The factors, which either contribute to the process of integration or, alternatively, hinder the integration of returnees;
- The relevance of the programs designed to facilitate integration;
- The intended and unintended outcomes of the policies and strategies of integration;
- The response of returnees to their new economic, social and political environment following independence;
- Whether the environment is conducive to and offers an opportunity for returnees to eke out a living and thus help their integration into society;
- The way resources, services, employment and other opportunities are distributed or may become a bone of contention;
- The atmosphere created by the political change after independence and its impact on returnees’ reintegration;
- The extent to which the activities of international aid agencies impinge on national self-reliance and sovereignty.
In order to unravel the process of integration, especially with respect to the gender dimension, the following questions will be addressed:

- What is societal rehabilitation and who sets priorities with respect to it?
- Who designs and plans the process of integration, and which institutions – existing or to be set up – will be responsible for its implementation?
- In what ways are gender relations reproduced in post-conflict Eritrea within the legal system, constitution, land-rights, and political participation?
- How effective has been post-conflict rehabilitation from the perspective of women, and how does this relate to the overall integration process?
- How are women’s issues affected by gendered power arrangements of rehabilitation and integration?
- How does post-conflict rehabilitation address the gender-specific traumas women have experienced on individual, family, and societal levels, such as rape and sexual torture?
- What integration policies and programs have been put in place to facilitate the attaining of greater gender equality?

The thesis will only look briefly at the process of repatriation of refugees or the demobilization of fighters. The issue of demobilization of fighters is comprehensively discussed by the author in the third issue of the Eritrean Study Review published in 1999, as well as in a book on examples of demobilization and integration in Sub-Saharan Africa (Kingma, 2000) and an unpublished MA dissertation (Mehreteab, 1997). The repatriation program of refugees has also been well-documented (Kibreab, 1996; ERREC, 1997, 1998).

The thesis focuses instead on what happens when ex-refugees and ex-fighters return ‘home’? What are the first contacts [positive or negative] they encounter when they arrive in the community where they will start their new life?

The exiting from any group or social setting that has had a central meaning in one’s life is often traumatic and painful. It involves tension between an individual’s past and present experience and future prospects. Past identification with social categories or roles lingers in one form or another throughout the lives of ex-fighters or ex-refugees as they struggle to incorporate past identities into present conceptions of self. Another characteristic that makes the ex-fighters or ex-refugees status unique is the images the society holds on their previous roles. People in society are conscious of a person’s status in a social structure not on the basis of the current role occupancy alone but also on the basis of whom the individual used to be. Life-cycle changes must also be taken into consideration when designing programs for ex-fighters and ex-refugees.
Returnees continually have to deal with society’s reaction to their previous role for it can facilitate or hinder the overall process of integration. In order to grasp the complexity of the problem and to tackle it properly, the thesis places the integration process against the background in which the new nation found itself at the end of the war of liberation, and in terms of the developments which have been unfolding ever since.

1.4 Methodology
Reintegration or integration is not employed only as a conceptual tool, but as a heuristic device to refer to a range of related processes. The study is concerned primarily with policies related to integration or reintegration and examines what ought to be done to improve them. The approach is not to carry out a cost benefit analysis, although this could conceivably be useful. Rather the concern is to ask, are the priorities right? Is the emphasis right? Is there objective, which was not taken into account in the original formulation that should be addressed? Are there some unintended results? What can be done to avoid them?

In the thesis reintegration also refers to the actual programs. In order to chart what their stated aims and assumptions were, the author reviewed relevant documents of the Government bodies, UNHCR and NGOs and conducted interviews with government officials. The concern was not only to describe but also evaluate the programs and assess how the integration program relates to the broader strategy of development and recovery.

On the second level, the author uses the term reintegration to incorporate initiatives undertaken by returnees and ex-fighters in resolving their problems themselves. Reintegration is long term, which not only concerns those who have to be reintegrated, but is also further complicated by the fact that the host communities are not in good shape economically. The process of reintegration entails both economic and social aspects of life and thus depends greatly on the context and circumstances under which it is unfolding. In Eritrea, it is shaped by the victorious end of a thirty year long war of independence and coincides with the ending of the cold war and the start of globalization.

The term reintegration is also used to mean socio-political fusion. In Eritrea there is an ideal goal which is broader than the process of the reintegration programs, relating to the on-going process of national integration or nation building. Integration in this particular sense has been going on since the 1940s and has continued throughout the struggle and is not yet fully completed.
The above-mentioned points are not the only dimensions. There are also others. The process of reintegration is also heavily marked by the fact that the different segments of the Eritrean society have developed very different norms and values as a result of their different experiences.

In order to implement this policy at community level the government of Eritrea designed different integration programs for ex-fighters and ex-refugees, both of which aim to rehabilitate ‘war-torn societies’ in the process of reconstructing the whole country. The integration policy had created the platform for reintegration programs to unfold in the process of national rehabilitation and reconstruction. One concern of this study is to assess how far these programs are consistent with the broader policies of national integration, rehabilitation and reconstruction in post-conflict Eritrea.

At the macro policy level, self-reliance is an important guiding principle of social and economic transformation programs. The author’s concern is to investigate how actual policy on integration at national level is translated into action at the micro level. Is there evidence that the principle of self-reliance is really internalized by the different categories of the society? To what extent has it proved successful or not? How far are groups, or for those matter individuals encouraged to mobilize their efforts in improving their situation, drawing on their own capacities or abilities?

The process of integration at the micro-level entails both economic and social aspects. The former ensures the distribution of resources, services, and employment and other opportunities that promotes the material well being. The latter involves very delicate issues affecting people and includes values, traditions, capacities, aspirations and returnees’ actual involvement in the day-to-day activities of their communities. Returnees act or react in ways, which can help or hinder their efforts to resolve problems arising from the differences between them and the members of the local communities. Economic integration is linked to social status, which defines what is/isn’t possible in the process of reintegration.

In an attempt to evaluate the current condition of returnees after their return ‘home’, much consideration has been given to the quality of social life as assessed by the returnees’ themselves. They have been asked about the problems they faced subsequent to their repatriation or demobilization, their opinion of the effectiveness or the impact of integration programs on their life and initiatives taken to sort out their day-to-day problems.
In order to tease out aspects of the integration process, the social transformation returnees have undergone is examined. To this end the following issues have been explored:

- The actual effects (intended and unintended) of the government’s integration policy;
- Current living conditions of the returnees and their progress since return compared to those of the local communities;
- The interaction, interdependence and impact of the various groups on each other; and
- People’s own efforts to organize themselves and develop their communities as reflected in their experiences and coping mechanisms.

1.4.1 Data collection

This study utilizes (1) information gathered from existing reports and studies on demobilization/repatriation and reintegration. In order not to duplicate what was studied regarding reintegration, the author used previous studies, but with the aim to be more analytical than descriptive in regard to its impact; (2) information collected during two different periods of fieldwork. The first phase of the research was March-April 1997, which was specifically looking only at ex-fighters and the second phase, August 1998 to March 2000 for ex-refugees and ex-fighters. From the experience gained in the first field work, the author conducted in-depth interviews first and after indexing the in-depth interview a semi-structured questionnaire was designed for the second fieldwork.

The techniques used to gather information was by conducting interviews with household heads for ex-refugees and individual members of ex-fighters, participant observation and documentary research. In the first fieldwork data was collected using two enumerators. Thus 238 questionnaires and 38 in-depth interviews were administered. In order to facilitate the second field work thirty-three enumerators (among them 6 women) were trained for two weeks. The questionnaire was pre-tested in Tessena and Ghinda selecting 50 individuals each from ex-refugees and ex-fighters where the two groups are residing side by side with the receiving community.

Enumerators were divided into five groups to fill the questionnaire. Going through all collected questionnaires some amendments were made. The full-fledged work of filling in the questionnaire started on February and took four months. Three hundred seventy two households of former EPLF-fighters and 760 ex-refugees were administered. The questionnaire was designed to generate data on background information; the experience of demobilization or repatriation; life in and after exile or
armed struggle, and the process of social, cultural and economic integration and psychological adjustment (see appendix 1). The author also conducted informal discussions with administrators, village elders, and members of youth and women’s associations.

These informal discussions utilized Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA) techniques. In addition valuable information was obtained from nine systematically selected key informants in each of the areas covered in the fieldwork. These key informants included persons from different ethnic, political and religious groups. Unpublished written information was obtained from various Ministries and interviews were conducted with Government-representatives that were directly or indirectly linked with the reintegration programs and anecdotes were collected to elaborate issues.

The ex-refugee community is itself composed of two categories. The 25,000 returned to Eritrea in 1994 was in an organized way but the majority (165,000) who started returning as early as 1991 was without Government or UNHCR assistance and who are usually referred to as spontaneous returnees. The sample survey of ex-refugees includes 147 (19 percent) who returned in an organized way and 613 (81 percent) who returned spontaneously.

The regional administration of Gash-Setit and the Department of Military Training of the Ministry of Defense covered the expenses of transport and enumerators. In February 1999 follow-up of interviews of ex-fighters interviewed by the author in March-April 1997 fieldwork were conducted. The main concern of these follow-up interviews was to assess the degree of integration of demobilized fighters who had started their own businesses after demobilization. It simultaneously also involves documenting numbers of ex-fighters remobilize in consequence of the current war with Ethiopia and to assess the impact of conflict on the reintegration process of demobilized fighters. Other African experiences of reintegration of returning refugees and demobilized combatants were also scrutinized, to provide a comparative basis for carrying out the research and assessing its findings.
1.4.2 Issues raised

Questions in the survey instrument were organized under the following broad topics:

- Demographic background and social origins;
- Experiences from struggle and exile;
- Expectations of an acceptable lifestyle and the extent to which these have been realized;
- Relationship with host community;
- Present economic situation; and
- Present social and psychological situation.

1.4.3 Sampling procedures

Survey respondents selected for the purpose of the study were heads of household and usually the person responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of the household. They were selected from a sampling frame, which comprised a list obtained from Regional Administrative Offices of ERREC. Two different sampling frames were used—one for ex-fighters and one for ex-refugees.

The surveys conducted by Mitias in 1993, 1994 and the survey conducted by the author in 1997 clearly showed that there was no valid reason for dividing the sample of ex-fighters into urban and rural categories. A typical response of ex-fighters to the question of where they wanted to go after demobilization was:

*It doesn’t have any significance where I settle as long as there is a work perspective in sight. As we more or less know the country, the people and its culture like the fingers of our hand, there is no way that we can be strangers in any corner of the country (interview with Robel Mokonnen Asmara, 12 April 1997).*

Taking this issue on board, the author randomly selected ex-fighters from the list supplied by ERREC\(^2\) for the head office of ERREC has lists of names of all ex-fighters and ERREC offices within the regional administration keep further details of the whereabouts of ex-fighters resident within their region. A sample of 400 was selected from the main list of which 372 were ultimately reached and interviewed. The remaining 26 were not located and two refused to be interviewed.

From 1988 onwards Eritrean nationals living in the Sudan started to vote with their feet and returned spontaneously to the liberated areas of Eritrea. Since the end of the war about 165,000 people have returned to their home country in an organized and unorganized manner (ERREC, 1996). But ERREC had no records of their destinations. It was only after 1995 that the whereabouts of organized and spontaneous ex-refugees

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\(^{2}\) The survey included people from all the fronts (1. Gash-setit front 2. Sorona front 3. Zalanbessa front and, part of Asseb front).
were documented properly by the data and statistics department of CERA initially and ERREC in the later stage. This document provides the number of spontaneous and organized returnee households from 1996-1998 by town and village. This 1996-1998 time series data was used to construct the sampling frame of ex-refugees for the study of the entire sample of 900 household, 140 household heads were not reached, 123 were not located and 17 declined to be interviewed.

1.4.4 Sample framework
Table 1 provides numeric and percentage distributions of organized and spontaneous ex-refugees’ households and the number of villages – or Mimihiidars - the regional administrations (Zoba) are stratified into urban and rural areas. The data show that there are 10 groupings or strata in the five regional administrative units taken as a survey area. The sample survey was selected from places where ex-refugees had returned in an organized or spontaneous way. The nine sites of organized settlement comprise only ex-refugees and to a small degree ex-fighters.

The total number of organized and spontaneous returnees’ households from 1996-1998 in the five regional administrations (Zobas) totaled 10,210. Out of these, 8190 were in urban areas, the rest in rural areas. The total number of villages/Mimihiidars is 117 of which 54 are in urban areas and the 63 are in rural areas (ERREC Statistic Office, 1998). Table 1 reveals that about 80 percent of the spontaneous and organized returnees settle in urban areas with only 20 percent dwelling in rural areas.

1.4.5 Characteristics of the sample
The sample for the ex-refugees household survey was selected in two stages. In the first stage, a certain number of villages and towns were selected at random from the Zobas where ex-refugees had returned in 1996-98. In the first stage, a certain number of primary sampling units (PSUs) were selected with probability proportional to size. In the rural areas, the PSUs corresponded to the villages while in the urban areas, each PSU corresponds to a Mimihiidar. The number of urban PSUs in Gash-Barka is relatively small with very large number of households in them, ranging from a minimum of 18 to a maximum of 853 (ERREC, 1996).

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3 Mimihiidar is a Tigrina word meaning administration.
Table 1. Sampling frames for ex-refugee households.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zoba</th>
<th>Urban household</th>
<th>Rural Mimihidar</th>
<th>Rural Mimihidar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of HH</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No. of Mimihidar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anseba</td>
<td>894</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debubé</td>
<td>534</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gash-Barka</td>
<td>2046</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>1500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nor. Red Sea</td>
<td>779</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maekel</td>
<td>3937</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8190</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>2020</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


A second-stage of sampling involved the selection of the households to be visited by the enumerators for each selected village/Mimihidar. Since listing all the households in the selected villages/Mimihidars was time consuming and would have demanded additional finance, a range of households, which numbered (11-31), was systematically selected from the selected urban PSUs (Mimihidars). Similarly, a range of households, which numbered (5-30), was selected from each chosen rural PSU (villages), depending on the number of the households in each PSU. Taking the list of names obtained from ERREC administration as base, the author selected the respective number of households at random from the villages and towns already selected in the first-stage of the sampling process.

The selected villages were roughly classified into three major groupings depending on the concentration of the population in the settlement area; (1) very densely populated area, (2) moderately populated areas and (3) sparsely populated areas. Following this rough classification, the author allocated 50 percent of the households to be selected from the densely populated area, 40 percent from the moderately populated area and 10 percent from the sparsely populated area.

1.4.6 Sample allocation
Each of the five zones was stratified into urban and rural areas and categorized by density. A proportional allocation of the target number of 900 households to the zones yielded the sample distribution that is presented in Table 2.

According to Table 3 allocation, about 720 households would have been selected from urban areas and 180 households from rural areas. The small number of rural (600 household for urban and 300 for rural) would not provide a sound proportion of the returnees in rural areas. It would have been urban biased.
But from discussions conducted with ERREC members in the settlement areas, the author learned that more than 75 percent of all ex-refugees who had returned to Eritrea between 1989 and 1994 went to rural areas, especially in the Western lowlands. Taking this into consideration the author decided to weight the rural part of the sample more heavily. The main reason was to correct a bias resulting from data only relating to the period after 1996 (Table 4).

The number of villages/Mimihidars selected for each cluster was calculated by dividing the selected number of households by the average in the cluster. The optimum number of households to be interviewed is around 11-31 households in each urban area and ranges from 5-30 households in the rural areas. The number of administrative units (villages and Mimihidars) selected in the Zoba by place of residence ranges from a minimum of 3 to a maximum of 10 Mimihidars in urban areas and from 4 to 10 village administrations in rural areas. In the zone the total number of Mimihidars selected was 55.

Table 1.3: Proportional allocation of the 900 households (1st allocation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zoba</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of HHS</td>
<td>percent</td>
<td>No. of HHS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anseba</td>
<td>894</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debube</td>
<td>534</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gash-Barka</td>
<td>2046</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>1500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nor. Red Sea</td>
<td>779</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maekel</td>
<td>3937</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number</td>
<td>8190</td>
<td>80 (720)</td>
<td>2020</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.4: Deliberate allocation (600 and 300 rural) (2nd allocation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zoba</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Household allocation</td>
<td>percent</td>
<td>Household allocation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anseba</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debube</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gash-Barka</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nor. Red Sea</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maekel</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>8190</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. 4. 7 Stratification and systematic selection

According to the sampling frame the households in the rural and urban areas vary greatly in number in all the five Zobas. The variation is large in Gash-Barka ranging from a minimum of 5 households in Setimo and Shambukko, to a maximum of 502 households in Guluj/Sabunait in Omhaje sub-zone (ERREC, 1998). Selecting villages with probability proportional to size without some measure of size stratification would ensure that mostly large villages are selected and thus would not give proper representation to the small villages. Then the decision was taken to stratify the villages by size within each grouping. Total number of households, number of villages/Mimihidars to be selected and sampling intervals for the stratum is given in table 5.

Table 1.5: Deliberate allocation (500 urban and 400 rural) (3rd allocation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zoba</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H.H. Allocatin</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anseba</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debube</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gash-Barka</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nor. Red Sea</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maekel</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>501</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(For sample probability design see appendix 2)

Table 1.6: Number of households reached from the selected sample survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zoba</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>selected</td>
<td>reached</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anseba</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>debube</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gash-Barka</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-Red Sea</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maekel</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>501</td>
<td>448</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.5 Working definitions

Demobilization has different meanings depending on the context in which it is used. A very general definition of demobilization is the reversion of a person or force from military to civilian status. Demobilization can also be perceived as the reverse process of mobilization, which is defined as: “the readying of the armed force and the rest of society for war, either as preparation for attack, or for defensive purposes if an attack is expected” (Moller, 1995: 226). Historically, the term demobilization was mainly used to describe this latter situation.

Refugee: a “refugee is defined as any person who is outside the country of his nationality, or if he has no nationality, the country of his former habitual residence; because he has or had well-founded fear of persecution by reasons of race, religion, nationality or political opinion. And is unable or, because of such fear, is unwilling to avail him of the protection of the government of the country of his nationality, or, if he has no nationality, to return to the country of his former habitual residence” (Kibreab, 1987).

The Organization of African Unity (OAU) defines a refugee as a “person who, owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole country of origin or nationality is compelled to leave his place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge to another outside his country of origin or nationality” (ibid.).

Disarmament is the reduction of arms that occurs when demobilized soldiers or freedom fighters hand over their arms.

Fighter is defined by EPLF as a person who joined the liberation armed struggle voluntarily with the basic understanding that s/he would have a total unwavering dedication to the cause of Eritrean independence.

Household is defined as a unit of people living together and sharing resources, including consumption. The basic economic unit in Eritrea is the household. Within the farming household, there is a clear-cut division of Labour by sex.

(Re) Integration is not only a complex process, but has many dimensions. The concept is key to the study and will be theorized in Chapter Two.
1. 6 Limitations
The author headed the Department of Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex-fighters (Mitias) for five years (from 1992 to the end of 1996). After two years of absence he returned as a research student. This posed both dilemma and also presented an opportunity. The dilemma was to convince the ex-fighters – and to a lesser degree the returned refugees - that he was not coming with authoritative mandate. To minimize this problem the author undertook two preliminary field trips to the area where most of the returnees were living. Meetings were held in which the author explained that the study was meant to evaluate the strong and weak points of the integration exercise and that they would not benefit materially from it. In some places the ex-fighters refused to co-operate arguing that they had answered similar questions before and nothing had come out of it. This was particularly the case with women ex-fighters.

Another problem consisted in fighting against one’s own subjective inclinations, the author being himself a former fighter. To face this dilemma was not easy nevertheless it was challenging and fun. Training enumerators conversant in the languages and cultures of the selected areas bypassed potential communication problems. The positive aspect balancing the limitations was the insight the author had acquired by participating in the struggle for liberation over more than 15 years.

Another limitation was the lack of continuity in the integration process of former fighters, due to the outbreak of the war with Ethiopia in May 1998. But this also represented a chance to draw on the lessons of the past reintegration experience which will serve to minimize mistakes once demobilization resumes at the end of the current crisis.

1. 7 Organization of the thesis
The thesis is organized in two sections.

Part One
Chapter one: Introduction outlines the background to and objectives of the study research hypothesis and describes the methodology and organization of the thesis.

Chapter two: following the introduction this briefly explores the colonial era, before discussing the development of the armed struggle. It addresses the refugee issue and the social transformation undergone by refugees during their exile, especially in the Sudan; it reviews the impact of EPLF’s policy towards integration and national unity and ends with reflection on the situation at the end of the war in 1991.
Chapter three: provides the theoretical framework and considers the role of national institutions and donor agencies in rehabilitating war-torn societies. The literature review sets an agenda for analyzing programs and policies in the rehabilitation and integration process in post-conflict Eritrea.

**Part Two**

Chapter four will evaluate government policy measures and programs designed for ex-refugees and ex-fighters. It maps out the planning of demobilization and repatriation and discusses how it was implemented. Programs designed to help integrate ex-refugees and ex-fighters are evaluated. The role of the international community in facilitating or hindering the rehabilitation project and overall program of integration will be analyzed through reference to following questions: Were the priorities right? Were the activities appropriate? Were the means and ways adequate? Were there some unintended results?

Chapter five: will present the findings of the field study concerning ex-fighters and ex-refugees. It will look at background characteristics, life in exile and the experience of returnees.

Chapter six: chapter five provides a continuation of the field findings concerning the ex-fighters and ex-refugees. It charts the similarities and differences in experience between ex-fighters and ex-refugees in the process of economic social and psychological integration.

Chapter seven presents conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for future action and research.
Chapter Two

Social Transformation

2. Introduction

Integration of returnees cannot take place in a vacuum. It occurs in societies where a lot of interaction is taking place amidst different processes of social transformation. In order to gauge the extent of the social transformation attained in Eritrean society, it is necessary first to briefly examine the situation during the colonial era. This will set an agenda for analyzing the overall reintegration of the three groups in the process of rehabilitation and reconstruction of the country.

2.1 Historical and political background

In the Horn of Africa, as in the rest of the continent, nations did not emerge along classical lines from fragmented, feudal entities (Davidson, 1992). The process was forced by the imposition of European colonialism. Had there been no colonization of Africa by European powers, the formation of nations and nation states would probably have taken centuries – as was the case in Europe - and the political map of Africa would have been radically different from the present day.

The infrastructure set up by the colonizers brought people closer together, who until then often had no means of efficient communication (Anderson, 1991). The racist treatment inflicted on the indigenous population and repressive and exploitative policies fuelled revolts by the colonized population and thus slowly fostered a common psychological make-up (Gebremedhin, 1989). These politico-administrative, economic, social, cultural and psychological processes in the long run combined to forge a nation.

Control over advanced mechanical and social technology enabled the West to expand its empire to global proportion by the end of the nineteenth century. The colonial powers set in motion new relations of production that gradually undermined the existing social structures and created new social forces. Thus it set in motion a dual process which was simultaneously integrative and destructive.

The changes brought about by colonialism did not, however, affect the people of the evolving nations uniformly nor have they given rise to a common level of development (Gebremedhin, 1989). Eritrea’s pre-colonial past was characterized mainly by interludes during which external invaders both from the African continent
and from abroad controlled the coasts of the Red Sea. Trevaskis, a colonial administrator during the British Administration (1942-1952), aptly summarizes the Eritrean scene at that period:

*The capricious manner of Eritrean creation, its long history of immigrations, invasions, and partition between alien rulers, and the physical diversity of its terrain have left their stamp on the inhabitants (Trevaskis, 1960).*

2.1.1 Colonial era
Exploring and understanding the integration process in post-conflict Eritrea prompts one to pose a basic question about the country’s political history. What social transformations occurred during Italian colonialism (1890-1941) and what transpired under British military administration (1941-1950) and during the federation with Ethiopia and subsequent colonial rule? Putting this into perspective will give us a foundation for examining the rehabilitation and integration process in post-conflict Eritrea.

2.1.2 Italian colonialism
The goal of Italian colonizers was to make Eritrea a stepping stone for further penetration of East Africa. Italy also targeted Eritrea for Italian emigrant settlement and encouraged its surplus population to immigrate to Eritrea and form a settler colony (Iyob, 1995).

From the beginning, the Italian colonial power tampered with the traditional land tenure system. Italy began to alienate fertile farmland and converted a considerable portion to Crown land and state farms. By 7 February 1923 the Italians defined and declared the most fertile areas as exclusive property of the colonizing state (Gebremedhin, 1989). According to Tseggai, at least half of all Eritrean land came under the control of the Italian government (Tseggai, 1978). The alienation of land into private property had two purposes. Its conversion safeguarded Italian interests of settlement and, by making land a scarce commodity, it forced landless Eritrean peasants to seek employment in the new job market created by Italian capital (Trevaskis, 1960; Tseggai, 1978).

The demographic composition and distribution of population within the colony changed: new towns were built, seasonal employment patterns developed and different groups started migrating. The impact of these changes on rural social life and class structures was tremendous. In the Barka lowlands, for example, a tobacco enterprise that employed 1,000 regular workers and 6,000 seasonal workers was started in 1920 (EPLF, 1975). Pastoralists and agro-pastoralists were forced to supplement their incomes by becoming wage earners. Thus capitalist agriculture in
the rural areas brought new experiences to rural life, creating new production relations. At the same time, those colonial forms of capitalist production and socio-economic relations were in formation old forms of production and social relations were decaying and disintegrating. (Gebremedhin, 1989).

As early as 1890 Italy began to set up transport infrastructure for its own benefit. At first gradually and then rapidly during the 1930s, a modern communication network was built in Eritrea, giving it one of the best means of transport infrastructure in Africa (Trevaskis, 1960). This not only made Eritrea an increasingly unified economic and political unit, but also by expanding westwards and southwards it facilitated external trade along main road and railroad new towns were created or old villages transformed into important commercial centers.

These developments created an unprecedented demand for Eritrean labor. Prior to the Italian occupation, the Eritrean population was predominantly composed of sedentary peasants in the highlands and pastoralists and agro-pastoralist in the lowlands (Tseggai, 1988). Under the Italian rule of 1890-1941, however, urbanization, industrialization, and commercialization of agriculture deeply affected the Eritrean peasant population.

In this manner, Italian colonialism unified Eritrea geographically and set in motion economic, social and cultural changes, which gradually sparked off a feeling of belonging to an ‘Eritrean community’. Although Italian colonialism prohibited political and trade union rights, this did not prevent the Eritrean people from mounting strong opposition to Italian policies of exploitation, oppression, racial discrimination and forced conscription (Iyob, 1995). The rebellion in parts of Akele Guzai in 1984 led by Bahta Hagos is one of the best known examples. According to Conti Rossini: he warned his countrymen in the following manner:

*My brother Nuguse don’t be naïve, if a white snake bites you it is very difficult to find a cure. (Nuguse Hawei Ayteashu endhri tsaeda temen nekisu aygnen delaliqa fewu), thus giving a clear warning signal to his country men/women (Iyob, 1995: 23).*
2.1.3 British Military Administration (BMA) 1941-1952

In 1941 when Italy joined the Axis, British troops, as members of the allied Forces and calling themselves ‘liberators’, attacked the Italians in Eritrea. The British Military Administration (BMA) promised the Eritrean people that they would grant Eritrea its independence if they helped them to dislodge Italian rule (Gebremedhin, 1989). As a result a large proportion of the Eritrean population took Britain’s side in the operation to drive the Italians out of their country, but the British had their own designs on the country and soon became new rulers.

We can discern two distinct periods in British rule of Eritrea. From 1941 up to the end of the war, the British set out to fully exploit the existing war oriented facilities without making any change in the socio-economic structure left by the Italians. In three years time, over 300 factories were set up. However, with the end of the war in 1945, the second phase of their rule brought about a drastic change, when the artificial ‘boom’ came suddenly to a halt and a considerable number of factories were closed down. The BMA dismantled factories, industrial hardware and infrastructure equipment which were transferred to other British colonies to show that an independent Eritrea would not be economically viable (Eritrean Information, 1980).

Although the British were supposed to ‘administer’ Eritrea on behalf of the Allied Powers (U.S.A, Britain, France and Soviet Union) until its fate was decided the British did all they could to prolong their colonial occupation. One proposed idea was the partition of Eritrea into its two predominant religious communities with the two sections being attached to the Sudan and Ethiopia respectively. However, this was met with such vigorous opposition by the Eritrean people that the British were forced to abandon the idea of partition (Iyob, 1995). In the early 1950s the U.S.A proposed a new idea to ‘federate’ Eritrea with Ethiopia for U.S.A strategic interests. As the US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles said:

*From the point of view of justice, the right of self-determination of the Eritrean people must receive consideration. Nevertheless the strategic interests of the US in the Red Sea basin, and considerations of security and world peace make it necessary that this country be linked with our ally, Ethiopia (EPLF, 1975).*

Thus Eritrea was federated with Ethiopia in 1952 and the Eritrean dream of ‘a nation of one’s own’ was derailed once again.
2. 1. 4 Federation and annexation (1952-61)

The subordination of Eritrean society to the absolute will of the Ethiopian emperor proved difficult especially after Eritrea had experienced freedom of expression and political competition. G.K.N. Trevaskis has pointed out that ‘federal’ relations were bound to be endangered by the tendency of an absolutist empire to ‘fall back on its traditional mode of rule (Trevaskis, 1960).

Eritrean disillusionment with the ‘federal’ arrangement was demonstrated through songs, ballads and theatre performances, which drew large audiences. A popular song of the mid-1950s proclaims:

I am amazed at what is happening,
I never thought we would
Go backwards in history
Would Mussolini have been better for me?

On the positive side the process offered a window of opportunity for both countries to develop mutually beneficial economic relations within a larger economic unit than before. Possessing a strong industrial base and relatively well developed human resources, Eritrea had much to offer in terms of strengthening the nascent forces of capitalism in Ethiopia. It was precisely the potential of Eritrea for Ethiopia’s modernization efforts that was frequently cited by the US and British officials as an argument in favor of federation (Gebremedhin, 1989). However, from the Eritrean perspective the arrangement caused potentially serious provocations. From the beginning the emperor was skeptical that Eritrean nationalism and trade unionism could be contained and diluted before the forces of modernization in Ethiopia emulated them (EPLF, 1975). Moreover, he viewed Eritrea’s autonomous democracy and separate institutions as a threat to his power.

The actions taken by the emperor between 1953 and 1956 reduced Eritrea to an Ethiopian province in all but name. A ban was imposed on the Syndicate of Free Workers of Eritrea, the free press and all political parties except the Unionist Party. In 1956, Ethiopia attacked the cultural institutions of Eritrea by abolishing Tigrina and Arabic as the official languages of the territory and replacing them with Amharic. As Gidden comments,

A state which does not recognize the cultural [institutions] of its people, which represses the use of their languages, is engaged in a process of cultural genocide (Gidden, 1998: 30).

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4 For more on this issue see Connell, Don (1993).
5 Tigrina is one of the main spoken languages in Eritrea.
6 Amharic is the lingua franca in Ethiopia.
Faced with injustice repression and denial of the basic right of self-determination the Eritrean people began to protest peacefully within democratic structures. But their legal and peaceful struggle for self-determination only led to further repression and injustice. Initially, the mass resistance, mainly centered in the cities, was spontaneous, without an organization to lead it. Later increased repression made it impossible to stage peaceful demonstrations. The intensified repression mounted by police and the growing realization that open peaceful resistance alone was ineffective led to a decision to form clandestine organizations and, accordingly, the Eritrean Liberation Movement (ELM) was formed in the end of 1950’s. The Ethiopian soldiers responded to peaceful demonstrations by force. As a result the idea of armed struggle began to gain acceptance. Thus by the end of 1950s the Eritrean struggle developed from reliance on federal institutions (parliament, courts, etc…), to spontaneous peaceful opposition, and then to clandestine political activity and finally to armed resistance.

2.2 The emergence of political resistance

The first anti-colonial organization, Mahber Fikri Hager Eritra (MFHE)⁷, was established by the coalition of a diverse group of anti-colonial elements in May 1941 (Iyob, 1995). The founding members of MFHE consisted of the young intelligentsia, traditional figures of authority and religious leaders. Although they had strong anti-Italian sentiments, they lacked a coherent vision for future Eritrea encompassing a culturally and ethno-linguistically diverse population (Iyob, 1995). The traditional elite regarded the defeat of the Italians as an opportunity to restore their pre-colonial power and status, buttressed and justified by ethnic and religious affiliations. The intelligentsia, the product of the Italian colonial system and beneficiaries of Western education, wanted to retain their status and prospects of social mobility.

The MFHE was infiltrated 1945 by supporters of unity with Ethiopia and its principles were diluted. It was hijacked and transformed into a new organization called the Unionist Party Ethiopia and Eritrea one Ethiopia. Many MFHE members however opposed this change and went into exile. Among were the prominent founders of the organization, Ibrahim Sultan and Woldeabe Weldemariam.

When Eritrea was federated with Ethiopia, the first organization dedicated to liberate it from Ethiopian rule was the Eritrean Liberation Movement (ELM). The ELM set for itself three tasks: 1) to reconcile the different Eritrean constituencies that had fragmented in the 1940s and 1950s, 2) to construct a united Eritrean nationalist front, and 3) to mobilize all Eritreans against Ethiopian hegemonic control (Iyob, 1995).

⁷ Mahber Fikri Hager Eritra is a Tigrina word meaning “association for the love of the motherland Eritrea”
The ELM was founded by a group of Eritrean Moslems who had spent the better part of their lives in the Sudan and had no previous connection with Eritrean politics (Iyob, 1995). As students in the 50s, they had been caught in the rising tide of Sudanese nationalism and the excitement of independence in 1956. ELM decided to recruit followers in Eritrea. To strengthen their power base they used the cell structure of the Sudanese Communist Party as a model for organization. Accordingly, cells of seven members were formed, and each member was instructed to recruit six others to form a new cell. Thus the movement spread amoebae-like in the towns of Eritrea.

ELM’s activities were not restricted to politics. Due to its emphasis on keeping political discourse open within the cultural arena, many artists participated in articulating the position and ideas of the movement. For example members of MaTa\(^8\) were very active and produced many popular songs, at the price of being jailed and tortured. This contributed to keeping the memories of ‘a nation of one’s own’ alive. A ballad by Ateweberhan Seghid, appealing to unity and abhorring division provides an example of their work:

Moslems and Christians,  
Highlanders and Lowlanders:  
Do not listen to the enemy’s Counsel  
Or you may find yourself [being sold] in the market;  
Give me my torch.  
How long can you deceive me?  
What have I done?  
That you deny me my torch?\(^9\)

ELM’s clandestine politics of protest permeated a wide constituency and popularized the nationalist struggle through a creative mobilization of social and economic grievances against Ethiopian violations of federal guarantees. Despite ELM’s large following in urban Eritrean centers and in the Diaspora, support from veteran party politicians in exile was not forthcoming.

Many of those who had led the pro-independence forces in the 1940s had gone to exile were afraid of youth competition. At the same time the traditional elite within

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\(^8\) MaTa’ was a cultural group active in the 50s that produced nationalist songs in defiance of Ethiopian colonial rule.

\(^9\) Ateweberhan Seghid was a ballad artist who was jailed for keeping the memory of a ‘nation of one’s own’ and lost one eye in an Ethiopian prison.
Eritrea perceived the movement as too radical and mistrusted its ‘communist’ affiliation (Iyob, 1995).

2. 2. 1 Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) 1961-1970
The formation of the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) was announced in Cairo 1961, and on 1st of September 1961, the first bullet was shot in the western lowlands in the mountains of Amale, in what was to become Africa’s longest war of liberation.

The leaders of the ELF continued to subscribe to the narrow sectarian approaches followed in the forties. Those who started the armed struggle were living in exile and were not influenced by the developments during Federation. They played no active role in the internal political discussion of the time and were not influenced by the strong national consciousness that was developing (EPLF, 1975). The fact that ELF was formed abroad, far from the political realities of Eritrea and moreover that it was influenced by politically conservative forces in the Middle East contributed to its narrow outlook.

The rank and file of ELF was divided along tribal and provincial lines, thus fomenting provincial, tribal and religious sentiments instead of building a single army and fostering national unity (Markakis, 1990). This also affected the prosecution of the liberation war. Instead of leading a nation-wide effort, the ELF only carried out isolated small-scale operations. With the growth of the ELF and the expansion of its operational areas, conflicts of interest started to thrive. Internally, clan, tribal, provincial and religious divisions brewed the fragmentation of the forces composing the Eritrean Liberation Army (ELA). On top of the absences of leadership bodies from the field, there were neither national programs nor national policy. Failure to foster participation of the people and the lack of democratic organization and institutions also caused grave problems. As a result the enemy was able to inflict tremendous damage upon life and property by scorched earth campaigns starting in 1967, when for the first time 20,000 Eritreans took refuge in Sudan (Kibreab, 1987). The ineffectiveness of a fragmented army was revealed and the people’s confidence began to wane. It was precisely at this point that a new organization, the Eritrean Popular Liberation Front (EPLF) entered the scene and offered New Hope.
2. 2. 2 Eritrean Popular Liberation Front (EPLF) 1970-1991

From the birth of EPLF to date, national integration is much less the result of decisions taken by outside actors than of internal deliberation. The EPLF’s decisions have been oriented towards creating an Eritrean national identity based on equity of language, ethnic, religion and gender.

At the time it broke away from the ELF, the EPLF was small and weak. Its members were scattered throughout the country in the various divisions of the ELF. Three distinct groups emerged from the reformist movement within the ELF, which shared an emphasis on the ‘people centered movement’ in their struggle for liberation and emancipation of the country. Accordingly the groups came to be known as “Peoples Liberation Front 1” (PLF 1), “Peoples Liberation Front 2” (PLF 2) and “Ubel” (named after the river by the same name where they separated and formed their own front). Under threat from both the Eritrean Liberation Front’s General Command (ELF- GC) and the Ethiopian army, these three groups accepted an offer from Osman Salieh Sabbe to provide them with supplies (Iyob, 1995). On June 1970 they met and established a Tripartite Leadership, through a nine-member executive committee, to oversee the co-ordination of their political and military activities. The three splinter groups formed a united front from 1972-1974. After narrowing down their differences, they united at the end of 1974 to form the Eritrean Popular Liberation Front (EPLF).

2. 2. 3 The quest for a common vision

The EPLF charted a national democratic line in its first political program called “Neh’Nan Alamanan” (We and Our Aims). It clarified the character, objectives and motive forces and defined the strategy and tactics of the Eritrean revolution. Its objective was to liberate Eritrea from the stronghold of Ethiopian colonialism and built an independent, democratic state. The contradiction with ELF was rated as secondary, to be solved amicably by discussion or negotiation among the two fronts. Discussing the factionalism of the Eritrean movement, the political education of EPLF pointed out that:

Divisive tensions wrack every liberation movement. They spring from many sources: abrasions between fighting units and the political directorate ensconced in some friendly foreign capital far from the zone and danger and unsure of its control. The temptations offered by competing, often mutually antagonistic, foreign patrons; disputes over the terms of settlement and the anticipated allocation of victory’s benefits; difficulties of communication and supply; and the inevitable

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10 Osman Salieh Sabbe was one of the three prominent heads of Eritrean Liberation Front General Command.
11 We and Our Aims, was a set of guidelines written in 1972 by EPLF to clarify why EPLF separated from ELF.
defectors and informants who intensify the paranoia native to an underground struggle. The ELF demonstrated all these generic tensions plus others, which vary from time to time and place to place (EPLF, 1975: 55).

In February 1972 the three members of the Tripartite Leadership met in Beirut with Osman Salieh Sabbe and Woldeab Woldemariam. It was agreed that these two veteran politicians should be brought into EPLF. The ‘unofficial’ liaison was formalized and Osman Salieh Sabbe, who had been in charge of foreign affairs within the General Secretariat of the ELF, started to act as the foreign mission of the Tripartite Leadership. His main activities were public relations and fund-raising. The EPLF was at the time of a transitional stage, i.e., in the process of consolidating its internal unity and defending itself from the liquidation attempts of the General Command of the ELF (EPLF, 1975). In February 1972, the General Secretariat changed its name officially to ‘Foreign Mission’ and agreed to represent EPLF abroad.

2. 2. 4 EPLF’s policy of integration and national unity
The initial mistrust and misunderstanding which characterized the ELF prevailed also in the three groups that formed the new movement. In order to understand the situation and its impact on policy, it should be suffice to mention what Isaias Afwerki, Secretary General of the EPLF, said in 1986:

The Eritrean Liberation Front was the only front until 1970. It was horrible, just a mess, it wasn’t a national organization at all. In the towns, things were more cosmopolitan. No one cared about tribalism or religion; but when you came to the front you find people divided along these lines. There was no single leadership, only regional commands, and every regional commander was an emperor in his domain ... Within these regions you find the people divided on ethnic grounds or even narrower, on clan divisions ...etc. In the towns no one cared about these questions of identity; and we felt that upon joining the Front our first task was to fight this sentiment and overcome the struggle between these divisions within the ELF (Sorenson, 1991: 312).

The first manifesto issued by the Popular Liberation Front 2 (PLF 2) in 1971, “Neh’Nan Alamanan” (“Our Struggle and its Goals”) explained the reasons, which led to the

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12 Woldeab Woldemariam, the founder of MFHE fled into exile after surviving assassination attempts on his life in the 1940s and 1950s. He was regarded by most as the ‘voice of reason’ who was not swayed by extremism that fragmented the first generation of the 1940s; he return to Eritrea in 1991 and died in 1995.
new organization’s secession from ELF: the lack of a clear political line and patronage politics based on ethno-religious chauvinism. The manifesto emphasized that:

_We are freedom fighters and not crusaders ... we are Eritreans and not Arabs ...
Our stand is neither ethnic nor sectarian (EPLF, 1975: 37)._ 

The Eritrean national liberation struggle, led by EPLF, drew on the legacy of anti-colonial struggles and its main principles were democratic and egalitarian. It sought to build an economically developed society, in which a guiding principle was self-reliance, to create a cohesive national identity and to raise political consciousness. These policies were embedded in the unified resistance of Eritrean people to foreign domination; Mobilisation of citizens for self-reliance and the inclusion of traditionally subordinated social groups. The Eritrean national liberation struggle was singularly responsible for creating the context in which women and men were able to vigorously address gender issues within the society.

The official policy measures that were taken to address gender inequality had three domains: ideological, organizational, and legislative.¹³ The ideological approach consisted of a set of campaigns for political awareness concerning issues of equality, gender, and unity in diversity. The organizational aspect included a programmatic fostering of the participation of formerly excluded groups in political, socio-economic and educational institutions and the creation of organizations for such groups, which formed the pillars of the front. The legislative aspect included the passing of a series of laws designed to eliminate concrete barriers confronting the marginalized groups of the Eritrean society.

The EPLF quickly gained popular support from the youth in the urban and rural areas as well as from dissidents in Diaspora. The vision articulated in “Neh’Nan Alamanan” attracted a new surge of volunteers, including peasants, workers, students, teachers and radical university students from Ethiopia, Eritrea, the Middle East, Europe and America. The EPLF’s mode of struggle was a ‘protracted peoples war’. This involved the gradual build up of the guerrilla struggle based mainly in rural areas, which drew on the widespread support of the people. The EPLF’s programme of popular Mobilisation, developed from the early 1970s, was based on the twin planks, of social transformation and national liberation. The EPLF itself was characterized by its own distinctive culture:

¹³ For more detail of the policy intervention see the National Democratic Program of EPLF 1977 which clearly defined its two-fold objectives of independence and the transformation of Eritrean society into a modern and prosperous country.
There was a distinct ‘EPLF culture’ among the fighters themselves....

It stressed virtues of commitment to the cause and to comrades and to helping the ordinary people, of study and self-improvement, of equality between men and women, of whom there were large numbers within the movement, even in the front-line (Cliffe, 1989)

The broad policy of EPLF clearly aimed at delineating the following objectives of the armed struggle: to liberate the country from foreign rule; to rebuild national unity on the basis of equality and democracy; and to achieve economic and social development. In order to realize these political objectives stage by stage the EPLF strove to raise the political consciousness of the Eritrean people so that a common nationalism would traverse religious, provincial, ethnic and clan identities. The Eritrean leadership also asserted that substantial interventions would be necessary if gender oppression and women’s mobilization for nation building were to be addressed. While leaders have regarded economic rights as the fundamental lever for changing women’s status, they have also viewed political empowerment of women as key to energizing and guaranteeing the emancipatory process (Stefanos, 1997).

From its inception the EPLF leadership’s conviction was that Eritrea should be liberated from both the internal and external forces that had been dragging it back to sub-national factionalism. It convinced its membership that ethnic diversity was not, and historically had never been an antithesis to nationalism. As far as the EPLF was concerned, the strength of Eritrean nationalism lay in its diversity. The ELF’s weakness had been that it feared the ethnic and religious differences that had been magnified in the 1940’s. It failed to put them into their proper historical perspective and, thus gave them more weight than they actually deserved (Tesfai, 1997). The only reason that ethnicity seemed formidable in previous years was that no one had looked into the Eritrean social fabric to discover its real essence, in short, no one realized the uniting dynamics it embodied. EPLF accepted ethnic and religious diversity as facts of Eritrean life and stressed the equality of all citizens within the national framework. In the 1970’s and later in the 1980’s, the EPLF’s socialist ideology, with its Marxist orientation, was a unifying factor for its rank and file. Ethnicity and religion were never an issue. They were replaced by concern towards division along socio-economic lines. Coupled with the high degree of military discipline, a spirit of voluntarism and self-sacrifice were the EPLF’s guiding principles, nationalism, secularism and equality in the socialist sense became second nature to the Front’s membership:

Nation building is an architectural method for the process induced within a state to integrate the country and tie the inhabitants together in a national fellowship (Iyob, 1995: 89).
2.3 The refugee issue

Guerrilla warfare began in the western lowlands of Eritrea in September 1961. Six years later the Ethiopian army launched its first major offensive in the western and eastern lowlands. During the offensive in 1967 Haile-Selassie’s army retaliated against Eritrean insurgents by burning villages and crops, slaughtering livestock and poisoning water wells and thus leaving large sections of the countryside in the lowlands devastated. The military campaign drove an estimated twenty-five thousand Eritreans into exile. The exodus of refugee influx was more or less continuous from 1967 onwards: sometimes a mere trickle, sometimes massive.

The Eritrean struggle for liberation from Ethiopia produced hundreds of thousands of refugees as over three-quarter of million Eritreans fled from their country to save their lives. Although these Eritrean refugees ended up in many different parts of the world, some being resettled in Western countries, the majority, over 500,000 people, sought asylum in the Sudan, some stayed there for more than 25 years.14

2.3.1 Exile and change

Kibreab (1996) has argued that due to exile community cohesion was largely broken resulting in social fragmentation. When the refugees first went to Sudan, they constituted relatively cohesive communities with one headman or Sheik representing a large number of families. Prior to their displacement, the behavior of most refugee communities was governed according to customary and traditional principles. Not only were most communities ethnically homogeneous, but individual rights and responsibilities emanated from membership of a particular community, often with status-based privileges and duties based on age, sex or other ascribed characteristics.

The individual was subordinate to his/her community, and the enjoyment of individual rights was subject to fulfillment of traditionally defined social roles. Non-compliance with communal decisions or norms was not tolerated. Social pressure is brought to ensure compliance. In extreme cases, deviations could lead to ostracism or loss of access to productive assets such as land and other privileges (Kibreab, 1996). All these phenomena were subjected to changes in exile. Previously communities were able to devise and enforce agreement to promote common interests. In the process of becoming refugees they lost this cohesiveness, and most individuals maximized their self-interest, usually without regard to kith and kin.

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14 For a detail account on this issue see Gaim, Kibreab’s 1987 book
One of the consequences of this fragmentation has been a weakening of the moral authority of the community elders and traditional leaders. In the past, the community respected the advice and decisions of the elders and the traditional leaders. Most decisions concerning communal interests were taken either collectively or on the basis of decisions reached by traditional leaders in consultation with community elders: this changed dramatically in exile. For example, decisions about repatriation were often taken by individual families rather than as a result of community agreements.

The refugees were in some cases also exposed to Islamic fundamentalist groups. The fact that the majority of refugees in Sudan are Muslims, many with previous relationship to the ELF, posed a significant challenge to the goal of nation building based on ethnic and religious inclusion. In the course of his research on the decision of Eritrean refugees in Sudan to return to their country of origin, Gaim Kibreab (1996) recorded the activities of Islamic fundamentalist groups within the camps who fermented opposition to the inclusive policies of the Eritrean government.

As a case in point the National Islamic Front (NIF) of Sudan selectively assisted and trained former dissident groups among Eritrean refugees in the Eastern Sudan. After Eritrea’s independence they were allowed to continue to operate in the Sudan and are still causing disturbance among Eritrean refugees in the Sudan and the borderer areas. They have laid land mines in the western lowlands and attacked EPLF units in remote areas, inflicting casualties on members of the fighting force. In consequence of NIF interventions, Eritrea’s diplomatic relations with the Sudan were severed in 1994 and resumed only at the end of 1999.

2.3.2 Integrating into the cash economy
Capitalist penetration of the subsistence economies of the pastoralists' society in the lowland regions was marginal at best. Most household heads were pastoralists or agro-pastoralist producers with limited participation in commodity and labor markets. In bad years however, it was common for some family members to migrate on a seasonal bases seasonally to the Sudan in search of opportunities for wage labor, mostly in the commercial agricultural sector.

Apart from this, the rural communities were more or less dependent on their own produce. Prior to becoming refugees in the 1960s and early 1970s, the majority of the communities had no access to outside assistance in the form of food aid, safe water supply, health care, education, or sanitation. They often had to travel long distances, sometimes more than six hours for seeing health care or even to fetch water. Often they frequently had to walk hours to obtain only as much as needed for one day.
When they fled most of their possessions including livestock were left behind. The only resource at their disposal was the ability to work. In a matter of one or two seasons tens of thousands of refugees turned into agricultural wage laborers. Initially they participated in wage labor in order to supplement their farm incomes. But over time they become increasingly integrated into world labor markets as the productivity of their holdings diminished due to the depletion of soil nutrients precipitated by continuous cultivation without fallow periods or use of fertilizers (Kibreab, 1996).

When Eritreans went into exile, many settled in rural Sudan, although some moved to urban areas. The later was especially true of those from highland Eritrea. According to Kibreab’s study most young refugees, especially those in urban areas of the Sudan, were engaged in menial activities, predominantly in the informal service sector. These would have been considered taboo in their country of origin. They worked as waiters, cooks and cleaners in restaurants and cafeterias. Female refugees were dominant in domestic services. Few were able to rely on ethnic support networks or nor international assistance because neither the government of Sudan nor UNHCR nor the other refugee-oriented agencies had assistance programs for urban refugees. They thus had to rely on their own resources to make ends meet in an unfamiliar social and physical environment.

The challenge to survive through innovative change was greatest among refugees who moved to area, which were structurally very different from their areas of origin. In these cases access to the sources of livelihoods was often determined more by personal or group efforts than by clan membership or ethnic affinity (Kibreab, 1996). In such situations nothing could be taken for granted; everything had to be earned. The intertwined social obligations of subsistence economies include reciprocal exchanges of food, shelter and land as well as non-monetized exchange of labor to plant, weed, harvest, or construct homes. In Sudan, however, market relationships largely replaced these former patterns of household exchange.15

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Classification of the rural population
According to the EPLF’s 1987 survey, agriculturists constituted 62 per cent of Eritrea’s the rural population, agro-pastoralists 33 per cent, and pastoralists 5 per cent (EPLF, 1987). The geographical distribution of these three groups follows a distinct pattern. The highland and midland area is exclusively inhabited by agriculturists, while the lowland is largely occupied by agro-pastoralists.

The circumstances of these three groups are characterized as follows:

1. Agriculturists are sedentary farmers whose livelihood depends primarily on the cultivation of crops. Livestock is mainly reared for the purpose of farming; for instance, oxen are used for ploughing and pack animals for various farm transports needs. Other domestic animals such as sheep, goats and chickens may also be reared, but their importance is minimal in terms of the overall livelihood requirements.

2. Agro-pastoralists depend on both crop and livestock husbandry. They live in permanent homesteads but seasonal movements (mostly involving only a few members of a household) in search of pasture are common.

3. Pastoralists do not live in permanent homesteads. Livestock rearing is their primary means of livelihood (Interview with Mehari Tewelde Asmara, 22 May 1999).

Traditionally, the main social and political unit of the peasantry in most of the highland and midland areas of Eritrea has been and still is the village. The village is not only the focus of all social interactions, but is also an autonomous and self-contained political unit. It has well defined boundaries and administers its territory by a mechanism of communal control. A chief (Chikka/Ligina), supported by elder men, presides over all matters and disputes which involve decision making. But Habteselassie (1992) has argued that long stays in large refugee settlements of 10,000-30,000 people, new expectations and a craving for the amenities of urban life, such as ready access to schools, clinics, running water and flour mills, were in-calculated urban life.

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16 Chikka is the village administrator in the highlands and Ligina is the village administrator in the lowlands of Eritrea.
2.3.3 Changes in gender relations
In Eritrea, as in many other developing countries, women have little independent existence, with their status defined in relation to husband or father. They have to adjust their lives to the needs of others. Women shoulder most domestic chores. In times of hardships these responsibilities double as they struggle to close the gap between income and needs. With the exception of the rural highlands where women participated in productive and reproductive activities simultaneously, women were to a large extent restricted to the domestic sphere, which often meant dependence on men’s incomes. The social consequence of this dependence was that women were relegated to a subordinate position (Kibreab, 1996). Within the refugee community some aspects of the relationship between men and women underwent major changes; however this was particularly true of the urban refugees where many women became breadwinners of families by working as domestic servants for Sudanese families or by migrating to the oil rich Gulf States. The proportion of female-headed families was higher among urban than rural refugees.

In Moslem rural communities, women seldom participated in agricultural production prior to becoming refugees. This was also true of females heading families. Usually they were dependent on material or labor contributions from their own relatives or those of former or deceased husbands’ relatives. In refugee settlements, however, the contribution of relatives’ labor to female-headed families was nominal to say the least, thus leaving female heads with no choice but to participate in manual labor such as weeding, harvesting, water and wood fuel fetching. Although burdensome, for many this was a liberating experience, because in the traditional society little room was left for women to carve out an independent existence or to exploit opportunities for individual exploration and expression. Women who abandoned traditional lifestyles, however, received little if any support in their new lives. Breaking with tradition requires individual strength of will which society, as a whole does not encourage. How far the changes gained in exile were retained will be dealt with in the coming chapters.

2.4 Impact of EPLF’s policy towards integration and national unity
EPLF’s policy of reintegrating returnees in the process of nation building has had to address the varying experience of Eritreans during the period of exile and struggle. The task of nation building and national integration has been complicated by the diversity of experience. For some the struggle itself involved the inculcation of values conducive to integration. This was partly true of the fighters, but also applied to the liberated areas of Eritrea. It was much less so for those who remained under Ethiopian rule or who were in exile as refugees whether in the Sudan or elsewhere.
2.4.1 Measures aimed especially at the fighters’ community

Members of the liberation forces were recruited from all ethnic and social strata. This, together with the egalitarian distribution system of social services and the democratic administrative structures that encouraged popular participation in the struggle, had far-reaching effects in breaking down the barriers that had always divided the society. National unity based on equality was only one of the basic values of the struggle, which were instilled into the EPLF fighters, starting from their registration for military training. In order to attain a degree of uniformity among each unit undergoing training, care was taken to balance them. The EPLF leadership was aware that in selecting fighters and commanders of diverse ethnic backgrounds, needs, training and experience, it was important to strike a delicate balance between the need for professional-efficiency and popular legitimacy.

The following characteristics were taken into consideration in attempts to achieve a balance across different ethnic groups before military training started and after assignment to their units:

- age;
- sex;
- background (rural, urban, semi-urban);
- level of education;
- ethnic affiliation; and
- religion

Similarly, at the end of each training period care was taken to balance the composition of each unit based on ethnic, linguistic, religious and educational background so that nearly every unit represented the whole of the EPLF in a microcosm.

In conclusion we may say that the main values which grew out of and unified the struggle were the following:

- nothing can be owned individually; common ownership is the rule;
- criticism and self-criticism are the daily bread of the fighters;
- all EPLF members are equal; there are no privileges for higher ranks;
- individual interest comes after common interest;
- unity and understanding of all ethnic groups is of utmost importance;
- religion is everybody’s private business; nationalism is a public issue;
- national independence and sovereignty are the prerequisites and guarantees for individual dignity; and
- without participation of women, who are half of the population, independence cannot be achieved
Weekly meetings were conducted in all EPLF units, which gave the fighters an opportunity to be heard. As a result, a sense of belonging developed. Within a short time of their assignment to different units, most fighters actively participated in discussions that focussed on the basic problems they encountered in day-to-day activities. Issues relating to the progress of the struggle facing the community in general and of armed struggle in particular were raised and thoroughly discussed. A good number of hours were spent discussing problems and everybody had to have an opportunity to speak before action could be taken. This was done in order to give everybody the chance to understand the goals and problems involved, to broaden his/her scope of understanding the situation and to create consensus.

2.4.2 Transformation in the liberated areas
The same procedure was followed among the population of the liberated areas. The non-military activities of the EPLF-fighters in the liberated areas not only aimed at informing the civilian population of current developments, but also represented an ideal opportunity to translate the principles into action. Thus simultaneously with the struggle for national liberation, the objective of economic, social and cultural transformation of the Eritrean society was pursued in day-to-day activities in the various sectors. The aim was to improve the livelihood of the people and also win their support. One of the many issues tackled was land reform.

2.4.3 Implementation of the National Democratic Programme
During their formative years, up to the mid-seventies, ELF and EPLF competed for sympathy and popular support. This offered an opportunity for both fronts to refine their methods of working. By avoiding the mistakes of their competitor each strove to gain more support from the population. By 1976, EPLF had grown both in strength and popular support. The broad contact it established with the population had gone beyond propaganda work to include administrative and judicial duties, as well as health and social services and the program of education.

2.4.4 EPLF as a force for social transformation
According to the national democratic program of EPLF, two processes needed to be conducted at the same time: the struggle for independence and self-determination and the struggle for social transformation of Eritrean society. During this period, the EPLF functioned as a government in the liberated areas, performing all state functions: military defense, social services and health and educational service etc. It also acted as a political party and trade union, mobilizing the people politically, organizing them in mass organizations etc. The final objective was to establish a Peoples’ Democratic State, as specified in the EPLF program, specifically to set up a
people’s Assembly constituted of people’s representatives democratically and freely elected from anti-feudal and anti-democratic forces (EPLF, 1975).

The task of organizing the masses could not be accomplished at once, as it involved an entire development process. Similarly, the building of a strong and disciplined organization involved a very long and patient struggle. In order to fulfil this task of administrative structures were formed in 1975 inside the fighting force, which gradually developed into new institutions within the wider society.

a) Public administration
At the first congress of the EPLF in 1977, the Department of Public Administration (DPA) was formed. Its tasks included not only mobilizing and winning the masses to the cause of the EPLF, but also attending to their basic needs. The DPA set out to establish two levels of administration – the people’s committees and the people’s assemblies. The committees, which were generally seen as transitional, were set up either in areas newly occupied or controlled by the Front or in areas close to or behind enemy lines. The membership was usually small but very committed to the overall goals of the struggle. The general village meetings elected them and their duties were to liaison between the Front and the village involved. All the Front’s directives and programs were transmitted through them and whenever delegated by the Mass Administration Units (MAU’s) responsible for their areas, they carried out administrative, judicial and other work on behalf of the Front. The next level of structure of these committees was the people’s assembly or baitos, which were formed of representatives from more than three villages.

Baitos were fairly widespread both in rural and urban areas, their membership corresponding to the communities class divisions. For example, villagers were classified by MAU’s as rich, middle-income or poor, and were represented accordingly, with the poor forming the majority in the baitos. The duties of the baitos were far greater than the committees. An executive body consisting of a chairperson, a secretary and the heads of various committees dealing with justice social and economic affairs, security etc., was elected from among the members of the baitos. This had wide powers to execute activities. In order to reach baitos level it often took an individual village six or more years of hard work (interview with Teame Weldehamanot Asmara, 12 February 1999). There EPLF’s cadres were developing the system serves to illustrate the way local administration co-operated with the local community.

To raise the political consciousness of the people, regular political education was conducted. Topics discussed included the history of the Eritrean peoples and their
struggle, the ‘correct national line’, methods of struggle, basic political concepts, forms of colonialism, its collaborators and their tactics, developments in the international political scene, rights and obligations of the masses, democratic organizational principles and perseverance.

The early instruments for this politicization work in liberated and semi-liberated areas were the small underground cells formed in the front-line villages and the towns and cities controlled by the Ethiopian government. The study circles were intended to form the base of new popular organizations of workers, peasants, women and youth. Each cell was made up of members of these social groups. The same process was followed among people in the Diaspora. While abroad, Eritreans learned the politics of survival and, as a result, developed the spirit of resilience that was instrumental in the formation and strengthening of Eritrean associations in exile. These associations provided crucial resources of finance, public relations and expertise in different areas, which were missing in the field. For example, at the end of 1977, all active EPLF members of the mass organizations were requested to visit the field. The Front wanted to strengthen the various structures it had created during the First Congress, be it in the area of education, health, agriculture, information, administration, or political mobilization.

During the armed struggle there was a need to be interventionist in organizing sections of the community and promoting reflection and political education in accord with the goals of the EPLF. Collective reflection continues to be of value in the post-independence period, as a sort of consolidation efforts towards building a cohesive and equitable society. But how far and in what way this process should be managed from above remains an issue to be carefully considered.

b) Health
The health policy the Front followed was aimed at improving the provision of primary health care services. Thus knowledge of proper nutrition and hygiene was promoted, as well as the provision of adequate and safe water supplies and basic sanitation. Promotion of mother and child health played an important role, including family planning and immunization, with a focus on controlling endemic diseases. Despite the fact that curative services were also provided, the emphasis was preventive rather than curative only.

According to Nerayo Tecklemichael, then director of the Eritrean Public Health Program:
Health planners in Eritrea have come out with a scheme that is considered appropriate for the prevailing situation: Community Health Service (CHS) for the village, Health Station (HS) for the sub-district and Health Centre (HC) for the district (Burgess, 1989: 216).

c) Education

The educational policy of the EPLF was based on the conviction that education is a decisive weapon in the struggle for national unity of nine very different ethnic groups speaking nine languages. In such a context it is important to find a middle way between fostering particularism and allowing the development of ethnic cultures. Taking this challenge seriously, EPLF emphasized the following principles: each nationality has the right to develop its spoken and written language to use in its internal administration. The educational gap between the different groups and regions needs to be narrowed and leveled by giving greater educational opportunities to the regions lagging behind in this field (Stefanos, 1997). Above all, the language of the majority, or the more developed group, should not be imposed on the others. The educational objective was to incorporate theoretical and practical work, so students would be able to make a direct connection between theory and practice.

The educational policy of the EPLF was based on a very comprehensive vision. Therefore it included not only primary and secondary school education, but also alphabetization and other aspects of adult education. More than 80 percent of the population was illiterate in 1995. As alphabetization alone is of not of much use, it was always accompanied by courses or talks on social and political issues. Another important aspect of the educational policy of the EPLF was skills training, for example in agriculture, construction and other technical fields. Serious efforts were made also in music, fine arts, handicrafts, literature and sports to encourage a cultural awakening that would give prominence to the history and glory of the nation and thus promote unity and nation building. From the end of the 1970s onwards, cultural troupes mushroomed in the EPLF. These cultural bodies provided theatre, songs and drama as well as general forms of entertainment, transmitting messages in all Eritrean languages and concerning all issues, to the fighters as well as to the civilians and Eritreans in the Diaspora.

In the EPLF program it was unequivocally stated that each citizen has the right to religious belief. Religious instruction was allowed and religious institutions were not prevented from carrying out their spiritual functions (EPLF, 1975). However, all attempts to use religion as a political tool or to infuse religion in the educational system in order to divide the people were considered contrary to the interests of national unity and nation building and therefore were not accepted.
d) Mass media

The media are often listed as crucial socialization agents alongside parents, school and peer groups (Gidden, 1998). During the early seventies, a number of publications were prepared and printed in the field, mainly written for a local audience. By 1978, the circulation, of the EPLF Meirh\textsuperscript{17} magazine had reached 10,000, excluding those reprinted abroad. This magazine was distributed clandestinely in Asmara and other Ethiopian occupied towns and was avidly read. In the same year, the EPLF began publishing a two page weekly newspaper Fitsametat\textsuperscript{18}, which was distributed reasonably efficiently in the liberated areas, including several major towns such as Dekemhare, Keren and Afabet.

In the late seventies thanks to Soviet backing, Ethiopian military superiority was at its highest level. The Eritrean forces decided to retreat behind the mountain ranges in northern Eritrea. The EPLF urged the people to collect enough money to finance and establish a radio station prior to the strategic retreat. The launching of the EPLF radio, Demtsi Hafash [Voice of the Masses], in January 1979 marked an important milestone in the Eritrean people’s efforts to have their own effective means of communication. This was a first step towards creating space for media in Eritrea. The radio started broadcasting in five Eritrean languages, as well as in Amharic and later in Oromo\textsuperscript{19}.

The EPLF radio broadcast was received in Eritrea and Ethiopia, as well as in Somalia, Kenya, Sudan and Saudi-Arabia. Eritreans in Saudi-Arabia monitored, recorded, transcribed and faxed its programs to Eritrean communities throughout the world. Recorded programs were also transmitted over the telephone to Europe and the US and distributed in audiocassette form. This intervention helped to bring together the different groups and enabled them to follow the day to day development of the armed struggle and gave hope to all Eritreans that one day they would be liberated and return ‘home’. The radio broadcast was so effective that the Ethiopian government listed the destruction of Demtsi Hafash as target number one.

\textsuperscript{17} Meirh was the official magazine published by EPLF from 1975 to 1979.
\textsuperscript{18} Fitsametat was a weekly newspaper published by EPLF.
\textsuperscript{19} Political education was given to Ethiopian prisoners of war, who formed their own cultural groups in the Staff liberated area.
e) Gender
Although Eritrean women have always been involved in all aspects of life within their society, they held a subordinate position in their society. Therefore the changes that occurred in women’s lives during the national liberation struggle were dramatic. Women participated in all areas of the Front’s organization (Stefanos, 1999). This full participation in politics was unprecedented since Eritrean women were traditionally prohibited from formally participating in public affairs. In the economic realm, the recognition of Eritrean women’s right to equal access to resources to engage in all facets of productive activity was fundamental to the achievement of women’s equality.

Women’s diligent participation in the armed struggle and their contribution towards realizing independence had changed women’s status in Eritrean society. During the struggle, 30 percent of the fighters were women, participating in production, education, health, and administration. Of these, 13 percent were frontline combatants. Women in the EPLF were active in different fields:

As health workers (89 percent of the dentists, 78 percent of anesthesiologists, but only 8 percent of the doctors), administrators (35 percent), factory workers (30 percent), mechanics (25 percent) and teachers (11 percent) in fact, during the war women benefited from EPLF training programs which discriminated in their favor (Ministry of Defense, 1993: 13).

Their participation in non-traditional male dominated occupations changed traditional perceptions of women’s roles. EPLF women achieved great success during the course of the independence. Their subordinate position was changed to more equal relationships and positioning within the EPLF. This, of course, had a great impact on society’s perception of what women were capable of, if given the opportunity. Female EPLF fighters became role models for many young women and girls in the villages and towns of Eritrea. They came to expect equal status in life.

To sum up, studies have amply documented that during the national liberation struggle efforts to address Eritrean women’s emancipation were highly successful. Many Eritrean women felt that their status in the private and public realm had improved as a direct consequence of the official policies and also because of the experimental and creative way the Front pursued female emancipation (Stefanos, 1999). The challenge is whether women will be able to retain their hard-won equality and carry it over to the post-war period.
f) Self-reliance and sustainability
The EPLF believed in self-reliance in all fields of nationhood: political, economic and cultural.
- Politically it meant to follow an independent line and give priority to internal conditions;
- Economically it referred to the reliance on internal resources and capabilities and to develop them; and
- Culturally it acknowledged self-confidence and the value of cultural heritage, while at the same time fostering national identity.

EPLF made great efforts using different mechanisms to eliminate the traditional social divisions based on religion, ethnicity, regionalism and class differentiation, as well as harmful traditional practices and norms that could obstruct national integration and nation building. It abolished feudal landholding rights and introduced new legislation, ensuring access to resources for women and other deprived categories of the society. In the later stages of the war, the absence of antagonistic political factions was conducive to creating a sense of unity and common purpose both among the fighters and the civilian population in the liberated areas. Thus the nationalist struggle and military situation created new opportunities, options, interdependence and consensus.

g) EPLF’S nation building endeavor before independence.
Since the initiation of the liberation struggle, almost everyone in the former Italian colony identified himself or herself as Eritrean, not as Ethiopian. This, however, did not eliminate internal contradictions. The EPLF has pursued a policy of bringing together the different nationalities that formerly rarely interacted with one another. One of the main aims of the cultural policy of the EPLF has been to ensure that traditional dances and songs of different national groups should be part of a common national heritage. As Erikson (1997) has argued,

Benign integration is achieved through policies, processes and measures, and within structures that do not threaten or restrict the values of the members or groups of the society that is being integrated. The policies and programs of benign integration may have a long time frame from adoption to impact; but what is achieved, when it is achieved, would be more meaningful and enduring, built essentially on free choice and through processes that are humane and sustainable (Erikson, 1993: 27).

The fifty years of Italian rule not only had a deep transforming impact on the Eritrean social structure, with positive as well as negative effects, but also provided the basic
administrative structure for future integration and nation building. The common legal system and administrative language and a well-developed infrastructure allowed unprecedented exchange of goods. The author agrees with the analysis of Alemseged Tesfai that this development ensured cross-ethnic affinities, religious tolerance and good neighborliness, within a transition towards the emergence of a distinct and separate Eritrean identity (Tesfai, 1997). But it was the conscious and determined policy of the EPLF, which succeeded in forging the embryonic commonness into a strong national identity. The idea of the nation to which all Eritreans feel a sense of belonging is best expressed by Benedict Anderson:

It is an imagined political community people who define themselves as members of a nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. The fact that people are willing to die for their nation indicates its extraordinary force (Anderson, 1991: 23).

The policy of national integration and its implementation by the EPLF is also a vivid illustration of the observation made by Benedict Anderson that nationalism derives its force from a combination of political legitimization and emotional power (Anderson, 1991). This does not mean that EPLF has not valued the cultural roots of the various ethnic groups. They have inspired the textbooks used in schools and the songs and theatre plays of the cultural troupes, and they have also been used to serve integrative needs as defined by the EPLF.

The role of the educational system worked out by the EPLF and the wide use of mass media has facilitated development of the idea of inclusion of all different groups. The mass media and literacy campaigns have been used to create authorized versions of (their) history, which have served as cultural cement (Interview with Semere, former head of mass organization in Southern Zone Mendefera, 09 February 2000).

If the policy was predetermined, it was nevertheless conceived on grounds of concrete experience and the firm belief that a non-ethnic nationalism is possible. To quote Benedict Anderson:

Being a member of a family does not preclude being a member of an ethnic group, and being a member of an ethnic group does not necessarily preclude being a member of a more encompassing category. However, for that more encompassing group to exist, it must be socially relevant (Anderson, 1991: 54).

Obviously, the more encompassing group represented by the Eritrean nation was not only imaginable; it was socially relevant for the vast majority of the Eritrean
population. Certainly it was more relevant for those who joined the struggle and paid with their lives to realize it, but it also was relevant for those who fled the war to save their lives. Even if the EPLF’s concept of nation building was not explicitly inspired by theoretical reflections, it seems to fit the model that several researchers have drawn from other experiences. But if the state opts for domination or segregation, as was the case in South Africa during the period of apartheid, or decides to carry out a policy have forced assimilation, as in Ethiopia before the fall of the Derg. As Erickson elaborates:

*The main option for the state consists in transcending ethnic nationalist ideology and adopting an ideology of multiculturalism, where citizenship and full civil rights need not imply a particular cultural identity, or a decentralized federal model providing a high degree of local autonomy* (Erickson, 1991: 56).

Nevertheless, despite the growing feeling of national unity, the different segments of the Eritrean society have simultaneously developed very different norms and values as a result of their very different experiences. This applies to those who lived in exile scattered all over the world; those who participated in the liberation struggle or were living in the liberated areas; those who stayed in Eritrea under Ethiopian rule and those who continued to live in Ethiopia.

As odd as it may seem, the latter two have developed very differently. Those who went to Ethiopia during Federation generally left voluntarily in order to seek education or work. Usually they had at least one asset, either money or education and sometimes both. They felt that Ethiopia was their naturalized new country and they were often inclined to assimilate, although many suffered discrimination and harassment. The local community in occupied Eritrea appears to have held most firmly to its traditions because of the continuous pressure to which they were exposed.

Despite what has been said about the Front’s policy, it must not be forgotten that the nationalist movement experienced a series of internal conflicts and transformations, which had important implications in achieving national unity. The protracted armed struggle shifted the center of gravity of nationalist agitation away from the civic and associational dynamics of the public sphere, to the increasingly tightly organized and disciplined structure of the EPLF.

The task of creating an inclusive political community was necessitated by the plurality of groups within the territory. The concern of the EPLF has been to encourage the growth of a national culture, which transcends the experience of any
single ethnic group. In this respect the establishment of national sovereignty has presented as the ‘final triumph’ of the nationalist project that first began to cohere half a century earlier.

The author fully agrees with Makki’s analysis,

*In the absence of a civil society that could monitor and steer their dynamics, the liberation movements developed an autonomous and somewhat substituous political culture. The hierarchical organizational frames encouraged a compliant culture in which the ideal of a self-empowering citizenry was somewhat restricted, and political creativity was subordinated to the cult of efficiency and rationality. The sheer brutality of the war, and the massive social dislocation it occasioned, was understood as necessitating a movement that had to be exceptionally disciplined while also being intimately attuned to the sympathies of the people* (Makki, 1996: 481).

Over the years different codes of conduct and ethos emerged across different groups a) within the front and to lesser degree in liberated and semi-liberated areas; b) in the Diaspora or exile where life differed according to exposures and experiences; and c) among communities which had remained in occupied Eritrea. After independence all these different values, norms and attitudes have acted or reacted in ways that can help or hinder the process of integration. We must be aware that the main catalyst of change – the national liberation movement - no longer exists. In the post-conflict period, economic development and national re-construction are the main concerns. The question remains how far this approach will provide an enabling framework for reintegrating returnees.

2.5 The situation at the end of the war

To chart out the situation of the country at the end of the war there is a need to briefly probe at the political social and economical performance of the country.

2.5.1 Political-overview

The Government of Eritrea is trying to achieve a transformation from a ‘war-torn’ to a reconstructed country. The task presents a number of challenges. The Eritrean Government has to rebuild a country that was devastated not only by a thirty-year war and recurrent droughts, but also by deliberate neglect from 1974 onwards (GOE, 1994a). The political strategy of the military regime in Ethiopia aimed at undermining the political, social and cultural base for Eritrean independence.
After liberation, the Provisional Government of Eritrea (PGE) began to set up a nation-wide administrative structure, which simultaneously guaranteed continuity with its past and promised a stabilized future. The progressive assimilation of the liberated zones during the armed struggle had resulted in the formation of a de facto dual power structure. With the Ethiopian occupation force confined to the major urban centers, most of the rural areas and some of the smaller towns had come under effective jurisdiction of the EPLF. This allowed the Front to acquire considerable experience in public administration, which allowed the subsequent process of state formation to draw on systems and institutional patterns of governance that had emerged in embryonic form during the long armed struggle (Makki, 1996).

However, because cut off from the centers of the national economy and large segments of the population, this administrative apparatus was severely truncated. Its isolation from the broader public and its emphasis on military discipline, which was input to its efficiency and internal unity during the struggle, conditioned its structure, code of conduct and ethos.

2.5.2 Socio-economic situation
The challenges facing Eritrea after three decades of war and recurrent droughts are enormous. Decades of war neglect, deprivation of resources, and inappropriate policies prior to 1991 resulted in a weakened economy and a damaged infrastructure arising out of a considerable brain and skill drain from the country. Thus Eritrea’s industrial base was shrinking during the period of the Ethiopian occupation. Historically, Eritrea had been a nation of people with a variety of experiences in entrepreneurial skills, commerce, and international trade. At the end of 1930s, there were 730 companies producing industrial goods and 2,200 trading companies in the territory. During this period, Eritrea was also a successful exporting nation. At the time of the Second World War, when imports from Europe to East African markets were disrupted, Eritrean industries stepped in to supply these markets (World Bank, 1994). At present nearly all companies which had been nationalized under the Derge and were minimally operational at independence have been sold to private investors, Eritreans as well as foreigners.

A survey of rural livelihoods conducted in 1995 by the Consortium for Political Emergencies (COPE) shows the extent of these trends:

- Average land-holding was small (1.4 hectares); 13 percent of households had no land; returnees to existing village find it difficult to get land allocated to them;
- In agricultural areas two-thirds of households did not have the requisite pair of oxen or camel for ploughing, half had none;
Almost a third of all rural households were women-headed, a result of migration and war losses; they tended to include more of the most vulnerable; many were chronically short of family labor and thus could not easily benefit from food-for-work programs;

In (agro)pastoral areas, the loss of livelihood had been such, that large section could not cannot replenish their herds by natural increase: two third had no camels, a minority (17 percent) were left without even small stock;

Although food security had increased self-sufficiency was still a long way off: ‘subsistence‘ crops by the producers themselves provided food only for only five months a year on average;

Those households that avoided extreme deprivation did so by the ‘insurance’ of combining multiple sources of income by family members: petty trade, off-farm earning, and migration for work in towns or abroad (Rock, Cliffe and White, 1997).

Despite its weakening, the Eritrean economy was relatively diversified in comparison to those of other Sub-Saharan African countries (World Bank, 1994a). According to 1997 estimates there was an average economic decline of -0.7 per cent between 1985 and 1990. With the intensification of the war in the first half of 1991, the figure slumped to -7.0 percent. Agricultural production fell by -5.0 percent, industries by –12.4 percent, service by -4.6 percent, construction by -15.6 percent and transport and communication to -21.1 percent (GOE, 1994). Following the end of war of independence the economy has grown considerably and reached 9 percent growth rate in 1997 (IMF, 1997). The GDP share of agricultural production was 24 percent, which is lower than the average 30 percent in Sub-Saharan African countries. Industry counted for 28 percent and contributes 35 percent of GDP (World Bank, 1994a).

This structure is partly a result of economic policies under Italian and British colonial rule. The Italians focused mainly on developing a basic infrastructure and agriculture to support the needs of Italian settlers and to export primary commodities to Italy. The British, who took control in 1941, invested substantially in ports, air bases, ammunition plants and storage depots to serve their war effort. Under Ethiopian occupation, industrial production declined from the early 1960s onwards. When the military regime (Derge)\(^{20}\) came to power in 1974, the Ethiopian government adopted a policy of central economic planning. The nationalization of land, housing and industries accelerated the economic decline (GOE, 1994b). Throughout the period,

\(^{20}\) In 1974 the former Emperor of Ethiopia was ousted from office by a military junta called Derge which was formed by 120 individual military personnel from the army.
however, Eritrea accounted for almost 30 percent of Ethiopia’s industrial production and continued to be one of the most industrialized regions in East Africa (Eritrean Profile, September 1999).

The Eritrean Government has sought to foster sustained economic growth (GOE, 1994b). The agricultural sector has gained increased investment and institutional support (GOE, 1994e). Great effort is being made to open up the economy by stimulating the private sector and creating an environment for development in order to attract foreign investment. However, in this initial phase Eritrea represents a capital-starved economy, and its development prospects remain highly dependent on foreign aid. With imports greatly exceeding exports, inflows of hard currency stem from private and official transfers. For example, in 1994 the surplus in the balance of payments of US $ 112 million resulted from private transfers of U.S $62.2 million, official transfers of U.S $ 123.9 million and services of U.S $59.6 million covering a trade deficit of U.S. $ 333.88 million (IMF, 1994). Private transfers from Eritreans in the Diaspora are expected to continue to be the most important source of foreign exchange for the country for the foreseeable future (World Bank, 1994c).

Another potential area of interest is the development of the Eritrea is marine resources. In the past the fishing sector was neglected due to war and lack of funds. The Eritrean government is currently trying to address the development of agriculture and fishing, which hopefully will lead to the goal of self-sufficiency and self-reliance (World Bank, 1994).

Shortly after independence most social indicators for Eritrea were – and still are - low even by Sub-Saharan Africa standards (World Bank, 1994a). But in the meantime noticeable progress has been made (UNDP, 2000). In the immediate aftermath of the war of liberation Eritreans had a life expectancy of about 46 years against 50 years for sub-Saharan Africa; in 1998 life expectancy had raised to 51 years. The under-five child mortality rate of 203 per 1,000 live births was extremely high, even for the region (196 for sub-Saharan Africa as a whole); in 1998 it had fallen to 112. In 1993, the average caloric intake was estimated at 1,750 kcal/person/day (2,096 kcal/person/day for sub-Saharan Africa as a whole), equivalent to 93% of minimum requirements. In this case, however, there seems to have been no progress: the Human Development Report for 1997 states a figure 1,622 kcal/person/day only.
Table 2.1: Social indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>ERITREA: SOCIAL INDICATORS</th>
<th>ERITREA</th>
<th>SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA</th>
<th>ERITREA</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Life expectancy at birth (yrs)</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>51.1 years</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>51.1 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infant mortality per 1000 live births</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population per nurse (100)</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult literacy (percent)</td>
<td>58.5</td>
<td>51.7</td>
<td>58.5</td>
<td>51.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP/capita U.S $</td>
<td>1607</td>
<td>833</td>
<td>1607</td>
<td>833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily per capita calorie intake</td>
<td>2096</td>
<td>1622</td>
<td>2096</td>
<td>1622</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNDP, 2000

More than 40 percent of under-fives were – and still are - underweight and a high percentage of them are stunted. The majority of Eritreans obtain their water from sources that are either unprotected or vulnerable to contamination. Few have access to safe drinking water and sanitation is extremely low in most parts of the country. Most diseases such as malaria, diarrhea and acute respiratory infections, which account for three fourths of all disease episodes, are preventable. High fertility rates of about 6.8 percent and an annual population growth rate of about 3.3 percent accompany the low health and nutrition levels.

With limited resources, the Government has started a comprehensive program to facilitate improvements in the social sector (GOE, 1994b). In the health sector, great emphasis is placed on preventive and primary health care, particularly in rural areas, whereby resources are shifted towards public health services such as epidemic control, water and sanitation, and health education. Hospitals and clinics are being restored. A problem that is receiving growing attention is AIDS, in that the number of reported AIDS cases in Eritrea is growing rapidly. There are estimates that 8,000 Eritreans were probably HIV positive in 1996 (Haddas Eritrea, April 1996). The Government is seeking to increase public awareness and educate people in preventive methods. The problem of social services was further compounded when many Ethiopian civil servants left Eritrea. Luckily during the liberation struggle, the EPLF had been able to develop an effective administrative structure, which became the basis for developing a civil service needed for the transformation from war to a peacetime economy.
2.6 Conclusion

Charting out developments during the colonial era gives a glimpse of the integrative and disintegrative factors Eritrean society has undergone. Putting these into perspective helps to understand subsequent developments. In Eritrea there is a goal which is broader than the process of the (re) integration programs, namely the on-going process of national integration or nation building.

From the birth of the EPLF to date, national integration has been much less the effect of decisions taken by outside actors than the result of planned actions taken by the main actor- the EPLF. Its aim is to create an Eritrean national identity based on equality of opportunity regardless of ethnicity, religion or gender.

Despite all the destruction and disruption, the war itself had one positive effect: it helped to forge a strong sense of unity and national identity among the various ethnic and religious groups. The thirty years of war with Ethiopia did more good than harm in cementing the different ethnic groups in Eritrea into one nation. All across the country people rallied round the common cause of national salvation and defense of their existence.

However, it must be taken into account that the nationalist movement experienced a series of internal conflicts and transformations. The protracted armed struggle shifted the centre of gravity of nationalist agitation away from civic and associational dynamics of the public sphere, to an increasingly tightly organized and disciplined structure of the liberation front.

There were limits to the national culture. The process of constructing an inclusive political community was linked to the existence of self-conscious national movements’ intent on expressing a national culture, which was not congruent with the culture or history of any single ethnic group. This was mellowed, especially in the fighter’s community. Independence has created an environment where different groups are given a chance to mesh in order to create a cohesive Eritrean society. However, the main catalyst – the national liberation movement — no longer exists. Social integration is a complex issue, involving a process in which people who have developed various attitudes and behaviors in diverse circumstance are brought together to form an integrated society. They act or react in ways, which might help or hinder the action being taken to resolve the problems created by their difference. This process will be investigated more fully in subsequent chapters.
Chapter Three

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

3. Introduction
The success of reintegration of returnees in war-torn societies depends to a large extent on the climate of peace or violence prevailing in the community into which they are expected to integrate. The cessation of armed conflict can present an unprecedented opportunity for war-torn countries to rebuild their political institutions, augment their economic assets and embrace reforms that have been elusive in the past. Once the dust of fighting starts to settle two specific issues come to the forefront: demobilization of combatants and return of refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs).

Whereas demobilization is usually a planned and organized procedure, return can either be organized or spontaneous. Organized repatriation is carried out with the agreement of all the parties concerned and usually benefits from government support and UNHCR assistance. Spontaneous return, on the other hand, takes place at the initiative of, and is managed by, the refugees themselves, in general with little or no help from either government or support agencies like UNHCR, at least until recently. During their stay in exile and in the field the refugee and fighter communities usually grow apart from those who have stayed behind, especially in cases like the Eritrean war of independence which lasted 30 years.

Thus the reintegration of these categories constitutes an important dimension of creating a cohesive society within one territory. Special target groups among ex-combatants, such as women combatants, child soldiers, disabled fighters and female-headed households and single women among the refugees need special and immediate support measures. Also in short as well as in long-term, social integration of the various groups needs acceptance by the local community and the willingness to give returnees a chance to fend for their livelihood and thus start slowly to integrate into the society.

This thesis conceptualizes returnee rehabilitation and integration in terms of a broader nation building process, which puts inclusive strategies in place. The integration of ex-refugees and ex-fighters is an essential component of the consolidation of a society and the overall nation building process. This chapter is organized around three issues: ongoing debate about rehabilitation and reintegration,
the role of outside assistance in this process and reintegration as it has worked in practice, with a few examples from Sub-Saharan Africa.

For many African countries, it has become painfully clear that the insecurity and diversion of fiscal resources caused by civil conflict represent the primary roadblocks to return to economic and social development. Such conflicts have imposed a heavy burden on the continent, which is host to more refugees and displaced persons than any other region of the world: 20 million of whom 80 percent are women and children (World Bank, 1998). Since the beginning of the 1980s, several armed conflicts have come to a formal end in different parts of the world, bringing a new degree of security to the populations concerned and enabling large numbers of displaced people to return voluntarily to their homes.

For example, in Mozambique and Namibia, 90,000 and 43,000 combatants respectively have been demobilized. In Uganda, the government demobilizes 36,350 soldiers in three phases between 1992 and late 1995. In the Horn of Africa, the fall of the Mengistu regime in Ethiopia in 1991 led to the complete demobilization of what was the largest army in Africa. The demobilization of almost half a million soldiers has brought a new degree of security to the populations concerned and enabled large numbers of displaced people to return voluntarily to their homes (Kingma, 1996). At the same time, growing numbers of refugees have been obliged to go back to their country of origin, either as result of pressures exerted by the governments of the host countries or as a consequence of deteriorating conditions in the area where they had temporarily settled. At the beginning of 1996, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees announced that almost nine million refugees had gone home during the preceding five-year period. A substantial increase was recorded for the period 1985-1990, when around 1.2 million refugees were repatriated (UNHCR, 1997).

3.1 Concepts of rehabilitation and reintegration

There is still very little understanding of how conflict-affected societies should be helped to rebuild their countries – socially, politically and economically – or in fact what should be considered as strategic rehabilitation and reconstruction in the aftermath of Complex Political Emergencies (COPE). This may be due to the fact that rehabilitation in war-torn societies often has very little in common with rehabilitation and reconstruction after natural disasters such as droughts, floods and earthquakes.

The study of rebuilding war-torn societies and helping their populations to adjust to ‘normal’ life has only recently picked up momentum as a significant research issue in Africa. Little academic interest was shown in Africa’s refugee movement until the
mid-1970s. Nevertheless during the past two decades, a growing body of researchers has focused their attention on various dimensions of Africa’s refugee problems. For example, there have been quite a number of reviews of the scale, directions, causes and consequences of Africa’s refugee migration (Gould, 1974; Robin, 1974; Rogge, 1974; Adepoju, 1981; Kibreab, 1985, 1987, 1992). Also some good analysis has been made on the difficulties encountered by refugees and IDPs (Chamber, 1979; Hansen, 1981, 1990; Betts, 1984). We see a growing volume of studies of the successes and failures of settlement schemes for returnees (Potten, 1976; Nelder, 1979; Rogge, 1981; Harrell-Bond, 1987, 1988; Hansen, 1990; Kibreab, 1987). And last but not least several critical evaluations have been carried out of the nature and effectiveness of aid programs for refugees, and some indicators have been developed for analyzing their integration, although this issue is far from being fully researched (Stem, 1981; Karadawi, 1983, 1996; Pillerman, 1984; Harrell-Bond, 1986).

3.1.1 Rehabilitation in post-conflict situations
Kumar (1997) regards Rehabilitation as overall process of reconstructing the material basis of a country after destruction as well as of rebuilding its social capital damaged by the effects of war. He further elaborates it as a long process that could take several years, perhaps decades, before societies shattered by civil and interstate wars are able to effectively rebuild themselves and their governments to the point where they are able to perform the essential functions (Kumar, 1997). The conceptualization of rehabilitation by Kumar is a step in the right direction but ignores all social/economic intervention except in the short run. He puts rehabilitation process under three essential, interrelated elements:

- Restoration of physical infrastructure, basic social services and essential government functions and economic activities;
- Structural reform; practically all war-torn societies require comprehensive reforms in their political, economic, social, and security sectors. This involves creating and/or dismantling organizations, institutions and administrative structures.
- Institution building; this type of rehabilitation involves improving the efficiency and effectiveness of existing institutions (Kumar, 1997: 3).

As can be seen, rehabilitation consists of a range of integrated activities and processes required to ‘kick-start’ the development process that has been interrupted by war. Rehabilitation in post-conflict period encompasses a whole range of diverse and complex programs, ranging from demobilization, repatriation, de-mining peace-making and political reconciliation to psychosocial healing and the reform of economic policies and institution (Kumar 1997). It has proved necessary to rethink the concept of rehabilitation to take account of the complex process needed to
establish the conditions for political and economical stability. This in turn requires re-evaluation of development goals in fragile, insecure and highly unstable environments (Macrae, 1995) and appreciation of the varying needs within political, economic and social spheres.

3.1.1.1 Political rehabilitation

The cessation of formal hostilities or the signing – and even formal implementation – of peace accords does not necessarily mean a return to ‘normalcy’. This applies especially to civil wars, as there may still be major differences between the warring groups and –as in Rwanda – even substantial violence (Green and Ahmed. 1998: 39). Especially in societies having suffered from civil war political rehabilitation takes place in highly polarized settings where there are deep suspicions between warring factions. The truth is that during transition periods, war-torn societies tend to remain extremely polarized. The extremist factions of warring parties constantly strive to undermine the peace accords. The case is even worse in countries where one party emerges victorious and sees little need for making significant political concessions (Kumar, 1997: 4). Kumar 1997 argues that:

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\text{Those charged with designing and implementing political rehabilitation interventions lack appropriate conceptual frameworks, intervention models, concepts, policy instruments, and methodologies for assistance programs to rebuild civil society in a highly unstable political and social environment (Kumar, 1997: 34).}
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Green and Ahmed elaborate that, despite a distinct lack of analytical tools the governments of Mozambique, Ethiopia and Eritrea do have, and act on, political rehabilitation strategies with links between most major political and economic initiatives and the overall rehabilitation of the country (Green and Ahmed, 1998).

3.1.1.2 Economic rehabilitation

Achieving macroeconomic stability is essential for the transition from a highly distorted; survival oriented war economy to a more household-friendly market and livelihood-oriented economy and for providing the basis for sustainable economic recovery and growth. Governments engaged in post-conflict rehabilitation often inherit bloated military and/or excruciatingly understaffed civil bureaucracies and serious fiscal and balance of payments problems. At the macro level, priorities for economic rehabilitation will include macroeconomic stability and economic reform in order to reverse the extreme macroeconomic disequilibria inherited from the economic policies followed (often necessarily) during the war (Green and Ahmed, 1998).
This is important for reviving savings and investment, economizing on scarce revenues, containing inflation and removing regulations and controls, which are often introduced during the conflict. At the micro-level this means providing support to households to rebuild their livelihood systems and paying greater attention to excluded segments of the society such as single women and women headed households. Macro and micro interact. Small farming (or herding) households are historically central not simply to their own subsistence but to urban food and raw material supplies, urban goods and services market, indirect tax revenue and exports (Green and Ahmed, 1998). Their revival is, therefore, strategically and macro economically as well as socially and politically important as the Mozambique, Somaliland, Somalia and Rwanda cases attest.

Prolonged conflicts destroy key productive assets and reduce productive investment by state enterprises and households to very low levels. Thus a priority of economic rehabilitation is to revive the economy through investment in key productive assets and create conditions necessary for the resumption of trade, savings, foreign and domestic investment. Achieving macroeconomic stability is also essential for the transition from a highly distorted, survival oriented war economy to a more household-friendly market and livelihood-oriented economy and for providing the basis for sustainable economic recovery and growth (Green, and Ahmed 1998). But for many countries more urgent priority might be removing landmines before they can start rebuilding their key infrastructure. Moreover, it is now increasingly recognized that rebuilding the social capital and institutional infrastructure shattered during conflict is as important as replacing physical infrastructure. Unfortunately, this is an area that has been largely overlooked (Kumar, 1997).

3.1.3 Social rehabilitation with special reference to returnees
In post-conflict environment, rehabilitation of civil society structures and livelihood systems is one of the most important components of rehabilitation. Violent conflicts undermine social networks and often leave a legacy of divided societies at all levels from family outwards. Rehabilitation should provide the framework for reviving livelihoods and civil institutions previously suppressed, eroded or rendered powerless by war with the aim of strengthening local capacities to participate in the rehabilitation process and as a result to attain overall integration.

3.1.2 Reintegration as part of rehabilitation
Demobilization and repatriation are the initial basic components of reintegration of returnees in countries emerging from war. They are critical steps in the process of overall rehabilitation and a major challenge for authorities and donor agencies supporting rehabilitation efforts. The presence of a large number of ex-combatants
and ex-refugees creates a serious threat to peace-making and reconciliation efforts. Thus properly addressing demobilization/repatriation of fighters/refugees is generally considered to be a precondition for lasting peace in war-torn societies. The process of demobilization is mainly concerned with the disarming of former soldiers and other armed groups and the facilitation of voluntary return of ex-combatants, ex-refugees and their families, whereas reintegration involves supporting their re-entry into productive civilian life. World Bank studies of 1993 show that up to 90 percent of demobilized combatants and a large segment of ex-refugees lack transferable skills and have little or no formal education since often most of them are recruited in the rural areas or fled from rural areas.

In the case of a negotiated settlement high priority is given to demobilized combatants (World Bank, 1995). But if the settlement of the conflict is reached by a total military victory usually there tends to be little or no direct targeting of defeated ex-combatants beyond whatever general programs exist for rural returnees. But what applies to all categories of returnees is that the key factors for successful social integration are good relations with family, friends, church, and community, which in effect constitute the returnees’ social capital (World Bank, 1996).

3.1.2.1 Prerequisite of timeliness
Issues related to demobilization, repatriation and, ultimately reintegration need to be addressed at the earliest opportune time and the processes implemented during the transition process from war to peace. Timeliness as well as proper phasing is important, because demilitarization in particular is a precondition for reviving civil society, reducing fear and social tension and restoring confidence and a sense of security. Reducing the risks of renewed conflict depends on a large extent on the success of efforts aimed at demobilizing and reintegrating ex-combatants and the leaders of organizations commanding their trust/allegiance. By helping ex-combatants and ex-refugees to become productive members of the society, reintegration programs have to be seen as key factors in promoting economic recovery and social harmony.

After demobilization or repatriation resettlement of returnees in areas of their preference, or designed by government, usually follows. At time of demobilization or repatriation a package in cash and/or kind is usually provided to assist the returnees in the initial stage of resettlement. In this study the term resettlement will be used, rather than reinsertion that has been employed in World Bank Publications (Colletta, 1996). Since the latter over emphasizes a top down perspective of policy and programming, rather than of a socio-economic process in which people find their way into locations and communities in which they wish to integrate (Kingma, 2000).
3. 1. 2. 2 The true meaning (or ambiguity) of (re) integration
Social and economic reintegration must not only focus on returnees and those who have been internally displaced but should polestar the whole society into a new post crisis context. In such a situation a multiplicity of interventions is required. It is necessary both to meet immediate needs and put in place systems, structures and support to allow the country and people to define and meet their ongoing requirements. These interventions should occur concurrently.

The impact of returnees (including those internally displaced) on host communities has to be considered from the start, when the programs are designed, and from the beginning measures must be taken to lessen the negative impacts (such as pressure on local infrastructure and the environment). There is also a need to ensure that the local community can share in some of the benefits of the projects, including health care, education services and transport routes. Plans should be made to develop the whole area phase by phase and certain measures should be taken before the uprooted return ‘home’

Once the returnees are settled the process of integration within the host community slowly follows. When refugees or ex-combatants return, they are not returning to a vacuum, they are returning to a place, which is most probably markedly different from the place they left, even if it is the same location. Their place needs to be rebuilt and their home needs to be reconstructed physically, socially, and culturally. They are also returning to a place where people have remained and lived throughout the conflict. As Rogge argue (1994),

For many long-term refugees ... repatriation does not necessarily mean ‘going home’. Instead, they return to places or social environments that are different or appear to have changed, or alternatively, where the resident population regards the returnees as strangers because of differing customs and beliefs that they have acquired (Rogge, 1994: 28).

War-torn countries are characterized by fragmented societies. The returnee society has grown apart from the civilian society, and the integration of these entities constitutes an important dimension of integration within one territory. In the short term, social integration relates to the acceptance of the various groups by the host community and the willingness and chances of returnees to integrate. As Hoffman and Barakat pointed out in 1995:
The local community is the primary resource for rehabilitation and end result for integration. It is crucial to work with community [meaning returnees and host community] and not FOR it. People need to be helped to help themselves. Programs have to be geared up to the REAL NEEDS and PRIORITIES of the community. This requires major changes in attitude and methods of working with the community. The community must have the sense of ownership and responsibility towards the projects, as the only way of ensuring true sustainability and initial self-reliance (Hoffman and Barakat, 1995: 15).

In most cases the integration process takes a number of years and involves not only combatants, but also their family unit and returning refugees. Kingma (2000) has defined social reintegration as the process through which the ex-combatants [refugees] and his or her family feel part of and are accepted by the community. One should thus not only consider the returnees and their families, but also the attitude of the communities towards the returnees. This remains relevant throughout the whole integration process, since communities might not, for example, appreciate special integration support to returnees (Colletta, 1996). Although reintegration has to be considered as one complex process, again a distinction must be made between different aspects of integration: social, political and economic.

Political integration refers to the process through which the returnees and his or her family become full part of the decision-making process. Economic integration is the process through which the returnee’s household builds up its livelihood through production and other type of gainful employment (Kingma, 2000). For the economic integration one should consider the position of returnees with often little education, few skills and poor health in societies where it is already difficult to start a small enterprise or find employment.

Reintegration has many meanings. It means insertion of groups of vulnerable persons into communities, who often are living a precarious existence. Reintegration also means rebuilding a nation or society/social fabric after prolonged war. Reintegration can be understood as bringing people together who have not only been physically separated but who ‘have developed’ their own values, norms and attitudes.

In the case of people who have left communities, nations or states, and return to them, the term reintegration is generally used to describe their efforts and experiences after they have returned to their place of origin (Preston, 1993). The difficulty with the term reintegration however, is that it implies that people return to their former place and that the social and economic environment has not changed
since they left. It is the returnees who are supposed to have changed and have to readapt to the environment and society they had left. In practice, whether they have been away for a few weeks or many years, the physical and social environment to which they return has also been affected by more or less important, sometimes intangible or invisible changes. As a result both host community and returnees have consciously to learn new ways of living together.

The author uses the term integration or reintegration to mean a complex business, that is, a process through which people who have developed different conceptions and attitudes in diverse circumstances are brought together to form an integrated society. They can act or react in ways, which may help or hinder the action being taken to resolve the problems created by their differences. It is not necessarily a conflict resolution process. It might be a question of assisting particular groups to re-adjust or to reassert their place in society. But this must be achieved in a process during which the whole community learns to live with differences, to understand and accommodate diversity. By meshing the diversified experiences gained while fending for survival, they can live once again a ‘normal’ life. Therefore the words integration and reintegration will be used interchangeably.

3.1.2.3 Prerequisites of economic integration
The absorptive capacity of the society when receiving a considerable addition to its population can be seen at least in two ways. As most of the former exiles return to rural areas and are likely to be absorbed in the agricultural sector access to land is the immediate and most important issue they confront. The questions that beg answer are the following: to what extent have returnees been able to settle down in rural areas with their families or relatives or on their own to become self-sufficient farmers? What are the consequences when returnees are not able to settle in rural areas? What political decisions, such as government policy on land issues and the question of land distribution, influence the prospects of economic integration for returnees in rural areas?

A second concern relates to the absorptive capacity and growth potential of the labor market. This includes the capacity for economic growth, pressure on the labor market, and political strategies for developing the employment sector that might contribute to absorbing and utilizing the potential of the returnees. A central issue returned exiles are facing here is access to the labor market, both in terms of employment opportunities and the recognition of certificates and other qualifications obtained in exile. As most of the returnees lack appropriate qualification(s), after independence or war, skills training programs are needed to tackle these deficiencies.
But in the absence of job opportunities in a post-conflict economy, there can be a tendency to ‘park’ returnees in skill training programs.

This was the case in Zimbabwe where skills training were identified as a priority by the National Survey, which was conducted 1981. Training was provided for both returnees and for those who remained in the country during the war, most of whom were disadvantaged by the policies of the previous government. There were, however, institutions that gave precedence to returnees. Such centers were soon caught up in the pressure to become “main stream” institutions, insisting on ordinary (O) level passes for entry and producing graduates that were acceptable in the private sector unemployed (Preston, 1993). This led to the exclusion of those ex-combatants and returnees who did not have O levels. More than two-third of returnees remained.

3.1.2.4 Reintegration as a learning process

The impact of returnees (including internally displaced) on host communities has to be considered from the start, when the programs are designed, and from the beginning measures must be taken to lessen negative social and environmental impacts. There is also a need to ensure that the local community can share in some of the benefits of the projects. Through greater access, for example to health care, education services, transport routes. Plans should be made to develop the whole area phase by phase and certain measures have to be taken before the uprooted return ‘home’.

There are different interpretations or understandings of re-integration and integration processes. Re-integration is usually conceived of as a particular form of social integration, applying to people who have gone into exile or joined a fighting force, which means that they were separated from the mainstream of the society for some time. The general assumption is that returning ex-combatants or refugees are detached or disillusioned from staying for a long time outside of ‘normal’ life. Therefore special attention is needed to help them to come back to the mainstream of the society become once again leads a ‘normal’ life. Here society is taken as something into which returnees will have to re-integrate, a view, which I am contesting throughout the thesis. Referring to refugees’ relationship with their host environment Harrell-Bond succinctly argues that:

Integration denotes a situation in which host and refugee communities are able to co-exist, sharing the same resources – both economic and social – with no more mutual conflict than that which exists within the host community (Harrel-Bond, 1986: 7).
Preston in 1993 argued that within a migratory cycle the process of integration is one of adaptation, of give and take on both sides as people learn to live together (Preston, 1993). In exile this adaptation takes place between the host community and their guests. At the place of origin, it is between those who have returned and those who had stayed or remained at home.

Constraints on economic integration of returnees such as limited resources in the settlement area can be complicated by additional social constraints. Rogge (1994) notes that:

*The receptiveness of the local population also affects the nature of response returnee encounter. If local chiefs, for example, are supportive of the returnee, then an array of response strategies will be available from within the community. If there is no support, or if local people are hostile to the returnees, then the integration process will be seriously impeded* (Rogge, 1994: 45).

In tracing the various phases of the integration process of groups such as those which are the subject of this study, the primary issue is to understand how to provide for means of survival: food, shelter and clothing.

### 3.1.3 Towards a holistic concept

Conceptually, more coherence and a holistic approach are needed to address rehabilitation and integration programs. In practice most literature – and most projects – concentrate on political or social or (micro-) economic aspects of early post-conflict resettlement and integration, and in parallel either on survival during and just after conflict or (more occasionally) overall rebuilding toward a renewed development dynamic well after the end of overt conflict. It is relatively rare to encounter a fully articulated holistic treatment even at the theoretical or conceptual level and still less at the national, policy level, and it is nearly unknown on the operational level (Green and Ahmed, 1998).

A post conflict situation can provide an opportunity for positive change, for instance to increase rights for women and their participation in decision making, as they take on greater responsibilities. This may also mean potential for changes in property rights, as is the case in Rwanda where property rights are being reviewed by the Government (UNDP, Rwanda. 1998: 4). This is not to be seen as in contradiction to a holistic approach. As Pugh (1998) argues, certain themes of general relevance can be highlighted, while at the same time acknowledging that particular policies have to be fashioned in the light of *sui generis* circumstances. First, strategic, coherent and long-term approaches to the processes of transition are not always integrated into the agendas and implementing mechanisms of interventionist policy-making institutions. Second, there is often an imbalance between short-term, 'hard', visible reconstruction
measures and long-term 'soft', civil society programs. Third, the humanitarian dimension has sometimes been geared more towards social engineering than civil development based on local ownership of the peace building process (Pugh, 1998). Although transition governments have formulated comprehensive proposals for reform and rehabilitation of their societies with the assistance of international organizations, most of them can hardly be considered as integrated strategic frameworks; rather they are a compilation of sectoral targets and plans without an overarching conceptual foundation. This has often created problems in prioritizing and sequencing major intervention (Kumar, 1997).

What strategic approaches and policies can be adopted to promote realistic rehabilitation and provide a basis for sustainable peace and development in which integration process of returnees can take place? In the literature (Green, 1995; Macrae, Zwi et al. 1995 and Kumar, 1997) there is general agreement on the importance of understanding how local people [returnees and members of receiving community] rebuild their livelihoods in post-conflict situations. It is also important to extend local level rehabilitation programs to regional and national level, through needs assessment by which rehabilitation interventions can address the underlying causes of conflict, and local and regional governance can be rebuilt without restoring the unsustainable, over centralized and often highly divisive institutions. Green and Ahmed (1998) argue that these issues must be explored under three main dimensions of social rehabilitation, political rehabilitation and economic rehabilitation, so that the overall integration process of returnees and stayers can be tackled properly.

3.2 Role of outside assistance in rehabilitation and reintegration
What exactly constitutes rehabilitation and how this concept is linked to relief and development have also been subject to continuous debate in literature. As Harvey 1997 points out, it is a fuzzy concept, subject to many different interpretations (Harvey, Campbell et al. 1997). Most definitions of rehabilitation used by agencies describe it as activities of limited duration started soon after a disaster. Such definitions include that generally used by NGOs which limits rehabilitation to programs carried out under emergency relief with a particular emphasis on meeting basic needs (Campbell 1996). It defines rehabilitation assistance as the provision of aid designed to help restore emergency-affected populations to self-reliance in meeting basis needs, and to reduce their vulnerability to future emergencies.

Rehabilitation assistance is meant to accelerate the transition from a war economy to a livelihood and development friendly economy. But the issue is; what are the main present practices and how could they be improved in a way that will address all
dimensions of rehabilitation, and cover all integration needs – economic, social and psychological, as well as political?

3.2.1 Limitations and risks of emergency relief

Traditionally response to emergency situation is mainly given in form of delivery of relief goods, but also in cash. Technical assistance is the task of specialized agencies such as ICRC and UNHCR, as well as of more generally oriented NGOs. These programs mainly consist of life saving measures in the case of such natural disasters as floods, earthquakes and droughts, and involve, apart from provision of food and shelter, reconstruction of infrastructure and supply of basic health services. The same measures are taken for refugees and other victims of violent conflict. Similarly rehabilitation programs after cessation of armed conflict consist mainly of provision of food and shelter for returning refugees and other victims, and attempts to reconstruct the physical infrastructure and other damages caused by military actions. What generally is missing is a component meant to restore social capital, which usually has suffered as much as the physical capital.

Usually emergency aid has to be extended over a longer period and amounts to a higher cost than expected. Also increasing doubts as to whether relief aid is contributing to socio-economic stabilization and recovery have led the international community to question the effectiveness of this kind of assistance (UNDP, 1998). Hitherto, one problem has been a narrowly targeted approach, which has primarily focused on the most visibly affected population (often the internally or externally displaced).

The short-term nature of donor funding of rehabilitation programs does not contribute to achieving sustainable rehabilitation effects, which in turn will lead towards sustainable development (Kumar, 1997). Because of lack of long-term resource commitments by the international community, thus many rehabilitation programs amount to little more than “crisis management”.

Separate budget lines and a lack of clarity as to what type of projects and programs should fall under rehabilitation complicate the problem further. For instance, for most international agency rehabilitation aid comes under emergency relief departments, which follow procedures similar to those used for emergency aid. It is seldom placed within a macro framework, or has links to long term development. A further problem of this type of approach to rehabilitation is the speed with which programs are identified and implemented (Green and Ahmed, 1998). The aim to do something quickly means that they are not subjected to stringent criteria used in the appraisal of development programs.
The strengths of these innovations are also their weakness. In the search for instruments that enable fast-disbursing support, procedures used to assess sustainability and efficiency is often bypassed. Well-intentioned though they may be, such interventions may even exacerbate existing problems. Another limitation consists in the fact that different actor addresses needs on different levels, without coordinating them. For example international financial institutions concentrate on macro-economic reform processes, as in the case of the Economic Recovery and Rehabilitation Program (ERRP) in Ethiopia, which was introduced in large part to reach a modus vivendi with the World Bank in 1991, but left the other dimensions unattended. NGOs, on the other hand, concentrate on relief oriented; small-scale rehabilitation activities carried out at village, community or household level, without referring to macro-economic decisions (Macrae, Zwi et al. 1995; Harvey et al. 1997; Kumar, 1997).

According to Macrae (1997) aid agencies usually recognize the importance of rebuilding public administration and services, but in practice rehabilitation aid in post-conflict situations often by-passes national authorities (Macrae, 1997). Thus the recognition of their vital role is more rhetorical than operational. During the transition from war to peace it is common practice for funds allocated for this purpose to be disbursed through NGOs establishing parallel structures delivering similar services to government departments. Also during transition NGOs often compete not only with local public structures, but also among themselves, leading to confusion and duplication. This reflects the reluctance of the international community to engage directly with new regimes or transition authorities, and even with domestic civil society actors other than analogues to northern NGOs. Last but not least, too many uncoordinated actors (e.g. NGOs, UN agencies, local authorities, central authorities, and social sector actors) create fragmentation of institutions and provision of services, leading to differential access to public services. As Macrae (1997:190) argued “This pattern of donor assistance mirrors the experience of Uganda and Somaliland where rehabilitation interventions largely consist of NGO-led interventions at the micro level. While enabling an expansion of service provision, these NGO interventions were not implemented within a coherent national policy framework”.

There is also the danger of outside assistance killing own capacities. For example, in countries such as Mozambique and Ethiopia massive direct action by too many external agencies particularly increased short-term service provision capacity, “but at the price of cumulative fragmentation and de-capacitating of domestic governance and social sector institutions” (Green, 1995: 1). Consequently, the process of
disintegration and fragmentation started by the war can be re-enforced during the reconstruction phase.

3. 2. 2 The mandate bondage
International organizations and agencies, such as UNHCR and UNDP, are limited in their programs and operations by their respective governing mandates and available resources. UNHCR is mandated to assist and protect refugees, and to help them to go back home; it is not a development agency.

At the end of the 1980s, traditional UNHCR post-return assistance consists of short-term aid directed towards individual refugees. UNHCR provided returnees with transport, food assistance for less than a year, shelter materials, seeds, tools, cash grants, and other agricultural inputs. Only recently has UNHCR accepted the idea of planning and implementing reintegration assistance through mechanisms which include the local population in affected areas, and through programs that extend over longer periods, tying return assistance to long-term development processes. However, such assistance usually is beyond UNHCR’s mandate and resources (Stein, N. 1997).

Traditionally, relief and development assistance is treated as separate and distinct sectors of activity. Within the UN system, the UNHCR deals with aid to refugees and the UNDP has the task of coordinating development assistance. The rationale for this division is that the need of refugees for protection and assistance has been seen as distinct from development needs of the host population. This is due to the belief that development activities involved longer time horizons than relief activities associated with refugees (Kibreab, 1998).

3. 2. 3 Conditionalities and biases
Reconceptualizing rehabilitation “requires acknowledging that neither relief nor rehabilitation or development assistance is politically neutral” (Macrae, 1997: 198). In most case integration programs are not initiated or funded by the country concerned. Usually program intervention is a condition for getting assistance from the donor community. For example, in Namibia the leaders had no say in the integration of returnees or for that matter even for the future and stability of the country. Angola, Cuba and South Africa signed a peace agreement in December 1988; no Namibian party was part of the accord (Woods and Hess 1992). So it is not surprising that neither the UN in its Resolution 435 or the new government envisaged any assistance to ex-combatants (Colletta, 1996). It was only when former combatants began to voice their disappointment in demonstrations and in the media that the government hastily responded and designed a number of ad-hoc measures.
During the Cold War, the principle of absolute sovereignty of states was respected almost universally. Sovereignty set the parameters for international responses to the persistent conflicts, which continue to haunt the Third World in the post-colonial period. International responses to the humanitarian impact of these conflicts were confined largely to their periphery (Duffield, 1994a). Until the mid-1980s, the humanitarian impact of conflict remained largely hidden from public view and action.

The economic conditionalities proposed during the 1980s were based on the principles of neo-liberalism. These approaches argued for a rollback of the state and the privatization of many of its functions, including that of public welfare (Borton, 1994). During the 1980s and 1990s the international humanitarian system expanded significantly as a result of opening of humanitarian space. The distinction between relief and development was effectively hardened. While development aid became subject to increasingly economic and political conditionalities, relief remained (at least in theory) free from conditions, but was increasingly managed outside state structures (Macrae, 2000).

Currently a key interest of countries in the developed world is to ensure that the growing global refugee population does not flood their borders or tax their treasuries. With the end of the Cold War, the firm basis of interest in refugees, particularly from the developing world, has been removed: refugees no longer have ideological or geopolitical value. In consequence little effort is done in finding what happens when refugees go home and try to integrate within the local community.

Among the international agencies, it is generally assumed that, most African refugees are experienced farmers. On this rationale programs are designed to last three to four years. First returnees are given relief aid and transport to camps, which it is hoped, will become settlements in the long run. Eventually houses are built for them, or they erect their own shelter. In many cases during the second stage they are provided with land, tools and seeds, and primary education is organized. During this period returnees are expected to be motivated to work and to get on their own feet quickly. They are often told that there will be a gradual reduction in their food rations after the first harvest. In the third stage, aid is withdrawn, on the grounds that returnees should by then be ‘self-sufficient, and integrated into the local community (UNHCR, 1990; Chambers, 1997).
3.3 Linking relief to development

Social and economic recovery depends on a well-managed transition from emergency to development, during which the domestic economy is rebuilt and institutional capacity restored. These objectives imply an integrated package of assistance (UNDP, 1998). In practice as noted above this is often hampered by the fact that relief and development are considered to belong to two separate sectors of intervention and usually are taken care of by different institutions. In the case of post-conflict Eritrea this had far reaching consequences for the overall rehabilitation process, as will be seen in chapter 3. In order to increase the overall effectiveness of interventions in transition periods both sectors therefore have to be seen as complementary and their efforts have to be linked. Linking relief to development from the outset has the following objectives, to facilitate the transition from emergency relief distribution to sustainable rehabilitation and to support the resumption of economic and social development of the war-torn society.

3.3.1 From relief to development

The need to move from “relief to development”, meaning that relief measures should be replaced as soon as possible by development programs, and short term assistance should give way to long term perspectives fitting normal situations began to be stressed in the late seventies (Macrae, 2000). According to development and growth-focused approaches, postwar and other crisis situations are “one go problem” that require direct intervention in favor of the affected population, in order to get the country back to a stable state from which development and growth can restart. But crises are more than that. They must be seen as symptoms of problems deeply rooted in the economic and social fabric of the country. It is due to this misinterpretation of the situation and more typical piecemeal, non-holistic approaches that the relief to development hand over has not always been able to yield tangible results.

Allen and Morsink (1994) argued that, for development to take off an integrated reintegration approach is needed that is to restore the institutions of civil society and to strengthen the bond between citizens and the state. They argue that rather than limiting itself to emergency relief needs of returnees, reintegration assistance should provide an integrated response to the rehabilitation and development needs of local communities and the larger society (Allen and Morsink 1994). Appropriate reintegration assistance should develop programs for localities, vulnerable populations, individual returnees, and organized groups, and should connect these programs to political efforts aiming at national development.

Green and Ahmed (1998) argue that the rationale behind conceptual and strategic linking of relief, rehabilitation and development is the belief that relief and
rehabilitation programs will include development objectives. Given the complexity of rehabilitation in post-conflict situations, it is also important to rethink through whom rehabilitation aid is channeled. NGOs, for instance, have been relatively successful in rehabilitation initiatives in the aftermath of natural disasters such as droughts. But the focus of rehabilitation initiatives has often been on specific operations that have lacked the kind of coherent, integrated framework needed for realistic sustainable macroeconomic and household livelihood rehabilitation. More than anything else successful development requires development of an integrated strategic framework that “identifies priority areas, allocates appropriate resources for them, and relates interventions to the achievement of the twin objectives of peace and development” (Kumar, 1997: 34). Part of the problem is:

The absence of mechanisms to link donors with a national policy framework, combined with the high degree of donor dependence on NGOs for project design and implementation [which] tends to reinforce the inclination of rehabilitation programs to adopt the highly decentralized, un-integrated approach of relief rather than those of development (Macrae, J. 1997: 197).

In an attempt to define the links between rehabilitation, relief and development Korner, et al. 1995; Harvey, C. et al. 1997 have used broader definitions. According to Harvey:

Rehabilitation overlaps with relief and development. It is part of a process of protecting and promoting the livelihoods of people enduring or recovering from emergencies. It aims to provide short-term income transfers, rebuild household and community assets, and rebuild institutions. Its key task is to help reinforce developmental objectives, notably livelihood security, participation, sustainability, gender equity, and local institutional capacity (Harvey, 1997: xv).

3.3.2 The ‘continuum’ concept
The difficulties of achieving a transition from relief to rehabilitation, and from rehabilitation to sustainable development, and of planning and implementing the appropriate support measures have resulted in what is called “the gap”, meaning more or less long interruptions between the two categories of support programs. In order to prevent the gap, emergency relief has to give way to rehabilitation support without delay, by a smooth and timely hand over from one agency to the following, establishing what is called a “continuum” of measures.

Initially formulated in relation to national disasters, particularly drought and floods, the continuum concept was based on the idea that well-planned relief could be used to reduce the vulnerability of communities to future hazards. A similar model is now
used to explain and justify the role of aid agencies in conflict prevention and integration of returnees’ back ‘home’.

As early as 1992, the Office of the UNHCR identified the ‘gap’ existing between repatriation and integration of returnees in a report to its Executive Committee (UNHCR, 1992). The reason for this gap was seen to follow first from the failure to involve all relevant actors national and international; government, aid agencies and NGOs- in long-term planning for integration and development and secondly from the different mandates and modalities of development and humanitarian agencies. But this also has its bias, for it conceptualizes the integration ‘problem’ as one of aid management. Improving the co-ordination and funding instruments, and adopting more developmental methodologies are proposed as means for improving integration strategies. The crucial problem of different mandates of the two sister organizations UNHCR and UNDP still remains a key stumbling block.\(^\text{21}\)

It seems that the willingness of the aid community to embrace the ‘continuum’ idea was due to the fact that it faced two key challenges simultaneously. On the one hand it was asserting the new role in conflict management. On the other, it was also seeking to improve the effectiveness of its response to protracted political emergencies (Macrae, 2000). One approach was to link these two issues. The mechanism adopted was simply the adaptation of an old idea –that of the relief-development continuum.

But this concept of aid continuum leaves little space for thoroughly planned rehabilitation. Importantly the aid continuum is not always seamless, nor is it consistently applied in practice. Rather, it requires a decision on behalf of official aid bodies as to the legitimacy of an incumbent regime at all stages of political transition (Macrae, 2000). Thus during the early nineties, especially with the end of a series of conflicts in Asia, Latin America and Africa – among them the Eritrean liberation war – a formative change took place linking relief to development (Duffield, 2000).

Although this linear representation may be useful for expressing the sequence of different phases and their priorities, it does not fit realities of life. In practice there is simultaneity of situations and needs. Relief measures, especially humanitarian assistance, will be necessary as long as returnees are not able to feed themselves;

\(^{21}\) The existence of parallel and overlapping programs is both enabled, and exacerbated by, the mandate creep of UN agencies increasingly evident in the last decade where emergency organizations have started wandering into development and vice-versa and creating a mandate problem.
repatriation and reintegration may start before the war is over, but rehabilitation may continue for some time. Eritrea is a good example for this.

UNHCR’s reintegration strategy continues to pivot on the concept of ‘post-conflict transition’ premised on a continuum from war to peace. This envisages a parallel aid transition from relief to development assistance (Macrae, 2000). Macrae put the UNHCR’s approach of reintegration in a broader context with two related dimensions: first, a changing geopolitical landscape characterized by new economic, political and military formations; second, changes in the organization and values of international assistance. These changes reflect the broader evolution of international relations in the post-Cold War era.

3. 3. 3 Beyond ‘continuum’
Support measures for returnees have to be development oriented from the outset and must be designed to enable refugees to move towards self-reliance and self-sufficiency. Their aim should be to help least developed countries to cope with the heavy burden placed on their social and economic structures. They should provide benefits to both refugees and to the local population in the areas where they have settled. They should consistent with national development plans (UNHCR, 1994c). How far this is the case in Eritrea in relation to ex-refugees is an area the thesis will explore.

Unless a comprehensive strategy and program are put into place, there are risks of reversals, setbacks and failures that accentuate the situation further. The continuum argument of a linear transition from relief to development has proven ineffective as a model for dealing with complex crises and may actually have exacerbated those crises (UNDP Rwanda, 1998). These distinctions mainly reflect the organization of aid agencies rather than the reality of affected people (Davies, 1994).

The following principles of rehabilitation, distilled from the experience of Rwanda and other complex emergencies can provide a useful framework for analyzing the Eritrean integration process.
- Programs should focus on supporting and rebuilding coping mechanisms.
- The approach should be targeted at ensuring access to assistance and opportunities for development for the whole community rather than specific target groups or areas.
- A participatory approach involving the beneficiaries in decision making and implementation should be used.
- Assistance needs to look beyond returning the country back to the status quo applying before the crisis, and rather look at ways for changing the
development pattern of the country (at all levels economic, social and political) to avoid such crises in the future.

- Priority should be given to rebuilding human and physical capacity, and supporting sustainability at the local and central level.
- Emphasis should be on re-establishing linkages within and between communities and on exploring how reconciliation can be promoted.
- Attention should be paid to macroeconomic constraints, which may have precipitated crisis, such as an unsustainable debt burden, or a rigid macroeconomic program narrowly focused on economic performance criteria.
- The situation should be viewed as a complex inter-linked set of issues where events/interventions have direct and indirect impact, and where various social and economic equilibria may have built up during the crisis (UNDP, 1998).

The low levels of economic integration of returnees generally generate strong, often uncomprehending, resentment among them. This is even worse in the case of ex-combatants who often feel betrayed after years of sacrifices and hardship. This feeling is aggravated when promises they were fed during the struggle – or in exile – remain unfulfilled after independence. Another problem that follows from staying in exile is the fragmentation of society. The returnee population itself is highly diversified and heterogeneous in terms of background, age, education, income, social class, and area of settlement.

The Namibia and Zimbabwe experience demonstrates this clearly. Although the long struggles for self-determination and the political activities of resistance movements were instrumental in establishing a collective identity, [which at least partially survived in the years following repatriation] it didn’t turn into an organization or a pressure group to fight for their right. This is true for other countries as well. Usually returned exiles have no organized interest or pressure groups of their own to represent them, nor want to be labeled as “returnees”. In Zimbabwe and Namibia returned exiles that have successfully obtained high positions within the government and public administration, do not necessarily identify themselves with their former refugee companions, or consider them as politically more significant or important than any other “group” in the country (Tames, 1992). As Musemwa in palpable way said,

‘Sons of the soil’ during the armed struggle ‘squatter’ after independence, the irony in this statement encapsulates the predicament in which many ex-combatants find themselves in today, thirteen years after independence. For most of the now destitute ex-combatants the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe was “a revolution that lost its way” because of the raw deal they got from the petit bourgeoisie nationalist leadership when they were demobilized. For many ex-
combatants the catchphrase, “Muchanoguta Kumusha” [There will be plenty at home], made by politicians to in-still resilience during the struggle did not materialize. Whilst more than 25,000 ex-combatants have become progressively destitute in Zimbabwe, the very people they put into power and those who opportunistically leaped on the bandwagon of the liberation struggle have become oppressively rich (Musemwa, 1994: 1).

Risk of social disruption is evident when ex-combatants use weapons as their major means to secure their livelihood. Without any prospects of remunerative employment and a decent life as civilians, former combatants can easily turn to banditry and jeopardize peace in a country. Disarmament and weapons control must hence be carried out carefully. In many cases the ex-combatants have spent long years in combat and do not have any other profession or formal skills. They have been socialized according to military rules and hierarchical structures and have often lost self-initiative.

The case is even more complex if freedom fighters are concerned. They have fought for ideals and thus have built up great expectations for the type of society, which will be constructed after victory. They are easily frustrated when changes do not occur as rapidly as they had expected. Furthermore former combatants can pose a danger to peace and stability if they feel a (subjective) necessity either to press their claims or achieve their ends through the use of force and violence (Klingebiel, 1995).

3.4 Reintegration in Practice
Integration is closely linked to the Demobilization of ex-combatants and the repatriation of refugees. Usually the term integration is used to describe the change from an existence as combatant or refugee to that of a ‘normal’ member of the society of origin. Many experiences had demonstrated that appropriate repatriation and Demobilization measures are a prerequisite to successful reintegration process.

Programs aiming at revitalizing the economy through integration of returnees constitute a vital element in transition from war to peace. Lessons from newly independent states in Southern Africa suggest that in the interest of long-term stability, as much information as possible should be gathered about the situation of people who continue to suffer the effects of war (Preston, 1993). Surveys conducted to collect information about the number, socio-economic background, career aspiration and intended place of settlement of returnees can be critical to the design of programs for returnees.
3.4.1 Selected examples from Africa

In Namibia attitudes have been reported to be generally favorable toward the settlement and economic integration of returnees (Pendleton et al, 1992). In many cases returnees seem to be socially accepted and appear to play an important role in communities, through participating for example, in traditional village councils. Most local people seem to recognize and respect the knowledge and experience which returnees have brought back from abroad including their organizational and problem-solving skills. The inputs of their experiences can contribute to formal and informal community development (Stein, BN 1990).

However, some returnees, often the less educated, have experienced difficulties in adjusting to a self-sufficient and self-dependent life in Namibia. After a lengthy stay in the SWAPO refugee-camps in exile where they were mostly provided with food, clothes and shelter, these returnees sometime appear to have developed some kind of a dependency syndrome (Tapscott and Mulongeni. 1990; Rogge, 1991). Because the general contribution of agriculture to their household income is often inadequate returnees have often needed to apply a “multiple income strategy”. Rural households have relied on assistance from members of the “extended family” through pensions, remittances from contract labor, or wages and salaries from work in nearby towns. A large number of returnees have left their rural homestead to look for wage-employment in order to support them and to be able to contribute to the cash-income of the family (Tames, 1992).

In order to become self-sufficient, many skilled or semi-skilled returnees have tried to start up small businesses in Namibia. However, a major impediment to realizing their aspiration for self-employment is a general lack of funds and difficulty in obtaining credit. The First National Development Corporation, FNDC, a parastatal aimed at supporting and funding small-scale enterprises in communal areas, has only given support to a very small number of returnees in the Owamboland area (Namibia). Many returnees have tried to acquire credit but have become discouraged by the lack of success (Tames, 1992).

Although already a general problem, returned exiles have intensified the rate of rural-urban migration in Namibia. The limited resources among rural households for accommodating returnees and their families has inevitably forced returnees to migrate to urban and peri-urban areas to look for wage employment. Another reason that returnees migrate appears to result from experiences in exile where many of them have undergone major cultural and social transformations and/or got used to urban life (Rogge, 1991; Mwaze, 1990). Moreover, some of the returnees have experienced adversity with the local crops and methods of cultivation because they
have become used to agriculture in a different environmental and climatic setting. Indeed many returnees lack any experience in agriculture because their experience in exile was essentially in urban areas, or they worked as casual wage laborers.

The longer returnees have stayed without their own source of income, and the longer they remain dependent on their rural hosts, the greater is the economic burden on their families or friends and the more likely the emergence of tensions between the members of the household. A feeling of dependency and frustration was found to be increasing among Namibian returnees, because their inability to contribute to income within an extended family system appeared to block their entrance into networks of rural kinship (Preston, 1993). This case provides a set of issues against which to view the integration policy of the Eritrean government and construct an agenda for analyzing the experiences of integrating returnees in Eritrea.

Generally one of the major problems left an-addressed by states emerging from armed conflict is what happens once the returnees are back ‘home’ fending for themselves. Their presence tends to be forgotten until they pose a threat to the ruling power. For example, an estimated 300,000 people left Zimbabwe to seek refuge in many countries of the world. Another two million rural people were internally displaced after having been herded into ‘protected villages’ by the settler regime as part of its strategy to sabotage the war of liberation. With independence, the refugees returned to their motherland in a repatriation exercise that has been hailed as one of the most successful on the African continent (Makanya, 1992).

The Namibian repatriation program, organized by UNHCR and essentially implemented by its Namibian counterpart, the Council of Churches in Namibia (CCN), has also been described also as a well managed operation (Gasarai, 1991). The success of the repatriation programs of Namibia and Zimbabwe, however, seems to have amounted more to the physical transportation and relocation of exiles than to the subsequent process of reintegrating them into the society and address their problems (Tapscott, and Mulongeni 1990).

The Namibian government did little to ameliorate the problems faced by returnees and ex-combatants in their attempts to integrate to the society. It can be argued that since theirs was a negotiated settlement in which they had no say, they could not do much. But this applies even to issues, which were under their control. For example, over 70 percent of the population is dependent on agriculture. However, distribution of productive farmland is extremely imbalance and unequal. In 1989 it was estimated that 4,045 white commercial farmers owned about 45 per cent of the total land area and 74 per cent of the potentially arable land (Tapscott, 1991a). There is no timeframe
for the land to be transferred to the landless. So the black subsistence farmers still live in densely populated, communal (traditional) areas, predominantly in the North. The conference on land issues in Namibia in June/July 1991 proved unable to produce a basis for a land reform that could lead to substantive redistribution of land (National Conference on Land Reform and the Land Question, 1991). As a result there is increasing tension related to land distribution issues.

3.4.2 Demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants: a special dimension
The end of the Cold War and a decade of economic deterioration created an atmosphere that was favorable to downsizing military capacities. Countries emerging from armed conflict, but also ones that were at peace were exploring ways to reduce their military expenditure with a view to shifting scarce resources towards redressing persistent poverty. In this changing context, integration of ex-combatants constitutes a vital element of the transition from war to peace.

The process of Demobilization and integration of ex-combatants is essential for both political and economic reasons. Successful Demobilization and integration efforts can build mutual confidence among former adversaries, thereby reducing the risk of renewed hostilities. The experience of many war-torn societies indicates that when effective Demobilization and integration programs were not or could not be implemented, fragile peace arrangements could be jeopardized and conflicts re-ignite (Refugee Policy Group, 1994: 3).

Worldwide Demobilization over the past decade is quite impressive. The total number of armed forces personnel has declined considerably and continuously since 1989. Following the 1987 Cold War peak of 28.8 million military personnel, the number dropped to 22 million by 1998 (Kingma, 2000). Especially in Sub-Saharan Africa the nineties could be called a decade of Demobilization.
3. 4. 2. 1 Demobilization and reintegration exercises in Africa

Box 3. 1: Demobilization and reintegration exercises in Africa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>15,000 soldiers were demobilised in 1992-1994.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eritrea</td>
<td>54,000 ex-fighters were demobilised in 1993-1996.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>almost half a million soldiers of the defeated Mangiest army were demobilised in 1991; between 1992 to 1994; another 22,000 fighters of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) were demobilised.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>70,000 soldiers of the Government force and 20,000 of the Renamo Opposition forces were demobilised in 1992-1994.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Namibia</td>
<td>all of the about 30,000 people fighting for South African forces in Namibia and 13,000 combatants of the People’s Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) were demobilised in 1989.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>32,200 soldiers were demobilised between the end of 1992 and mid 1994.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: BICC 1996

A survey of Demobilization in Africa shows that it has occurred in the following circumstances.

- A peace accord between fighting parties;
- Defeat of one of the fighting parties;
- Perceived improvement in the security situation;
- Shortage of adequate funding;
- Perceived economic and development impact of conversion; or
- Changing military technologies and/or strategies. (Bonn International Centre for Conversion, 1996: 4)

Decisions to demobilize are based on specific military, political and socio-economic circumstances or events. In Angola and Zimbabwe, where peace was reached based on a compromise between opposing forces, Demobilization was seen as a tool for preventing further outbreaks of violence, and more emphasis was placed on negotiating a reduction in size of the different armed forces involved (World Bank, 1993).

The first Demobilization procedures were regarded as an exclusively military problem. In the case of Mozambique, fighters were discharged after independence and moved to so-called production-centers, where they lived in very poor conditions (Tajuda, 1993). The government did not show much interest in their fate. Though many years have since passed, reintegration has not yet been fully achieved. The
same holds true for Zimbabwe. The new government thought that reintegration could be achieved through the support provided by family networks (World Bank, 1993). Two years after independence it became clearer that returnees, and especially the freedom fighters, needed additional help. A primarily cash-payment oriented support scheme was introduced, but it was too meager and came too late to alleviate the frustration and bitterness among the demobilized.

2.4.2 Chances and risks of Demobilization and reintegration

Successful Demobilization necessarily involves a well-structured reintegration program. Demobilization that discounts social, economic, and political factors which is usually inherent in the reintegration process risks endangering peace and thus lead to a renewed fighting with catastrophe humanitarian implication (Refugee Policy Group (RGP), 1994). On the other hand all positive effects of timely and properly managed Demobilization or repatriation may be spoiled by – often long-term - negative effects of inappropriate integration efforts.

The longevity of conflicts influences Demobilization and integration efforts in a variety of ways example, on the one hand, through the destruction of national infrastructure and the weakening of public-sector institutions by extended periods of fighting. On top of that, the drain of human capital, the very substantial movements of refugees and IDPs add to the logistical and technical challenges involved in organizing and sustaining Demobilization [repatriation] and integration programs (Berdard, 1996). On the other hand, especially among ordinary soldiers, the expectations of a decent life, that is of getting employment and enjoying increased welfare, are usually high when most, sometimes all, of their adult life has been spent in the field. The longevity and legacy of war have profound economic and social implications, which not only complicate the transition to peace, but also can make the very prospect of Demobilization less attractive than continued fighting.

Having served in the military for many years ex-combatants have been socialized according to military principles. Military training of soldiers makes them follow orders without asking too many questions. As a consequence they tend to be reluctant to seek explanations or to participate actively in Demobilization and reintegration programs. Experience from Zimbabwe shows that training in participative approaches to planning and decision-making can help ex-combatants to overcome this attitude (ILO, 1995a). Integration of demobilized combatants is further complicated by the fact that it generally occurs under very bad circumstances. The country and its economy are often devastated and the government has limited resources. Hundreds of thousands of returning refugees are also needy and the political period of transition implies insecurity and risks.
The long-term objectives of the integration process are to enhance economic and human development (Kingma, 1996) and to foster and sustain political stability, security and peace. Collier and Pradhan argue that ‘the longer a society stays in a state of civil war the more do conventions of legitimate conduct decay’ (1994: 120). They conclude that the restoration of peace is tightly linked to the reconstruction of systems of legitimacy. Boyce (1995) concludes that, in the aftermath of a civil war, the soundness of policies can be ascertained only in the light of the political economy of the peace process (Boyce, 1995).

But Demobilization also offers new possibilities. Securities in a country as well as national reconciliation are necessary preconditions for sustainable human development. A war-torn society can find new ways to solve emerging conflicts. Another potential lies mainly in the group of the ex-guerrilla fighters. Whereas government soldiers carry out a job where most liberation fighters feel committed to a mission. They show commitment, discipline and motivation. Even though they do not have many formal professional skills, they are often better educated than the average person and more qualified when it comes to community-oriented social behavior.

Education and vocational training can do a lot to build self-confidence and respectability, to redirect the individuals’ energy to useful activities and to build hope for the future (ILO, 1995b). Furthermore, training can be therapeutic and help to reduce trauma caused by the loss of family members and friends. Ex-combatants begin to recover from their experiences, and find a new identity during the training process and through meaningful and productive activities.

Most studies on Demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants in post-conflict African countries tend to give a minor role to the aspect of utilization of existing skills. They conclude from surveys that most ex-combatants have no or only very few skills and knowledge (ILO, 1995a; Klingebiel, 1995; World Bank, 1993). As a consequence, little consideration is given to effective utilization of existing competence of returnees.

The example of Zimbabwe shows that a shift in the orientation of outside support can have unexpected negative effects. After independence the international community converted its aid from solidarity with liberation movements in exile to multilateral and bilateral assistance to the new government. At the same time its commitment shifted towards support for national development and away from targeting groups still suffering from the effects of war. By August 1990, many ex-combatants were
voicing their disappointment and protesting through the media and on the streets against the lack of recognition and economic support. It was only after these incidents, and in the face of potential violent destabilization, that planning and funding of programs for integration of ex-combatants became a priority (Colletta, 1996).

Integration of ex-combatants usually takes place in economic, social and cultural environments that determine constraints as well as opportunities. When the social capital has been eroded and ethnic or regional tensions prevail, integration is far more complex and difficult to achieve. For example, Ugandan ex-combatants were generally well received by communities in the central and south-west of the country where the National Resistance Movement had its support base, but those attempting to resettle in the east of the country initially faced community hostility. In Namibia some Ovambo ex-combatants who fought on the losing side faced resentment on their return to the northern part of the country (Colletta, 1996). Alongside their material needs, ex-combatants have to deal with the sudden loss of their former comrades and the aims and ideas for which they have lived and fought. They may feel abandoned and superfluous if they do not find a new economic, social and psychological standing in the community (World Bank, 1998). Integration is also affected by the conditions prevailing in the home and family environments.

Last but not least integration depends on the capacities of the individual. Whatever the setting may be, only a few of those who return are flexible and adapt quickly. The majority face problems (Preston, 1993). For example, while Namibia’s transition to democratic nationhood has been smooth and advances have been made to reconcile differences between formerly opposed groups, difficulties have been encountered by former refugees or ex-combatants in achieving social and economic integration and advancement compared to the stayers.

3.4.2.3 The special case of women ex-combatants

Within the liberation movements in Namibia, women played a prominent role as civilians and through service to the People’s Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN). In the 1980s, about one third of active PLAN members were women (World Bank, 1996). They were proud of their record in combat, although few had been unit leaders. Most had provided support services as radio officers, health assistants and caterers. Over the years, many had seized the scarce existing opportunities to obtain qualifications (Preston, 1993), rallying under the double banner of fighting colonial and male oppression. They expected at the war’s end to have the same opportunities as men and to play an equitable part in the structuring of the new state, a just reward for
their contribution. The initial exclusion of women from the army shattered illusions that the new state would be more committed to egalitarian gender structures than the apartheid regime (Nathan, 1993). Even the few who were eventually admitted experienced dissatisfaction with their roles and prospects, especially if they had previously held positions of seniority in the liberation forces.

In spite of their involvement in nationalistic struggles in such diverse parts of the world as Zimbabwe, Nicaragua, and China, women have rarely achieved visible leadership roles during the post-conflict period. And the reinforcement of existing household relations has meant women have usually remained in, or even returned to, subordinate positions (Seidman, 1993). Many international examples convey analogous scenarios – that after conflict, in times of peace, women’s place is regarded as being in the home. Another way women are marginalized is in the conflict resolution process. In the reconstruction period, dealing with conflict remains a male dominated issue (Mckay, 1994).

In El Salvador, women ex-guerrillas were pressured to put aside their needs in the name of peace (Enloe, 1993). Such an attitude is not unique to Third World countries. As Enloe (1993: 257) noted Polish women are being urged to worry less about unemployment and to take more satisfaction in bearing children for the sake of nationalist revival. Angolan women are being urged to put their own needs as women on the political back burner for the sake of keeping afloat the fragile boat of post-Cold War Angolan democratization.

Edward (1994) reports that the dedication to and sacrifices for the common cause of those who participated in Marxist liberation movements in Central America did not translate into leadership in post-war civil institutions. “Nicaraguan women warn Salvadorian and Guatemalan women not to equate participation in the armed struggle with gender equality (Edward, 1994: 52)”. The same applies to Africa. Urdang (1989) observed in Guinea-Bissau how little change had taken place at household level. Although the liberation of women was part of the ideological perspective of building a new society women have been actively called upon to leave aside gender issues and wait for the appropriate time to tackle them. In Somalia, women who desired to help shape the reconstruction of their country were faced with the consequences of breaking tradition when men felt threatened by women’s new roles in the country. The most active women community workers were shut out of negotiations towards peace and reconstruction, and women were excluded from nearly every formal meeting where Somalia’s future was being determined (Osman, 1993).
Mathabane (1994) cites the significance of women’s involvement in South Africa’s national freedom struggle and states that their agenda must no longer be ignored, postponed, or compromised: “They are insisting that their emancipation should not be regarded as incidental to the overall liberation from apartheid and the two struggles are indivisibly linked” (Mathabane, 1994: 346). He observes: “They want to ensure that South Africa doesn’t go the way of many independent states in Africa where women contributed as much as men to the overthrow of colonialism and yet find themselves still oppressed, discriminated against, and treated as second-class citizens” (ibid.).

Siedman (1993) states that “since at least the turn of the century, nationalist movements have regularly promised to improve the status of women; before taking power, they have pledged to end gender-based subordination. Just as regularly, however, most of these promises have gone unfulfilled (Seidman, 1993: 291)”. Seidman attributed several causes to this maintenance of the gender status quo, including fear of dividing the “imagined community” on which nationalist ideology is built and emphasis on national unity instead of gender equality. Further, Seidman describes the dilemma faced regularly by nationalistic leaders:

> Even when they sincerely hope to challenge the subordination of women, their efforts to maintain a popular base requires them to respond to supporters’ demands, articulated primarily by men who generally have little immediate interest in challenging gender subordination. These demands frequently involve the reconstruction of beleaguered peasant households, even when that means reconstructing gender inequality (Seidman, 1993: 292).

### 3.5 Conclusion

The cessation of armed conflict, especially civil war, presents an unprecedented opportunity for war-torn societies to rebuild a country’s economic infrastructure and restore its social capital and institutional set-up, and at the same time embrace reforms that had been elusive in the past. Up to the present there is little understanding of how this can best be done, that is what should be considered as strategic reconstruction and rehabilitation in the aftermath of complex political emergencies with view to establishing a solid basis for future development. This is partly due to the fact that rehabilitation generally does not get the attention it deserves, neither by the governments concerned, nor by the donor agencies involved. It is generally seen as an intermediary situation, squeezed between emergency and development, and it is dealt with in a sectoral way. This might also be the reason for the paucity of research devoted to this issue.
The first instruments to deal with rehabilitation were originally developed for situations after natural disasters, like floods, drought and earthquakes this has led to over emphasizing the reconstruction of material infrastructure and neglect of the social and political dimensions. But experience has shown that this is a far too narrow approach. Rehabilitation after armed conflict has to address all dimensions: political, economic and social. Moreover it should address the material as well as institutional reconstruction at all levels, from the national to the local, including the household level. There is hardly any other field where a holistic approach is more needed, encompassing all sectors and levels in one overall conceptual framework. In most cases this framework is missing, as are the necessary funds, the needed data and the appropriate timeframe for planning and implementation. Although, with the assistance of international organizations, some transition governments have formulated comprehensive proposals for rehabilitation and reform, most are little more than a compilation of sectoral targets and planned measures rather than integrated conceptual frameworks.

Part of the problem lies in the absence of mechanisms to link the interventions of aid agencies - themselves conditioned by the rules of funding agencies - to a national framework. Governments and aid agencies have become increasingly aware of the need to understand rehabilitation as a necessary and important phase between relief and development, in accord with the continuum concept. Nevertheless it seems that as much as it is an improvement over the previous disrupted way of handling post-emergency situations, it is still not sufficient. In reality we face a multitude of different post-conflict situations, where rehabilitation co-exists with relief and development, and each needs a distinct response.

Given the complexity of rehabilitation in post-conflict situations, it is important to rethink through whom support to rehabilitation should be channeled. To a large degree this depends on the mandate of the intervening actors this indeed is the main reason for what is called "the gap" between relief and development. Whereas UNHCR has a clear mandate to take care of refugees, UNDP and multilateral as well as bilateral agencies engage in development assistance although in the recent past we can observe a trend toward greater flexibility. NGOs have always been preferential partners in emergency aid delivery, and they - mainly because of their decentralized and often integrated approach and their grass-roots orientation - play an increasing role in the aftermath of violent conflicts. Without minimizing their positive role, their interventions can also present disadvantages. NGOs don't usually address needs at macro level rather they tend to carry out individual programs and projects at the local level and without links with other interventions. They often set up local parallel structures - for the delivery of social and health services, but also for administrative
purposes - by which they bypass national public structures and contribute to de-capacitating rather than strengthening them.

Integration of returnees - ex-refugees and demobilized combatants - is an integral part of overall rehabilitation and has to be dealt with in this context. What has been said for rehabilitation also applies to reintegration. Until recently little effort has been made to find out what happens to refugees after they have been repatriated or to combatants, after they have been demobilized. It seems that they have been expected to solve their own problems, with the help of kin and village networks.

Re-integration addresses the human dimension of rehabilitation. The term re-integration is used to describe the process in which people – in this case refugees, IDPs and combatants are rejoining and gradually becoming an integral part of the mainstream. During their absence they have developed values, norms and attitudes which are different from those of ‘stayers’, but this does not mean that the latter - forming the mainstream - have not themselves changed. Post-conflict countries are characterized by fragmented societies, and ex-refugees and ex-combatants are just two fragments. The aim of re-integration is to facilitate all fragments of the society learning to live together, and with the differences which developed while they lived apart. In post-conflict situations all categories of the population are generally in need, but those who had been away and have to start from scratch need special attention and assistance rebuilding their life. This is the aim of re-integration support measures. Nevertheless from the beginning it must be clear that these measures can only be of limited duration and that they should not entail discriminating against other citizens.

The balance between the needs of both communities - the stayers and the newcomers - is not easy to strike, as examples from various countries show. If one group feels neglected or discriminated, the overall re-integration process can be jeopardized. In order to accommodate interests of all categories, for example, issue that eventually might lead to controversies, such as land allocation, water supply, capacity of social services should be addressed before the arrival of newcomers. It is generally agreed upon that the target group approach, which certainly is needed at the start, will have to be abandoned, as soon as possible, but in practice determination of the right moment to do so proves difficult.

Apart from lack of an overall conceptual framework, insufficient funds and too short a time-frame, all re-integration exercises reviewed seem to suffer from two inter-linked weaknesses: wrong assumptions and lack of participation of all concerned. Usually returnees, especially returnees, and members of the receiving community
have little say in the planning of the programs and do not participate actively in their implementation. This leads to wrong assumptions, like the idea that African refugees have rural background and will wish to engage in farming when they return, and therefore that agricultural settlement will be the best solution to the re-integration problem. This example shows the importance of thoroughly studying the situation in the area to which they return, as well as their capacities and intentions. The results will help in the design of diversified support packages and multiple income strategies.

In all of the case studies reviewed, the re-integration of returnees is considered a precondition for the stability and security of the country, the consolidation of the society and the restart of 'normal' life. But even if a community-based approach is applied, re-integration is seldom seen as an essential part of a broader nation building process. This is what makes the Eritrean case a unique experience. We will see in chapter three what this has involved.
PART TWO
Chapter Four

Reintegration Programs in Eritrea

4. Introduction

When a country emerges from a liberation struggle, everything seems to be a priority. Among the many priorities the Provisional Government of Eritrea (PGE) listed in 1991, repatriation of refugees, Demobilization of ex-fighters, and the integration of the two groups were highlighted. This chapter is concerned with the efforts to integrate two groups, refugees and ex-fighters. In some ways, the two groups pose similar problems in resettlement and integration. But they also present divergent needs.

First Hypothesis

The designing and implementing of actual successful reintegration programs that accommodates ex-fighters and returnees proved to be much more difficult than anticipated, thus the specific assumptions of differing experiences and other design elements are questionable.

Null hypothesis:

It is possible that the designing and implementation of actual successful reintegration programs that accommodates ex-fighters and returnees is not as difficult as anticipated.

In this chapter using the above hypothesis as hindsight the programs that were designed to help returnees integrate into the main stream will be explored. Often ex-refugees and ex-combatants are presented as different categories for which different projects and programs have to be conceived in order to address their needs adequately. This was also the case in Eritrea, at least in the beginning, until it was understood that reality does not necessarily fit the target-group approach. If repatriation and Demobilisation involve different actors and follow distinct patterns, the situation changes afterwards, in the reintegration phase. Once the refugees have become returnees and the combatants have been demobilized, their needs are not so different any more and can often be addressed by one programme under one authority. But this approach was not realized in the early stages. Thus different programs were designed and implemented for more than three years, and it was only then that the Government became aware that interventions were overlapping and scarce resources were not being properly utilized. In 1995 the government of Eritrea decided to merge the two institutions in charge of integration programs:
1) The Eritrean Relief and Rehabilitation Agency (ERRA) and,
2) The Commission for Eritrean Refugee Affairs (CERA) - and formed a new institution called Eritrean Relief and Refugee Commission (ERREC), responsible for both ex-refugees and ex-fighters.

But already different schemes were designed to accommodate the experiences of ex-refugees and ex-fighters. Not only did coordinating and implementing the programs prove problematic. But many unanticipated problems also arose. There appear to be at least three main explanations for this:

1) The design of the respective programs for ex-fighters and returnees were conceptualized and implemented by two different institutions.
2) Given resource constraints and to built capacity, the Government developed a policy of national execution of programs, by which international organizations were asked to provide technical services and financial support, rather than substitute local capacities. Here issues of differences and disjunctures in mandate and philosophy – mainly the meaning of ‘adequate’ or ‘responsible’ reintegration - of the various intervening international, multilateral, governmental agencies and NGO’s had to be taken into consideration. Also the relationship of the donor countries with the national government, and coordination of the various interventions were issues that had to be dealt with right from the start.

3) The Government decided that a bilateral approach in its relations with the donors should replace the multilateral framework. This bilateralism entailed the government negotiating with the individual donors and signing bilateral agreements with each regarding their involvement in development processes of the country (PROFERI, 1995). Each donor agency has its own, often sectoral, approach. The study will try to find out in how far this factor affected the success or failure of the intervention.

The government designed different programs for the two groups. This shows that it recognized the differences between ex-refugees and ex-fighters and tried to design programs, which would address their different needs. But the conceptualizing and the subsequent design of the programs need to be questioned. Whether other assumptions should also have been taken into consideration is worth exploring. For example, the components of the two programs were not similar. Initially only the ex-fighters benefited from a credit scheme, but not the returnees (apart from returnees from Germany).

This chapter will investigate the policies pursued and the institutions put in place to implement the organized settlement program for ex-refugees and the assisted
program for ex-fighters. In the process the following questions are raised: What were the different approaches followed in the implementation of reintegration programs? What were the reasons for designing different programs for ex-refugees and ex-fighters? What circumstances forced the government not to tackle the overall reintegration program under one authority and program? What were the intended and unintended results of the reintegration programs? What could have been done to avoid them?

In the course of the chapter the government assumptions will be outlined, the co-ordination of the main components of the programs will be reviewed and problems encountered will be mapped out through reference to three case studies in different settlement sites. The adequacy of the programs will be assessed. The government attempted to modify conventional programs in accord with its preference for principles of co-operation and partnership in order to ensure that the war-born sense of self-sufficiency and independence did not become lost amidst bureaucracy and aid conditionalities.

Our concern in this chapter is to ask, was the strategy appropriate? Were the priorities right? Was the emphasis right? Was the timeframe to implement it conducive to success? Were resources available? Were there objectives that were not taken into account but which should have been addressed? Were programs properly developed before and monitored during their implementation?

4.1 Planning of the reintegration program
The repatriation of refugees from the Sudan and the Demobilization of former fighters represent great challenges for Eritrea. But one thing was obvious: the overall transformation of Eritrea from a ‘war-torn’ society to a reconstructed country could not be achieved without reintegrationing the returnees back into the society (EPLF’s Charter, 1994). Thus both the opportunities and constraints that exist in present-day Eritrea have shaped the reintegration process.

Until the demise of the Cold War, international responses to the refugee problem were predominantly exile-oriented and reactive; that is, international refugee programs were concerned almost exclusively with people who crossed international borders in search of protection (Kibreab, 1996). The task of promoting the rights of the people to live in, or return to, their areas of origin or habitual residence in safety and security was normally considered outside the humanitarian mandate of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and its partners. UNHCR was concerned neither with the causes of displacement nor with the factors that prevented those in exile from returning. One of the consequences of this was that those who
were internally displaced and refugees who re-crossed the border into their countries of origin were of no concern to UNHCR (ibid.).

In 1990s, however, a shift occurred, away from a focus on maintaining refugees in exile towards a preference for voluntary repatriation. In the first programs designed to help ex-combatants, we see Demobilization was understood as an exclusively military problem. In the past, in order to buy the loyalty of the military establishment African governments typically enlarged their armies by incorporating rebel forces into their rank and file with high salaries, special allowances and other privileges.

In general the objective of Demobilization is to channel human and economic resources into reconstruction rather than into defense. The government declared that democratic civil institutions, an effective police force, a strong judiciary and a small but effective army were essential in sustaining security. In addition, constructive policies and diplomacy were considered as positive measures for reducing defense expenditure. In the long run, Demobilization is deemed to have a positive impact on the political development and stability of a country (GOE, 1993a). Eritrea was faced with the need to guide both the process of repatriation of refugees and the Demobilization of a section of its armed force. What were/are the guiding policies for the overall reintegration programs of returnees back to the society?

4.1.1 Policies and priorities for reintegration programs.
At independence Eritrea may be at a distinct advantage in comparison with other newly liberated countries. Although it had little capital, there was hardly any corruption and little crime to speak of. Also the country had few debts and no political obligations since there had been any political support for the Eritrean independence movement from the international community (UNDP, 1997). So Eritrea’s development efforts were based on self-reliance and an insistence by the government that it should define its own policies as a sovereign state, asserting its ownership and leadership role in economic reconstruction, general development policies and other aspects of life.

Just after the 1993 referendum Eritrea became a member of the United Nations and was admitted to the Lome’ Convention. The country joined the African Development Bank in May 1994 and two months later the World Bank and the IMF. Several bilateral donors started their activities during this time. A first donor conference (Consultative Group meeting) took place in Paris in December 1994 at which Eritrean government presented its view on principles of development co-operation. The government emphasized that assistance must not encroach on Eritrea’s sovereignty
and its independent decision-making. Its statement included the following points (World Bank, 1994).

Partnership relationship: The country being assisted... plays a focal role in articulating and prioritizing the problems and in designing and implementing their solutions... This requires a fundamental reassessment and relationship between the parties to reflect this new character.

Technical assistance: It is on the question of indiscriminate assignment of expatriates that we have reservation”. Field experts may make only small contribution to institution building. Besides, they are very expensive and use up a lot of aid money. “Ideally, funds earmarked for technical assistance should thus be directly transferred to the concerned country as budgetary support for it to decide how to spend it to build its capacity.

Delivery of external assistance: External assistance is usually delivered in tied conditionalities. This leads to restriction on where and how the assistance can be used. Funds should be transferred directly to the government concerned.

Delays: With regard to the time dimension as a precious resource, the Eritrean government calls attention to delays of development co-operation ...we wonder if some of the procedures could not be streamlined, and if the establishment of a local office would not help to solve some bottlenecks.

Co-ordination: Because co-ordination is important on various levels of development co-operation the Eritrean government has institutionalized this task under the Office of the President. It co-ordinates, negotiates, and signs international economic co-operation agreements.

Development co-operation is quite a new phenomenon for the Eritrean Government and society. Until formal independence Eritrea received very little outside development support and most of this came through NGOs. The little humanitarian assistance EPLF received was used to support development programs. After independence Eritrea has sought external assistance based on partnership. Such an approach means that the recipient country is fully responsible for identifying its needs and for developing and owning its programs according to its objectives and strategies for development (Doornbos and Tesfai, 1998). Co-operating partners have been asked to assist in areas where expertise is lacking in clearly identified fields, and to monitor whether resources are used in accordance with stated purposes.
The Government of Eritrea established a national execution plan through which the integration program of returnees and related development projects were to be implemented. This was to involve the line ministries rather than UNHCR or NGOs. The emphasis was on capitalizing on the experiences gained during the long armed struggle in identifying issues and carrying out development programs.

At the Consultative Group meeting in 1994 the Eritrean Government presented a list of priorities to the international donor community (GOE, 1994c), which included rehabilitation of physical infrastructure, development of productive public enterprise, human resource development, private-sector development, and balance-of-payment support (GOE, 1994a).

The PGE insisted on placing the process of repatriation and reintegration of refugees within the country’s overall development approach. However, the UNHCR was still clinging to the principle that it only assisted in the physical return from exile. Its representative counted the position proposed by the Eritrean government with the comment that:

Donors would not fund UNHCR if it were involved in developmental work (Interview with Gerensai Kelati, former commissioner of CERA, Asmara, May 17, 1999).

The author asked the former commissioner of CERA [Ahmed Tahir Badurie] who was one of the key discussants of the Program for the Repatriation and Reintegration of Eritrean Refugees (PROFERI) program in 1994 to elaborate on the negotiation between the government of Eritrea and UNHCR. He stated:

This [limiting repatriation only to the transportation of the returnees without settling them] would have meant that Eritrea would be drowned in a sea of returnees who had no suitable accommodation. The Eritrean government explained at that time that this would cause major social upheaval and economic problems, as the country did not have the necessary resources for assimilating the returnees (in-depth interview with former commissioner of CERA Ahmed Tahir Badurie, Asmara, 12 December 1998).

Nerayo Tecklemichael, former director of Eritrean Relief Rehabilitation Agency (ERRA), until 1996 the institution which was entrusted with coordinating the activities of international organizations and NGOs, summarized the basic problems as follows:

For us Eritreans there is no need to distinguish between refugees and community. Although there is a difference in the degree of destruction committed by the enemy one common factor is that it affected them all. The aim was to target the whole
community, not to target the refugees as a separate group. The UNHCR were targeting the refugees only and their main aim was physical repatriation that is to move them from refugee camps in Sudan to Eritrea; the community was of no concern to UNHCR (Asmara, 15 December 1998).

The Eritrean government had little knowledge of the working of international agencies. Nerayo elaborated this by saying:

Our perception of UNHCR was wrong. We perceived it as almighty with a lot of money to donate. It could do what it wanted to do. Therefore, we didn’t understand why it would stop short when it comes to Eritrea. The Eritrean government had little exposure to these [UN] agencies. UNHCR is also to be blamed partially for failing to explain itself. It also didn’t try to understand the Eritrean situation and learn from it (Asmara, 15 December 1998).

The problem was that the wishes of the Eritrean Government were in direct conflict with practices of international development agencies. What experience led the government of Eritrea to come up with a different approach to repatriation and reintegration in particular and development in general are worth exploring.

4.1.2 PROFERI
The Government of Eritrea considered PROFERI to be an important component of its overall national recovery and rehabilitation program. This was why the government sought to develop a comprehensive and integrated program of repatriation, rehabilitation and reintegration with its international partners. The operational plan was home brewed and nationally owned. It was against this background that the government requested the UNDP and United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs (UNDHA) to assist in 1994 in securing resources to finance a program for refugees’ reintegration and rehabilitation of resettlement areas in Eritrea.

The government was and still is committed to repatriating all its citizens who fled the country because of the war of liberation. The government’s strategy is to ensure that the process is organized and orderly and that the ex-refugees are fully rehabilitated and reintegrated into the communities from which they had fled (PROFERI, 1995: 19). The Commission for Eritrean Refugee Affairs (CERA) has been the main vehicle for implementing government strategy. CERA was established in 1987 as an EPLF department and charged with the responsibility of safeguarding the interests and wellbeing of Eritrean refugees in the Diaspora and ensuring that they developed a national identity and were self-supporting. From 1988 onward CERA facilitated the voluntary repatriation of refugees to liberated areas and assisted in their reintegration by mobilizing international funding (ibid.).
The document outlining the objective of the Program for the Repatriation and Reintegration of Eritrean Refugees from Sudan (PROFERI) was the first attempt by the government to develop a possible repatriation and reintegration strategy for refugees in the Sudan and to start funding requirements for its implementation. The objectives of PROFERI were twofold: 1) to assist the repatriation of the refugees in an organized manner by providing them with the necessary logistical support and 2) to help them become socially and economically integrated once they reached their own country. The government felt that it was useless merely to transplant refugee camps from Sudan to Eritrea (interview with former commissioner of CERA, Gerensie Kelati, Asmara, May 10, 1999). For this would neither resolve the livelihood needs of ex-refugees nor contribute to the rebuilding of the nation. It was considered that further forms of assistance enabling the ex-refugees to start a new life on their own must accompany repatriation.

When the PROFERI program was being designed it took into consideration the state of the national economy, the infrastructure, housing, services and employment, as well as the economic and social situation in the various areas of the country. The most important role of the PROFERI program was to co-ordinate the activities of the various implementing agencies (line ministries and local authorities, with the latter playing an increasingly important role) with those of external actors. The assistance basically consisted of eleven packages. Some addressed immediate basic needs for survival while others were oriented toward more long-term needs.

1. Institution strengthening and capacity building;
2. Repatriation and initial relief;
3. Shelter;
4. Roads;
5. Health;
6. Education;
7. Food aid;
8. Agriculture and livestock;
9. Water;
10. Fisheries; and

The resettlement of ex-refugees was designed in models for each zone:

a) The south-west lowland model, which is based on a crop/livestock integrated system;

b) The northwest lowland model, which is based on livestock production.

Since the rainfall in this area is inadequate for rain-fed agriculture, spate
irrigation has been considered given that the potential for crop production under this activity is great;
c) The Red Sea coastal Zone model where spate irrigation already practised should continue with the provision of inputs and livestock;
d) The model for the north-west Zone is to be applied to the Sahel part of the Red Sea coastal Zone where resettlement sites are being planned;
e) The highlands Zone model consists of an integrated farming system based on crop and livestock production;
f) The Senhit model is similar to that of the highlands with a variation in the provision of seeds (sorghum and millet). Here, each household will be provided with small amount of money to buy ox, seeds and agricultural tools; and
g) The peri-urban model where returnees will engage in semi-intensive agricultural practices as is the custom in these areas.

The PROFERI program was planned in three phases and was to be executed over a period of three to four years. The first phase was meant to repatriate, rehabilitate and reintegrate approximately 100,000 ex-refugees who expressed a preference to be settled back ‘home’. The design of PROFERI envisaged that a National Project Co-ordination Committee (NPCC) under the chairmanship of the commissioner of CERA and with members drawn from the participating institutions would be set up and meets quarterly to monitor and evaluate program/project progress (PROFERI, 1995). It also set up a Project Management Unit (PMU) within CERA to co-ordinate and implements the program. The organizational structure was purposely designed to be flat for maximum efficiency (Sisay, 1997). The PMU was mandated to implement the overall technical and financial aspects of the repatriation-resettlement-reintegration-development continuum.

Before further exploring its activities, let us review the Demobilization and reintegration programs for ex-fighters. As will be seen, the same policy of intervention, which was applied to returning refugee, was designed to help ex-fighters reintegrate into Eritrean society.
4.1.3 The Mitias program
In order to fight the huge army of Ethiopia’s military junta Derg, the EPLF built up a liberation army. At the end of the war of liberation it had about 95,000 members (almost 3 percent of the total population). After independence, the Eritrean government announced that the economy could neither sustain such a big army or did security concerns require it (GOE, 1993). In order to develop a plan of action to carry out Demobilization a workshop was organized by Ministry of Defense in Asmara from 22-25 September 1992. The author was one of the participants. The workshop made the following recommendations:

- In order to ascertain the profile of the beneficiaries and assess their needs a sample survey had to be conducted;
- Demobilization and reintegration should be implemented as one package;
- In order to minimize misunderstandings and promote trust between Mitias and the beneficiaries, qualified staff members should be recruited from among former fighters;
- The new institution should be separate from Ministry of Defense; the most likely structure to which it might be attached was ERRA;
- It should be assisted by an advisory board formed from representatives of line ministries which were the main actors in the implementation of the reintegration program; and
- The Demobilization and reintegration program would be implemented in phases. Each phase should be evaluated in order to learn from experience and to minimize future mistakes.

Thus the Mitias concept aimed at twin objectives: Demobilization and reintegration of former fighters. It was obvious that the government did not have the means to launch large-scale assisted reintegration programs. This would also have been in contradiction with the policy of self-reliance which had governed the EPLF in wartime and which continued to be applied after independence. It was believed that fighters who had passed through numerous obstacles and had in the process acquired the stamina for a high degree of discipline and dedication could, if channeled in a positive direction, push forward the development of Eritrea. Thus fighters were expected to play a role in the reconstruction and development of the country, and it was considered as vital that they be given opportunities for full participation in the civilian society (Mitias, 1993). Emphasis was therefore put on helping the ex-fighters to re integrate themselves and on encouraging them to take their lives into their own hands, helped by their families and their communities.

Unlike PROFERI, the program for reintegrating former fighters did not consist of a uniform package. Mitias was an open-ended program, couched more in conceptual,
rather than in project terms (W/Giorgis, 1996). It aimed at giving a chance to individual ex-fighters, or groups of them, to identify the areas where they could best realize their own potential and to assist them to make their selection accordingly. There were no restrictions confining assistance to a particular type of activity or locality. In the discussion at the workshop preceding the establishment of Mitias, it became clear that reintegration should follow two paths:

1. Non-assisted reintegration would be followed for those who found their way into the community by themselves, without any assistance.
2. Assisted reintegration would be limited to those who were in need of assistance in starting a new life.

Before assessing the reintegration programs after independence, we have to understand how EPLF helped returning refugees to reintegrate with their receiving communities during the armed struggle.

4.2 Repatriation of Eritrean refugees
The Government’s policy concerning reintegration was based from the beginning on the principle of self-reliance, making use of already existing institutional bodies, mainly ERA and CERA. The Eritrean Relief Association (ERA)22 had been founded in 1975, more than 15 years before the end of the war, with a view to fund-raising and channeling all humanitarian relief to the liberated areas, in order to assist refugees, Internally Displaced People (IDP) and the local population.

By the mid 1980s, the EPLF had undertaken a number of programs to curtail the outflow of people from Eritrea and to help them resettle in the liberated areas. For example, after the large-scale famine of 1984-85 it was able to settle some 200,000 people who had been bound for exile in Sudan (W/Giorgis, 1996). In order to take proper care of the refugees, a special body was created in 1987: the Commission for Eritrean Refugee Affairs (CERA). Its main role was to deal with legal and human rights issues of the refugee population, mainly in Sudan. After independence CERA was to be restructured according to the following principles:

• An experienced institution with competence to repatriate and integrate should be in place right from the start;
• Repatriation should be developed in phases so that necessary resources could be raised progressively; and

22 From 1975, the Eritrean Relief Association (ERA) was responsible for channeling all humanitarian relief to the liberated areas, including that aimed at caring for refugees. The broader thrust of EPLF’s foreign policy was to reduce political isolation while, at the same time, avoid the trap of becoming dependent on one political patron or camp, a mistake particularly associated with the first wave of nationalism.
• The flow of returnees should be managed in such a way that Eritrea would not have to handle a large number of refugees at one go.

Information collected by UNHCR in Sudan 1994 gives some indication of the total size of the refugee population and its socio-economic features (Dalfet, et. al 1997). Over 75 percent had been living in Sudan since before 1980 and 30 percent since before 1970. The adult literacy rate was less than 24 percent and only 5.1 percent of household-heads had more than six years of primary education.

When the root cause of involuntary displacement came to an end on May 24, 1991, many Eritrean refugees seized the opportunity to return home in safety and dignity. To date, over 165,000 have come back spontaneously, without any external assistance, and only around 25,000 have returned in an organized way from Sudan (ERREC, March 1998). Of all returned refugees, nearly 57,000 individuals (15,301 families) have settled in the Gash-Barka Region and approximately 7,000 (2,320 families) have returned to the Northern Red Sea region. Returnees comprise about 13 percent of the current population of Gash-Barka and 2.3 percent of the Northern Red Sea Region. A significant demographic feature of the returnee population is the high proportion of female-headed households, about 35 percent overall (ibid.). In order to understand the factors which guided the Eritrean leadership in their choice of rehabilitation and integration efforts, but also of other related programs, it is appropriate to look at the way aid was managed during the armed struggle.

4.2.1 Support structures during the war of independence
In the beginning food aid came primarily from Scandinavian countries, but later it also came from European development agencies and was channeled into Eritrea mainly through the Swedish Church Relief operating under the Sudan Council of Churches (SCC) and Norwegian Church Aid (NCA). Funds were directed equally to the Eritrean Relief Association (ERA), the humanitarian arm of Eritrean People’s Liberation Force (EPLF), and to the Eritrean Red Cross and Red Crescent Society (ERRCS), which was linked to Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF). In the 1980s the Sudan Council of Churches and Norwegian Church Aid combined their efforts and set up the Emergency Relief Desk (ERD) in Khartoum. ERD was an ecumenical NGO coalition of predominantly European Protestant organizations which raised funds internationally for logistics and food aid deliveries into both Eritrea and Ethiopia, in co-operation with the Sudan Council of Churches (Duffield and Prendergast. 1994).

ERD created a partnership with ERA. At first ERD purchased food in Sudan and brought it to the border. At a later stage ERD received food supplies directly from major European donor agencies, which were also delivered to ERA. ERA organized
the movement of the food within the liberated areas where it was managed in a participatory way using the traditional local self-help structures. During the war of independence, EPLF developed parallel administrative hierarchies in the liberated areas and strengthened district and village level Baitos (assemblies), making them more representatives. These mechanisms helped to strengthen the civil society in the liberated areas and the countryside, and enforced legitimacy for the Front in the process.23 No expatriate staff is involved in the actual program operations within Eritrea. Funds were raised and disbursed with minimal bureaucracy. Accountability was achieved through the use of outside monitors employed by ERD. This locally managed, participatory system allowed for a high degree of operational flexibility and it also helped to create a capacity to manage disaster at community and regional levels (Smith, 1992).

International relief was funneled directly to ERA for more than 20 years. The general consensus is that ERA was effective and deserves credit for the survival of much of the civilian population (Duffield and Prendergast, 1994). International NGOs channeling outside support to Eritrea neither expected nor obliged ERA to comply with strict bureaucratic procedures for project approval, monitoring, reporting and evaluation. Apart from financial resources channeled by ERD, considerable funding for the war effort and civilian survival came from Eritreans abroad.

In the early 1980s EPLF was not only managing relief activities but was also engaged in development activities, using food aid first as emergency relief, followed by food for work and cash for work initiatives. Seeds, tools, oxen for ploughing, rural credit were also distributed. Thus the Front was able to rehabilitate schools, health posts and wells and set up administrative and social infrastructure. In the liberated areas, especially in the Sahel, projects like Forto Mogoraib, Rora Habab, Backla and Afabet were initiated to create co-operatives and administrative structures. This was accompanied by land reform measures meant to benefit marginalized groups, including single women, women with children and the elderly (interview with Teame, Woldhaymanot Asmara, June, 12, 1999). With the increase in liberated areas the number of spontaneous returnees also started to increase, and integrating them put serious pressure on the limited budget of the Front.

There is some controversy about the effectiveness of some of these activities; e.g. the public work schemes, land reform and the training of fieldworkers. But it has to be remembered that all these activities were conducted as investments in social capital and helped to transform social relations. Also many of these activities can be

23 For a detailed account and analysis see Duffield and Prendergast, 1994.
considered as ‘developmental’, as they contributed to the rehabilitation of infrastructure (Rock, 2000). Some of the economic activities also served to diversify income opportunities at household and community level. And last but not least the provision of social services and skills training can be considered as investment in human resources development.

After independence, international agencies and donors insisted that they must be able to account for the use of their funds and also that they should be involved in policy decisions affecting the programs they supported. Expatriate staff argued that donors couldn’t channel resources for government use without putting in place mechanisms that would guarantee adequate accountability. Recalling this experience Badurie, a former commissioner of ERREC said, at independence we were asked to surrender our independence to the donor community. Macrae (1999) vividly expressed this trend,

> Development assistance is grounded in politics, rather than in any assessment of the changing needs of particular communities. The entitlement of populations to official relief or development resources depends not only upon the national political context, but the interpretation of that context by international actors (Macrae, 1999: 15).

After reviewing its own and other countries’ experiences, the Eritrean government became convinced that trying to satisfy donor’s demands would leave the country without its own policy direction. It considered it necessary to protect its sovereignty over, and ownership of, the development process thus foregoing assistance was deemed preferable to accepting unwanted conditions (Doornbos and Tesfai, 1999). Some NGOs, which were working in Eritrea during the armed struggle, preferred to close down their programs and operations rather than accept control by the Eritrean government. Here two issues merit consideration.

First, the question of leadership and ownership of programs and projects, which is crucial for the sustainability and optimization of desired results, should be considered. Second, the government has recognized that fragmented and uncoordinated programs and projects are likely to induce avoidable wastage of resources and duplication of efforts. In light of this consideration, the government felt that the articulation and formulation of these programs and projects would rest with, and form an integral part of, the sectoral development strategies of the concerned Ministries (Sisay, 1997). In addition to this overall framework of co-operation, NGOs were expected to observe and comply with the operational regulations that aimed to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the programs and projects they funded.
Thus the habit of the Eritrean leadership, which had been accustomed to rely on its own efforts and decision-making capacities and to allocate resources where they were most needed, determined their relations with international donor agencies. They showed a ‘take it or leave it’ attitude vis-à-vis foreign donors, who were welcome to support projects or programs that had received government approval, but whose own agendas for involvement in different sectors carried little weight, if any. Instead, the government was – and still is - determined to do things its own way, even if it meant taking unorthodox steps, making internationally unconventional decisions or refusing to adopt a particular policy (ibid.).

4.2.2 The 1993 Geneva pledging conference
In 1993, the Eritrean government requested assistance for the repatriation of Eritrean refugees from Sudan from the UN agencies. It was hoped that UNHCR would mobilize resources to fund a Program for Refugee Repatriation and Reintegration and the Rehabilitation of Resettlement areas (PROFERI). The funding requirements for the three phases of PROFERI totaled U.S. $ 262.2 million, of which phase one required U.S. $ 110.9 million. The UNDP/UNDHA organized a pledging conference in Geneva in July 1993 to raise funds in order to start repatriation and reintegration of about 500,000 refugees from Sudan and to rehabilitate the main areas to which they were expected to return.

The result was a total failure: the oral pledges received from official development agencies and NGOs totaled only US$ 32.4 million, far short of requirements. As a result, the government decided to scale down its plans and to begin with a small pilot phase comprising a limited range of easily implementable activities. The government expected to benefit from the experience of this pilot phase and to build upon it during the subsequent phases.

The speech of President Isaias Afwerki (1993) to the pledging Conference reiterated his country’s overall development strategy by emphasizing that:

"The repatriation of refugees must be firmly rooted on, and be linked with, programs of rehabilitation and recovery of the society as a whole. The exercise must also be framed within the long-term development strategies and plans of the country. That is why the Government has earnestly sought to develop with its international partners, a comprehensive and integrated program of repatriation, rehabilitation and reintegration (PROFERI, 1995: 29)."

It was within the framework of this statement that the government made a policy decision for all line Ministries24 with relevant PROFERI components to implement

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24 Line ministries were entrusted to implement the reintegration programs that directly relate to their work. These are the Ministries of Agriculture, Education, Health, Local government, Construction, and Social Affaire.
reintegration programs in collaboration with CERA. One of the main objectives of PROFERI was, therefore, to link repatriation with rehabilitation of the country.

The challenge... is not just to repatriate and reintegrate the refugee from Sudan. It is also to rehabilitate and rebuild the areas to which they will return, and to do so in a way that does not create a privileged class of returnees amidst a deprived local population. But rather improve the lives and supporting infrastructure for these persons as well...it should be noted that PROFERI program addresses rehabilitation needs of those areas only up to January 1997, and not the full, longer-term needs (PROFERI, 1993: 3).

When discussions between the government of Eritrea and UNHCR started in 1993 to carry out repatriation and integration 500,000 refugees living in Sudan; some for more than 25 years, misperceptions followed by misunderstandings progressed quickly to resentment and ended with deadlock. The main points of difference were the following:

- Where does repatriation end and reintegration begin, in respect of a process of overall inclusion?
- How should the overall program of integration be funded and who should disburse funds?
- How should the processes of repatriation and reintegration be interwoven and monitored?

The confusion led to increasing distrust during the negotiation between UNHCR and the Government of Eritrea as described in a study by McSpadden (1996). According to its findings the Eritrean government presented five reasons why UNHCR’s proposal for repatriation of refugees from Sudan was unacceptable:

- UNHCR was discriminating against Eritrea by proposing a lower cost/head for this repatriation than applied to South Africa and Namibia repatriations. The effect was to ‘dump’ refugees.
- UNHCR was unwilling rather than unable to commit the necessary funds (over $ U.S 200 million) to Eritrea.
- UNHCR was refusing to include reintegration and development as part of repatriation.
- UNHCR was offering ‘piecemeal’ assistance which the government found unacceptable. To begin repatriation without full guaranteed funding was considered too risky. Once repatriation began it would have to continue uninterrupted until all the refugees in Sudan who wish to return had done so.
UNHCR was killing time by proposing reviews of project proposals. All studies had been completed and no further work was needed. The government had submitted proposals, which had not been funded.

The response of the international donors to these accusations as quoted by McSpadden (1996) addressed the following points:

- The PROFERI program was not a ‘pure’ repatriation exercise; it was rural development plus repatriation. But to develop the reception areas the way the Eritrean government wanted would have taken 50 years. In the meantime, UNHCR was unable keep the refugees in camps in Sudan.
- The PROFERI program was too big; they should start with a pilot program for a few thousand refugees.
- Donors were not willing to engage in a long-term co-operation with Eritrea. They preferred to restrict their support to short term interventions such as repatriation, which has a beginning and an end within a defined time frame.
- Interest in Eritrea PROFERI Program [pressure from the media] was not there.
- The PROFERI program wasn’t ‘good enough’, because an operational plan outlining the way the Eritrean Government wants to handle PROFERI was missing.
- The Government had declared its intention to rely exclusively on national project management and execution. This was not looked at favorably.
- The donor community was dubious about the capacity of a dedicated but inexperienced Eritrean administration to absorb the funds and manage such a varied and vast program.
- The government would not permit international NGOs to be implementers. This was a great impediment to getting money, since international donors were increasingly funneling their money through NGOs.
- The pledging time was unfavorable in several ways. a) There was not enough time between the development of PROFERI and the Donor Conference for the donor governments to process such an extensive and innovative program through layers of their own bureaucracies. b) The month of July did not fit the budgeting timelines within the different donor governments’ procedures (McSpadden, 1996: 38).

It is evident that there was a wide gap between the perception of UNHCR and other donor agencies and that of the Eritrean Government. If PROFERI had been developed concomitantly, all partners might have been able to iron out most of the stumbling blocks and an understanding might have been reached on the most basic points, thus laying the foundation for a trustful co-operation. Nerayo summarized the main problems in an interview conducted in Asmara, 15 December 1998.
It was hard to understand the donor reaction to the PROFERI program. One thing, which is sure, was bad timing. Also our approach was new to the giant organizations who were used to doing what they thought was right without the consultation of the beneficiaries. Perhaps they didn’t like the style of assertiveness from our side. In the end the difference was there but there was a need to develop the program together with them. We had unrealistic expectations and we were naïve. The world is not only black and white. There are also gray areas that we must master. We are learning this slowly when, where and how to say it.

With the failure of the PROFERI appeal of July 1993, the Government of Eritrea, UNDP and UNDHA came back together to plan on the basis of the limited funds available. In January 1994 the plan was ready. Implementation of the pilot program was divided into two parts. Responsibility for the operational and funding side of repatriation was vested in UNHCR, while the government and its institutions took on reintegration responsibilities (W/Giorgis, 1999). It was assumed that the other external actors would provide the necessary funding support to both components. The large donors refused to release money unless the government made arrangements with UNHCR. Greater flexibility developed both within UNHCR and within the government and a more collaborative discussion developed of the end of 1995.

4.2.3 Pilot Phase of PROFERI: January 1994-May 1995
Disappointing donor response forced the government to scale down PROFERI and begin with the Pilot Phase instead, at an estimated cost of U.S. $ 16 Million. The 1993 Geneva pledging conference and the subsequent activities under the PROFERI Pilot Phase were conducted within a multilateral framework (PROFERI, 1995). The government decided that a bilateral approach in its relations with donors should replace the multilateral framework (PROFERI, 1995). This bilateralism entailed that the Government negotiating separately with each of the agencies regarding their involvement in the development process of the country. This policy decision allowed the donors to discuss their own contribution against what they had earmarked for funding. The government, on the other hand, was in a better position to co-ordinate various donors’ inputs and targets them to areas where they were most needed; while at the same time minimize the risk of duplicating of efforts.

Such an approach meant that the beneficiary country would be fully responsible for identifying its needs and for developing its programs according to its own objectives. This approach also fostered the development of dearly needed capacity. Gerensai Kelati, former commissioner of CERA, put it clearly in his interview with “Voice of the Masses” on May 27, 1995. In the implementation of the PROFERI program, he said,
“we don’t want a relationship of lend me your watch, and then I will tell you the exact time. But unfortunately this approach does not go in line with the experiences we had gained during the armed struggle that said “nobody was born having a spoon in his mouth but everything is or can be learned in the process, that is, learning by doing”.

The government allocated 45 million Birr for the Pilot Phase in order to repatriate approximately 25,000 (4,500-household) refugees from Sudan (CERA, 1995). The Pilot project would never have started unless the government had taken the initiative to implement it without waiting for the pledged funds to arrive.

The central objectives of the PROFERI Pilot Phase were:

- to repatriate, resettle and integrate about 24,000 individual returnees (4,500 households) from the Sudan into nine settlement sites located in four areas namely, Gash Setit, Barka, Senhit and Sahel;
- to provide the returnees with basic services in water, agriculture, health, education and to strengthen the capacity of CERA and of the line ministries which were to participate in the planning and implementation of the PROFERI Pilot Project;
- to provide food aid for up to one year or until the first harvest or employment; and to provide CERA and the relevant line ministries with experience that would enable them to design and implement the subsequent phases of the PROFERI Program effectively and efficiently (PROFERI Program, 1995).

The government strategy was guided by three principles:

1. Equality in the integration process;
2. Interventions for relief, rehabilitation and reintegration should be designed as integral parts of a development continuum; and
3. Sustainability of interventions within the present fiscal and social milieu.

4.2.4 Management of Pilot Phase

The Pilot Phase followed an area-based development strategy in its implementation. This methodology required close monitoring of every step in the process: emergency problems would be defined and their causes analyzed; existing constraints would be assessed and adequate solutions worked out (Sisay, 1997). The methodology was also based on the government’s philosophy that Eritrea’s comparative advantage rests in its cheap, unskilled labor and that any people-centered development strategy must improve human resource development and raise living standards for the entire population (Charter, 1994). This philosophy depended crucially on the government’s strategy to decentralize development activities to the regions and communities
through proclamation No. 86/96. The decentralization policy, in turn, influenced the implementation of the reintegration efforts: specifically the decentralized structure of the line ministries did not fit the monolithic and centralized management of the reintegration efforts.

The main questions raised in assessment of this program are what work, how, and why? But there is a further question: how can evaluations and assessments become practical tools facilitating the conception and planning of subsequent phases. Two main issues will be dealt with in detail in the following chapters. 1) How far were the returnees involved in the process of planning, implementation, monitoring and ownership of the Pilot Phase? (2) Is the Eritrean government in its endeavor to decentralize committed to sharing power and developing adequate capacities within civil society?

These two questions are based on the understanding that area-based development is a process of socio-economic change involving the transformation of rural society in order to reach a common set of development goals and objectives based on the capacities, aspirations, needs and involvement of the people. This in turn can pave the way for harmonious reintegration to take place.

**Unforeseen developments**

When the PROFERI Pilot Phase started the relationship between the Governments of Sudan and Eritrea went from bad to worse. The main reason was that the Eritrean Government accused the Sudanese Government for arming dissident groups and infiltrating them into Eritrea in order to create instability. In consequence Eritrea cut its diplomatic relations with Sudan in 1994. Nevertheless the repatriation operation was not affected by the severance of diplomatic relations. It was governed by the principle embodied in the two separate Memoranda of Understanding signed on the one hand by the Government of Sudan and the UNHCR and on the other by the Government of Eritrea and UNHCR (Kibreab, 1996). Thus UNHCR was promoted by the situation to a position as mediator. In the process confusion slowly developed to conflict and escalated to finally reach a stalemate. In the end UNHCR was asked to leave Eritrea. Nevertheless the number of Eritrean refugees returning spontaneously continued to increase.

The eastern border of Sudan remained open during the repatriation process between 1995 to 1996. But later all borders were closed and this had a detrimental effect on those ex-refugees whose livelihood depended on cross-border trade. A further negative effect of this development was an increasing number of systematic and selective incidents of harassment among Eritrean refugees, including detention and

4. 2. 5 Evaluation of the PROFERI Pilot Phase 1995 - 1996

Between November 1994 and April 1995, 24,630 returnees (6,386 households) were repatriated from Sudan, of which over 90 per cent (22,615) chose to settle at 21 sites in the Gash-Barka Region. An overall evaluation of the Pilot Phase was carried out during April 1995 by a joint national-international team and another evaluation was done by Kibreab (1998) on the agriculture and livestock component (Dalfet, et. al. 1997; Kibreab, 1998).

The Pilot Phase had been under way for about six months when an independent group commissioned by UNDP evaluated it. The evaluation gave a positive appraisal and concluded that its implementation was successful given the resource scarcity and the planning parameters used (UNDP, 1997). CERA was commended for what had been accomplished during 1995 and 1996. The implementation record was declared to be impressive, proving that CERA and the line ministries could successfully implement and execute subsequent phases of the project. By implementing the Pilot Phase efficiently the Eritrean Government was able to boost donor confidence. Nevertheless there were key lessons learned from the implementation of the PROFERI Pilot Phase.

Among these were the following:

- The need for flexibility in responding to changes in preferences of returnees for settlement sites and for more accurate assessments of returnee preferences before they left Sudan;
- The need for provision of sanitation facilities at the earliest practical stage of settlement to prevent outbreaks of disease;
- Exploration of ways to share implementation responsibility with the returnees;
- Primary responsibility for agricultural land clearing should rest with returnee households but a safety net needed to be provided for assistance to vulnerable families;
- Provision of assets (such as livestock) should be phased and should be delivered at least nine months after initial settlement to enable ex-refugees to better prioritize their needs; and
- Provision of assets should be flexible and include a variety of forms of assistance to encourage investment in a range of potential income generating activities.

In addition to the above points Sisay (1997) identified four major pitfalls:

(a) Inadequate knowledge of the local situation;
(b) Lack of involvement of local communities/community organizations in the development process;
(c) Inadequate adaptation of technology and technological inputs to local conditions;
(d) Different social groups within the same community faced different problems and therefore priorities should have been differentiated.

Despite the above mentioned shortcomings and problems, the PROFERI Pilot Phase was an extremely useful exercise. When asked to evaluate his experience of the Pilot Phase of PROFERI, the former commissioner of CERA, Gerensai Kelati said,

_The Government of Eritrea in general and CERA in particular had developed new skills. We have learned how to handle the donor community and in the process mastered the art of diplomacy_ (Asmara, 10 May 1999).

4.3 Demobilization of former fighters

As early as December 1992 President Isaias Afwerki announced that Eritrea would have to demobilize about 60 percent of the armed forces phase by phase. A special committee was set up by the Department of Defense (DOD), composed of representatives of the Labor Office, the National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEWn), the Eritrean War Disabled Fighters Association (EWDA), ERRA and various departments of the then PGE. Its task was to study the procedures of the Demobilization and integration and to prepare a survey in order to obtain a general picture of the EPLF fighters.

The Government declared that democratic civil institutions, an effective police force, a stronger judiciary and a small but effective army would be sufficient to ensure security. In addition, constrictive policies and diplomacy were considered to be positive effects, reducing defense needs and expenditure (GOE, 1993a). In 1993 the government of Eritrea decided that the severely wounded fighters should not be included in the Demobilization program. Their number is estimated 2500-3000 and they are currently under the responsibility of EWDA.

Demobilization had to wait until Eritrea was officially independent. Unlike other liberation struggles, independence was not achieved directly with victory over the occupation army; it had to be confirmed by an internationally controlled referendum after a period of consolidation. Long-term objectives of Demobilization are usually to enhance economic and human development and to foster and sustain political stability, security and peace. These certainly apply to the Eritrean case.
The design of a Demobilization program depends to a large extent on the political and socio-economic context in which it will have to be carried out. In the case of Eritrea, defeat of the Ethiopian army paved the way for effective Demobilization. Despite the absence of outside financial support, the process in Eritrea was implemented as planned and there was only one army to demobilize. In comparison with other Sub-Saharan African and ‘Third World’ Demobilization experiences, the disarmament of fighters in Eritrean context was a straightforward activity.

During the whole time of the struggle the small arms of all fighters were registered, right from their entry into training camp, and the records were kept up-to-date. The fighters to be demobilized were informed by their leaders and were told to leave their arms with their unit leaders in the barracks and camps, and then went to collect their Demobilisation money and a certificate of service. Their personal data were given to the Department for Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Ex-fighters, Mitias. Transport of the fighters to their destination was organized by ERRA. The whole process took only a couple of weeks (ERRA, 1996).²⁵

Mitias collected a number of data as a means of acquiring better knowledge of the target group. Three surveys and one follow-up were carried out in 1993. The questionnaires covered gender, age, geographical and social origin, marital and health status, educational and professional background and aspirations (Mitias, 1993: 8).

Analysis of data collected in 1993 by Mitias revealed that: 81 percent of the fighters were of rural origin, 6 percent from semi-urban and 13 percent urban. When asked where they would prefer to be settled once demobilized, 41 percent declared a preference for urban areas, 10 percent for semi-urban and 14 for rural areas. A further 33 per cent were prepared to live anywhere, provided they received what they needed to start up their new lives.

The study showed that 85.2 percent were under 32 years old, of whom 37.6 percent were between 18 and 22; 31 percent between 23 and 27 years and 17 percent between 28 to 32 years of age, 78 percent were men and 21 percent women. Most of the women (70 percent) were between 18 and 22 years old.

As for their educational background, 78 percent had attended only primary school, up to grade 5, while 7 percent had reached grades 6 to 8, with the remainder having

²⁵ For more detail see Bruchhaus and Mehreteab. 2000 ‘Leaving the Warm House’: the Impact of demobilization in Eritrea in Kingma, Kees: Demobilisation In Sub-Saharan Africa; The Development and Security Impact Macmillan Press LTD.
finished senior school. The number of those who had gone to university was statistically insignificant. The marital status of the combatants was as follows: 49 percent were single, 50 were married had families while the rest (6 percent) were separated, divorced or widowed. 72 percent said they had no children, while 24 percent had children ranging between 1 and 4 years of age.

The ethnic origin correlated to a large degree with the size of the different groups that constitute the Eritrean population. The majority was Tigrina (64 percent) and Tigre (24.3 per cent). 3 percent were Nara, 3 percent Saho, 2 Kunama, 2 percent Bilen, 1 percent Hidareb, 19 percent Rashaida and 1 percent Afar.

Six percent declared that they were normally healthy, while 23 percent had some kind of disability and the rest were suffering from various illnesses. Among those who had sustained war injuries, half were severe and half relatively minor. Taking the above points into consideration, the overall Demobilisation and reintegration of former fighters was designed.

4.3.1 Approach
The Provisional Government of Eritrea had decided to conduct the Demobilisation in phases. The first phase which started in June 1993 involved about 26,000 fighters mainly young people who had joined the struggle after the battle of Massawa (February 1990). It was expected that the majority would go back to their families and continue their studies or work. The second phase, involving the so-called ‘veteran fighters’ who had stayed in the field for a long time, mostly between seven and 20 years or more, were demobilized from June 1994. The third phase or as it is sometimes called the ‘civil service retrenchment’26, affected 6000 fighters. The goal was to reconstitute the discipline and inner coherence of the administrative structure, and reduce the bloated bureaucracy of 30,000 by half, thereby substantially reducing the 250 million Birr budget outlay that it used to absorb (Hadas Eritrea, 10 Ginbot 1995).

The decision as to whether or not a fighter would be demobilized was taken by MOD. Demobilisation depended on several factors, mainly health status and the socio-economic situation of his or her family: whether parents had lost more than one child in the ‘struggle’, or whether the fighter was the only child of her or his parents.

When the fighters were demobilized their EPLF identification card was replaced by a civilian identification card. This was important in providing equal treatment with their civilian counterparts and might have helped in de-politicizing former fighters.

26 Civil service retrenchment was done in 1995 in order to streamline the public service during which altogether 10,000 civil servants were laid off to trim down what was seen as too a large bureaucracy.
Ex-refugees were issued new identification cards that gave them entitlement to support.

Table 4.1: Phases of Demobilisation in Eritrea

| Demobilisation in Eritrea: First and Second Phases plus Retrenchment of Civil Services. |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Demobilisation time             | First Phase     | Second Phase    | Retrenchment    |
|                                 | June 1993       | June 1994       | After July 1995 |
| Target Group                    | joined after 1990 | Joined before 1990 | Joined before 1990 |
| Total Number                    |                 |                 |                 |
| Male                            | 26,000          | 22,000          | 6,000           |
| Female                          | 21,500          | 14,000          | 5,000           |
|                                 | 4,500           | 8,000           | 1,000           |
| Cash payment/person             | 1,000-5,000 Birr\(^{27}\) (Total 100m. Birr) | 10,000 Birr (total 220m. Birr) | 10,000 Birr (Total – 60m. Birr) |
| In kind                         | food for 6 months, health care | food for 12 months, health care | Salary of 450 Birr + service multiplied by 10/year |

Source: ERREC (updated in 1998).

But this intervention worked the other way round and was a label that hindered their reintegration. For example one key informant from Ghinda told the author:

*For some time after the arrival of the ex-refugees in Ghinda, there was a misconception between ex-refugees and the community of Ghinda, which presented many difficulties in the process of their reintegration. The Ghinda community used to call the ex-refugee by the term “lagin”. A label given to refugee that portrays him/her as dependent on alms.*\(^{28}\)

The money given to former fighters was supposed to serve as a safety net in their transition from military to civilian life. The total sum – altogether 430 million Birr=70 million U.S. $ - had an important economic effect on the immediate post-war period through activating the monetary system and commercial trade.

\(^{27}\) Birr is Ethiopian currency valid till 1997.

\(^{28}\) Lagin is an Arabic word, which was derived from the word “lagi” meaning a refugee.
4.3.2 Process

The Demobilisation itself was a fairly easy procedure. Since the ELF had been defeated by the EPLF in the early 1980s, and some of its fighters had joined the EPLF, the new government had to deal with the Demobilisation of only one disciplined armed force. After the end of hostilities the fighters had continued to stay in their barracks and camps, and the EPLF ensured their livelihood as before. In order to prepare the fighters for Demobilisation, meetings were held to inform them about the procedures and the help that they could expect. After having collected their Demobilisation money and food ration those to be demobilized left for their chosen destination. Disarmament, Demobilisation and the creation of a downsized military force went smoothly and according to schedule, managed by MOD and carried out with the support of other Ministries and institutions, such as ERRA.

For the tasks of carrying out the practical activities of Demobilization – such as handing out certificates of service and payments of Demobilization money – and support to reintegration, a special department was designed within ERRA. In order to express the concept of self-help support, which it was supposed to offer the institution was called ‘Mitias’ after a traditional mutual self-help system, practiced in the highlands of Eritrea. All positions of responsibility in Mitias were filled with veteran fighters. They were believed to be best suited for this task, as they and their target group belonged to the same community of freedom fighters. Nevertheless the new institution also suffered from limitations due to lack of experience with and exposure to development related work.

4.3.3 Mandate and set-up of Mitias

Mitias was set up in December 1992 to offer demobilized fighters a foundation, which would help them to pass through several stages of adjustment. Mitias has played a variety of roles. As an actor or coordinator, it has initiated projects or implemented its own activities such as counseling, human power assessment and research. It has set up and contributed to running of a credit scheme. It further acted as a facilitator, providing ex-fighters with letters of reference or giving assistance to projects such as the Ali-Ghidir agricultural development project. As a coordinator, it steered different institutions involved in integration projects or linked up ex-fighters who had ideas for projects with eventual donor agencies. It has also played an advocacy role by lobbying within the Government of Eritrea and within the donor community for the interests of the ex-fighters.
**Mitias' mandate is as follows:**

- To carry out studies and investigations concerning the situation of fighters (demobilized and not yet demobilized) with the aim of obtaining data to be used for support measures;
- To raise funds for training programs, loan schemes and settlement projects;
- To look for appropriate areas of training and settlement sites; and
- To provide services to ex-fighters to facilitate reintegration into civil society.

After the merger of ERRA and CERA in April 1996, a new division for rehabilitation and reintegration was - and partly still is - in charge of both ex-fighters and returnees.

### Table 4.2: Mitias reintegration activities undertaken through 1998

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Barefoot bankers</th>
<th>Counseling and guidance</th>
<th>Agriculture</th>
<th>Credit</th>
<th>Training</th>
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<td>17</td>
<td>6,500</td>
<td>950</td>
<td>1434</td>
<td>9500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>55</td>
<td>14,500</td>
<td>5350</td>
<td>5410</td>
<td>13500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ERREC, 1999

### 4.4 Reintegration in practice

The overall co-ordination and responsibilities for the reintegration programs were initially vested in CERA and ERRA and later were taken over by ERREC. The line Ministries carried out the actual implementation of most program activities. After 1995 the implementation was done through the relevant sectoral Ministries in cooperation with capacity building and institutional strengthening assistance being provided by the development partners. In the following the author reviews the various activities of the reintegration programs implemented by the Eritrean government and the donor community for both returning refugees and ex-fighters, focusing mainly on their shortcomings.

#### 4.4.1 Support activities for reintegration

Unlike PROFERI, assistance to ex-fighters was provided along four lines: settlement for agriculture, self-employment in rural or urban small-scale business, employment opportunities in the modern sector [public or private] and on-the-job training. Former fighters were not provided with inputs such as seeds and tools, as their Demobilisation money was meant to act as start-up capital.
4. 4. 1.1 Credit scheme
It might be useful to recall that the government gives priority to the development and diversification of the financial sector and encourages the growth of micro-finance institutions, in rural as well as in urban areas of the country, where unmet needs for credit are prevalent. While the Government acts as a catalyst in this endeavor, the goal is to rely ultimately on private, group and community initiatives. Loan scheme facilities were – and still are – dispersed by using the ex-fighters’ military service payment as collateral. The amount of loan depends on the length of the time the individual fighter has served in the armed struggle, and thus service payment is calculated at the rate of US $ 30 per month. It is this debt of the government that is currently used as collateral by ex-fighters.

Eritrea’s community of self-help structures continues to provide a safety net for local residents. The following example provides an illustration. During the Ethiopian occupation the inhabitants of 67 villages of former Seraye province had accumulated a profit of 1.75 million Birr from running several people’s shops. After contemplating how to spend the money they agreed to use it as a revolving fund for their province and looked for help in establishing a structure for a credit scheme. Returning refugees from Sudan had some experience with a credit scheme run by ACORD and asked for technical assistance. The Eritrean government made additional resources available. The credit scheme started in 1993 and came to be known as the Seraye People’s Credit and Saving Scheme (SPCSS).

Revolving funds among members of an association, be they self-help or affiliated to religious institutions are not new to the country. There are many self-help associations that use the revolving fund as an occasion to associate once or twice per month. Eritrean living in urban and rural areas form small groups and collects money and distributes it in rotation. In the highlands it is called Ekube and in the lowlands is known as Sanduke. The weak point of this arrangement is that it does not include a saving component.

After assessing the traditional mechanisms of self-help, the Ministry of Local Government (MLG) designed a credit scheme comprising a savings component and started a pilot program in 1996. This intervention accorded legal status to the self-help mechanisms and provides a basis for the development of local savings and micro-credit groups. At present the majority of communities have elected committees which are handling financial transactions on behalf of the community. Currently this

30 For more on self-help see Bruchhaus, 1994.
type of financial set-up is working as a safety net all over the country in general, and among returnees in particular.

When they were in camps in Sudan refugees obtained credit from NGOs, but usually were not obliged to repay it. So when credit schemes started in the settlement refugees were keen to take credit but were not interested in repaying. In the process of second dispersment villages that had default were excluded from getting credit. When they realized their village was excluded from the credit scheme those who had not yet benefited and wanted to start their own activities acted like a pressure group and forced those unwilling to pay back their loan to do so. Slowly the system started to function and currently it is working in four administrative regions.

*Mitias* has granted loans to ex-fighters and facilitates access to loans, coupled with technical and administrative assistance, with the aim of helping demobilized fighters carry out economically viable activities. There were two types of loans: special Commercial Bank (CB) loans for ex-fighters and the Revolving Loans Fund (RLF) managed by the Credit Unit of *Mitias*. Altogether 68 *Mitias* staff members - most of them not yet demobilized managed and approved the loans:

- 50 ‘barefoot bankers’ at sub-zone level (each responsible for one sub-Zone),
- 16 credit officers (each responsible for three sub-Zones), and
- 2 credit officers at headquarters’ level.

The so-called ‘barefoot bankers’, half of them female ex-fighters, formed the backbone of the credit system. The project office and bare-foot bankers helped ex-fighters to assess the viability of the project for which the loan is requested. They advised borrowers when need arose and followed up repayments. In order to enable them to fulfill their tasks, they took several training courses organized by ACORD and National Insurance Company of Eritrea. ACORD also worked out the rules and procedures of the RLF, following more or less the example of the *Gramean* Bank in Bangladesh.

The credit scheme run by *Mitias* has progressed well and the repayment rate in 1996 was 85 percent (*Mitias* report, 1996). Most of the activities were in former Seraye Province. The main reason for this was the existence of the credit scheme run by ACORD in the province. *Mitias* started its credit scheme in 1994 and chose this area to get experience. After developing their capacity over one year they started replicating it in all other regions in 1995. In the process more than 60 bare-foot bankers were trained and a full-fledged program was started in 1996 when ERRA and CERA were merged. At the start of the scheme the available amount was 2 million Birr, and when
it was stopped in 1998\textsuperscript{31} the net capital in circulation was 32 million Birr. In its initial stage the program had benefited from a GTZ grant. The maximum loan per person was Birr 5000, with an interest rate of 12 per cent.

Since 1995, the Commercial Bank has also offered loans to ex-fighters according to their collateral. The interest rate ranges from 12-14 percent according to the investment sector and the loan has to be paid back after 1-5 years.

The Revolving Fund (RLF) appears to have performed much better than the Commercial Bank in providing credit facilities. The former had 1176 clients within four months, whereas the CB has only been able to provide loans on a monthly average to less than 50 ex-fighters. The main difference lies in the bureaucratic procedure and lack of interest of the CB staff in relatively small loans. At the same time it should be noted that some beneficiaries of RLF loans consider the maximum amount of 5000 Birr per person as too small.

When in 1995 ex-refugees asked CERA and ERRA (Mitias) if they could be included in the loan scheme, their request was turned down. The reason given was that they were not able to present a guarantor or collateral. This created understandable resentment in the ex-refugee community until 1996 when the Ministry of Local Government started a savings-and-credit scheme and included ex-refugees in its target group.

The loan schemes, especially the RLF, can be considered as important instruments for facilitating economic reintegration even though the available funds are limited. According to the findings of the evaluation they have to be considerably increased, especially if the target group is to include returnees. But there are problems in this area and doubts must be raised about both managerial capacity and government commitment.

4. 4. 1. 2 Training

The prolonged war of independence destroyed the basic economic infrastructure and institutions of the country and had a dramatic effect on the health and education of its labor force. The skilled Eritrean workforce was scattered, decimated and unable to take on the task of rebuilding the economy.

\textsuperscript{31} The author tried to find-out why the credit scheme stopped in 1998. The answers he got were conflicting. The official version is that to meet the demand of beneficiaries it needed overhauling. But it seems it also suffered from structural and management approach.
After the country was liberated there was high demand for skilled labor force especially in the construction sector but elsewhere as well. Nearly 3000 Ethiopian nationals who were working in the education sector returned to their country (Mitias, 1993). Shortages of qualified staff were evident in all other sectors of the civil service. There were only two vocational training centers in the whole country and together these could accommodate only 500 students. But the long struggle had endowed EPLF with a rich experience of mesh of theory and practice in areas such as education. The Wina Technical School is one of the best examples of this. After independence the Eritrean government developed several on-the-job training programs providing skills and competencies needed to fill the shortage of short-term labor needs of the country (ibid.).

The donor community was asked to help fund projects or programs that could contribute to capacity and institution building in the country. The government wanted ex-fighters to be trained together with returnees, but this faced problems. Some donor agencies, such as Otto-Benecke-Stiftung (OBS), argued that they could not include ex-fighters in their on-the-job training program:

| Participating in program that includes former military personnel is interpreted as giving military help (Meeting in early 1995, with representatives of MOE and ERRA). |

The author participated as Mitias’s representative in the meeting where this view was articulated. For the Eritreans it made little sense to differentiate between ex-fighters and refugees return because when fighters are demobilized they face the same problems of reintegration to those of refugees returning and their needs should be addressed together. This and similar responses from the donor agencies forced the government to design different programs for more or less the same problems faced by different groups.

From October 1993 up to April 1996, 5500 ex-refugees, ex-fighters and internally displaced persons participated in the on-the-job training programs of ERREC and OBS. Other institutions like Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Construction and Ministry of Fishery also organized training courses. All in all 13,600 individuals benefited from these different schemes (ERREC, 1998). At the end of 1996 an independent consultant conducted an evaluation and concluded that beneficiaries had used the skills training effectively. The selection of trainees took into consideration the returnees to rural Eritrea. In order to accommodate them training centers were opened in different places.
The main shortcoming of the training programs was lack of follow-up and of upgrading facilities. When training was conducted the needs, wishes and commitment of the trainees were not always taken into consideration. For example, in a discussion between the author and a group of trainees in 1999 it became clear that some had joined the program only because they were getting pocket money. There was no mechanism for avoiding this pitfall. Since training was given by different institutions, it was difficult to standardize the various courses. Training given to women in sewing and pottery proved to be a total failure for lack of markets for the products.

Following training, most male trainees were able to find employment in the building sector, which has started to boom in Eritrea. Female returnees are still constrained by their lack of mobility and traditional norms, which see the building sector as men’s territory. To counter the gender bias Mitias and ACORD had reached an agreed to build a child-care centre in Keren. The aim was,

a) to create temporary employment for a large number of women, for the premises were to be built only by women;
b) to give women an opportunity to acquire skills that would enable them to enter the male dominated construction sector;
c) to demonstrate to the public that women are also able to build houses on their own which would in the long run contribute to change the general attitude towards women performing tasks considered to be men’s domain.

Training women only in traditional fields such as mat weaving, basket making, tailoring, embroidery or typing is not insufficient for their income-generating opportunities; nor does it break the gender bias. According to an evaluation by Mitias the training program in traditional female crafts was a complete failure and therefore was phased out in 1995 (interview with acting head of Mitias, Teckle Mengistu Asmara, 12 February 1999). But as it will be discussed in chapter four, training women exclusively in male dominated skills by males is not a solution either, as it will not overcome the biased attitude of the employers.

4.4.1.3 Settlements: Case studies
Agricultural settlement projects play a major role in reintegration strategies. They make it possible to relocate a large number of people and are expected to ensure their livelihoods and raise agricultural production. Agricultural settlement was initially expected to absorb a significant number of former fighters and ex-refugees, considering that most of them were of rural origin.

But prior to the selection of candidates no information was collected concerning the number of refugees, their socio-economic status and ethnic identity, where they were
living and what they were doing in Sudan nor were former refugees were not asked about their preferences. This lack of knowledge was a serious drawback.

The preparation of settlement sites was planned according the following lines:
1. A major criterion for selecting resettlement sites was suitability for agricultural activities. Returnees were to be brought to selected sites and provided with temporary shelter, food and basic health and social services;
2. permanent social and economic infrastructure would be established when returnees had demonstrated their intention to stay on the site;
3. A range of rehabilitation packages would support different livelihood strategies.

The author has chosen three settlements as a basis for assessing the impact of the reintegration program on returnees. Namely:
1. Mahmimet in Northern Red Sea Region;
2. Ali-Ghidir and Alebu in Gash Setit, in Western Lowland and;
3. Ghinda and Gahtelai, in the Eastern Escarpments, also Northern Red Sea Region.

1. **Mahmimet** is situated in the northern Sahel about 45 Km from Karura, a town bordering Sudan. It is one of the districts in Sahel sub-Zone with the most desperate and urgent need of assistance. Mahmimet was one of the biggest military garrisons in Northern Sahel. Mahmimet has a more hostile environment than any other settlement areas in Eritrea. In other places in Eritrea, e.g. in Western Lowland, the ex-refugees could start farming right from their arrival to Eritrea. In Mahmimet, even eight years after returning from Sudan, virtually no tangible farming activities take place, and a family’s average livestock herd is still not more than 8-10 goats and a donkey. Very few of the inhabitants of Mahmimet own more than one camel.

The atrocities committed by the Ethiopian army in this region were particularly cruel and most of its inhabitants, including people who were living in the suburbs, left for Sudan in early 1970. Yet, it is an area that has not been able to attract the attention of international donors, be they multilateral, bilateral or NGOs. The only international organization that has worked in the area is the Norwegian NGO Redd Barna. Redd Barna Sudan proposed the original aims and objectives of the **Mahmimet** resettlement project in May 1992. But work didn’t start until 1993 and was completed only in 1996. The overall aim of the project was:

1. To provide proper shelter for 500 families (ex-refugees/local) in Mahmimet;
2. To provide education facilities for the area in question;
3. To improve drinking water supply;

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4. To render advice to any party involved in the process;
5. To increase Redd Barna’s knowledge of repatriation and reintegration;
6. To install a grinding mill; and
7. To support the Mahmimet clinic.

The target population estimated to have organized/spontaneously returned to Mahmimet was 6000. But currently less than 2,500 ex-refugees are living in Mahmimet. The main reason for the decrease of inhabitants of Mahmimet was that people who had returned spontaneously were not entitled to get help from the program until it was revised in 1996. Thus the spontaneous returnees left the settlement site to fend for themselves. Many who are still living in Mahmimet hope to leave as soon as they receive their reintegration money.

Presently, 58 houses have been erected, each containing 4 units (‘apartments’) providing shelter for 232 families, which is less than half of the number targeted in the project plan. Beneficiaries have been allocated accommodation, but so far less than 20 percent of them have moved in. The explanation given for their behavior was that the houses were too small and too hot, and all had built their grass house besides the new building and their animals were sheltering in there. When the author asked the inhabitants of Mahmimet whether they had been consulted what type of house they wanted, the reply was no. Mahmimet is a community with relatively ‘good housing’ although it is not suitable for the climate of the region, as the roofing is made of corrugated iron sheets and during the hot season it is like an oven. Compared to other settlements it has good educational and health services although their sustainability is questionable. But the biggest problem is that Mahmimet has no sustainable economic base. Currently the gap is bridged by food aid, but this is a temporary measure, not a lasting solution.

Before the project was implemented no baseline study was conducted, either of the area or of the beneficiaries. Had this been done, it would have directed project activities more in line with the ex-refugees’ own perceived needs, problems and aspirations. It would have made sense if the project activities had been geared towards income generating activities, such as horticulture and livestock rearing rather than towards the construction of cement houses.

The main problem affecting Mahmimet, apart from the poor environmental conditions is its isolation. It is in a very remote and inaccessible area. This aggravates the obvious economic disadvantage of the community.

It is possible to go to other areas for farming and herding, but it is in Mahmimet that facility like market, water, school, clinic, grinding mill and
houses are found. People have become used to these services and want to
live in areas where they are available (interview with key informant
Mahmimet, 23 December 1999).

Thus the inhabitants of Mahmimet are trapped by the services they receive. But if we
see at their social, economic conditions the problem lies elsewhere. For example, on
the social level most of the young people grew up in refugee camps in the Sudan. On
the economic level, there is no employment opportunity whatsoever; the livestock
component is insignificant; and agriculture is not possible because people lack seeds
and arable land. Environmentally, the area is extremely arid and inhospitable with
vegetation only along the streams. In the PROFERI initial program the modality
designed for the Red Sea coastal Zone model was spate irrigation with the provision
of inputs and livestock. But when it was implemented the intervention took little
account of these guidelines and was the same irrespective of their experience,
environment, gender...etc. Instead of a small community a rather big community was
settled in Mahmimet. The only plausible reason for this was that Redd Barna had
built a clinic, houses, boreholes and a school, which had a pull effect on the
spontaneous returnees.

Ali-Ghidir and Alebu: both settlements are located in Gash-Setit. Alebu was selected
as a study area by the author because it was a settlement site for ex-refugees only. It is
situated 30 kilo-meters east of Tessenai, a town on the border with Sudan. Ali-Ghider
is located at 12 km north of Tessenai; previously it was an irrigated cotton plantation.
Alebu was initially planned to house 500 ex-refugee families. Currently over 1,300
families have settled in Alebu. Alebu settlement is unique insofar as all ethnic groups
except Rashaida are living together, thus representing Eritrea in microcosm.
The main NGO involved in the rehabilitation programs in Alebu was ACORD. The
focus of their intervention was to provide shelter. ACORD followed the basic
PROFERI document, which identifies five specific objectives in relation to the shelter
component:

1. To ensure that ex-refugees settle in well planned villages;
2. To develop technical and administrative capacity to produce building
   materials;
3. To develop income generating activities based largely on block making and
   production of fibber-reinforced cement roofing tiles;
4. To explore community based cost-sharing and cost-recovery options
   including credit mechanisms for house construction and improvement; and
5. To ensure that both ex-refugees and other households have equitable access
   to program benefits in the long run, and that priority is given to the most
vulnerable groups such as those who are disabled female heads and elderly people.

The number of houses to be built by ACORD with the involvement of the community was 800-1000. By the end of the project more than 1,300 houses were built (ACORD, 1996). Contrary to what happened in other settlements, people were consulted about their preferences and participated in the planning.

ACORD’s approach comprised the following elements:

- People were involved in design and choice of house type;
- The self-help component was voluntary;
- Tile production took place on the site. ACORD trained individuals in its training centre in Keren and Ghinda and generated income for those engaged in the production;
- Selected settlers got on-the-job training in house construction. Some of the groups who were trained by ACORD are now working in construction of small bridges with a company engaged in the construction of the road from Keren to Tessenai;

Discussions were conducted informally as well as in formal meetings, and three model houses were built. The preferred model was a simple 4m by 4m house built with stabilized soil blocks and covered with cement fiber tiles. A tile production unit on the site provided tiles. The returnees produced the stabilized blocks. Stone, salt, soil, lime and water were available locally. The only raw material, which needed to be brought from Asmara were timber for roofs and door and window frames, cement, nails and fittings. The average cost of a one-room house was 4,000-4200 Birr 1995 (ACORD, 1996). All in all the shelter building approach developed by ACORD compared with the intervention of other NGOs and CERA proved to be efficient and effective.

Ali-Ghidir: Previously Ali-Ghidir was a private cotton plantation until the Ethiopian government in mid 1970 nationalized it. From 1985 onward the plantation was producing cash crops. The initial size of the irrigation scheme was 16,000 hectares. But in 1994 only 6,000 hectares were usable because of the neglect the scheme had suffered under the Ethiopian government.

The Government of Eritrea decided to use the irrigation plantation for resettlement of returnees and allocated 60 million Birr for its rehabilitation.33 It should be noted that, in the planning stages of Ali-Ghider project, there was no comprehensive

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33 Personal communication with the project head of Ali-Ghidir 20 January, 2000 Asmara
reintegration program to include both ex-refugees and ex-fighters. 2350 ex-fighters and 436 ex-refugees were settled in the initial year of 1994 (Mitias, 1994). Whereas each ex-fighter was allocated two hectares of land for cash crops (cotton and sesame) and one hectare for sorghum, an ex-refugee got only one hectare for sorghum. Also the ex-fighters irrespective of their sex were allocated the same area of land, so that a fighter couple had six hectares while an ex-refugee family only one hectare. In the later stage of the project the allocation of land was the same for all categories.

The Government provided all settlers with food ration, blankets, tents and kitchen utensils for the first year, thus enabling the ex-fighters to keep their Demobilisation money to invest or hire additional labor, whereas the ex-refugees had no or only an insignificant capital. This difference of treatment led to class differentiation within the rather homogeneous fighters’ community and created resentment among the ex-refugee community. Initially only veteran ex-fighters were given the chance to settle in this rather privileged scheme. Although it is understandable that they might be given preferential treatment, this had its drawbacks. Because of their long stay in the armed struggle, most of the veteran ex-fighters had physical problems and could not cope with the physical demanding farm work.

The Government decided that technical and management services should be provided free for the first year. But after the first harvest the beneficiaries were expected to pay the full cost of the technical and management services. Given the complex task of managing the mechanization and irrigation services required to run the plantation, it was felt necessary to maintain the former state farm management structure intact. But this had serious drawbacks, as the management tasks were not clearly delineated and therefore created misunderstandings and tension between the management and the settlers which put the project under threat of collapse.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Ex-fighters</th>
<th>Ex-refugees and host community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>946</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>1219</td>
<td>604</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>773</td>
<td>367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>535</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source Ali-Ghidir Project 1999

The expectations among the ex-fighters and ex-refugees were quite different. The former fighters, no doubt because of the sacrifices they had made during the struggle and because their basic needs had always been taken care of by the Front, expected
more from the Government than the returnees did. They seemed disillusioned about the time it was taking to return to normal civilian life and the difficulties of making ends meet. At a meeting in which the author participated in 1996, the representatives of the ex-fighter community listed a number of problems they faced, concerning health services, water supply, shelter and credit. They expressed their feeling that the assistance provided was far less than they had hoped to receive. On the other hand, interviews with the project management and Mitias field officers indicated that, apart from some components, which were still being organized, the assistance packages had been provided according to plan. The former fighters did not seem to realize that their needs could not be met in totality, as there are similar or even greater needs elsewhere in the society at large, for example those of ex-refugees. The latter, in fact presented fewer complaints and demands.

*Co-operazione Italiana*, the development agency of the Italian government, gave a grant of U.S. $ 2.4 million to be used by Mitias for building shelters for returnees in Ali-Ghider, renovating the administration quarter of the project, building administration premises for Mitias in Tessenai, and to equipping the plantation clinic with new houses and medicine. An estimated 300 houses were planned to be built through the end of 1995 and sold to the inhabitants of Ali-Ghider on a credit basis, to be paid within four to five years. The money collected was supposed to be used as a revolving fund for the scheme to build additional hoses or fund other activities chosen by the inhabitants of Ali-Ghider. It was only in 1997 that the 300 houses were completed.

In assessing the economic benefits of the project, it is important to distinguish between individual benefits and general economic achievements. The most successful settlers were able to produce as much as forty quintals of cotton in one year, which represents an income between 20,000 and 30,000 Nakfa, after deducting expenditure for inputs and services. On the other side those who could not reach at least 20 quintals were not able to pay for their inputs and were asked to leave the scheme by the management.

From the point of view of the project management, all in all, the Ali-Ghidir scheme has been economically successful, even though some individuals could not make it, as they were not able to assimilate the required know-how, or were not prepared for the hard work and other requirements. Some who left the cotton plantation however are engaged in similar agricultural activity in more unpredictable conditions of rain fed agriculture. In contrast to the view of the Ali-Ghider administration who regarded any shortcomings as due to deficiencies of former fighters, the latter have a different interpretation and complained about the delay of the housing scheme. Ex-
fighters had to live in rudimentary temporary shelters, mainly made out of grass and straw, for several years and still some were living in these precarious conditions when they were re-mobilized in 1998/99.

The management admits that there have been some technical problems like insufficient water supply for irrigation, poor soil quality of some plots, etc. But it is expected that the settlers will improve their capacity to cope with these problems and that management and infrastructure will be brought up to a sufficient level. This is rather a simplistic view of the complex situation in the scheme. A more critical assessment of all factors is required, rather than putting all the blame on the settlers. Interviews with former settlers of the irrigation scheme in December 1998 indicated that the main reason they left was not because the work was hard but because they were not clear about the fate of the irrigation scheme. Some even commented that they did not understand whether they were owners or tenants. They had tried hard to find answers, but when it was too much they just left the scheme to lead their new lives elsewhere.

It should also be taken into consideration that, apart from the individual gains, the project has a considerable impact on the national economy. Through its supply of cotton and seeds, it has saved precious foreign currency and helped to revitalize the textile and oil factories of the country. This, of course, has a positive impact on employment as well, but should not be at the expense of the settlers.

Up to 1997 all the cotton produced were sent to Asmara for ginning. In order to minimize the cost of the cotton production and preserve the environment, a ginnery has been established at Ali-Ghidir since 1998. Before ginning a truck could take only 150 quintals of cotton. Now that it is compressed a truck can take 220 quintals of cotton, reducing the transport costs. The factory produces from briquettes cotton and sesame straw, which are used as charcoal for household fuel and bakery. At a later stage it is planned to add oil and animal fodder production, which will provide some additional employment possibilities. But all this points toward one fact that is the settlers of irrigation schemes cannot be self-sustainable within one year.

In spite of economic progress, the ex-fighters seem to be less integrated in Ali-Ghidir than the ex-refugees. Although both communities are engaged in the same economic activities, their living patterns are different. The former refugees have settled with their families in their traditional housing structures called ‘Aget’, whereas most of the ex-fighters are still living as they did during the struggle. This encourages them to

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34 Aget is a round type of house mostly found in the lowlands of Eritrea usually Tigre ethnic group
retain their fighter mentality and identity, rather than look upon themselves as individual citizens. Because of the harsh climatic conditions, the lack of proper housing and other facilities and the lack of off-farm income generating possibilities, almost all are living alone, without their families whom they join after the harvest.

Such separate living arrangements may hamper successful reintegration. The fact that instead of setting up a common community organization each category has its own village or camp administration committee can also be seen as potentially a divisive factor. On the other hand, this does not seem to have hindered the two communities living and working in harmony with one another. In fact, it seems the physical merging of the two categories has not created resentment. I did not come across any obvious signs of friction or hear of pique between the various communities while staying with them for more than three months apart the normal conflict of interest found in any community.

The only time the ex-fighters were regarded as change agents was in settlement programs. The idea of creating settlements for fighters was seen as an initial step to pave the way to absorb a bigger number of ex-refugees returning from Sudan. As well as Ali-Ghidir, three other settlements namely, Sabunait, Jimel and Gifate, was also being set-up in 1995-1996 with this intention. The main reason behind this plan was to give the ex-fighters a chance to act as ‘change-agents’, to serve as examples especially for the returning refugees and the community in general. But the program was not well conceived and lacked adequate financial resources. Besides, they could have only acted as change agents if they would have lived in a community and if their experience had been given its due value.

1. Ghinda is a town located around 45 kilometers east of Asmara, about 1000 meters above sea level. Most of the spontaneous returnees of Ghinda were former Saho agro-pastoralists. Before their flight, most of the ex-refugees were not permanent settlers, but after they returned from exile they decided to leave their former lifestyle and settle. When asked what they were doing before they went into exile, most said they had been taking care of their cattle, working as farm workers or engaged in charcoal production or in trade. They had been fending for their livelihood without expecting any help. But because of the atrocities committed by the Ethiopian army in early 1970, most of the Saho community in and around Ghinda left for Sudan where they lived until independence. When the author asked the key informants of the settlement why they hadn’t gone back to their previous place, he responded,
They don’t want their kids to be like them. They were following their cattle and goats and the only difference they have compared to their animals is they can communicate with people. So by staying in Ghinda, we can give our sons and daughters education and bright future (Informal discussion with elders of Ghinda, 12 April 1999).

This is in contradiction with the assumption, which found its way into the PROFERI program, that the returnees would go into farming and even become ‘good farmers’. The underlying idea was that the refugees who went to the Sudan were of rural origin and therefore their reintegration into agricultural schemes would offer the easiest solution to the problem at hand. But the following typical example of spontaneous returnees to Ghinda proves it wrong.

For example, after having collected some information about the situation in Eritrea in general and in Ghinda in particular, a refugee community from Semsem had sent three elderly refugees in 1995 to make sure that they could return to resettle in Ghinda. Recognizing the desire and eagerness of the refugees to return home, CERA decided to assist those who were ready to repatriate themselves using their own means. The assumption was that since they were originally agro-pastoralists they would go to their indigenous place and resume their former activities. But this proved wrong, for the Saho community did not return to their original place nor exercise their previous agro-pastoralist activities. Instead they settled two kilometers away from the Ghinda-Massawa main road. The area was formerly a plantation owned by an Italian entrepreneur known by the name of Guido De Nadai.

Gahtelai lies at the foot of the eastern escarpment, halfway between Asmara and Massawa. Its location near the main road has helped it grow into a town. During the summer it is extremely hot and during the winter it does not rain much. Ex-refugees, ex-fighters, local indigenous people and some people from other parts of the country inhabit the settlement. It is surrounded by a lot of flat land suitable for agriculture. Most of the ex-refugees are Saho, and although originally pastoralists, they got used to agriculture during their stay in Semsem. The local population is mainly composed of Tigre.

To avoid prolonged dependence on relief aid, CERA requested assistance from AUSCARE, an Australian NGO, to help relocate 600 families in the Gahtelai area so that they could take part in agricultural activities. All in all 240 houses were constructed with a clinic and a nice school. From the start Gahtelai was created to ease the problem of Ghinda. As in most of other settlements, however no proper need

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35 Semsem was a refugee camp for Eritreans in Sudan.
assessment was conducted. Ex-refugees moved to Gahtelai only because they were offered housing, health care; education and food aid, facilities which they were used while their stay in the refugee camps in Sudan. When the author talked with the elders of Gahtelai about their livelihood they complained:

What is the use of having ‘nice houses’ a clinic, a school, if in the end of the day you depend on the handouts of the government? If the government can help us in building a diversion canal to the valley behind our village we would have worked on spate irrigation like our forefathers. Now all our resource is gone, even we don’t have draft animals to build Agume36 (informal discussion with Gahtelai elders, 01 March 1999).

Currently all the integration projects are finished but reading the final reports of the projects and visiting the project sites one can see that none of the sites has reached the stage of sustainability or functions as a village. In the three mentioned settlements no long-term economic activities are being conducted which would allow the community to become sustainable after the termination of the ongoing program. Three settlements were created in western and eastern lowlands in Eritrea.

For example, building schools or clinics or for that matter bore holes cannot be sustainable if the inhabitants cannot afford to run them once the projects are finished. Starting from the beginning settlements were not designed involving would-be-inhabitants by putting mechanisms in place that would have allowed them run the activities initiated by the program.

Table 4. 4: Ex‐fighters settlement with ex‐refugees and local inhabitants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Settlement</th>
<th>Ex-fighters Male</th>
<th>Ex-fighters Female</th>
<th>Ex-refugees</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ali‐Ghider</td>
<td>2,001</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>436</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabunaite</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jimel</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gifate</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karamellllo</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gahtelai</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haikota</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agordet</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,748</td>
<td>735</td>
<td>436</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3,944</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Doorombos and Tesfai, 1999

Table 4. 5: Ex-refugees settlements with local inhabitants

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36 Agume is a Tigre word meaning to built a barrier of sand meant to contain a pool of water so that it can be used to water a field.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Settlement</th>
<th>Organized</th>
<th>Spontaneous</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goluge</td>
<td>2,778</td>
<td>3,491</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6,269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fanko</td>
<td>3,291</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>3,831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alebu</td>
<td>4,417</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4,493</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gergef</td>
<td>3,008</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3,053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tebableia</td>
<td>4,049</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4,049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Um-Hajer</td>
<td>405</td>
<td>2,468</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adi-Ibrihim</td>
<td>1,233</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tekreret</td>
<td>1,215</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hagaz</td>
<td>569</td>
<td>1,264</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>7,833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20,965</td>
<td>7,860</td>
<td>6,200</td>
<td>35,025</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source ERREC statistic office 1999

3.5 Wrong assumptions

The wrong assumption that found its way into policy formulation was that the refugees in Sudan all had agricultural origins and that their reintegration into agricultural schemes offered the easiest solution. This orientation was also dictated by serious housing and unemployment problems in urban areas (W/Giorgis, 1999). For example, the difficulties of the ex-refugees in Ghinda experienced during their reintegration lie in the fact that they were wrongly expected to go back to their original place and thus no preparation was made to accommodate them. The situation was further complicated by the fact that until 1999 no ex-refugee was able to get land either for housing or for cultivation. As they were told that their settlement in Ghinda was not permanent, their houses were built for temporary usage. When the author discussed the issue with administrative officers of Ghinda he was told that no land could be allocated because the master plan for the town was yet not adopted. In order to accommodate part of the spontaneous returnees to Ghinda, the government came up with another solution: a new settlement site was created in Gahtelai.

On the basis of the above assumption thirty-seven principal (and thirteen satellite) sites were identified in Gash-Barka and Northern Red Sea Regions to accommodate an estimated settlement size of from 300 to 1000 families. The PROFERI Pilot Phase offered a uniform package to almost all returnee households, regardless of their occupational background, capacity, labor availability or their own priorities. So the majority of the returnee households received the following inputs: (1) Two hectares of arable land accompanied by (i) Food for work for communal clearing, (ii) Free tractor service for one year, (iii) Seeds, (iv) Hand tools. 2. Agricultural extension service and pest control (3) Livestock valued US$ 420 (Birr 2,500), vaccination of the animals at the time of purchase and free veterinary service for one year.37

37 I US $ was exchanged at the rate of 6.25 Birr at that time.
For example, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) contributed US$ 1.4 million for the agriculture component of the PROFERI Pilot Phase. The majority of beneficiaries chose sheep and goats (91.5 percent of the 34,340 animals which were distributed) followed by donkeys (5.9 percent), instead of large animals such as oxen (02 percent), cows (1.5 percent) and camels (0.8 percent) (Kibreab, 1998).

In consequence of displacement and resettlement in Sudan, refugees were subject to experiences that didn’t fit to their original background. When the packages of assistance were designed, the experiences the refugees had accumulated during their stay in Sudan were not given due consideration. On their arrival in Eritrea, the ex-refugees were settled in selected sites of CERA in the countryside. The major criterion for selecting a site for settlement was its suitability for agricultural activities (ERREC, 1997). Any returnee settling in one of the designated sites was entitled to get the integration package. The ones who returned to Eritrea spontaneously didn’t get any help until 1996.

But identifying a settlement at the least requires a detailed study of the rainfall pattern. In addition habitability and sustainability should be thoroughly studied and non-crop and non-agricultural activities must be taken on board. In an interview conducted with staff members of ERREC who had participated in the implementation of the Pilot Phase, the author learned that no proper study had been conducted to ascertain the profile of the returnees and the selected settlement sites.38 Nor consultation was done with the inhabitants of the nearby villages to sort out problems of land, water, and grazing area and to know the regularity of rainfall or availability of water…etc. It is argued that staff and financial constraints pushed the government to embark on earliest possible implementation and thus it was forced to adopt a non-diversified approach.

There was no involvement of refugees in the discussions and decisions related to their future. Nor was there any counseling by UNHCR and NGO staff, who worked among them about their fears, hopes and expectations. In spite of the fact that some refugees had spent a lifetime in Sudan, UNHCR and government still considered repatriation as merely a logistic operation, that is involving transportation, supply of food in transit, reception…etc. The repatriation of capital assets (communally or individually owned) was not negotiated for the benefit of the refugees. Where capital could be moved home, UNHCR and the Sudanese government could not negotiate waiving taxes, and thus refugees could not pay taxes. Communally owned property

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38 One anonymous member of the implementation group told the author the study of selecting one site took two-hours minimum and two days maximum.
posed a particular problem when refugee groups were repatriated particularly into different directions. The government of Sudan had imposed restrictions on immovable property. In the case of communal property the only solution was to sell it cheap. Even when refugees were forced to sell their communal and individual assets at low prices, no official arrangements were made to secure a positive exchange rate for their currency. The ex-refugees were reduced again to relief rations and basic utensils distributed at reception sites and upon arrival at their respective destinations. Due to the unfavorable conditions in which the repatriation process took place, the ex-refugees were once again pushed into destitution.

The author discussed the livestock package with the elders of the three settlements. Nearly all of them considered it as useless. For example, the inhabitants of Alebu unanimously refused to accept the livestock component of the agriculture package recalling the experience of neighboring villages. All their animals had perished because most were not of good quality, or didn’t adapt to the climate. Another problem was that many beneficiaries had no, or only little, knowledge in animal husbandry and were short of family labor, or had no means to hire herders and therefore were unable to look after the animals they had received. This led to high animal mortality.

Also the number of animals given to the beneficiaries was too small [8-11 goats/sheep or one camel or two heads of cattle], far below the customarily defined viable herd size (50-70 heads) in the area. The consequence of this was that even those returnee households with long-standing experience in animal husbandry could not make use of their traditional knowledge because they did not consider it worthwhile to allocate full time family labor to look after a small number of animals. In the settlement areas, livestock owners engage in seasonal long-distance migration, designed partly to take advantage of variation in the environment and partly to let the nearby grazing areas rest. The returnee households could not afford to do likewise because to deploy their family labor in this way had relate to greater opportunity cost related to other forms of economic activities, e.g. wage labor, than herding a small number of animals on a full time basis.

On the social level, most of the young people grew up in the refugee camps in the Sudan. They do not know the current environment and have never learned how to live in it and with it. The ones who left their former places [western lowlands] in their

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39 The key informants told the author in December 1999 that livestock was bought from Sudan or Ethiopia and due to the change in climate most of the animals didn’t adapt to the new environment and died after a short time, or they were of poor quality and did not survive the shortage of rainfall.
adult years might still know the natural environment, but the social environment with its networks and institutions, which they earlier had depended so heavily on, is to-day totally changed. On the economic level, there are few employment possibilities that can accommodate what they had learned while in exile.

Assistance packages must be attuned to both needs and the broader context in which incomes are generated and sustained. For example, the programme offered livestock, but this was not high on the list of priorities of returnee households. Nor were the number of animals granted (8-10) sufficient to form the basis of a viable herd. In consequence many animals ended up in the market.

The other main intervention of the PROFERI Pilot Phase was shelter. In Eritrea before liberation, war and insecurity dominated the economy and society. Population mobility was an important survival mechanism for many Eritrean communities. Yet displacement was destabilizing because it resulted in living in a foreign country with little security. Liberation implies an end to exile and forced mobility and the potential for a stake in a settled existence. The idea of a house or home in Eritrea is not that of a single building, but of a homestead with a number of different components. A kitchen, a veranda for receiving guests and for outdoor sleeping, a shed for small animals and calves, a latrine and maybe in the case of some ethnic groups, a separate house, or separate sleeping quarters for men and women. It is the whole compound, which is ‘home’ not just the house. When thus the word ‘abaiti’ or ‘gezauti’\textsuperscript{40} are used for ‘housing’ what people have in mind is not a single roomed house, but a homestead with several functional buildings and structures. The layout of these structures is extremely important and varies with the traditions of the different ethnic groups. For example, Beni-Amer and Nara arranged their compounds differently from Tigrinya families. CERA has calculated that space to be 375 sq. meters, which is adequate according to the responses of ex-refugees.

For many ex-refugees shelters are a stabilizing element and an important basis for carrying out economic activities. It was envisaged that ex-refugees should contribute to the building of their own houses. In the first PROFERI documents, a certain degree of cost-recovery was advocated. But in the event self-help and community participation were downgraded. There were several explanations for this.

- The first relates to the time factor. It has been argued that housing is an emergency need, which cannot await community participation. This was a point put by CERA in 1993 and 1994 to donors. It led to the construction of

\textsuperscript{40} Abaiti is a Tigré word and Gezauti is Tigrina word, Tukul is Bilen and all the words in different languages mean houses.
• Secondly, the vulnerability argument: there are many vulnerable returnee households who could not be expected to contribute labor or other resources, that housing has to be a service given to them for free.

• Thirdly, the dependency syndrome\textsuperscript{41} argument, which said that it was unlikely that ex-refugees, who were used to living from hand-outs in Sudan, are unlikely to be mobilized for any substantial self-help contribution and community participation at all.

But all the above points proved invalid, in the settlements as well as elsewhere. The response of ex-refugees was,

Our nails are still sharp. What we need is work, work, work and we can be self-reliant on our own initiatives (interview with \textit{baito} head of Guluj, Mussa Ahmed, 23 March 1999).

Government programs and especially the settlement projects have run into other problems as well. Among are the following:

• Conflicts over existing land rights (see, for example, Hansen, 1994);

• High expectations; after receiving basic housing and other support for many years in some areas (Mahmimet, Alebu, Gahtelai) returnees complained about unfulfilled promises e.g. maintenance of shelter, land, and provision of social services;

• Nearly one fifth of households in the settlements are women-headed; as with female ex-fighters, shortage of labor has been a major problem for them; and

• Problems typical for large-scale, mechanized agricultural development schemes lack of or long delay in delivery of centrally controlled tractor services. (For more details see Mehreteab, 2000).

It would take us too far to examine the reasons for all problems mentioned, the main one being the missing national framework in which the different interventions could be interwoven and an operational plan for all measures would have been established. These preconditions is missing, the implementation of the various projects tended to be ad hoc. Linked to this there was no clear-cut strategy, which could have guided the decisions, which had been in the hands of the government and its partners. This mainly concerns choice of the type of approach of integration and the various forms of support and the selection of the type of agricultural technology.

\textsuperscript{41} Regarding the myth of dependency syndrome the thesis will present more detailed findings in the coming chapters
4.5.1 Settlement versus community approach
What is surprising in respect of all three settlements reported in here is the absence of long term economic activities which might have allowed the settlement community to become sustainable after termination of the support interventions. The returnees got schools, clinics, dispensaries and bore holes, but all these facilities are in isolated areas, far from viable communities. The overall program remains uncoordinated. So in the end implementation has tended to be ad hoc. This is due to mainly two factors. First, all the projects had a life span of only one to four years. This is too short a timeframe for a complicated process including intricate social, economic and environmental factors to develop. Second, settlements were not designed to function as viable communities. When the PROFERI program was devised in 1994, all the preconditions and components essential for setting up a settlement were identified; when it came to implementation, however, most of them were bypassed. But the basic question is, was putting ex-refugees/ex-fighters in settlements a good solution to the reintegration problem? This issue will be further pursued in the coming chapters. Here the main question concerns what were the reasons the Eritrean government chose the settlement approach.

It seems that the main reason was the same as that of the origin of the villagisation policy implemented in 1993-94:

The intention to relocate as many people as possible from dispersed communities in one central location – situated on a main road - in order to make them benefit from the facilities set up by the Government, e.g. schools, clinics, water supply, transport etc (Hansen, 1994: 34).

From an economic point of view it might be argued that establishing a central point, or for our purpose a settlement reduces the cost of service provision. But building a new school cannot be as cheap as to adding one or two classes to an existing village school. There seems to be another reason for the preference of settlements by the partner agencies, mainly NGOs, and the government: the need for a ‘showcase’ to present their important role. If the projects – health posts, schools, bore holes - are implemented within an already existing community, their contribution is ‘invisible’ and there is no ‘showcase’ to be presented to the funding agency. But this is not the only reason for questioning the suitability of settlements for reintegration purposes. Among other disadvantages are the following:

- There is hardly any interaction with neighboring village communities and little opportunity to build up a relationship.
- It is not easy to strike a balance between the interests of the settlers and the host community, concerning such issues as land, grazing areas, water…etc;
• Compared with the host community returnees can be seen as privileged, this can create resentment in the host community.
• Both returning refugees and ex-fighters have been exposed to different ways of life and experiences and thus have developed different norms, values and attitudes; putting them together in settlements is not conducive to them entering into main stream society.

4.3.2 Agro-pastoralism: the neglected dimension
Programs of support for Eritrean (agro)-pastoralists date back to the period of the armed struggle in 1980 and have included, alongside distribution of food relief, the provision of education and health facilities, livestock vaccination campaigns and veterinary services. During the struggle, these activities were seen as a means of addressing the historical neglect of public service provision in the lowland communities, and as a way of mobilizing political support in those areas. It proved to an important investment in social capital. In the period following independence, strategies for developing (agro) pastoralism concentrated on improving the quality of animals, with the aim of increasing the commercialization of livestock. While these achievements are commendable, a major shortcoming of such initiatives has been the tendency to neglect the provision of livestock (other than oxen) other than through replacement of the losses caused by war and drought (see, Silken, et. al., 1992; UNDP, 1992; Cliffe, 1996). In the PROFERI program the replenishing of herds was initially planned, but badly implemented.

In all the sites the author visited during the course of fieldwork, the ex-refugees owned only a small number of animals. Few had sufficient animals to meet their basic needs and inconsequence sold their reproductive animals, thus foregoing the chance to rebuild a herd. But this is not the only example of neglect. According to the COPE findings of 1995 (agro) pastoralists were the least likely to benefit from food- or cash-for-work schemes implemented by MOA there are a number of reasons for this.
• The activities tended to concentrate on soil and water conservation, which are not of primary concern to (agro) pastoralists.
• Public works programs need high-density populations, which is not a characteristic of (agro) pastoralists' communities.

There seems to be an implicit assumption that (agro) pastoral practices of the lowland people are inferior to those of the sedentary population in the highlands (Hadas Eritra, 12 April 1997). This attitude was also clearly expressed during a seminar conducted for shemagle and elders in Massawa in March 1998, in which the author participated. One of the higher officials of Northern Red Sea Zone explained that people in the region needed modernization of agriculture, implying large scale farming supported
by mechanization, as it is already practiced in other regions of the country. He also called for abolition of parcellation as is traditionally practiced by Eritrean agropastoralists. Highland Eritrea is suffering from acute land shortage. According to their land distribution systems high land villages in Eritrea distribute land every seven years and accommodate newly married couple in the process and thus create over parcellation and was stopped in some areas for it was not practical to allocate land for new entry. There is no official policy of enforced sedentarisation in Eritrea, but the trend is obvious. And it can be expected to fail as it has often failed elsewhere in Africa (Johnson and Anderson, 1988). In addition this attitude is in contradiction with the declared policy of the Eritrean government to minimize risks of ethnic or religious cleavages by implementing political measures aiming at capitalizing on social capital.

4.5.3 The mechanization bias
In semi-arid areas such as the Eritrean lowlands, one of the most critical factors affecting productivity per unit of cropped land is the date of sowing. This is because rainfall is concentrated in a few weeks, if not a few days and usually is unpredictable. Therefore labor supply has to be flexible. According to the key informants in the region, including staff members of ERREC and MOA, the success of the crops depends mainly on timely sowing. In their view sowing should be done during the first three to five days after the first rains, and if possible it should take place in June. In the settlements as elsewhere in the region, timeliness of sowing is crucial, as one year’s livelihood depends on it.

In order to maximize surface coverage and yields, the Government of Eritrea has decided to use mechanization. The regional department of MOA provides tractor services for field preparation and sowing. But because of a shortage of tractors not all areas can be covered equally. In Gergef the community leaders, key informants and respondents repeatedly complained that the three tractors allocated to the whole settlement were too few to allow timely cultivation. They also complained that drivers spent a lot of time traveling between farms and the village. According to the key informants, tractor drivers were supposed to start at 6 a.m. and finish at 6 p.m., but started at 10 a.m. and finished at 4 p.m. The consequence of this was that many farmers’ plots were planted in August when the prospect for crop failure is virtually certain. Many farmers in Gash Setit also complained that the quality of ploughing by MOA tractors was poor. They believed this was partly because of the inappropriate nature of the disc harrows for the soil conditions and partly because the drivers were excessively concerned with the safety of their agricultural implements.
The following example may underscore the importance of timely planting. Mohamed Nur Ali is a returnee living in Alebu. In 1998, he planted his two hectares using a privately hired tractor in the right time of the raining season (mid June) and harvested 33 sacks of sorghum and 26 sacks of sesame. In 1999, he ploughed the same plot using the free tractor service provided by MOA in mid August. His harvest was only 5 sacks of sorghum. His neighbor who hadn’t waited for free tractor service and had planted in the right time using draught animals got 15 sacks. That year’s rainfall was much higher and distribution was more even throughout the rainy season than in than in 1998. In spite of this, Mohamed experienced crop failure because of untimely planting. The author met many farmers who tell similar stories.

Opinions regarding to the quality of tractor service given by MOA are varied. For example in 1997, sixty nine percent of those of the respondents whose plots were ploughed by tractors of MOA expressed satisfaction. A large minority (31 percent), however, was dissatisfied with the quality of the service. Of those who expressed dissatisfaction, 38 percent (12 percent of the total) reported that the tractors had arrived too late (Kibreab, 1998).

In the farmers’ view, late arrival of tractors was a major cause of crop failure. In Gergef, 80% and in Guluj 33 percent of the farmers were dissatisfied with MOA tractor service. The returnee households in Barka seemed to be more satisfied than in Gash Setit. The difference may reflect the inability MOA to cover all the areas equally. Leaving the cost effectiveness of mechanization aside, it seems that animal power is still needed for ploughing, especially that of camels. As the field work findings from Aditsaída (35 kilometers from Tessenai) show, people who had waited for the MOA tractors to plough their field lost the harvest of 1998, while those who took the initiative to use camels for ploughing had a good harvest.

In the last two years the plots ploughed collectively under the auspices of the Ministry of Agriculture gave high yields compared to those where individuals ploughed themselves. The positive outcome of this seems to have pushed the Ministry of Agriculture to introduce large-scale agriculture based on mechanized farming. How far it will be sustainable is to be seen in the future (Profile, 1999). If a tractor service is to be provided, however, it should be used for land preparation before the rains, and sowing should be done by returnees using traditional methods of cultivation such as draft power, hoes and sulukas. Once the hard soil is broken using tractors, seeds can easily be sowed. But nearly all ex-refugees the author

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42 Sulukas is a traditional method of ploughing in the lowlands of Eritrea.
interviewed are short of draft power; there is a need to alleviate the shortage of draft animals. In 1995 MOA had started giving draft animals on a credit basis in and surrounding debube, but it was not continued. Draft animal distribution on a credit basis however, might be the appropriate solution for the problem of shortage of draft power.

4.6 Conclusion
The Eritrean Government had the political will and vision to design a program for reintegrating refugees and ex-fighters within the wider context of rehabilitation and reconstruction of post-conflict Eritrea. Although acknowledging the need for appropriate financial and technical assistance, it wanted to be fully responsible for identifying its needs and developing the programs according to its own objectives. This conviction was based on the fact that during the struggle the EPLF had been able to gain considerable experience in assisting returning refugees and victims of drought and famine, and even in implementing rehabilitation and development projects, with the help of a few international NGOs. Based on the principles of national sovereignty and self-reliance, the Government opted for national ownership and execution. The integrated approach and the strong will to keep control of the overall reintegration process led to the establishment of a coordinating body in the Office of the President, in charge of negotiating and co-operating with the donor community and directing the rehabilitation and development process. When it comes to implementation of reintegration program a lot of problem crawled in which were not taken into consideration or anticipated.

The donor community – mainly the international organizations such as UNHCR and UNDP – were asked to provide the necessary funds and help develop the capacity required during planning and implementation, rather than execute the program. Unfortunately this approach proved incongruous with the policy of the aid agencies which had offered their assistance.

The plans of the Eritrean government were based on an integrated rehabilitation plus reintegration concept, according to which the resettlement areas would have to be rehabilitated and prepared for the returnees before they were repatriated. The donor community’s rejection of these plans was based on three factors. First, due to different mandates and therefore limited responsibility and competence repatriation and reintegration were typically split and handled as two separate exercises. Second the funding agencies doubted that the Eritrean government would be able to direct and implement the process. Third the funds pledged proved far below what the Eritrean government had asked for. The donors insisted that Eritrea should comply with the procedures generally used for aid recipients. The issue was further complicated by
the fact that shortly after the start of repatriation diplomatic relation between Eritrea and the Sudan were severed. In combination these factors led to downsizing the initial PROFERI to a pilot phase targeting 25,000 returnees instead of 100,000. According to an evaluation carried out by an independent team of experts chosen by UNDP, the Pilot Phase was completed successfully.

The Demobilization and reintegration of EPLF fighters was handled in a separate exercise, mainly due to the unwillingness of the donor community to spend funds on severance payments, but also because of the fact that the reintegration of ex-refugees and ex-fighters was not seen as one issue. For this reason until 1995/96 – when ERRA and CERA were merged into ERREC – the two-reintegration programs were placed under separate institutions and carried out independently, even though in practice their staff tried to co-operate as much as possible.

In contrast to PROFERI, the support measures offered by the Department for Demobilisation and Reintegration, Mitias did not consist of uniform packages distributed equally to all ex-fighters. They were meant to help the fighters help themselves, by offering skills training opportunities, credit facilities, access to agricultural settlements and various services. It proved positive for Demobilisation and reintegration to operate under one program. The fact that Mitias staff members were mainly recruited among not yet demobilized veteran fighters contributed a lot to the acceptance of the support program. Also the fact that a detailed survey of the fighters to be demobilized had been carried out before the exercise started proved to be helpful.

The relatively positive results of both integration programs benefited from a series of factors characterizing the Eritrean context:

- The whole country was at peace for the first time after 30 years;
- The government which had brought independence enjoyed confidence and its decisions were respected and followed;
- There was hardly any corruption and no debt burden, and those who had stayed in the country welcomed both categories of returnees.

But some factors influenced the reintegration process in a negative way:

- The transition government had hardly any experience with large scale rehabilitation and development and little experience with the international, multilateral and bilateral aid agencies;
- Its members were quite astonished to find out that their wishes were in contradiction with donors’ rules and practices.
The Eritrean leadership had great illusions about possible international co-operation, not knowing that being an aid recipient meant being forced to give up part of the ownership of the programs. Apart from these general factors the reintegration exercise suffered from quite a number of deficits and setbacks. Probably the most important was the absence of a national rehabilitation framework in which the reintegration programs could have unfolded, according to an operational plan agreed upon by all intervening partners. So the program implementation tended to be ad hoc, creating co-ordination problems, especially during the implementation of settlement programs.

The PROFERI Pilot Phase was criticized as having been conceived without a prior needs and assets assessment among the refugees who wanted to return. Also the fact all returnees were offered a uniform package irrespective of their needs, priorities and the experiences accumulated during exile, and the exclusion of IDPs, have to be considered as a major flaws. And last but not least the PROFERI programme tried to accomplish too much too fast. It over-estimated the receptivity and absorptive capacity of the Government of Eritrea with regard to technical assistance. A more modest set of clearly defined capacity building and institution-strengthening objectives in the early phase of post-war recovery would have been more appropriate for a program of eleven components.

In the same token, the program aiming at (re) integrating ex-fighters carried out by Mitias was over-stretched with its four roles, that is to act as coordinator, facilitator, advocate and counselor. Although this was inevitable when the program started, some of the tasks should have been delegated to others institutions to enable Mitias to work more efficiently as facilitator. The fact that female ex-fighters experienced many more difficulties in re-integrating within the main stream society cannot be blamed on Mitias which tried its best to help them, but it should be acknowledged that not all eventual possibilities were sufficiently explored. More attention should also have been given to psychosocial counseling. In retrospect it is evident that the importance of psychosocial problems among ex-fighters was underestimated.

The settlement policy, which was one of the pillars of the reintegration exercise, can be criticized on a number of grounds. A uniform model had been worked out, instead of different models based of regional differences. It should have encompassed the host community as well as the returnees, with special support measures for vulnerable members of each category. Also agro-pastoralists should have been seen as a group with special needs. None of the three settlement sites researched proved to be economically viable: in the climatic conditions of Eritrea rain-fed agriculture is not a sufficient basis for sustained livelihood, and no attention was given to eventual off-
farm income generating possibilities. Mechanization of agricultural labor has not resulted in the expected increase of yields, and settlers are still largely dependent on food aid. Last but not least, neither receiving communities nor the returnees have had say in the planning and implementation of the settlements.

The international actors (NGOs and donor agencies) are not going to provide a solution to the entire problem Eritrea is facing. They can provide small additional resources and will impose their political conditions. In order to decide what works and what does not there is a need to have an overall strategy of reconstruction rehabilitation and reintegration program. A policy framework should be worked out that chart out the context of integration; description of the target group and its features; the integration strategy; time framework; elements of the program; institutional responsibilities and budget. Thus the government can maneuver even if what is being offered by donor is a short-term and piecemeal approach. An overall framework is essential for the following reasons:

a) To provide a basis for deciding what fits and what does not either in the long or short run and act accordingly
b) To accept conditions when necessary and when it is important to the overall strategy.

It must be equally remembered that the short-term nature of donor funding of rehabilitation programs does not easily lead to achieving sustainable rehabilitation efforts that are directed toward sustainable peace and development. Because of lack of long-term resource commitments by the international community many rehabilitation programs are little more than “crisis management” interventions. “They are neither conceived nor implemented as sustainable programs.”

Finally the reintegration process has suffered from two setbacks at the highest political level:

- Over-centralized execution, where all decisions were taken or confirmed by the coordinating body in the President’s Office; and
- The change in policy which occurred in 1996, when the government declared that rehabilitation was over and had to give way to development, without assessing the extent to which the long-term objectives of sustainable integration had been reached.
5. Introduction

The scars of thirty years war and the recurrent droughts are evident everywhere in Eritrea. After independence the government of Eritrea had declared the first few years to be a transitional period of rehabilitation and reconstruction to improve social and economic conditions across the country that can create space for the returnees to reintegrate into society. This chapter deals with the context in which returnees are trying to achieve their return to the mainstream of society. Besides it is the space where macro and micro meet, and also the area where interface between the rehabilitation efforts of the government and the community in general and the individual efforts of the returnees in particular take place. A difficult economic situation and a precarious material and institutional infrastructure, both conditions are rampant in the Eritrean context which is typical for post-war countries.

Since reintegration constitutes an integral part of the overall transformation from a ‘war-torn’ to a reconstructed country, the process which currently is unfolding in Eritrea depends on the opportunities and constraints that exist in Eritrea and its relations with external actors. It presents chances for returnees to succeed, but at the same time experiences of other countries show that successful reintegration is still more an exception than a rule, thus reintegration proves to be a complex process with many pitfalls.

The absorptive capacity of the society when receiving a considerable addition number to its indigenous population in the form of returnees depends mainly on two factors:

- Availability of land: resettlement of returnees is usually taking place in agricultural areas. So access to land has to be seen as a precondition to successful reintegration. In this context the success of integration depends on how far returnees have been able to settle down in rural areas and become self-sufficient farmers. The following questions are raised to explore the issue of land availability: What are the consequences when returnees are not able to settle in rural areas? What political decisions, such as government policy on
land issues and the question of land distribution, influence the prospects of economic integration for returnees in rural areas?

- Potential of the labor market. This includes two aspects: demand for labor due to economic growth, and pressure of different population groups who look for a job. The potential of the labor market can be developed with the help of appropriate political strategies aiming at absorbing and utilizing the potential of the returnees. A central issue for returnees is access to the labor market, both in terms of employment opportunities and the recognition of experience gained during their exile or participation in the armed struggle.

In order for returnees to reintegrate to the mainstream of the society economically they have to earn a living, be it wage employment or a farm, or by combining different sources of income, such as petty trade and off-farm earning activities. They need to be given equal opportunities for employment as with any other member of the receiving community. Eritrean leaders have viewed the economy as the decisive realm without giving due respect to social and psychological dimensions of reintegration. The understanding is to do away the problem of reintegration by adopting a classical Marxist perspective in all walks of life.

Economic transformation is perceived as key to overcoming the oppressive class relations and impoverishment that have victimized the vast majority of both men and women. It is believed that the mobilization of the economy and labor force is decisive for successful reintegration and nation building. Towards this end, as seen in chapter four, the government designed economic support programs to help returnees integrate into the mainstream of the society. In the leaderships view full participation in economic life as wage laborers is decisive in their reintegration process. The following hypothesis will be used to explore the impact of economic intervention related to the reintegration of returnees.

**The second hypothesis**

“The Eritrean government regards economic modernization as the key factor to full reintegration of returnees into the mainstream of the society”.

**Null hypothesis**

“Economic modernization is the decisive factor in reintegrating returnees into the main stream of the society”

The following questions are raised to explore the above raised hypothesis. Do policy of economic interventions designed by the government help the returnees to secure
their livelihood? When designing reintegration programs, did the government take into consideration the capacities of the returnees as well as the needs of the labor market? Are returnees’ capacities properly used and if not, what has to be done to up-grade their skills and make them more marketable? What resources have been made available to help the returnees to rebuild their lives? What kind of safety net is put in place to help returnees who can not secure livelihood? Who do they turn to if they need help? How do returnees see their situation compared to the stayer community? On the base of his field study the author answers these questions.

Besides the global circumstances, post-war realities of Eritrea have dictated the overall development strategy which is market-based and export oriented, with the government promoting private enterprise (Eritrea’s Charter, 1994). On the macro-level the Eritrean economic performance for the five years starting 1992 has been relatively good: an average growth of GDP of more than 5 percent per annum (IMF, 1997). But this is not matching the general expectation of the society and returnees particularly.

5.1 Portrait of the sample population

The economic context in which individual efforts of re-integration take place could better be understood by presenting first the profile of the concerned categories. Presenting a portrait of the sample population of returnees and charting its main characteristics will do this. The demographic characteristics presented include sex, age, and length of stay in the struggle or in exile, present location, marital status and children. The same proportion of each sex was selected from both categories of ex-refugee and ex-fighters: 64 percent males and 36 percent female, that is 238 male and 134 female ex-fighters and 485 and 275 ex-refugees. Individual ex-fighters were regarded as equivalent to a head of household (i.e. the sampling unit within the population was the individual), whereas the sampling unit for returnees was the household, from which an individual was chosen for interview.

Table 5.1: Sample data of ex-refugees and ex-fighters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Ex-refugees</th>
<th>Ex-fighters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>485</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>760</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.1.1 Age

As indicated in Table 5.2 the majority (79 percent) of the ex-fighters are young, which is consistent with the overall profile of ex-fighters. This is differs from the age pattern of the ex-refugees’ community, where the young are only 21 per cent of the sample.
Two reasons can be offered. 1) The young members of refugee families may have chosen to remain in Sudan for economic reasons or (2) They may have feared to return to Eritrea given the renewed hostilities with Ethiopia and thus the risk of being conscripted.

**Table 5.2: Age of respondent**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Ex-fighters</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Ex-refugees</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Per cent</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Per cent</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70+</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2 shows that only 21 percent of the returnee refugees are of working age (20-39). This makes a lot of difference if they are to be retrained in different skills in order to help them integrate to the receiving community.

**Table 5.3: Mean and standard deviation of returnees**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average age of ex-fighters</th>
<th>Average age of ex-refugees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mean</strong></td>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>372</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In contrast to ex-refugees, ex-fighters the majority 79 percent (20-39) is in the working age and relatively easily trained in different skills that can ease their reintegration process.

Figure 5.2: Demobilized by age group at the time of their demobilization
5.1.2 Stay in exile or in the field

Table 5.4: Service in the army in years and its breakdown by sex of respondent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Army Service (years)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>01-05</td>
<td>06-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>89 (24%)</td>
<td>52 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25 (7%)</td>
<td>56 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.4 shows that nearly half (48 percent) of the ex-fighters surveyed have stayed in the armed struggle between 6-15 years. We can also see that 68 percent of the demobilized women are veteran women fighters, which is far higher percentage than that of female fighters who participate in the EPLF armed forces. We can also observe from Table 5.4 that more veteran women ex-fighters were demobilized. The outcome of this is detrimental to the gender awareness gained during the armed struggle. Because the most experienced women fighters were lay-off living no space for continuity of wealth of experience gained to pass to new generation of young women fighters. It is argued that children had to be brought up in a ‘normal’ atmosphere outside the military and that their mothers should have the opportunity to devote the necessary time to childcare. This does not make sense for the responsibility should be equal for both sexes. In the current situation the sole responsibility falls on single mothers. Recalling her experience Teblets Tewelde said,

*During the armed struggle children born to fighters their rearing falls on both male and female members of the unit. The Unit, which was taking care of the kids, was called kindergarten 17. Both men and women were equally assigned to take care of our kids. I don’t think that can be replicated now for couples currently live together and should take the responsibility together, (Interview conducted in Asmara 17 May 1999).*

5.1.3 Origin and place of residence

When the process of Demobilisation or repatriation and ultimately reintegration starts, there is usually a dilemma that emerges in adapting to a new way of life. So there is a need to accommodate and understand the lifestyle of ex-fighters and ex-refugees by identifying and choosing those ‘positive’ experiences that might help returnees’ reintegration.
In the initial study conducted by Mitias in 1993 the majority (74 percent) said they want to live in rural area provided they get an opportunity for decent life (see more on this on page 138).

Table 5.5: Current residence place and origin of ex-fighters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present location</th>
<th>Place of origin</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Semi-urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>94 (25%)</td>
<td>13 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-urban</td>
<td>5 (1%)</td>
<td>7 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>4 (1%)</td>
<td>4 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>103 (27.6%)</td>
<td>24 (6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

But Table 5.5 offers a different picture. It shows a clear trend toward urbanization: 72 percent of the ex-fighters are currently living in urban areas. The same holds true for refugees. As Table 5.6 show nearly two third of the returnees originated from rural areas. But after having stayed for twenty or more years in exile, more than half had decided to settle in towns. As we will see in the coming paragraphs the main problem for not making a living in the rural area is that the absorption capacity is law.

Table 5.6: Current place of residence and origin of ex-refugees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present location</th>
<th>place of origin</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Semi-urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>149 (85.1%)</td>
<td>45 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-urban</td>
<td>7 (4%)</td>
<td>26 (28.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>19 (10.9%)</td>
<td>19 (21.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>175 (100%)</td>
<td>90(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ex-refugees are also reluctant to return to rural life. The main reasons lie in the fact that during their stay in exile they were accustomed to new services, which were unknown to most of them prior to their flight. For example, the spontaneous returnees who were originally agro-pastoralists are currently residing in suburbs of Ghindae wanted to live in the town because they wanted their sons and daughters to go to school. Returnees from Keren responded that social services such as clinics, water supply and school, were the reason for the choice of their residence in urban areas.

The rather high percentage of ex-refugees wanting to reside in urban areas of the western lowlands might be also due to the proximity of the Sudanese border and hence easier access to different opportunities to Sudan if need arises. The ex-refugees’ extended stay in large settlements in Eastern Sudan might also have played a role for preferring the amenities of urban life. One factor is particularly striking with regards to women. For most women ex-refugees who formerly belong to patriarchal socio-
political systems, life in Sudan in the refugee settlements had been liberating experience even though its degree was limited. For example, delivery of piped-water system and flourmills in the settlement had relieved women of the arduous tasks of collecting and carrying water and of the backbreaking grinding of cereals. Likewise, the existence of markets and food processing facilities had markedly reduced the time absorbed by those activities. The greater chance of finding employment in the booming construction sector or other income generating possibilities is also a strong pull factor for urban residence.

Currently 72 percent of ex-fighters and 51 percent of ex-refugees are living in urban areas. Thus the influx of a large number of newcomers is also creating extra problems in the social service sector such as school, health, housing …etc. in the towns, mainly in the western lowlands. Especially for women returnee reluctance to accept the traditional social system of the rural sector might be another reason for abstaining from returning to rural areas.

5.1.4 Marital status and family
According to Table 5.7, the majority of ex-fighters and a similar proportion of female and male fighters were married, but widows, widowers and divorced are more numerous among women. 26 percent of the sample survey of women ex-fighters is divorced. The author conducted another study where there is a concentration of demobilized women fighters in keren out of the 2152 more than 85 percent were single mothers. When evaluating the marital status of women we have to remember the fact that these marriages were contracted in an atmosphere of imminent dissolution by death of one of the partners.

Table 5.7: Marital status and sex of ex-fighters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Single</th>
<th>Married</th>
<th>Widowed</th>
<th>Divorced</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>22 (6%)</td>
<td>180 (48%)</td>
<td>1(0%)</td>
<td>35 (9%)</td>
<td>238(64%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1 (0%)</td>
<td>94 (25%)</td>
<td>4 (1%)</td>
<td>35 (9%)</td>
<td>134 (36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23 (6%)</td>
<td>274 (74%)</td>
<td>5 (1%)</td>
<td>70 (19%)</td>
<td>372 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the armed struggle, usually the couple did not live together as they were assigned to different units in different places and often spent not more than a couple of days together during common leave. Also there were no material problems they had to attend to as the EPLF took care of everything, even if it was not much that was provided.
The author in his discussions with male (ex)-fighters about the reason why they divorced their fighter wives was often told: ‘they are not modest’. Men usually claim that female fighters had lost their femininity by participating in the armed struggle. This shows that the deeply entrenched belief, that women should be soft and gentle, is not gone and the gender bias could be read in between the lines. This is confirmed by the fact that ex-fighters who have divorced from their ex-fighter wives usually remarry with a civilian who they consider as a ‘soft doll’ with little effort. Divorced female ex-fighters find it difficult to find another spouse, as they are considered as too assertive, and also because divorced women are traditionally disrespected.

Stefanos (1997) elaborated this by referring to the training of social codes of ‘proper’ family relationship that is deeply entrenched in the Eritrean society as follows: girls learn to be courteous and subordinate, and to defer to males, even those younger than themselves (Stefanos, 1997).

Another frequently reasons for divorce whether in rural or urban lies in problems encountered with in-laws. In the field the fighters had learned to disregard ethnic and religious differences, but unfortunately their civilian relatives had not reached that stage and often-rejected sons and daughters in-law for not belonging to their ethnic or religious community.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital status</th>
<th>Single</th>
<th>Married</th>
<th>Widowed</th>
<th>Divorced</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>36 (5%)</td>
<td>416 (55%)</td>
<td>8 (1%)</td>
<td>25 (3%)</td>
<td>485 (64%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2 (0%)</td>
<td>208 (27%)</td>
<td>42 (6%)</td>
<td>23 (3%)</td>
<td>275 (36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>38 (5%)</td>
<td>624 (82%)</td>
<td>50 (7%)</td>
<td>48 (6%)</td>
<td>760 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Asking the direct question of marital status did not produce the rate of divorce among ex-refugees. But by reformulating the question and asking, with who are the children currently living the author was able to derive the female-headed households in the sample survey data: 18.4 percent of ex-refugee households sampled. Among the sample of ex-fighters, the proportion was virtually the same. This is very striking because it shows that both categories are facing the same problems that make their reintegration rather difficult.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>With whom are the children living</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[Sex]</td>
<td>Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>115 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>140 (18%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The fact that 80 percent of the children of ex-fighters were born after liberation is not surprising. If a couple had a child - or children - during the struggle, it usually was not planned. They saved their wish to have children for post-war times. The baby boom started after independence. It is also no surprise that only 12.6 percent have more than 4 children and about 2/3 only one to three children: in general fighters are very concerned about the future of their children. They want them to get the highest possible education and many practice family planning in order to have not more than 2 - 3 children. For the women who have to raise their children alone - be they widows, divorced, separated or single - this is a heavy burden.

Unlike during the struggle when children were totally taken care of by the Front, in post-war Eritrea kindergartens are rare, especially in smaller towns and villages. Many female ex-fighters cannot go for training or take up employment, because they don’t have anybody to take care of their children - who are mainly between 1 and 5 years old - during their absence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5. 10: Children born to ex-fighters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One of the major challenges dealt with head-on by EPLF had been to ‘promulgate marriage and family laws that safeguard the right of women’. The Marriage Law was introduced in 1977, alongside the EPLF National Democratic Program. There seems to be progress in relation to feudal marriage norms based on the supremacy of men over women; and arbitrary and coercive arrangements that do not safeguard the welfare of children. The new democratic marriage law is also based on the free choice of both partners. Equal rights of both sexes and legal guarantees of the interests of women and children are proclaimed. Polygamy, concubines, child betrothal, interference in the remarriage of widows, dowry and other marriage related discrimination such as in acquisition of land property was dealt with head-on and banned.

All these interventions were usually top-down and their implementation was rather easy during the armed struggle especially in the liberated areas. Now, however other issues are taking precedence. For example, there are some within the country that are advocating for more formal recognition of the *Sharia* (Moslem law), many of whose principles are at variance with those upon which the new marriage law is based. If a
woman is married in traditional Sharia law she can not sue her husband under the new marriage law. The Sharia issue, especially with Islamic Fundamentalism well entrenched in next-door Sudan and returning refugees possibly influenced while in exile; the Government doesn’t want to give grounds for agitation. This is understandable but at least there is need to make women aware of the law of the land and the right, which it upholds.

During the armed struggle the fighters’ community has transcended the ‘traditional’ systems of marriage and intercultural marriage became slowly a norm. But subsequent to independence this has created a big problem. For example, a priest or a Sheikh (Moslem spiritual father) finds it difficult to accept his son/daughter being married to someone from another religion. In some minor cases, families will not accept a marriage partner who came outside their region. In this context the ones who are on the losing side are former female ex-fighters. Divorce among former fighters, with no prospect to earn a livelihood for a single mother is also disturbing issue at least if seen from the perspective of the child rearing. Before, children born to fighters were taken care by the Front and there was no problem for their living. Currently that entire burden falls on the women ex-fighters because sole mothers are left alone to rear the child.

The author conducted discussion with group of demobilized women fighters in Keren. The divorce issue was raised vehemently and the author asked why they didn’t sue their former husband to pay child-rearing money. The answer given was sarcastic:

*The law is not on our side. If my former husband is in Asseb I could sue him only in his administrative area where he is working, and besides transport problem he may not be stationery in one place. Transport costs are high and to travel with infant children is not easy to say the least. So in principle the law is there, but since we can not enforce it, what is the use of having nice law on paper? For sole parent female ex-fighters it doesn’t make any difference (group discussion with 9 women ex-fighters Keren, 13 June 1999).*

Aster, one of the discussants further elaborated the issue and said, “I had sued my former husband and what I got in the end was not even enough to cover my transport costs”. Traditional means of getting support for a child were alien to the culture of the fighters.

The civil and penal provisional Laws were revised to reinforce the position of women and disallowing discriminatory practices in 1977. The changes promote gender equality in areas such as inheritance, property, marriage and divorce. Furthermore, under the new system of land tenure women have the same rights as men. The new

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43 For more see, Silkin, 1983; EPLF Marriage law 1979; Wilson, 1991.
labor law gives women the right to equal employment opportunities and equal pay for equal work, as well as 60 days paid maternity leave (Ministry of land, Water and Environment Annual Report 1998). To support the implementation of these laws, there is a need for gender training within the legal profession.

In many of the informal discussions with male ex-fighters it became clear that the main reason behind divorce was economical problem. After liberation of the country, most of the fighters were dependent on extended family economic support. We have also to remember after all male fighters are benefiting in all contexts from family status and prestige and thus gave-in to family pressure easily.

But there is also another dimension to the issue of divorce. Can we confidently say that the fighters had created a nuclear family during the armed struggle? The following answer from an in-depth interview conducted with a group of female ex-fighters in 1999 might shed some light on this point:

Recalling our armed struggle’s experience in creating nucleus-family it is not fair to conclude that fighters had households during armed struggle. *All the economic needs of the ‘household’ were taken care of by the front. From Tomin (consumable supply post of the Front), you could get every thing you needed for your vacation stay which is usually one month. Because of time shortage the ‘couple’ can not narrow down their differences and can be said that they hardly know each other. If they made it for the next year they might stay together during their vacation for it is not allowed for couple to live together in the same unit. There are some lucky ones who were assigned in the same unit to stay together, which was rather an exception. Your cultural difference or upbringing doesn’t matter as long as s/he was committed or dedicated politically and militarily and that was what counts most. The mutual satisfaction or biological need was given secondary role and thus it was played down. The possibility of living together and in the process of knowing each other better was simply not there. It is natural for a lot of marriages to face crises and ultimately for relations to terminate because the marriage or relational thread that tied the ‘couple’ during the armed struggle was thinner than a spider’s web (interview with Asmara Haile Haikota, 2 August 1999).*

The relationships forged during the struggle were based on different context compared to those of civilian society in general. The main reason for termination of relationship seems to be that there was little opportunity or space for the mates to know each other and for their love to grow. What counts is the political stand s/he has towards the armed struggle not the love you have towards each other.
Women demobilized from the EPLF, who were unmarried and who had passed the traditional age of marriage have often experienced difficulties in returning to their original communities. Particularly men from their communities [ironically it also includes their comrades in arms] who resist the assertiveness women had developed during their stay in the armed struggle. Askalu who joined the struggle in 1977 commented:

*In the field, the men respected us, our brains, our strength … but in this society of ours, they now respect make-up, nice hair, being a proper housewife…If we kneel down to what they want, we’ll end up back in the wishate (kitchen) (Mendefera 13 February 1999).*

### 5.1.5 Expectations and reality

During the long years of struggle for freedom or staying in exile, returnees built up strong expectations of ‘decent life’. They believed that all problems would be solved once Eritrea attained her independence. Especially, their expectations concerning professional and social opportunities were high. After liberation was achieved and Eritrea has become independent the majority of returnees are facing problems in gaining their living, and their expectation of a reasonably decent livelihood is vanishing in front of their eyes. More than half of the interviewed ex-fighters (56 percent) responded that their expectations were not matching reality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expectation match with reality</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>143 (38%)</td>
<td>19 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>95 (26%)</td>
<td>115 (31%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>238 (64%)</td>
<td>134 (36%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Match of expectation with reality</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>160 (21%)</td>
<td>83 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>325 (43%)</td>
<td>192 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>485 (64%)</td>
<td>275 (36%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If we break this down by gender, women are more disappointed than men for not getting what they were expecting. Table 5.11 shows this trend clearly: 55 percent (115) of the women against 45 percent (95) men are disappointed. Expectations of a better livelihood under peace and a popular government seem particularly high among the ex-fighters and the population in the liberated areas that were accustomed to rather
efficient services. After independence substantial improvements have taken place in different sectors but the speed of development is not as fast as the expectation created during the armed struggle or stay in exile. Thus it is natural to hear disappointments and some grumbling of discontent. Among the fighters demobilized during the first phase, mainly young men and women who had not stayed for much more than one year in the field, the number of dissatisfied is much lower only 7.2 compared to nearly two-third (63) veteran who responded bad (Table 5.13).

Table 5.13: Perception of Situation of Ex-fighters and the Year of Demobilisation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception</th>
<th>Date of Demobilisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bad</td>
<td>1 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not good or bad</td>
<td>3 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>13 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17 (2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.1.6 Reception of local community

When they first came home, ex-fighters remember the attitude of the civilian population towards them as one key informant from Senafe called it resembles a ‘honeymoon’. Everybody was euphoric, those who came back and those who received them, all showed how happy they were although they might express it differently. The homecoming of their sons and daughters who fought for the country’s independence was a great event for all community members. Nevertheless, from the beginning some former fighters were not warm welcomed. They vividly remember that some family members were not keen to have them back. Because they feared they sooner or later would have to share housing, land, and other property. It would, however, be misleading to interpret the difficulties faced by both male and female ex-fighters in isolation from problems experienced by other strata for example returning refugee and other members of the civilian population.

Another fact that must be taken on board is that returning fighters and to lesser degree refugee often feel guilty for not having been able to meet the high expectations from their family or relatives who had missed their support for so long time. According to Eritrean custom the expectation of his/her family was that s/he should be taken care especially in their old age.

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Abraham, a key informant, put his feelings in the following way, which represents the dilemma former fighters find themselves in after independence:

*All these long years of armed struggle I have survived with this feeling of guilt and responsibility for my family and when we were given money for the first time\(^45\), I spend it to buy cloth for my father and mother and felt good that for the first time in my life I was able to repay the love they gave me* (Massawa, 19 December 1998).

When the author was discussing their expectation after return to Eritrea or Demobilisation in the case of fighters he realized that there was a sharp difference between ex-refugees and ex-fighters; and again between refugees who had come back in an organized way and those who had returned spontaneously. The spontaneous returnees did not expect any support from the government and thus took initiative to fend for their livelihood. But the refugees who returned to Eritrea in an organized way and who are settling in one of the nine sites prepared by the PROFERI Pilot Project expected the government to take care for their problems, behaving in the same way as the veteran fighters. Although with time this attitude is changing, both group expected the government to solve their problems. Table 5.14 might suffice to elaborate attitudes of refugees who returned to Eritrea in organized and spontaneous way.

Two families live side by side in Guluge, one of CERA’s nine organized settlements sites. One family – that of Adem Musa - had been repatriated in 1995, with the help of the Government and UNHCR, the other has come back spontaneously. Adem Musa’s family is entitled to get help. They got one of the semi-finished houses built by CERA. CERA set up the frame of the house, made of eucalyptus poles and corrugated iron sheet for the roof. The remaining work was to be finished by the ex-refugee family. Four years later Adem’s premises are still not finalized. When asked why he was not able to do it, his response was,

*The government promised us a finished building and as you see we are suffering from the failed Government promise* (Guluge, 02 January 1999).

\(^45\) Every individual fighter was given 500 Birr in 1991 to buy civilian cloth.
Salieh Osman is an ex-refugee who returned to Eritrea in 1996 spontaneously. Salieh had built a nice *Tukul* surrounded by a well-established compound. When asked if he got any help from CERA or other organization in building his compound, he smiled and responded proudly,

*God gave me health and thanks to that I have built my meskeb (house) with the help of my friends and family members. First we built my house and then my friend’s and as you see my friend’s house is better than mine for we built it after gaining experience in building my house (Guluge, 04 January 1999).*

When asked why his neighbor Adem didn’t build his house, he answered:

*Government and floods are the same: once they pass you it is unlikely that they will come back; so he is still living in a world of dream and it will take time until he sees reality (ibid.).*

Taking initiative to fend for one’s life is not a rare phenomenon in areas where survey was conducted. But comparing spontaneous returnees with those who came back in an organized way one can observe that the spontaneous returnees are more vibrant. They try to involve themselves in any kind of economic activity to make a living and try to improve their condition. In informal discussions the author has had with them, he realized they were confident of their abilities to care for themselves and their families. Currently, though relief aid has been stopped for more than four years, they manage to make a living and to lead an independent life by working hard. But in some survey areas like Afabet and around Anseba the government has distributed food aid due to food shortages because of prolonged drought.

### 5.2 Social mobility – a way to reintegration

During the armed struggle not every fighter [woman or man] was sent to the front. Decisions were taken according to their capacities and skills, but also according to their health condition they might be sent to the liberated area to take up civilian tasks. As already mentioned they worked as barefoot doctors, teachers, secretaries, in local administration, public relations etc. In times of enemy offensives they were mobilized...
to reinforce the front line. Even after liberation until the day of their Demobilisation they were engaged in a wide range of civil tasks.

But when entering civilian life ex-fighters faced the gap between their high level of informal competence and low level of formal education and this was also true for ex-refugees even though were applicable to a lesser degree. In the post-war situation the missing accreditation of returnees’ qualifications has restricted their job enrolment and thus is hindering their reintegration. Many have been marginalized in the competition for securing jobs. Although ERREC/Mitias has sought to counter these socio-economic constraints, for example, by providing welfare services to ex-fighters and ex-refugees, the impact was limited compared to the extent of the task it demanded.

Due to missing formal qualifications ex-fighters find it difficult to find any job and many of them are currently jobless. This has severe social and economic consequences for the individual ex-fighter who in the market-driven competition sees her/him self marginalized by those who did not participate in the struggle but instead secured their own formal education. Thus the qualification constraint points to a historically determined condition of unequal access to employment and education and might be a factor that causes growing frustration and disillusionment among returnees in general and ex-fighters in particular.

5.2.1 Education and skill training

Education should be understood in its broader sense, meaning that life long learning and work go together hand in hand. Education should not be restricted to the space of formal schooling. But in the studies conducted in designing reintegration programs for returnees it seems that education/training is implicitly understood as formal transfer of vocational, technical and basic general skills (Klingebiel et al, 1995). The world of skills, however, is diverse. Human capabilities and competence relate to knowledge, abilities, skills, as well as to values, attitudes and norms are the results of both the educational and the employment system in which experiential learning usually has no place.

Education was viewed by the Eritrean political leaders as integral to the national liberation struggle, and is currently valued by policymakers as a core element of nation building. In the view of EPLF the broad educational arena relates to both formal and non-formal learning; to efforts at consciousness-raising, including those that occur outside of schools and to all opportunities for building skills. The design of and strategy for education is linked to a larger social vision that is egalitarian, responsive to the interests of peasants and workers, independent, oriented to self-
reliance, and able to mobilize effectively all human and material resources. An examination of education during the colonial era shows education was undervalued and constricted and that Eritrean women in particular were greatly impeded in pursuing schooling and all forms of learning (Stefanos, 1997).

Table 5.15: Ex-fighters’ origin of education by gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Origin of education</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Before struggle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>130 (35)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>34 (9%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>164 (44%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>During struggle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>99 (27%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>98 (27%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>197 (54%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>After struggle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4 (1%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2 (0%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6 (2%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>233 (63%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>134 (37%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>367 (100%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the armed struggle education and literacy efforts were not limited to introductory courses. EPLF fighters were involved in vocational and educational programs in the base camps and in the liberated areas. Besides the task of front line combat, female and male fighters established small-scale workshops, schools, hospitals, and public services department etc., based on participatory management systems. Through these activities the fighters obtained a pool of qualifications, which were never certified due to the war situations. The same is true of ex-refugees although the degree of literacy varies.

Sharing of skills and experiences was also considered as a natural part of social life in the field. In the trenches or rear-liberated areas more experienced fighters taught their knowledge and skills to newcomers with dedication. In its early stage the military situation was harsh and every body was keen to pass his experience to the newcomer so that continuity of the armed struggle would be sustained on solid ground. In this way fighters hoped to establish a framework of discourse ensuring that comrades spoke on the same wavelength for common good.

Concerning the change of attitudes, education and articulation of women there is a striking difference between civilians and fighters. Usually civilian girls leave school between ages of 12 to 14, in most cases to get married. According to the findings from the sample of ex-fighters points that there is no significant difference between men and women because all were undergoing training during the armed struggle. What is very important is that women ex-fighters particularly seem more motivated to continue their school education. This is demonstrated by the fact that more females than male ex-fighters are going to evening classes.

The author has interviewed staff members of the Ministry of Education about the policy of EPLF toward refugees’ education in Sudan. Berhane Demos is a veteran
fighter having joined the armed struggle in 1975 and participated in the founding of Zero School.\textsuperscript{46} He responded,

Since the Sudanese government does not have a policy of ultimate integration resulting in naturalization, the only option EEPLF had was to prepare refugees to return back ‘home’ one day. Taking this issue into consideration the EPLF’s educational system in Sudan was to train Eritrean refugees in their own language and culture and thus preserve their ‘Eritrean identity’. The educational curriculum was developed in ‘Zero School’ with training focusing on the history and geography of the country and the ‘culture-neutral’ subjects (for example, biology, chemistry, physics and mathematics). The quality of training was so good that in places like Port Sudan, Sudanese nationals were sending their kids to the EPLF’s educational classes (Asmara, 9 March 1999).

\begin{table}
\centering
\caption{Ex-refugees’ origin of education by gender}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{sex} & \textbf{Before exile} & \textbf{During exile} & \textbf{After exile} & \textbf{Total} \\
\hline
Male & 147 (40\%) & 109 (30\%) & 12 (3\%) & 268 (74\%) \\
Female & 51 (14\%) & 40 (11\%) & 5 (1\%) & 96 (26\%) \\
Total & 198 (54\%) & 149 (41\%) & 17 (5\%) & 364 (100\%) \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

The government is committed to ensuring that the vast majority of people, rather than small, highly specialized elite have access to education. Accordingly, non-formal learning has been given equal status to formal schooling; both are seen as critical to developing the resources of the independent nation. In addition, the curriculum is anti-elitist; all subject areas highlight the everyday experiences encountered by students and are rooted in the concrete challenges of local life. The cleavage between mental and manual labor is seen as a false dichotomy that promotes an undesirable divide between exalted thinkers and denigrated laborers. Accordingly, the educational system combines learning with productive work. The pedagogical approach promotes active learning and collective co-operation. Teachers are encouraged to play a role in designing educational materials and to act as co-learners with, rather than transmitting agents to, their students (Stefanos, 1997). A great deal of emphasis is placed on peer learning, and students are involved in shaping educational experiences.

\textsuperscript{46} Zero School was found by EPLF in 1975 to train the sons and daughters of fighters and other vulnerable groups who were not able to pursue their studies.
Table 5. 17: Level of education of ex-fighters by their sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of education</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>102 (28%)</td>
<td>95 (26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle school</td>
<td>78 (21%)</td>
<td>32 (9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary school</td>
<td>47 (90.4%)</td>
<td>5 (9.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above secondary school</td>
<td>6 (75%)</td>
<td>2 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>233 (63.5%)</td>
<td>134 (36.5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the mid-1970s, the EPLF recognized the need to engage the full and active participation of Eritrean women in the liberation struggle. Education was recognised as crucial factor in transforming women and enabling them to redefine their private and public roles. It has been a critical avenue for developing the consciousness of newly emancipated women, for disarming the objections of men and mothers, and for providing skills that permit females to operate on an equal footing with males in the reconstruction of Eritrean society.

The strategy for integrating women into a new educational system included combating the material and attitudinal barriers to access. The women ex-fighters still perceive the degree of gender equality practiced in the field as an important achievement, which is not taken for granted in the society they had returned to. As Asmeret put it:

*I had not gone to school before I joined the struggle. In the field I got the opportunity to complete 6th grade, and I was able to understand the roots and reasons of the struggle. But that was not all: “I learned that men and women are equal, that you have to unite your forces to be able to win, that you can rely on your comrades instead of your kin’s for help to solve your problems (Adi-Keyihe, 17 May 1999).*

A fundamental obstacle was the parental view that a girl’s only goal was to prepare for and succeed in getting married and that female education was an unnecessary frill or, worse yet, a costly distraction. Aside from notions about male superiority, there was an economic basis to parents’ opposition to education for girls, the need for children to help with the persistent demands of domestic and agricultural labor.

While some parents anxiously ceded time for schooling to sons, they stiffened when it came to daughters (Stefanos, 1997). To confront the gender bias educational settings, curriculum materials include new images of women, such as handling tools or military equipment. School texts discuss women’s relationship with family, their work outside the home, domestic chores, and parenting, eliciting discussion on the value of women’s work and their place in society. They note women’s achievements
in the revolution, including their new roles as combatants, teachers, mechanics, and engineers.

EPLF recognized the need for an intensive political education campaign in the liberated areas to confront parental resistance to female education. In mass gatherings and individual meetings, EPLF’s political activists explained to elders and parent the value of making education available to all young people.47 They noted that gender discrimination in schooling undermined the liberation effort and sometimes sternly criticized those who withheld education from their daughters. The cadres organized communal assistance for those families who relied on their daughter’s extra hands, and the school calendar was often planned to minimize interference with periods of peak agricultural activity.

In the educational settings of EPLF, school texts discuss the culture of the nine ethnic groups of the Eritrean society so that tolerance and peaceful co-existence can develop in the process of nation building. Curriculum materials include new images of women and men from all ethnic group and show examples that all members of the nine ethnic groups are contributing for the common good. Textbooks have names of different Eritrean ethnic groups and religions places and history. Women's relationship with the family, their work outside the home, domestic chores, and parenting, discussion of the value of women's work and their place in society are systematically inserted into the text books. To highlight achievements during the armed struggle stories were told about the heroic deeds of daughters and sons who sacrificed their lives to defend their country. It also narrates the new role of fighters in general and the role of emancipated women in general as combatants, teachers, mechanics, and engineers is systematically incorporated. All this intervention can be read as laying a ground work for nation building in creating a unified, cohesive society.

The ex-refugees also had benefited in gaining education by staying in exile. 364 (48%) can read and write, out of which 74 percent (286) male and 26 percent (96) female. Here we observe in table 5.16 that in education women are disadvantaged in relation to their male counterparts. Nevertheless during exile nearly equal proportions of both sexes were able to attend classes: 40.7 percent for male and 41.7 percent for female refugees. This shows there was an equal opportunity of getting literate while staying in exile, which was not the case in their original place.

Nubler (1997) argued that most studies on Demobilisation in African post-conflict countries tend to give a minor role to the aspect of utilization of skills. Policy makers

47 In-depth interview with Mehari Tewelde a public officer in Barka region 1974 to 1988
and planner conclude from surveys that most ex-combatants have very few or no skills and knowledge (Nubler, 1997; ILO, 1995a; Klingebiel et al., 1995; World Bank, 1993). As a consequence, little consideration tends to be given to effective utilization of existing competence and little focus is placed on human resource development. In addition, it appears that a rather narrow view is taken in terms of skill variety. Reference is made implicitly to (formal) vocational, technical and basic general skills. The world of skills, however, is diverse. Human capabilities and competencies relate to knowledge, abilities, skills, values, attitudes and norms.

These are the results of internal learning, learning-by-doing and the socialization process in the education and training system, as well as the employment system. At independence Eritrea had on its territory 137 elementary schools, 37 junior schools and 16 high schools. Between 1993 to 1997 the government spent about 460 million Nakfa on improvements in the educational sector. At the end of 1997 statistics show that the number of basic educational institutions has increased to 583 elementary schools, 109 junior schools and 37 high schools. In the following three years period (1997-2000) an estimated 300 million Nakfa was to be spent on further building of elementary, junior and high schools including teachers training centers and vocational and technical schools (Eritrea Profile, 1997). All efforts the government had undertaken to develop the human resource of the society are commendable except in one area: – the upgrading of informal skills and learning of returnees is seen as a side issue.

5.2.2 Experiential Learning
Evan defines experiential learning as follows:

> The knowledge and skills acquired through life and work experience and study, which are not formally attested through any educational or professional certification. It can include instruction-based learning, provided by any institution, which has not been examined in any way of the public examination systems. It can include those undervalued elements of formally provided education, which are not encompassed in current examinations (Evans, 1987).

The definition mentions two strategic types of knowledge. On the one hand, the certified experiences and skills and, on the other, those informal resources that are disqualified or otherwise categorized as marginal. Reformulating learning on the basis of experiential knowledge and skills implies that people’s thoughts and actions are located in time and space. Experiential knowledge and skills are historical forms of practice referring to the way through which we construe the world and act upon one another (Giddens, 1998). From this perspective the development of knowledge is
a primary aspect of human socialization. It constitutes what has been termed cultural reproduction, the norms and values transmitted across generations.

But cultural reproduction does not necessarily mean that people are socialized in an unproblematic way. It follows that the re-production of knowledge cannot be reduced to individual mental attributes. On the contrary, the specific meanings ascribed to learning thinking and knowing are constantly shaped, struggled over and negotiated through social interaction between different groups in the society.

The skills and capabilities which the EPLF fighters were able to acquire in the field, by participating in educational programs – as beneficiaries and as teachers and trainers – and while working in production and maintenance workshops, clinics and public administration can well be seen as ‘experiential learning’.

Table 5.18: Kind of skills of ex-refugees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>kind of skill</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craftsmanship</td>
<td>16 (6%)</td>
<td>16 (6%)</td>
<td>32 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Builders</td>
<td>33 (13%)</td>
<td>2 (1%)</td>
<td>35 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truck driver</td>
<td>40 (16%)</td>
<td>3 (1%)</td>
<td>43 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tractor driver</td>
<td>22 (9%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>22 (9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>29 (11%)</td>
<td>3 (1%)</td>
<td>32 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanic</td>
<td>30 (12%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>30 (12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>16 (6%)</td>
<td>8 (3%)</td>
<td>24 (9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade</td>
<td>22 (9%)</td>
<td>7 (3%)</td>
<td>29 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health related</td>
<td>8 (3%)</td>
<td>1 (0%)</td>
<td>9 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>216 (84%)</td>
<td>40 (16%)</td>
<td>256 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Former commanders or officers are now serving in official bodies and are employing their skills to lead and develop the country. The civil service has absorbed the best qualified. But unfortunately most of the practical experience and skills acquired during the struggle are not properly utilized. If properly utilized, they could yield considerable potential contribution for peacetime reconstruction. The main reason is that the results of experiential – as well as all other forms of informal - learning are not certified or recognized.

Although both categories of returnees have acquired a variety of formal and informal competencies in the fields they were working, their lack of formal qualifications constitutes a social barrier, which constrains participation in the civilian community. According to Table 5:18, in the sample survey 34 percent of ex-refugees had skills. The PROFERI program was not developed on the outcome of a base line study;
therefore the skills of refugees were not given consideration. As mentioned earlier the wrong assumption that guided the designing of programs such as PROFERI was, since the majority members of refugee community left to exile from rural areas meant the main area of reintegrating them was agriculture settlements.

In the process of the fieldwork the author encountered ex-refugees with sound knowledge in their area of expertise, but as it is not certified they do not find employment. One of them is Kidane Aragay who had fled to Sudan in 1981. Before going into exile he was a member of ELF and had worked as a bare-foot doctor for three years. During his stay in Sudan he had worked with Red Cross for 12 years. He returned spontaneously to Eritrea in 1996. Since his return he had participated in four different tests related to employment in the health sector. He passed all the exams and was considered as a qualified candidate for the post. But without a certificate to support his experience he was always rejected. He complained that individuals who had no experience like him, but somehow had managed to get a certificate, were hired. When asked how he is earning his livelihood he said,

Since I was working with the Red Cross, plenty of ex-refugees know my experience. If they have health problems or some of their friends or relatives are sick they bring them here. I do what I can and if it seems beyond my capacity I refer them to the hospital and write my comment concerning the state of the patient. What I don’t understand is they receive my patient’s diagnosis and even sometimes consults me, but they don’t recognize my skill (Guluge,11 August 1999).

When the author was discussing with Kidane, people were queuing to be attended. The case may not be typical, but it shows how people in authority stick to formal qualifications and disregard valuable human resources. The same is true for ex-fighters. For example, when the author was heading the Department of Demobilisation and Reintegration from 1993 to 1996, he noticed a clear trend in the public service to hire staff on presentation of formal qualifications. Before the start of the second round of Demobilisation, which involved veteran fighters, he asked all line ministries to inform the Mitias of vacancies and the criteria to select candidates to fill them. For all posts Bachelors, Masters of Arts or other diploma holders were requested.

According to these criteria not a single ex-fighter could be assigned to any line ministry. This led to the establishment of new criteria. For example, if an ex-fighter had reached grade 7/8 and had stayed in the armed struggle for more than 10 years, with work experience of unit or platoon leader, his qualification was considered equal to that of a Bachelor degree holder. The institution, which was to hire him/her,
had to provide in-house training for his/her upgrading. With this and other related methods more than 4,000 individuals were assigned to the line ministries. Here we can see a clear commitment of the government to address the issue of experiential learning and its endeavors to accommodate it in the overall program. But this kind of intervention was not institutionalized and was rather an exception than the rule and it has no continuity. There is still a need to bridge the gap between formal and informal training.

Table 5.19: Break down of kind of skill ex-fighters has

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kind of skill</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craftsmanship</td>
<td>5 (2%)</td>
<td>10 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barefoot doctor</td>
<td>19 (8%)</td>
<td>33 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio operator</td>
<td>17 (8%)</td>
<td>12 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanic</td>
<td>29 (13%)</td>
<td>7 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petty-trade</td>
<td>1 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>48 (21%)</td>
<td>31 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>6 (3%)</td>
<td>3 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than one skill</td>
<td>2 (1%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1 (0%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>127 (56%)</td>
<td>99 (44%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another example of wasting precious human resources for lack of certified qualifications can be seen in the government’s retrenchment of civil servants in 1995, when the Ministry of Agriculture had to lay-off around 2000 locally based mobile extension workers, among them more than 800 former fighters. Equally the Ministry of Health had to lay off more than 500 bare-foot doctors, most of them women some had worked for more than 12 years. There was the same trend in all other line Ministries. Thus the government has forfeited years of practical experience that no paper qualification can substitute for. It would have made sense to upgrade the skills gained during the armed struggle rather than simply dispose of them.

A considerable number – 72 percent (266) - of interviewed ex-fighters have skills, which are not certified. Nearly two-thirds 201 (54 percent) of the ex-fighters surveyed acquired skills during the armed struggle, the significant area being administration, in which 35 percent of the skilled ex-fighter acquired competence.
Table 5. 20: Current skills of ex-fighters and its origin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Before</th>
<th>During struggle</th>
<th>After struggle</th>
<th>No skill</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>20 (8.4%)</td>
<td>111 (46.6%)</td>
<td>34 (14.3%)</td>
<td>73 (30.7%)</td>
<td>238 (64%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4 (3%)</td>
<td>90 (67.2%)</td>
<td>12 (9%)</td>
<td>28 (20.9%)</td>
<td>134 (36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24 (6.5%)</td>
<td>201 (54%)</td>
<td>46 (12.4%)</td>
<td>101 (27.2%)</td>
<td>372 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assignment as front line combatant leader requires, among other military skills, discipline, organizational competence, and teamwork capacity. Therefore ex-fighters constitute a pool of valuable managerial experiences for all sorts of modern bureaucratic organizations. The two other main fields of experiential learning seem to have been public administration and health. If we are looking at these sectors in the post-war society, the lack of qualified administrative staff and health personnel is not difficult to identify and upgrading of suitable skills could contribute to the development of these sectors. But as the post-war labor market is centered on the use of formal qualifications and on hierarchical employment structures, these resources are wasted.

The ex-fighters’ experiences with public services, media, communication, transportation and finance are not only useful for both public and private enterprises, it would help the returnees tremendously to increase their employment opportunities and their capacity to sustain their livelihood and that of their families. The same holds true for ex-refugees and ex-fighters in relation to the experiences gained in agriculture; a sector with potential for self-employment and, at the same time, in need of technological improvements.

The upgrading of qualifications, especially of ex-fighters would, have enhanced their reintegration in terms of civilian identity and livelihood, provided that the support measures are connected to the cultural heritage of the liberation movement. For example, veteran fighters can tell life stories and report actions in which they have participated, or which they were told by comrades. They could be trained as tourist guides or act as civic educators in schools. This could have a triple benefit. 1. New jobs would be created by which ex-fighters could make a living. 2. The oral history collected could help in writing and compiling the history of the armed struggle. 3. It might help to build the self-esteem of the veteran fighters.

The following example of a veteran fighter who had undergone a lot of experiential learning which was not considered as a valuable resource will illustrate the negative effects of this lack of consideration on a person’s self-esteem. Goitom, who joined the
armed struggle in 1974, was first assigned as a fighter in the front-line. After having stayed there for two years he became platoon leader. In 1976 he was wounded. As a result he was assigned to the department of mass organization and worked as a public officer for eight years. Then he was shifted to the department of logistics. In this post he worked for ten years. When he joined the armed struggle he had completed fourth grade. When he was asked after 22 years what educational level he had, he replied, "I am grade four".

The former fighters who were brought up in the cash-less society are slowly catching up. Haile Teklemikael is a veteran fighter who joined the armed struggle in 1975. He is married to a fighter and has three children. Both were demobilized in 1994. Before their Demobilisation they were living in Asmara. They got 20,000 Birr for their Demobilisation money. He had discussed with his wife how to use their severance money. The first thing they agreed was that they could not make a living from their scarce resource by living in Asmara. He said,

Asmara is for those who have money and support from family or relatives. We have neither of them, so I decided to go around and look if there is any thing I can do. Before Demobilisation Haile was working in Keren and decided to start study in the place Haile knows better. When Haile was looking for possibility of promising investment he found out that there was no glass workshop in Keren. Returning to Asmara he took three weeks training as an apprenticeship in a known glass workshop and mastered the skill (Keren, 23 April 1997).

Haile has been engaged in the glass workshop since 1995 and it seems that he is doing fine. When the author discussed with him in March 1999 he reported that although currently other glass workshops are open they are still earning a modest income. This illustrates how former fighters are slowly making progress towards their economic reintegration into the market economy. How is his experiential learning to be categorized? Is it logical that skills be measured only by the parameters of formal categories of education? Here the formal categorization fails us terribly. On top of this shortcoming if programs are designed based on criteria used for formal education criteria something is wrong with the whole system. In order for the new nation to benefit from the experiential learning of its nationals, this area needs a thorough study as how to utilize the human resource and unless it is done soon it will be wastage of a rich resource.
5. 2. 3 Skill training
Altogether 4155 returned refugees, ex-fighters and IDPs have been trained from October 1993 up to April 1996 in on-the-job training programs of ERREC and OBS (a German NGO). Other institutions like the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Construction and Ministry of Fishery organized training courses. All in all 9500 individuals benefited from the different programs. An evaluation was conducted at the end of 1996 by an independent consultant (ERREC report 1997), according to its results participation was good, but many of the trainees participated only to get pocket money which was quite high (400 Birr). Also the program did not have a follow-up component, and no attempts were made to upgrade the skills gained during the training. In terms of employment, most of the male trainees that participated in the construction courses found employment in the rapidly expanding building sector. Female trainees however were less successful, mainly for two reasons: they were mainly trained in traditional skills like various handicrafts and dress making, and due to children and traditional norms lacked mobility.

5. 3 Employment and income
Gaining a secure livelihood is one of the first steps in achieving successful reintegration. Efforts to create appropriate employment and income-earning opportunities for returnees are thus a central concern of economic reintegration strategies.

5. 3. 1 Employment
In the fragile Eritrean labor market the supply is larger than the demand and employment opportunities in the formal sector are rare. Returnees have to compete with annual school leavers, for the same limited number of jobs, not to speak of employees becoming redundant because of increases in productivity. In the course of the civil service reform, which attempted to streamline the inherited over-staffed and inefficient public administration and fit it to the Government’s revenue, 3,500 ex-fighters have been laid off and joined the job seekers. Thus gainful employment of all categories is crucial to social stability and a key ingredient of peace building.

The difficulties in privatization of state enterprises might be another factor, which has contributed to rising unemployment. On the other hand an extraordinary high growth rate in agriculture, industry, services etc., could be an indicator of the contrary tendency, namely declining unemployment in the long run. But, according to preliminary estimates, the average annual GDP growth at factor costs between 1993-96 was 5 percent and it has, presumably, not created enough employment to absorb the labor supply (Ministry of Finance, 1997).
In the EPLF access to jobs depended on motivation and accumulated knowledge gained from experience of life and not on academic or vocational certificate. The post-war job market, on the contrary, is centered on the use of formal qualifications and employment is hierarchically structured.

Table 5. 21: Current employment status of ex-fighters by gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current employment status</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>111 (29%)</td>
<td>24 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self employed</td>
<td>91 (24%)</td>
<td>6 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running family enterprise</td>
<td>8 (2%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with a partner</td>
<td>4 (1%)</td>
<td>11 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>23 (6%)</td>
<td>87 (23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1 (0%)</td>
<td>6 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>238 (64%)</td>
<td>134 (36%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As we see from Table 5.21 110 (30 percent) of the sample survey are not employed, but if we see employment from gender point of view 87 women (79 percent) are jobless and this clearly demonstrates their current situation. Many former female ex-fighters are living in abject poverty and have problems reintegrating into civilian society.

Table 5. 22 Employment Status of Ex-refugees by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment status</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>213 (28%)</td>
<td>15 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self employed</td>
<td>113 (15%)</td>
<td>36 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running family enterprise</td>
<td>6 (1%)</td>
<td>7 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with a partner</td>
<td>5 (1%)</td>
<td>1 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>113 (15%)</td>
<td>141 (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House wife</td>
<td>75 (10%)</td>
<td>75 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily worker</td>
<td>17 (2%)</td>
<td>12 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6 (1%)</td>
<td>6 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>473 (62%)</td>
<td>287(38%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is only a slight difference between the employment rate of ex-refugees and that of ex-fighters. 254 (33 percent) of ex-refugees in the sample are not employed. If we compare it from gender perspective 141 women (56 percent) are unemployed (see Table 5.22). From table 5.22 it can be seen 10 percent of female ex-refugees responded that they are housewives. In the case of former ex-fighter being a housewife is not considered as employment. When the author discussed the issue the unanimous answer was that this is type of work that men and women had to share and ought not
to be considered as employment. This notion also shows us in a nutshell that ex-fighters are relatively gender aware compare to their civilian counterparts.

Many returnees who statistically would be counted as unemployed actually work. They try to earn their living as street vendors, or casual laborers, mainly in agriculture during harvest time. Concerning the solutions to their employment problem, most of the returnees responded that they don’t expect the Government to solve it. But among the ex-refugee who returned in an organized way and some veteran fighters are those who still counting on the government to solve their problem. These shows there are a few individuals who have developed a dependency syndrome.

The high proportion of returnees engaged in self-employment can be interpreted at least in two ways. 1. The public sector and private sector might have reached their saturation points that they can not employ newcomers in their sector. 2. It can also be interpreted as a sign of self-reliance and sense of initiative. The second view is supported by nearly all in-depth interviews conducted with returnees who said that they wanted:

- To be self-reliant by participating in different kinds of work;
- To learn to solve problems with the help of friends;
- To count on their own efforts as the solution of the problems faced;
- “Our nails are still sharp, we only need space where we can work”; and
- “What we need is a roof to cover our head and we will be able to work”.

5.3.2 Informal sector
The informal sector is where people turn to if they fail to get employment. Although mentioned in the macro-policy the Eritrean government has no specific policy to encourage informal sector development. Maybe this is due to the fact that there is a problem of defining the ‘informal sector’ which therefore does not belong to any specific Ministry.

In the last four years the procedures to issue licenses have been tremendously simplified and improved. Nowadays it does not take more than one day to get a license, compared with previous times when it took sometimes more than six months. But still this new development is not uniformly applied throughout Eritrea. Additionally in some local towns authorities harass people (especially women) earning they’re living in the informal sector. Another problem lies in the fact that the Commercial Bank of Eritrea does not give loans to the informal sector (due to lack of license, lack of collateral etc). Lack of capital for usually small investments is one of the main constraints in the informal sector.
Another area in which returnees could eventually find work is community development. Unfortunately the Government neglects this. Given the reduced absorption capacity of the private sector and the saturation of the public sector, community-based development will continue to be the most effective way of improving the quality of life for the rural population for the foreseeable future. Strategies to consolidate their structures and traditional coping mechanisms must be devised and strengthened in order to create off-farm income-generating opportunities for individuals and co-operative groups.

The challenge is equally daunting in urban areas, where the priority should be to increase employment opportunities and encourage micro-enterprise activity. But for these strategies to be successful, the poor should be spared excessive Government regulations. For example, individuals who are working as street vendors should be allowed to fend for their livelihood and not be harassed.

Micro and small enterprises could play a pivotal role in generating employment, if they are to tap the potential of the informal sector. As mentioned in chapter 3 Mitias has set up two credit schemes for roughly 1200 ex-fighters known by Mitias to be engaged in small business initiatives restricted to a few activities (ERREC 1997 Annual Report).

5.3.3 Income
Employment by itself, or for that matter a job in the informal sector, is not sufficient to reach economic self-sufficiency at household level, particularly in a developing country. It depends on the salary level, or the income earned by self-employment. It also depends on the number of persons who have to live on it. Therefore it is necessary to assess income and expenditure at household level, to be able to determine the economic self-sufficiency of the respondents and the viability of the various forms of activity returnees is engaged in. The results have to be related to the general level of income and the absorption capacity of the labor market. But this raises at least two major problems.
The first is how to measure income in a country like Eritrea, where regular wage employment is not the main source of income. The second is how to know whether the income is sufficient to cover the basic needs. The author has tried to overcome the problems by assuming returnees have similar income as an average Eritrean household, which is estimated to be 400-700 Nakfa as basic salary by ministry of labor. Asking respondents about total expenditure on 1) Food 2) House rent 3) Health 4) Household Utensils 5) Cloth related 6) Education 7) Miscellaneous produced. (The results shown in Table 5.23 and 5.24 this table)

From the sample survey of ex-fighters 17 respondent were reluctant to give their income expenditure. Table 5.23 shows that the standard of living of the majority of former fighters is similar to that of the average Eritrean household by looking at the expenditure.

Table 5.24: Rough Estimate of Expenditure of Ex-refugees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years in exile</th>
<th>Total expenditure</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100-300</td>
<td>301-400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01-05</td>
<td>3 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06-10</td>
<td>22 (6%)</td>
<td>18 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>35 (13%)</td>
<td>45 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>49 (7%)</td>
<td>55 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>39 (5%)</td>
<td>45 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25+</td>
<td>20(3%)</td>
<td>22 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>168 (22%)</td>
<td>187(25%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If we compare the average income of former ex-refugees with that of ex-fighters, nearly half 47 percent (355) of the ex-refugees are living below the poverty line. 11 ex-refugee households were reluctant to tell their income.
5.3.4 Land issues

Immediately after independence, a number of pressures combined forced Eritrea’s decision-makers to put issues related to land tenure high on the agenda of priorities. Prior to the revolution, land tenure systems in Eritrea were complex and differed according to the type of agrarian system. However, one commonality was that women were not usually allowed to own land or large livestock (Green, 1994). The EPLF policy on land redistribution was to give women, especially widows, divorced and childless women, access to sufficient land. According to results of a survey carried out by the Leeds Centre for Development Studies which covered over 400 villages in all provinces, except Danakil, 40 per cent of the villages surveyed had experienced some measure of land reform (CDS, 1991: iii). From these 42 per cent of land reforms had been initiated by the EPLF. This suggests that a large proportion of Eritrea’s rural areas have yet to experience land reform. This applies particularly to the lowlands, as most reform measures carried out have concentrated on the land-scarce highlands (Green, 1994).

In rural Eritrea, arable land is allocated on the basis of membership of a particular community. Membership is based either on common descent or residence. Access to arable land in terms of ownership or usufruct is regarded as an inalienable right of every recognized member of the communities concerned. When the author was asking whether returnees could get land in their village, usually the response was: “yes, there is always space for our own people, those who had fled from that village.” But it was often added that there was no or little land available for returnees who were newcomers.

Nevertheless, especially in the highlands, former fighters and ex-refugees who returned to their villages found it difficult to obtain land. One option was to move to an agricultural settlement in the lowlands and thus eventually creating demographically generated tension. A few others chose to form a ‘work-team’ and go into sharecropping. But many returnees remain in towns because they have no access to land, posing both demographic and structural problems: there is scarcity of arable land, and a political problem of implementation of the new land policy. Woldemichael and Iyob in 1998 argued,

Refugees and former combatants originally from highland areas are settling in fertile lowland areas when returning to Eritrea. They have become more numerous in these places than the autochthonous population and political, economic and social tensions can be anticipated (Woldemichael and Iyob, 1998).

The fact that in some regions due to an influx of large numbers of returnees and scarcity of land, many young men, especially returnees, emigrate to the Arab Gulf States in search of work also lead to demographic imbalance. Consequently,
agricultural production at home has been declining because women do not traditionally participate in all these activities. On the other side the remittances of emigrated family members is the basis of survival of many Eritreans, although according to the key informants the amounts tend to diminish:

*Our families and relatives were sending money to keep us alive, but now situation had changed. There is peace in the country and you can work. Besides they have their own life and they want to return home. But this can be done only if they have money, so they need to save in order to make it and this is understandable (interview in Akordet with key informant Salih Suleman 13 March 1999).*

In the tradition of various ethnic groups involuntary absence from one’s community does not result in loss of land rights. But according to the legislation enacted in 1994, all land is now vested in the State. In the long term the enforcement of this law in a country where land is not just a source of livelihood, but above all a source of identity, could be disruptive. When returnees were asked to rank the problems they had encountered after their return, 69 and 55 per cent for ex-fighters and ex-refugees respectively referred to issues related to land.

**Problems encountered by former refugees after repatriation Label**

1) No Problem 1%
2) Lack of health 6%
3) Lack of funds 26%
4) House rent 4%

Lack of skills 4%
Land related problem

184
Problems encountered by former fighters after Demobilisation

Problems encounter

1) Child-care 1%  
2) House rent 3%  
3) Lack of fund 10%  
4) Lack of skills 11%  
5) Land related problem 69%  
6) Health related problem

One of the many issues that needed attention after independence was land ownership and land-use. Land was unevenly and sometimes unjustly divided, with some villages getting the lion’s share. At village level *baitos* collectively decided not only who was given access to land, but also how it would be used (Weldemichael and Iyob, 1999). The process ensured the local social and ecological management of a precious resource, but during the war local supervision did not produce positive results in terms of productivity or ecological management. But this incidence can not justify the government’s sweeping legislation according to which land belongs to the State.

When the author was discussing with anonymous higher officials about the reason for this decision, the answer he got was, “the government wanted a once-and-for-all solution to the problems associated with land use, but as you know it was obvious that the decree will not work. The attachment of the Eritrean peasant to land is legendary and it may not be possible to find an all-encompassing solution.
Sandra Joierman has rightly identified the two areas in the agrarian reform law that can potentially lead to problems: ‘the disregard for pastoralists and the investment policy for the countryside’ (Joierman, 1996). The agrarian reform makes no provisions for safeguarding access to water and grazing areas for pastoralists’ communities, and subjects their historic access rights to the cultivator’s permission, that is his enclosures. Moreover, the land law comes in the midst of demographic and ecological pressures in the central highlands that have been pushing many peasants to resettle in the western and eastern lowlands. Similarly, the desire for large-scale commercial farming is bound to accentuate the pressure on pastoral groups, who might be forced into more marginal and diminishing pastures, within fixed and ever-narrowing boundaries.

The new legislation is exemplary in many of its provisions for equality and the recognition of rights and is clearly well intentioned, but it fails to control a number of issues48 that would need to be addressed before it is implemented. For example, the provision granting lifetime usufruct right to all Eritreans above 18 years of age who wants to take up farming, irrespective of ethnicity, race or gender is a fine principle intended to ensure non-discrimination in access to land, but in reality it is impracticable. It is also doubtful whether the most vulnerable groups would be able to exercise this right. For example when the author was conducting his fieldwork in Southern Zone, he found out that in Teraimni, Gureyto, Adi-Keshi, Awhene, no land had been distributed for more than 18 years. The Southern Zonal administration had taken measure uni-laterally in its jurisdiction and allowed the former traditional mechanism of land allocation to function until the government could come up with new amendments (interview with Semere Beyien, deputy head for Southern Zone Mendefera, 10 October 1999).

Women-headed households were supposed to be one of the categories to benefit from the PROFERI Pilot Phase. Accordingly, especially in the lowlands, they were given land, but were not always able to make use of it. The main reason they gave for not ploughing their field was either lack of draught animals such as oxen, camels, or lack of cash in order to hire labor. Additionally social norms don’t allow women to plough, usually this means that they have to lease it, in which case they will get in return less than one-third of the produce.

Another well intended but impracticable intervention is de-recognition of the village boundaries. It is meant to eliminate disputes over land by giving life-long usufruct

48 For more detailed discussions of these and related issues see, June Rock, (2000).
rights to individuals, and by handling land allocations in a manner that does not involve the village community and at a level more widespread than a single village. Disputes over land are reportedly (see, Shivji and Cliffe, 1994) widespread in Eritrea and can often take a violent form. Most of these disputes appear to be between villages or between locals and outsiders (newcomers) rather than between individuals contesting rights to plots.

For example, an Eritrean returnee from Germany, Ghermai Habtegergis who had started horticultural activities in Barka in 1996, told the author that his water generator had broken down four times as a result of deliberate sabotage by the local inhabitants, because he was a newcomer. He complained to the local officials of the Ministry of Agriculture, police and other responsible bodies. He got no solution for his problem for two consecutive years. As the local authorities were unable to help him, he consulted with the local elders via a friend of his. They fixed an appointment and he explained his problem. The elders showed sympathy for him, but at the same time said,

*But where do you want our sons to go? You were probably in exile and come back with plenty of money and the Government gave you our land and even didn’t bother to consult us. We don’t know who damaged your water generator but you must understand the situation of individual peasants whose plot has been taken* (Akordet, 12 October 1999).

After four days of discussions with the local elders the problem was solved. He had agreed on the following points:

- To hire five permanent laborers from the village community;
- To hire at least half of the workers needed during the peak time of the harvest among those of the villagers whose land had been allocated to private investors and
- Contribute money according to his capacity for the functioning of social services such as education, health and water.

Since that discussion three years have passed and he has had no problems in his relationship with the villagers. A glaring omission in the Land Proclamation is that of the land rights of (agro) pastoralists (Joierman. 1996). Indeed, the Proclamation’s provisions are intended to apply to permanently cultivated arable land; there is no provision for the pastures and grazing lands of (agro)-pastoralists. Neither in the PROFERI Pilot Phase nor in the support program of Mitias for that matter had made provision for returnees who wanted to engage in (agro)-pastoral activities, nor was any support mechanism geared towards pastoralists put in place. As indicated above, some material basis for conflicts over existing land rights of (agro) pastoralists have
emerged on a small scale in the Western Lowlands. The land reform has not yet been implemented and is not a cause of these conflicts. But the missing protection of the rights of (agro) pastoralists will have to be addressed prior to the implementation of the Land Proclamation. If the government wants to contain and pre-empt the widespread emergence of tension due to grievances over land rights, which could be easily politicized and at the same time hinder integration.

It seems there is an urgent need for some form of land reform in Eritrea. Ex-refugees, ex-fighters and the significant number of landless need to be given secure land rights to rebuild livelihoods, but also the grazing rights of pastoralists have to be secured. What is also needed is a land reform that is easy to implement. It is useful to recall the EPLF’s own land reforms (see, Cliffe and Davidson, 1988; EPLF, 1975: 45) that were implemented throughout much of the highlands after they had been liberated from the mid-1970s.

According to a key informant in Zoba Gash 273 out of 376 cases of dispute brought to the attention of the governor in Guluj and Alebu between May and August 1998 was related to land use. The high number is an indicator that land issues need careful attention and sensitive handling. They cannot be dealt with in a uniform and bureaucratic way.

The Land Proclamation was passed in 1994, but hitherto never implemented, leaving questions of land use and inheritance unanswered. It is interesting to mention what one of the key informant said when the land issue was raised:

*What I like about EPLF is that they want to change things right away. During the armed struggle one of the many good qualities they had was that they were working with the people. But nowadays they behave differently. They pretend to know every thing and want to do it only their way, without consultation. Nevertheless one thing is remaining when they see the tide moving against them, they automatically stop the ongoing process; this is serving as a safety net. It is also a pity that, unlike what happened during the armed struggle, they do not openly acknowledge their short-comings (interview with 78 years old Yosief Tewelde; Southern region, 22 June 1999).*

Some of the issues rose above about land policy ring a warning signal that something is going terribly wrong. But why, after all these years of sacrifices and of EPLF’s policy of popular participation during the armed struggle, is this case? This issue will be pursued in the next chapter.
5.4 Conclusion

The impact of war is evident everywhere, nevertheless the progress made in the last few years has been impressive. An operational government structure has been created. Stretches of road have been newly constructed or repaired and other lines of communication improved. Many schools and clinics were rehabilitated and many new ones were built. But, above all, peace and stability have been maintained across the nation until ‘border war’ started in Eritrea. Even now the centre part of the country is stable and peaceful. These achievements have enabled urban and rural communities to start rebuilding their war-devastated country. But the expectation of returnees is not matched by the reality on the ground, for over time they had developed great expectations of new prospects of social mobility after repatriation or Demobilization.

One of the shortcomings of the overall reintegration program conducted from 1993-1997 is that the leadership sees the economic sector as a decisive factor. Where economic modernization is regarded as the key factor to full reintegration of returnees into the mainstream of the society but as we had already observed social and psychological problem are hampering the smooth transition and should also mainstreamed. For example, though many returnees have a rural background and economically are doing fine, they are reluctant to return to rural areas even if they might do well by returning to rural areas. This demonstrates how far their attitude has changed due to exile or participation in the struggle. This plays a great role in the process of their reintegration.

This problem is highlighted if observed from gender perspective. Women former fighters have great difficulties in accepting the norms of the prevailing patriarchal society. Moslem women returning from the Sudan are facing problems in using the skills they had acquired during their long exile, but the trend is changing fast in some parts of the country, especially in towns. Despite these changes one often gets the impression that the tremendous progress which had been made during the struggle is reduced to window dressing of the gender issue and that the gender bias was only latent until it got a chance to resurface. The current trend is detrimental to the reintegration process in general and gender issues in particular.

During the wartime many ex-fighters have been involved in different kinds of military training or civilian activities. Ex-refugees also had benefited from different kind of skill training, even though a lower degree to that of ex-fighters. Thus by staying in the armed struggle or going to exile returnees have accumulated a wealth of valuable managerial skills and other related experience which could be used in different sectors that currently are reviving in Eritrea. But the results of the study
clearly show that their informal experiences were obviously not taken on board and not given due recognition, leading to a waste of accumulated human resources which could be well used in a young nation that is struggling to stand on its feet. Developing a system able to assess and acknowledge results of experiential learning and training of ex-fighters and ex-refugees and to turn them into formal qualifications would have far-reaching consequence. There is an obvious need to bridge the gap between the acknowledged results of formal education and the non-recognized qualifications of informal training gained during the armed struggle and exile, thus missing an opportunity of vertical mobility for returnees and ultimately of their successful integration.

The government of Eritrea has stipulated in its macro-policy (GOE, 1994) that social welfare objectives were meant to rehabilitate the members of the society who were/are victims of the protracted war of attrition. But despite its good intentions and a firm political will the government of Eritrea is currently facing many challenges. The main problem seems to be lack of institutional capacity and financial resources. There is still continued reliance on informal lines of communication among front members and on ad hoc decision-making on nearly everything. It was only during the drafting of the constitution that all members of the Eritrean society, irrespective of where they reside, were asked for their opinion and their voices heard. It seems that the attitude ‘we know what the people want and we can deliver it to them’ is still prevailing. This is contrary to the very principle professed during the armed struggle and thus is creating resentment which in the long-run if followed will breed antagonism which could be a threat to the reintegration process and nation building.

The author being a member of the Front feels the Government has not been sufficiently either inclusive or transparent and for whatever reason public participation in decision-making has been limited. People are informed of Government policy, but rarely are they asked for their input. They have no idea how the policy was put together or why. With the passage of time the Government has become increasingly remote from the public, away from its own root, its own base inside the heart and mind of the people. For many, the EPLF they knew and loved is slowly fading into memory, replaced by what they see an indifferent and frustrating bureaucracy, far removed from their everyday lives.

During the armed struggle EPLF was so close to the people that if it is said, they could listen to the heartbeat of the people, this was not exaggerated, it was real. But now if a shell of artillery is fired they will not listen, because they are hiding behind heaps of paper and are remote from the base - the people. Unless they clear their house and listen to the plight of the population as they did during the armed struggle, they will never be part and parcel of the people (interview with Zahra
The transition from a successful guerrilla army to an effective civilian administration became more difficult than anticipated. A mind set and attuned only to control, security, and order, found it difficult to adapt to the civilian environment and administration. A commander is used to making decisions on the spot, if he feels the situation calls for it, or the welfare of his troops depends on it. There is no need for consultation. The idea that the commander knows better, or needs no consultation with anybody was carried into the civilian administration and resulted in excessive control and regulation, undoubtedly devised to protect the welfare of the people, but only creating misunderstanding and a drifting apart from the people. The responsible decision making official sees himself as the arbiter of what is good for the people or the country and uses his authority accordingly. It is unlikely that he will listen to alternative views. Many people believe that this is a recurring problem among officials in the Eritrean government.
Chapter Six

Social and Psychological Dimensions of Reintegration

6. Introduction

Before we consider the issue of social reconstruction following armed conflict, it is necessary to broaden our view of war and its social consequences. However, the difficulty in understanding the social consequences of war is that they tend to be less visible and less tangible than economic and political damages and changes. This leads to the assumption that rehabilitation of war-torn society boils down to economic interventions.

However, the reality is that social reintegration starts with the establishment of contacts between returnees and their host community. It is through interaction between groups that barriers are removed, attitudes changed and differences ironed out. Common interests are recognized and accommodated only if interaction takes place. Appropriate policy measures and administrative support may facilitate this process, but cannot replace it. Here accommodation refers to the mutual adjustment of groups that had developed their own values, norms and attitudes by participating in the armed struggle, staying in exile or by remaining in occupied territory. Except for the stayers, this meant undergoing a process of uprooting, which was followed by a similar experience when they left either exile or the EPLF armed forces and returned to mainstream society. This does not mean that the community of stayers did not undergo changes, but they were spared the experience of uprooting. To explore the reintegration of returnees two hypotheses are used as hindsight in this chapter.

**Third Hypothesis**

“The integration and settlement of returnees in Eritrean society depends on the social networks of extended family but also of new and old communities in creating effective livelihood survival strategies of the household”.

**Null Hypothesis**

“The reintegration and settlement of returnees doesn’t depend on the extended family network or needs creating effective livelihood survival strategies”.

Fourth Hypothesis
“The highly motivated and politicized ex-fighters and to a lesser degree ex-refugees have the potential of being agents of development and change in post-conflict Eritrea provided the reintegration process is managed properly”.

Null Hypothesis
“The experiences and skills gained by returnees during their exile or due to participation of armed struggle is useless and can not entitle them as change agents and have no impact in the process of reconstruction in post-conflict Eritrea”.

The social consequences of uprooting for an individual might be estrangement and alienation from family, friends and close community, the loosening of kin ties and the breaking down of support networks. In the villages, from where most returnees originated to which they returned the boundaries between family and the surrounding community are fluid and families are interlinked. The loss of these links and networks was usually replaced, after a period of adaptation, by the community of refugees in exile and by that of the fighters in the field.

In the field this process was accelerated and intensified by the pro-active role assumed by the EPLF, challenging the old cleavages of the Eritrean society and developing a new identity, establishing boundaries between others and sameness along the political line of national liberation from foreign rule and repressive traditions. The subjects of repressive customs, laws and norms, such as women, landless peasants, displaced nomads and workers, found in the EPLF an organization willing to protect and promote them. For example, for the first time in the history of Eritrea, women were encouraged to take on a more active role than supportive work. The young women, aged 15 - 30, who had flocked to the EPLF in 1975, were given rigorous military training as well as political education.

The changes the Eritrean refugees in Sudan had undergone were certainly less intensive compared to ex-fighters, but nevertheless affected them deeply. In the beginning they had believed that their exile would be of short duration and thus they tried to maintain their ‘old’ ways of life as far as possible, eager as they were to repatriate ‘home’ when conditions improved. This hope made them preserve their identity. For example parents wanted to transmit their language and culture on to their children and were resistant to assimilation into the Sudanese society. This was facilitated by the policy of the Sudanese government and the practice of UNHCR, according to which refugees were kept in spatially segregated sites until the factors
that promoted them to flee ceased to exist, allowing them to return to their country. This is a very effective way to sustain the feeling of ‘us’ and ‘them’.

But it is also argued that over years in exile Eritrean refugees in the Sudan lost their social cohesion and became urbanized, market-oriented and individualized (Kibreab, 1996). The estrangement was certainly accentuated by the fact that some refugees were displaced when they were children, or were born in exile and did not have a personal knowledge of their ‘country of origin’.

Despite the important role of social factors in the life of any individual, especially in the case of people who have been uprooted several times, reintegration programs usually consist exclusively of, or concentrate on, economic reintegration, thus repeating the mistakes of development policies centered on macroeconomic improvements. This was also the case in Eritrea. As described in chapter four PROFERI had 11 components but none addressed social needs of ex-refugees. The same applies to the support program for demobilized fighters. According to W/Giorgis (1999), and as confirmed by my observations as head of Mitias in charge of implementing the reintegration program of ex-fighters in the early 1990s, it was oriented more towards dealing with economic problems than resolving social and psychological issues. It was believed that ensuring livelihoods for former fighters and refugees was of foremost importance, and if this was achieved, all other problems would gradually become less pressing. Interviews with former fighters, in particular, have provided persuasive evidence that an integrated approach is needed.

It can be argued that economic opportunities are pivotal in the early phases of adjustment, because they can facilitate the rate and the scope of reintegration. But they are not a sufficient condition for the overall integration and thus social and psychological integration needs to be taken seriously. The social structures of the receiving society and the attitudes of its members towards returnees are variables that determine the speed, the direction and level of socio-cultural reintegration.

The reintegration of returnees would not be complete if it did not take into account their fears, hopes, and attitudes about adjustment or maladjustment within new environments. Adjustment refers here to the individual’s (or group’s) ability to live and perform various social roles and activities without suffering excessive or unbearable psychological stress. This chapter will chart the social and psychological reintegration process of ex-fighters and ex-refugees by raising non-economic aspects that helped or hindered the reintegration process.
6.1 Coming back ‘home’

Demobilisation and reintegration are closely linked. The payment of Demobilisation money was meant to help the fighters start their reintegration. To those in charge of preparing the fighters for Demobilisation, it was clear that Demobilisation and reintegration would not be easy. When informing the fighters that they were to be demobilized, one of the commanders described the process through a parable:

When the mother bird notices that the wings of the her young ones are well developed, she decides to convince them to leave the nest by pecking them, even if she does not know whether the wings will be strong enough to carry them to a safe place. In the same way during the struggle fighters have developed the necessary strength to overcome difficulties on their way. Now the EPLF has to demobilize them, not knowing whether all of them will be able to cope (in a seminar given by Division Commander Fussum Tecklebrhan for ex-fighters, Asmara 26 June 1994).

There is a sedentary bias in the concept of refugee, which implicitly suggests that people belong to a particular location as if by nature. The separation of people from their place of origin forms one aspect of the refugee problem and the restoration of a person to their place through repatriation is often presented as the optimal solution (Bakewell, 1999). This simplistic narrative of refugees being able to go ‘home’ is often employed without a critical analysis of what they conceive to be home and how it has changed since they were forced to leave.

6.1.1 Ethnic and geographic distribution

As mentioned in Chapter Five, apart from a small number of peasant and pastoralists origin, who went back to their families in the countryside, the majority of former fighters and ex-refugees gathered in or close to towns where they hoped to find job. The majority (76 percent or 275) of the sample of the ex-fighters surveyed belonged to the Tigrina ethnic group. When interviewed a few Tigrina ethnic groups were living in rural highland areas, but the majority is living in rural settlements and towns in the western lowlands. The Tigre and other ethnic groups with more or less nomadic lifestyle are living scattered in the vast plains and mountains of lowland Eritrea. Thus eighty percent of the returning refugees – Tigre as well as Tigrina and those from smaller ethnic groups similarly decided to settle in the western lowlands (PROFERI, 1995). This pattern has an impact on their reintegration process and changes the demographic composition of the region they return to. For example, 37 percent of Tigrina ethnic group who are originally from highland had settled in western thus changing the demographic balance of areas of their return.
Table 6. 1: Ethnic distribution of ex-refugees in their areas of return

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic</th>
<th>Anseba</th>
<th>Southern</th>
<th>Gash-Barka</th>
<th>Northern Red Sea</th>
<th>Central</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afar</td>
<td>2 (0%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (0%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>3 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kunama</td>
<td>15 (2%)</td>
<td>2 (0%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (0%)</td>
<td>17 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedarib</td>
<td>2 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (0%)</td>
<td>21 (3%)</td>
<td>2 (0%)</td>
<td>4 (1%)</td>
<td>30 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilen</td>
<td>37 (5%)</td>
<td>11 (1%)</td>
<td>23 (3%)</td>
<td>4 (1%)</td>
<td>8 (1%)</td>
<td>83 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saho</td>
<td>4 (1%)</td>
<td>7 (1%)</td>
<td>7 (1%)</td>
<td>19 (3%)</td>
<td>48 (6%)</td>
<td>85 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nara</td>
<td>1 (0%)</td>
<td>87 (11%)</td>
<td>341 (45%)</td>
<td>52 (7%)</td>
<td>243 (32%)</td>
<td>760 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tigre</td>
<td>6 (1%)</td>
<td>6 (1%)</td>
<td>90 (12%)</td>
<td>8 (1%)</td>
<td>59 (8%)</td>
<td>169 (22%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tigrigna</td>
<td>16 (2%)</td>
<td>33 (4%)</td>
<td>96 (13%)</td>
<td>18 (2%)</td>
<td>117 (15%)</td>
<td>280 (37%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>65 (9%)</td>
<td>59 (8%)</td>
<td>341 (45%)</td>
<td>52 (7%)</td>
<td>243 (32%)</td>
<td>760 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One critical task pursued by EPLF during the armed struggle but currently seen, as a side issue was to work with communities to make them aware of current developments which affect their daily life. For example, the cadres of EPLF made efforts to ensure that people are informed and are able to participate in all activities of the Front. The Front consistently made the fighters aware about their culture and to respect traditions of other ethnic groups. The Front used to inform the population of day-to-day developments through the media and related facilities. Initially mobilizing individuals for common work was rather difficult because Christians from the highlands were usually considered as 'foreigners' in lowland areas. But through persistent explanation and persuasion toward common goal they were able to win the hearts and respect of the people. For example, the program of 'women's participation' in the baito of Afabet and its environs in 1978 was quite impressive for its efficiency and flexibility (Burgess, 1991). By studying traditions and cultures, cadres' intervention was able to overcome the cultural gap between lowland and highland people. But after independence this practice was not always maintained and there is a lack of communication between the authorities and the people. This can be elaborated through reference to the attitude shown by CERA towards land allocation. As key informants from Adi Furgule and Adi Tsaida said,

According to the new law land belongs to the government and the authorities thought that they could settle ex-refugees where they want to settle them prior to our consultation. Of course the previous inhabitants resented this. During the night they sent their animals for grazing on the fields of the new settlers and destroyed the crops. This process continued until authorities from CERA came and asked us how to sort out the problem of grazing, fallow and cultivation areas (interview Adi-Tsaida, 8, November 1998).

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49 In Eritrea during the armed struggle cadres formed a nucleus of highly trained and politically conscious members of the society.
Table 6.2: Ethnic distribution of sampled ex-fighters by place of residence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic</th>
<th>Place of residence</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Semi-urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afar</td>
<td>4 (1%)</td>
<td>2 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kunama</td>
<td>4 (1%)</td>
<td>1 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nara</td>
<td>4 (1%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedarib</td>
<td>4 (1%)</td>
<td>1 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilen</td>
<td>6 (2%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saho</td>
<td>9 (2%)</td>
<td>1 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tigre</td>
<td>40 (11%)</td>
<td>8 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tigrigna</td>
<td>199 (53%)</td>
<td>20 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>266 (72%)</td>
<td>33 (8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reintegration policies should not assume a dichotomy between ex-refugees, ex-fighters and host community because they often have common needs. Moreover, they must all be ‘integrated’ into the same communities and society. At the same time it cannot be denied that they have had separate experiences, which need to be taken into account. For example, the issue is usually more complex when gender, ethnicity, language and religion are taken on board. Cultural, political and economic values can also bind or divide individuals or groups. Due to the experience gained in the armed struggle many of the potentially divisive ethnic, religious, geographical and occupational stereotypes have lost force, but that doesn’t mean that no problem is encountered by returnees when they embark on the reintegration process.

6.1.2 Perception and Attitude

Even in homogenous societies tension can arise for variety of reasons: difference in age, sex, wealth, status. In the case of a heterogeneous society such as in communities or areas where local people had to accept the presence of returnees, it can be the outcome of poor communication, false perceptions, or/and incompatibilities of cultural and religious practices and values, and, of course, conflicts of interest.

Table 6.3: Current Perception of Returnees of the Host Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Ex-refugee perception</th>
<th>Ex-fighters perception</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bad</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>123 (16)</td>
<td>219 (29)</td>
<td>143 (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>93 (12)</td>
<td>120 (16)</td>
<td>62 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td><strong>216 (28)</strong></td>
<td><strong>339 (53)</strong></td>
<td><strong>205 (27)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The frequency of tension between returnees and members of the host society is a good indicator of their tolerance, acceptance and ultimately integration. Table 6.4 shows that ex-refugees’ and ex-fighters’ perceptions of their current situation are
more or less the same. 28 percent (216) and 26 percent (97) of ex-refugees and ex-fighters respectively rated their current perception as bad.

As shown in Table 6.4 the return of ex-refugees and ex-fighters to their local communities does not occur without tension or even conflict. Comparing the experiences of ex-fighters and those of ex-refugees we see that ex-fighters have experienced more problems than ex-refugees that is 90 percent compared to 74 percent. Interestingly more women than men of both categories have encountered a hostile attitude.

Table 6.4: Tension/conflict Encountered by Both Categories after Return

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did you experience conflict or tension</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ex-refugees</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ex-fightiers</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>331(44%)</td>
<td>233(31%)</td>
<td>564(74%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>208(56%)</td>
<td>126(34%)</td>
<td>334 (90%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>154(20%)</td>
<td>42 (6%)</td>
<td>196(26%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>30(8%)</td>
<td>8(2%)</td>
<td>38(10%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>485(64%)</td>
<td>275(36%)</td>
<td>760(100%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>238(64%)</td>
<td>134(36%)</td>
<td>372(100%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One of the reasons could be that after their strategic retreat in 1979 until independence in 1991 most fighters stayed in their sanctuary in the Northern Sahel and thus had less contact with the Eritrean society. The political indoctrination they had experienced during the armed struggle has also played a role. For example, religion, tribe, region is not an issue among fighters. After their return to the society all these are issues that need proper handling.

Table 6.5: The Breakdown of Tensions Faced by Former Fighters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td></td>
<td>9(3%)</td>
<td>6(2%)</td>
<td>15(4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious difference</td>
<td></td>
<td>1(0)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1(0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic factors</td>
<td></td>
<td>129 (39%)</td>
<td>38 (10%)</td>
<td>167 (50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception difference/understanding</td>
<td></td>
<td>68 (11%)</td>
<td>74(20%)</td>
<td>142(43%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent problem</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (0%)</td>
<td>8(2%)</td>
<td>9(3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>208 (62%)</td>
<td>126(38%)</td>
<td>334(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Table 6.5 fifty- percent (167) of the problems faced by ex-refugees is related with misperception and lack of understanding with the local community are considered to be the main reason for tension and conflict. The table also shows a difference of perception is greater when seen from gender perspectives that is more than half (74) who face perception difference or misunderstanding with the stayers community were women. Women ex-fighters categories their social and economic
problems more critical compared with their compatriots reintegration to the main stream of the society. The issue of social marginalization is raised nearly in all the in depth interviews of women in general and women ex-fighters in particular and the main reason hindering their reintegration.

According to the finding presented in Table 6.5 and 6.6 religions is not playing any role to create rifts among the returnees and stayers community. But remembering the fundamentalist attitude of Sudanese government and its support to dissent groups is not an issue that lives space to reluctance. The rift created by the colonial power in the 1940’s and which was exasperated during the armed struggle in 1961 to 1970 was cemented by the endeavor of the EPLF. As one of the former commanding officer expressed it in his interview,

“If we capitalize on our experience gained during the armed struggle that is to down play the role of religion, ethnicity and regional affiliation in regard to job opportunity, social and economic mobility and mainstreaming to the society. Then there is a possibility to create a cohesive and hormones society in Eritrea” (Interview with Andebrhan Tewelde Maihabar, 10 May 1999).

Table 6. 6: The breakdown of tensions faced by former refugees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict</th>
<th>Sex</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>33 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious difference</td>
<td>7 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic factors</td>
<td>166 (29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference of perception/understanding</td>
<td>125 (22%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>331 (57%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compared with ex-fighters, ex-refugees are facing fewer problems: only 34 percent (193) of those who said they experienced conflicts indicated that they were related to difference of perception or understanding with the stayers community. As indicated in Table 6.7 the great majority ex-refugees believed that misunderstanding between the stayers and returnee community was decreasing. This is a positive sign and shows that slowly they are learning to co-exist together and thus were developing tolerance. This was observed in all the fieldwork sites and if there is any misunderstanding or conflict, it is little different from that within the society in general. The comments of one ex-refugee illustrated the situation:

*When we were guests, we felt some sort of isolation and we were unable to cope with the new environment. This was because we did not know many people and we did not know how to interact and work within the Demas community. Now we are able to get rid of the problems as we come to know much about how to fit in*
and function within the community of Demas. The improved relation with elders of Demas has enabled us not only to tackle problems but also to get land (Interview with Humedo Rumodan Demas, 06 January 1999).

Some returnees however, have faced outright animosity from the host community into which they were to integrate. In a group discussion the author conducted with a group of spontaneous returnees in Ghinda most of them reported that the receiving community was hostile toward them. Only a few said that they had experienced a warm welcome. Neither did they get any help by the receiving community in dealing with the hardships of re-establishing their livelihood, nor did the Ghinda administration assist them.

But social reintegration is also not easy to plan or to implement. It cannot be determined by government decrees, since much of its success depends on socio-cultural compatibility between returnees and the host community. The level of understanding is key to successful coexistence of returnees and their host community and a benchmark for successful reintegration.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6. 7: Are tension increasing or decreasing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ex-refugees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, they are increasing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, they are decreasing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It has always been the same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.1.3 Family relations
Family relations are a vital element of social cohesion and are highly valued by Eritreans in all parts of the country and all strata of the society. Whereas most refugees left as families, at least as a group of family members, fighters were forced to cut all relations with their families, often for the whole time spent in the field. Therefore one of the important problems faced by former fighters is the loss of ties with family or relatives during the long years of war and subsequent disorientation. For many former fighters the EPLF replaced the family of many fighters and after Demobilisation they felt being abandoned, or even sent away and this sentiment is especially strong with former female ex-fighters.
Table 6.8: Ex-fighters’ family contacts and their personal perception

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal perception after demobilization</th>
<th>Contacts with family during struggle</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad</td>
<td>14 (4%)</td>
<td>83 (22%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not good or bad</td>
<td>24 (6%)</td>
<td>94 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>20 (5%)</td>
<td>137 (37%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>58 (16%)</td>
<td>314 (84%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.8 shows that the great majority of ex-fighters 84 percent (314) had no contact with their families during the armed struggle. Therefore after long years of absence and a drastic change in values and life style, it seems quite understandable that many ex-fighters felt detached from their families. In the informal discussion conducted with former ex-fighters it was emphasized that the situation at the initial stage of independence the communication conducted between returnees and stayers were as if in different wavelength. But with time it was fine tuned and currently a harmonious society is developing which creates platform for reintegration.

Table 6.9: Ex-refugees’ Family Contact during exile and their personal perception

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal perception</th>
<th>Contacts with family during exile</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad</td>
<td>131 (27.8%)</td>
<td>85 (29.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not good or bad</td>
<td>207 (43.9%)</td>
<td>132 (45.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>133 (28.2%)</td>
<td>72 (24.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28.20%</td>
<td>24.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>471 (100%)</td>
<td>289 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.1.4 Comradeship
The basic training of fighters sought to build group cohesiveness and equality at the expense of individuality, and did so through a Front that made prior identities irrelevant. This process required a high level of discipline and as little privacy as possible. Performance was rewarded on the basis of group achievement. As a result individuality was subordinated to the welfare of the unit and a high spirit of comradeship emerged.

The following comment from a former barefoot doctor, describing his feelings for his wounded comrade, can illustrate this:

All I could think of was how I could get her to a safer place and attend to her injury. It didn’t occur to me that I was exposed to the enemy and thus my life was in danger and I may even be killed. All my heart was focused on how to save her life. If I try to remember the past incidents even it is hard for me to grasp why I
acted that way. I think we were a mutual survival society. The readiness to act on behalf of the other gave us new energy, blood and life. Without reflection of what are at stake you subconsciously act without thought of self-preservation and yes it is incredible to believe it now but it was there. I still believe that it will stay forever with me for it is what life with a comrade means to me (Suleman Tumsah Hargigo, 12 February 1999).

The sacrifice of life in the spirit of comradeship ensures a measure of immortality as the fallen live on through the memories of survivors. Meaningful ties with comrades on the front line empowered fighters to act when action seemed impossible. The belief was that one ‘couldn’t let the other men/women down’ that is when the action got tough everyone was expected to sustain commitment even under fearful circumstances. Veteran ex-fighters most frequently list essential skills as teamwork, self-discipline, and the ability to cope with adversity. The following comment makes this clear:

Field life made me realize how important it was not to shirk my duty. Everyone had his job to fulfil and any let down could be fatal to the unit in particular and the organisation in general (interview Hagos, Tewelde Segeneiti, 11 February 1998).

Most veteran ex-fighters share a similar perspective. As another said:

Each and every individual has his part to play. If not, the whole situation falls apart. The motto was, you win or die and perish together (Summary from interview conducted with different veteran fighters).

The well internalized belief not to let-down one’s unit during action can be verified by the initiatives taken by wounded fighters to return hastily his/her unit before even finishing their medical treatment. One ex-fighter expresses this sentiment as follows:

Those men and women on the front line were my family, my home. They were closer to me than I can express closer than any friends had been or ever would be. They had never let me down during those bad days, and I couldn’t do it to them. My colleagues in arms had replaced my family (Interview with veteran fighter of 1976, Asmara Aradom Dubarwa, 06 March 1999).

What gripped their imagination was rather the camaraderie of the trenches and the courage and sheer tenacity in the art of survival of their aim that they served. A comrade in battle is special because he or she is entrusted with one’s life. Asmara further elaborated her experience:
After all we were ‘special friends.’ We bunked together, fought together … expected to make it together when the war is over. Comradeship refers to the subordination of individuality to group interest, whereas individuality is central to friendship and to qualities of friend. In friendship, self-preservation tends to rank well above self-sacrifice (ibid.).

An important question is under what conditions is comradeship likely to result in friendship based on mutuality and complementarily, a relationship in which individuality is not appreciated? The collective memories of comradeship that often provide a basis for sticking together in post-war years may also become the foundation for lasting friendships between diverse individuals. They could be the basis of ex-fighters’ associations aimed at nurturing and safeguarding the interest of all former fighters.

Within the context of military service, we can readily appreciate a difference between the closeness of camaraderie and that of friendship. The closeness of camaraderie enabled men/women to sacrifice their lives for others without considering personal survival. This closeness characterized all members of the unit, whereas friendship was not grouped based. One’s self and that of the other become more precious in friendship, because of the emphasis on individuality. As can be seen by the following example self-sacrifice becomes more difficult after independence because other issues come to take precedence.

Bereket Tewelde is a veteran fighter who entered the struggle in 1975. He was demobilized in 1995. When asked to elaborate the role of his comrades in his life, in relation to his current situation, he said,

My comrades are everything to me. If I have any problem they are the ones I turn to. They are always ready to give a helping hand. During the armed struggle I was keen to avoid close friendship. It is good not to have close friends in your unit … you didn’t want to make friends… the situation was so harsh that … maybe you might not see them tomorrow. As comrades we vowed ‘to live as brothers and sisters in war, to remain true friends throughout life’. But now the comrade issue is different. As you see I am owner of a teashop and when other experiences intervene and common memories dim, you slowly become strangers. Some comrades are currently working in government offices (I do not want to name them) are so far from reality that I ask myself: are they the same individuals I knew before? So the feeling about the help that you may get from them is mixed, but somehow I am managing (Asmara, 19 July 1999).

Demobilisation leads men and women of the same unit along different pathways in the post-war era, entailing less contact and producing wide social differences and less commonality in interests. Varying material condition and work experience also favor
friendship instability over the course of life. But there is also a strong sense of social solidarity and belonging, despite Demobilisation and dispersion. There are collective portraits, a common memory. Their story extends back in time toward the historical context of the armed struggle. Time stands still at reunions, enveloping the participants in a framework where post-war paths and individual differences are irrelevant. As one veteran commented,

_It is not our own story to which our lives belong. The reunion of fighting unit demonstrates the continuing vitality of social bonds established in wartime (interview with Alem Segid Dekenhare 07, January 1999)._ 

Berhane is a veteran ex-fighter who was demobilized in 1994. On top of the Demobilisation money he received, his brothers and sisters helped him to start up his metal workshop. His earnings are decent compared with the average Eritrean income and he has 75,000 Nakfa as working capital. He commented:

_Although economically I am doing fine, after Demobilisation I felt some how drifting apart. I am missing the life in the trench for in it I remember the caring of my colleagues. The love and affection they gave me is irreplaceable by economic gain and this you cannot get it even in your dream when you have changed to a civilian. I always felt at ease with my colleagues for they were ready there when I need help. You get help even before you ask for it, but in civilian society it is the other way round. People ask, ‘how was life in the jungle’? As far as I am concerned the armed struggle was/is home to me, but the civilian life is indeed a jungle which I do not have any clue about (interview with veteran fighter Umeredin Omaro Demas, 14 September 1999)._ 

In order to minimize misunderstanding and to iron out the difference arising from experience and a platform has to be set up where these issues could be discussed. The problems faced by former fighters, ex-refugees and members of host communities must come out in the open, so that they can help in developing a common understanding. Such a process might help in developing tolerance within the society, which by itself is the sign of a healthy environment, which can promote the reintegration of returnees by breaking the barrier of misunderstanding. It should be understood that whatever money is poured into assistance programs cannot set right the misconception created by difference of experience.

If trauma and resulting depression are not properly taken on board during the reintegration process, the scattering of social ties in consequence of limited economic capacity can become an obstacle to good communication. When ex-fighters lack self-confidence and support, they may feel isolated. This can mark the beginning of a
tendency to take the law into own hand, the consequence may be a reversal of reintegration and nullification of prospects for creating a coherent nation. Compared to ex-fighters refugees are usually wrongly conceived as ‘dependants’, and the reaction is that ‘something must be done to help them’. Thus the tendency is for governments or NGOs to make decisions on behalf of refugees. But this stereotyping is not always necessarily true. The following examples, which narrate the experiences of Eritrean ex-refugees, demonstrate it.

*When we were guests we felt sort of isolation for the stayers called us ladin. This didn’t create an environment conducive for our reintegration. But slowly we started to make friends and bring our experience for the benefit of the community and this rewarded as with acceptance. Now we laugh remembering the misunderstanding created by the label they attach to new comers for it is only history and doesn’t matter at all (Focus discussion with elders Ghinda, 10 March 1999).*

Ex-refugees are as resourceful as anybody else is, but the label attached to their name creates problems in their day-to-day activities. Ex-refugees through their own schemes and networking and power they reach decisions on how to repatriate and how to lead independent life ones they are back ‘home’. For example, after Eritrea was liberated ex-refugees in general and the ones who were returning to Eritrea spontaneously in particular, first investigated how safe was to return ‘home’? Could they eke out a living? These were the two issues nearly all respondents were concerned with when telling their story of their return. They were always weighing the pros and cons of the situation before decision.

Spencer (1999) has argued that the experience of living through a war can act as a catalyst, jolting people out of disempowerment into empowerment by taking initiative to their hand and gave the following example.

*Communities began to examine the cause of war, why it has come to their village and what can be done to minimize its impacts. The process of conscientisation allows communities to develop and utilize coping mechanisms which enable them to survive the conflict and which can then be transferred into the economic recovery process once the war is ended. In many ways the conflict provides a unique opportunity to reassess community processes and practices (Spencer, 1999: 206).*

So communities devise and adopt different coping mechanisms in order to survive. By looking closely at the routine activities of spontaneous returnees from Sudan the author observed that they were not engaged in one task but several tasks at a time.
They practiced crop sharing; animal fattening; mat-making and during the slack period they were engaged in wage labor to make ends meet (Rock, 1998). For example, people from the Nara ethnic group shared their work on a gender basis; men got the palm and sold it to women who made beds, mats, twine or fibre to sell. Tigre wage laborers in Sudan had reverted back to growing traditional crops like sorghum, millet...etc using the spate irrigation system and had reintroduced their traditional water harvesting and management system, adapting it to the valuable experiences they had accumulated during exile. I don’t think that they had learned how to harvest water after their return; presumably they knew about it and during their stay in exile. This knowledge had survived, buried like embers that only needs blowing. These findings contradict the notion of Kibreab’s assertion that former refugees become de-skilled (Kibreab, 1996), while in exile. It might be that they lose some of their ancestors’ knowledge of weather forecasting and other related things but certainly other skills and knowledge of traditional practices have survived or might even be developed to suite the current situation.

Osman Riray, an ex-refugee, told the story of the spontaneous return of refugees from Felket to their area:

In 1991 the village counted not more than 13 families who had survived the war. But slowly people from our clan started trickling back. First in tens and in the end the number reached 231 families. The first influx of returned the host community gave refugees hand (Nackfa, 06 May 1999).

With this help they started clearing the bush and build their ‘agnet’ (traditional houses). The former refugees organized themselves into two groups, for food and labor, and shared the task burdens. They elected a committee of five people but, unlike previous times, among the committee members currently two are women. It may be that the experience of community organization gained during exile has helped them to traverse the usual accepted norm of committees being formed only of men. There are numerous examples of former refugees acting to secure their reintegration. Far from being passive, they have developed a variety of coping mechanisms. These have remained largely unacknowledged, but if taken into account could have contributed positively to the process of reconstruction in Eritrea.
6.2 Life in exile and in the field

Even though in theory refugees have a separate legal status, generally it is very difficult to make a clear distinction between migrants and refugees. There is a continuum between the “typical migrant” and “typical refugee” (Bulcha, 1988), in the middle of which is the category of dislocated populations.

Table 6.10: Former refugees reason for leaving

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why did you leave</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forced</td>
<td>443 (58%)</td>
<td>223 (29%)</td>
<td>666 (88%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary</td>
<td>42 (6%)</td>
<td>52 (7%)</td>
<td>94 (12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>485 (64%)</td>
<td>275 (36%)</td>
<td>760 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Voluntary migration occurs for a variety of reasons, which might be summed up as example of “availability of opportunities” at the place of destination. The ‘pull’ factor is important to the decision-making process (Balcha, 1989) but the push factor is also important. The migrant makes a choice between possible alternatives: to stay in an environment on which he or she feels relatively dissatisfied, or to move to an environment which he or she thinks or expects will offer better opportunities for economic and personal advancement. Thus, whether voluntary or involuntary, migration in the general sense must be seen as part of the struggle to survive in a precarious world of inequalities and injustice.

The majority of the sample surveyed 88 percent said force was the main factor that generated their exodus. The story of Amenay Adem, one of the survivors of Ona, a small village in the suburb of Keren illustrates the atrocities committed by the Ethiopian government. Amenay put his story as follows:

ELF killed the commander of Ethiopia’s Second Division in Eritrea, General Tesheme Ergetu on 21 November 1970 and a week later the Ethiopian soldiers rounded up 120 villagers of Basik Dira in a mosque and machine-gunned them. Ona, the village I come from, was serving as a ‘strategic hamlet’ and was burned as retaliation. 600-650 villagers died and I was one of the lucky ones who survived to tell the story. To be frank with, the memories of my relatives I left unburied haunts me vividly even after nearly 30 years. The Ethiopian government had declared martial law and the massacres continued unabated. So I was forced to migrate to Sudan (interview with Amenay Adem Elaberit, 14 March 1999).
6.2.1 Dependency syndrome: reality or myth

Sorensen (1996) has argued that two notions have influenced the thinking and planning of both the Eritrean government and of international agencies which were involved in the repatriation and rehabilitation process of Eritrean refugees from Sudan: social disarticulation and the dependency syndrome amongst long-time camp refugees.

> It is wrongly perceived that forced displacement tears apart the social fabric and the existing patterns of social organization. And life-sustaining informal social networks of mutual self-help among people, local voluntary associations self-organized service arrangements …etc., are dispersed and rendered inactive (Sorensen, 1996: 3).

An individual’s or group’s reason for flight may be the relative lack of power or inadequacy to ensure protection against ‘powerful’ others. In exile their sense of inadequacy may be exacerbated as the refugees become more and more deprived of their basic means of production for mere existence (Karadawi, 1995). Power is a function of social position, and social position often diminishes with dislocation. The underpinnings of what is called ‘normal life’ are lost when individuals are dislocated and thrown out of their original social environment. Bascom and Kibreab wrongly assumed that Eritrean refugees had lost their social cohesion, became urbanized, market-oriented and individualized during exile. The main argument is that by staying away from Eritrea, refugees were integrated into the market economy either by producing cash crops, engaging in wage labor or in other urban trades. The consequences are often presumed to be fragmentation and weakening of social fabric and cohesion. Kibreab offers this interpretation in the following:

> Social and cultural networks, which provided support in times of crisis, are either weakened or replaced by market relationships. Extended families are non-existent traditional leadership has almost become obsolete’ (Kibreab, 1996: 59).

And in the same token Bascom (1996) has argued that,

> In Sudan market relationships have replaced the main features of the once-prevail social relations between households. Land, labor, livestock and grazing rights has been transformed into monazite commodities. Most importantly the free and reciprocal exchange of labor between households has virtually disappeared. Community interests are now secondary to those of the household and the individual (Bascom, 1996: 73).

The above observation has contributed toward a pessimistic view and has negatively affected the design and implementation of programs meant to help the reintegration of returnees. For example Kibreab suggests, that ‘communal values have undergone
change and were replaced by collective decision and support based less on kin ties and more on political ideology’ and goes on to say that the process will be ‘an uphill task’ (Kibreab, 1992). Bascom in 1996 however, records the optimism amongst the refugees themselves, who state that upon return to Eritrea, they would ‘go back to the ways of nafir⁵⁰’ (Bascom, 1996). But the results of field study suggest that Eritrean ex-refugees have revived their social networks and self-help institutions and used to help them in reintegrating into the main stream of the Eritrean society.

Ex-refugees who repatriated to Eritrea in organized schemes started to settle in the nine settlements prepared by the pilot PROFERI program. They had different backgrounds, most had lived in organized camps in Sudan and came with high expectations that were inculcated during their stay in exile. Before they left Sudan ex-refugees were approached by UNHCR/CERA and were promised a house, food ration for one year and ‘adequate’ services (Kibreab, 1996). Because they were not told that ex-refugees had to build their house themselves, some were reluctant to contribute to shelter construction. But this attitude alone does not prove that they had developed a dependency syndrome while they were in Sudan.

Alebu offers a contrasting example why ex-refugees were initially hesitant to start building shelters or attending to the two hectares of land given for cultivation (Sorensen, 1996). When ex-refugees started to settle in Alebu in 1995 ACORD, an international NGO was ready to intervene to help them build shelter. According to one key informant from Alebu the first contact was established with a small group who had came from Qala en Nahal who knew ACORD and its activities in Sudan. ACORD was able to convince this small group to start work on their own. They produced their own compressed soil blocks by wefera (a self-help group) and participated in manual labor for the construction of the house themselves. Initially this small group of ex-refugee households constructed ten houses. When these first ten houses were constructed, the mood amongst the ex-refugees changed. It had taken nearly two weeks to construct a single house but with the gaining of experience and the training the construction time went down to around nine to ten days for a single house. In the month of May 1996 alone a total of 95 houses were constructed (interview with group of 6 elderly men in Alebu, 09 October 1999).

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⁵⁰ Nafir is a Tigre word meaning group work.
Table 6.11: House tenure of ex-refugees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tenure of the house</th>
<th>Last living place in Sudan</th>
<th>Table Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In camp</td>
<td>Settlement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My family</td>
<td>12 (2%)</td>
<td>14(2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I own it</td>
<td>71(9%)</td>
<td>85 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My friend</td>
<td>2 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belong to relative</td>
<td>9 (1%)</td>
<td>15 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government owned</td>
<td>4 (1%)</td>
<td>18 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rented</td>
<td>45 (6%)</td>
<td>45 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table Total</td>
<td>141(19)</td>
<td>179 (24%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The important lesson learned from this example is that under the right stimulus even those wrongly regarded by NGOs or government of Eritrea as having developed a ‘dependency syndrome’ was actively participating in the construction of their shelter. Table 5.13 shows that by 1998 nearly half of them, 41 percent, owned their house. It could also be concluded that despite long years of camp-life in Sudan, ex-refugees’ self-help potential could be mobilized to contribute positively to the reconstruction of their country - if an enabling conducive environment is created they can be self-reliant on their own initiative.

The organization of family work used in Alebu is a vivid example of ‘wefera’, the traditional mutual self-help co-operation widely practiced in rural Eritrea, both in house construction and in agricultural production, which was usually dormant in exile but has nevertheless survived. The other interesting issue that came out of the group discussion in Alebu was that even when everyone every one was busy building his/her own house the problem(s) of vulnerable groups was not put aside but was attended to by the community. According to one key informant the problem of vulnerable members of one community [women headed households and the elderly] was addressed in the following way.

*Meetings involving members of the community were held and the decision they reached was that the able-bodied members of households would produce building materials for the households who did not have any young member who could join work teams. It was decided that on Sundays the community would produce compressed earth blocks that can enable the vulnerable to construct their houses.*

The workers received food from the vulnerable families to partially compensate for the labor they contributed. Initially *Nara* people took the initiative and started to observe Sunday as a ‘wefera’ day for vulnerable members from their own ethnic group, after a short time it was replicated by the whole community.
It is true that camp life; urbanization, wage labor, and agricultural mechanization were aspects of the experience of Eritrean refugees in Sudan. But ‘wefera’ was still practiced, under different forms. Although ‘wefera’ has largely disappeared from ploughing, which is now increasingly done by tractors on a hired basis, it can be found in weeding and threshing (of sorghum) as well as the harvesting (of sesame). Mechanization thus has removed one labor constraint, but created new one which the Eritrean peasants have tackled by using the methods of social organization with which they are familiar (Bascom, 1996). Thus mechanization has not removed ‘wefera’, but may even have strengthened it by reducing the labor demand.

Several factors may have contributed to keeping these networks and social structures intact; among them the proximity of and direct ties to Eritrea, the social and psychological make-up of the Eritrean refugees in Sudan, their strong nationalism and their deeply rooted survival strategies (Sorensen, 1996). Eritreans in Sudan with very few exceptions even after having stayed there for a generation had inferior positions and conditions to those of the Sudanese. During their many years of exile Eritreans were always made to feel that they were temporary visitors. Their movement was restricted and controlled - they needed traveling papers e.g. to travel to Khartoum and they had difficulties in getting licenses for opening businesses. Despite relative economic integration within their host country, Eritrean refugees retained a strong psychological identification with Eritrea as ‘home’: “At home you are free to behave in all senses, but in Sudan you are always a guest” (Informal discussion with elders of Adi-Ibrihi in December 20, 1999). Table 5.12 shows that nearly 99 percent of the interviewed ex-refugees were contemplating to return to Eritrea while they were staying in Sudan even before independence was attained.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thinking returning</th>
<th>Match expectation with reality</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not matched</td>
<td>Matched</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>99.6%</td>
<td>98.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nationalism and support of the liberation struggle may also have played a role in unifying the Eritreans and keeping a common identity alive. The concentration of formerly isolated communities and ethnic groups in the refugee settlements has created favorable conditions for the creation of a national identity among the Eritreans in Sudan. This is because ethnicity is created as a result of contact with
members of other ethnic groups and not in a state of isolation. For example, in the
nine organized settlement sites in Eritrea, more than three different ethnic groups
typically live side by side and spontaneous returnees are mixed with the stayer’s
community. After a relatively short period of adaptation, there has been a sharing of
the same economic and social resources with relatively little conflict. In some of the
fieldwork sites such as Guluge and Tebeldia, unless one is told, it is hard to
distinguish people from different ethnic groups, or newcomers from members of the
local community, for they have completely reintegrated into the community.

Self-help activities, such as building residential houses for newly married couples by
a village community or maintaining old people in their homes are still more a norm
than an exception in places where the author conducted field work. Communal
farming to assist in meeting the needs of single women and children and running
villages democratically by village assemblies, Shemagille\(^{51}\) or Baitos are enshrined
in traditional values. In all places to which former ex-refugees and ex-fighters have
returned, these traditional practices are embodied and still active. Thus reintegration
of returnees could be beneficial if economic drive is anchored around traditional
values and specific history of resistance. For example, Eritrea can learn from the
experience of South East Asian countries. The market economy of Japan is rooted in
Japanese traditional values. A business firm in Japan is the core social unit of which
individuals are members rather than simply workers. So, developmental intervention
of a country must not just only be designed along the economic dimension, but also
should embrace social, cultural, and political dimensions.

### 6.2.2 Social and cultural importance of networking

Refugees who went into exile were uprooted, but by forming voluntary associations
in exile they were able to substitute for the extended family system, thereby creating
mechanisms for offering social, economic and psychological security drawing on
models and patterns of collective action in ‘traditional’ society. The voluntary
associations ex-refugees formed during their time in exile were different in their
composition from the usual self-help associations we find in rural and urban Eritrea.
The new associations encompassed different ethnic groups whose members had
never had the chance of living together prior to exile. Such associations might have
also helped refugees to preserve a sense of distinct identity and thereby retarded the
rate of social reintegration and assimilation into the Sudanese society. After their
return to Eritrea the voluntary associations’ ex-refugees formed in exile have served
returnees as a safety net. Askalu Haile illustrates this with the following example:

\(^{51}\) Shemagle means elder or a person gifted with wisdom in both languages of the ethnic group Tigre and Tigrina
The Ethiopian soldiers in 1975 rounded up the inhabitants of Wekidiba 10 km from Asmara including priests, and massacred more than 35 innocent Eritreans in front of Wekidiba church. I escaped from Wekidiba after the terrible incident and stayed in Sudan until I returned spontaneously to Tessai in 1996. I am a member of a voluntary group formed of Nara, Tigre, Bilen and Tigrina. The association of this group has cushioned my grief at the death of family members and friends. It has helped me to adapt to a new strange environment. The association provided me a setting where I meet people and establish ties that have replaced my lost family (interview with Askalu Haile Tessai, 2 May 1999).

Female-headed households found it particularly difficult to eke out a living in Sudan, since Islamic culture and Sudanese mores greatly restricted their employment opportunities. Thus Askalu was engaged in the informal sector and was selling Suwa (local beer). She swore that she would have never done this in her village. “In our village selling Suwa is considered weyay (not a decent work) and everybody takes you as a prostitute”. When asked why she didn’t return to her former village in the highlands but stayed in Tessai with no extended family to fall back on in case of problem, she gave the following explanation:

First I cannot return to my village because my community will not accept me for I was not engaged in ‘descent’ work. Also I have two kids born to a Sudanese husband whom I have left when I decided to return to Eritrea. My family is ardent Orthodox and will not accept me having married and born children to a Moslem. The third point is the people I met in exile have replaced my family and currently they are everything to me. I came to Tessai following my friend Amna Shakuki and since our arrival her extended family took me as a member of the family. They helped us in building our house and gave us land. But due to lack of resources we were not able to plough it. If I had gone to my former place I don’t think that I would have been accommodated better than the affection and sympathy I have here (ibid.).

Table 5. 14 shows that more than half – 56 percent - of the sample of former refugees surveyed are members of voluntary associations that are helping them to reintegrate into the society. The voluntary associations’ objectives can vary across social/cultural, religious, political and economic lines. Even though most of them started in exile, they currently include members of the host community and are organized on various levels. The voluntary associations fulfill more than one role and include declared as well as undeclared aims. The biggest associations have a multitude of functions, which include welfare, education and health. The activities of some of the associations are limited to their village or settlement. But there are some, especially those related to trade, which have complex organizational structures and are affiliated with associations of their exile compatriots’ still living in Sudan. The
informants declined to elaborate this further. But they responded that they provide(s) them with economic and social help if need arises members of the association were always ready to give a helping hand.

Table 6. 13: Member of an ex-refugee association by sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Belong to an association</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>269 (35%)</td>
<td>216 (28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>159 (21%)</td>
<td>116 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>428 (56%)</td>
<td>332 (44%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Local administrators and other authorities seem to be aware of the importance of fostering an understanding between returnees and their local communities and of overcoming eventual problems caused by difference of attitudes and perceptions. They organize educational programs in promoting cultural tolerance and enhance cooperation between the two groups. During my fieldwork the author saw a theatre performance in Haikota in March 1997 that ridiculed the stereotypical attitude of local people towards refugees, as well as the attitude of refugees towards the local community. Such activities may help the ex-refugees to overcome their often-condescending attitudes towards the stayers’ community and on the other hand might assist the stayer population to overcome their fear of encroachment. The activity capitalized on the already prevailing notion of living together peacefully and making use of the nationalist discourse of EPLF. The notion of being an Eritrean was used to enhance understanding and co-operation between the two segments of the populations. Also cultural activity such as dances of different ethnic groups offers symbolic expression for their peaceful co-existence and creates a platform to nurture social reintegration. We see the same networking among former fighters. An in-depth interview conducted with a veteran fighter can shed light on family social network system.

Asmerom Kibreom grew up in Adiquala - a small town about 75 km south of Asmara - and continued his studies up to 12th grade in Mendefera, which is 15 km from his hometown. At the age of 15 he lost his father - who was a teacher - to the indiscriminate killing of Ethiopian soldiers, in a raid conducted to ‘pacify’ the inhabitants of Adiquala. This was how he came to realize that the people in power were enemies who had deprived him of his father’s love. He wanted to join the University of Addis Ababa so that he would get a good job and be able to help his mother in bringing-up his three brothers. He passed all subjects except Amharic language and for this reason was not accepted by the University. In 1974 - at the age of 22 - he felt he could not bear it any more and decided to join the EPLF.
At present he is 46 years old his health is fine, despite a head injury that sometimes causes epileptic convulsions and prevents him from working. His wife is 38 years old; she was also a fighter, having joined the armed struggle in 1975. His wife and he were together in one unit since 1976, but as a married couple only since 1981. They have four sons of 12, 9, 6 and 4 years. Currently they are living together happily. He believes since they had shared the good and bad moments in life, they understand each other well and this makes life bearable. Unfortunately after his Demobilisation, they have been unable to live together for she is not yet demobilized and is working as a nurse in Keren hospital. Because of his health he can not do demanding physical work. Since 1995 he has been running a poultry farm in Embatkala where the weather is suitable for his health. He visits his family now and then.

During the armed struggle he had hardly any contact with his family and after independence he got the information that his mother had left with his three brothers for Addis Ababa in 1976, fearing that his younger brother who was 18 would follow his footsteps. She died in 1987. His three brothers are all living in the Diaspora, two in America and one in Australia. In 1993 they visited Eritrea to see their brother and to participate in the referendum. They promised to help their brother financially and advised him to get demobilized and take care of his health.

He was demobilized in 1995, and he was happy that he was able for the first time to do what his mind told him and lead an independent life of his own. But the life of a demobilized fighter(s) was not as easy as he had expected it to be. Physically he was not fit for manual labor; additionally he needs help because of his disability. During the armed struggle everybody was ready to share whatever little he/she had. The main aim was to achieve the overall goal: independence. Every fighter was at the same time a student and a teacher, teaching what he knew and learning what he didn’t but his comrades knew. So life in the field was meant to complement the shortcomings of each other.

He had worked at different levels in civilian and military administration and due to this involvement he had gained a lot of experience that is helping his current activity. He had spent more than 15 years in the field, mainly as a platoon leader in the front line. Later he was head of a Battalion logistics unit and gained knowledge of bookkeeping. He also worked as a barefoot doctor for three years. But he had also worked in the financial administration at division level, and from 1977 until 1993 he was also teaching literacy to the population behind the enemy line. This and
other administrative work has helped him to develop skill that proved to be helpful in his reintegration into the society.

He further elaborated that from his bitter experience he had learned that his civilian business colleagues don’t want to advise him and thereby help a competitor. This was hard to understand and initially created a lot of problems and frustration. He went to see his colleagues from the armed struggle who were assigned to the Ministry of Agriculture after the restructuring of the civil service sector. Currently because of his background education, he is working in Ghinda as an agricultural extension officer. When he related what had happened to him his friend advised him to see an ex-fighter who had started a poultry farm in Maihabar one year previously and who is enjoying some success. He stayed with the demobilized fighter in Maihabar for three weeks and who showed all his work from A to Z without any reservation and in the end promised to visit his place, which he did after five months. At that time he advised him how to handle the chickens and other things related to poultry farming.

When he took up poultry farming, his three brothers sent him a total of US$ 7000 as a loan but without interest. He had to repay them when he is on his two feet. The younger brother visited Eritrea in 1997 and together they went to see the poultry farm. When Asmerom told his brother that he was able to repay US$ 5000 of the loan his brothers gave him, his young brother said, “we gave the money as a loan purposely because if it is loan then you will use the money effectively. In our culture it is a taboo to ask your brother to pay back for the money s/he borrowed during bad time. We are proud that you have used the money effectively and the money belongs to you, so use it to extend your enterprise and for us it is a pleasure to see our brother get off the ground”.

According to him, ex-fighters have not yet managed to settle in the civil society, most of them are just struggling for survival, whereas the civilians had time enough to master the tactics of their society. For this reason it is very important to preserve the moral of the struggle, to be united, self-reliant and to help each other as before. He also thinks that the qualities he has acquired during his life as a fighter, mainly tolerance, perseverance, solidarity and sense of community, as well as interest in social affairs, are very useful for striking relations within the society. The positive qualities and experience acquired during armed struggle need to be maintained and fostered. The ex-fighters being used to an egalitarian community, had developed a culture different from that of society, and has no experience in business. “We fighters must stick together always in order to challenge the unfriendly world” (interview with a veteran ex-fighter Asmerom Kibrom May 23 1999 Embatkala).
We can understand from the in-depth interviews former fighters and the ones who are not yet demobilized have informal networks that currently serve them as a safety net to bridge gaps or tackle problems they find themselves in. The author has heard different stories similar to the one told by Asmerom. This network needs recognition and if properly used can help solve the problems faced by returnees.

6.2.3 Civil society and self-reliance

The EPLF believed in self-reliance in all fields of nationhood: political, economic and cultural.

- Politically this meant to following an independent line and giving priority to internal conditions;
- Economically it referred to the reliance on internal resources and prioritizing their development; and
- Culturally it promoted self-confidence and the value of one’s cultural heritage and at the same time as fostering national identity.

At the same time the Eritrean Charter of 1994 emphasizes that self-reliance does not mean having to isolate oneself from the international community. The engagement of the population in politics at a level and in a form that is sustainable is regarded as one of the most important investments in the revolutionary process (Connell, 1993). Lasting social change has to be achieved step by step, with retreats as well as advances depending upon the relative strengths and weaknesses of the contending social forces, in much the way that the war itself was waged and won.

Gottesman (1998) has argued that the model of self-reliant, innovative development successfully integrating elements of tradition and social transformation has yielded remarkable results in Eritrea. This applies not only to developments in education, health, production and transportation but also to political participation by all economic and social categories and ethnic groups in Eritrea (Gottesman, 1998).

EPLF has made great efforts using different mechanisms to traverse the traditional social divisions based on religion, ethnicity, and regionalism and to minimize class differentiation, as well as harmful traditional practices and norms that could act as obstacles on the way to national integration and nation building. It has had done away with traditional feudal landholding rights and introduced new legislation ensuring access to resources for women and other deprived categories of the society. To a certain degree, the EPLF has also been contributing to the emancipation of women and children from the subjugation of men. In the later stages of the war, the absence of antagonistic political factions was conducive to creating a sense of unity and common purpose both among the fighters and the civilian population in the
liberated area. Thus the nationalist struggle and military situation created new opportunities, options, interdependencies, and arenas of consensus.

So after liberation, the Eritrean people have inherited the legacy of self-help based on traditional values combined with the sprite of self-reliance, which was so important during the days of struggle. People’s energy was geared towards helping in building infrastructure of immediate necessity to their villages. In doing so, not only did they mobilize their own resources, labor and money, but they also raised funds from the Diaspora.

But the problem with self-reliance is that it means different things to different people, depending on what side of the economic divide one falls on, the rich North or the poor South. For some people, self-reliance is a dogma, which must be rejected outright because it is incompatible with free market economy. For others, it is an important way of improving the quality of life of the poor because they believe market forces alone are not capable of bringing to an end the poverty and deprivation prevalent in much of the third world today (UNDP, 1997).

“I have seen the future and it works” remarked Abdulrahman Babu on his first visit to the liberated part of Eritrea when he observed that EPLF had made full use of its human and material resources to sustain normal productive life in a time of war (Cliffe and Davidson, 1988). Eritrea as a new nation needs to define its relations with donor countries and other organizations, so as not to repeat the same erroneous policies as have occurred elsewhere such as drifting from people centered activities. Eritrea is a pragmatic new nation which has accumulated valuable experiences over the last seven years of independence and has the reputation of successfully liberating itself by relying on its own human and material resources. Therefore, self-reliance, rather than being a new doctrine is a long-standing principle for Eritrea.

Self-reliance does not mean banning all inter-governmental and other relations. Nor does it mean that a country never requires the co-operation and support of others. It only means that such relation and support must be firmly based on the principle of mutual benefit. These methods are not only applicable to external relations but are also rightly applicable to the relationship between the government and the society in general and returnees in particular in their endeavor to achieve reintegration.

When in 1997 journalists of Eritrea Profile asked President Nyerere why he is advocating self-reliance in Eritrea when it had failed in Tanzania, he said,
If it has failed in Tanzania it does not mean it is wrong and not applicable but to the contrary it is the only way forward in Africa’s development (Eritrea Profile, 19 April 1997).

But at the same time he warned that people who hold the reins of power often wrongly interpret the concept of a “people-centered” approach, which is very important and he gave a concrete example with reference to the housing problem in Eritrea. After all what is a house for people?

_A house for a human being is what a shell is to a turtle or a snail. The house should not be alien to the social and psychological makeup and to the economic imperatives of the people_ (ibid.).

The Government might be driven by a genuine commitment to solve the acute housing problem the people are facing through encouraging professional developers to built houses for many families by giving them land ahead of individual developers. However, the houses built so far are not affordable to ordinary people. The same is true for ex-refugees. CERA has built houses in settlement areas such as Areda, Mahmimet, and Gahtelai... etc but people are not living in these premises. Here we see that one of the principles followed during the armed struggle by EPLF “to serve the people starts from the people” is being neglected or is slipping from our hands. For ex-refugees were not consulted about the type of house they wanted. Rather the decision was taken by people ‘who know what is good for ex-refugees’. Houses should be constructed so as to make physical and psychological life of ex-refugees easier. There is a need to emphasize on grass-roots development by empowering people to control their own lives so that they are in a position to become their own development agents and decide their own future. Such is a people-centered approach to development.

The government of Eritrea is committed to popular participation and democracy in a social, economic and political sense. But it is also committed to State building, and the People’s Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) charter places ‘national harmony’ as the first of its basic goals (Eritrean Charter, 1994). Popular participation in nation building has played a decisive role on two important occasions – namely the referendum about the country’s independence and the charting of the constitution in 1994-1997. These were events in which Eritreans took full part.

The interpretation of participation itself reflects the contradiction between emphasizing grass roots self-reliant activity and ensuring that broad national goals are achieved. The Eritrean Charter reads:
Popular participation cannot be sustained without programs that help people change their lives for better. Enthusiastic participation in programs can only come when people actually see that the political movement or government works in their interest, only when they see that promises are kept’ (Eritrean Charter, 1994).

Here participation seems to be reduced to supporting government activities. This is a minimalist interpretation of the concept. At the same time the Charter stresses the necessary link between popular participation and improvement of people’s living conditions by the government’s economic and social policy. The Charter also sees participation as a much wider concept of empowerment. It says that:

*The people should participate in all decisions that touch their lives and their country from the inception to implementation of ideas. Since participation cannot be effective unless people are organized, they should have the right of not only establishing organizations, but also being encouraged and assisted to do so (ibid.).*

Here the importance of the time factor is stressed: participation will gradually increase and people will gradually learn through supporting the government projects to form their own organizations. There may be an implicit assumption here about phasing national unity and efficient government first, then participation in its widest sense later. As Makki (1996) rightly put it, EPLF is following its old policy, which was prominent during the armed struggle. In the absence of a civil society that is capable of monitoring and steering the process the liberation movement developed an autonomous and somewhat substitutional political culture. The hierarchical organizational framework encouraged a compliant culture in which the ideal of a self-empowering citizenry was somewhat restricted, and political creativity was subordinated to the cult of efficiency and rationality and has slowly developed into an authoritarian style of government. It is irritating to hear from many high Eritrean officials that all current problems Eritrea is facing can be solved by economic interventions and efficient government, meaning that ‘modernization’ and government intervention can solve all problems including the reintegration of returnees.

The modernization model put forward by Eritrean officials sees the necessity of achieving a certain level of economic development, with a certain degree of social inequality, before institutions of civil society can start flourishing. The danger of this kind of concept is that it is left to the state or government to decide when society is diversified and developed enough to allow civil society organizations to develop. It seems that a distinction is made between what is called ‘traditional civil society’, and a modern version of it. But it can be argued that the reverse is true, if civil society
institution flourish they can act as checks and balances and might serve as a safety net for healthy development. In reality a genuine ‘modern’ civil society based on the aspirations of Eritreans of all walks of life will have to develop on the basis of ‘traditional’ civil society in the same way that EPLF did. This principle seems to have been eroded however, in all the programs designed to re-integrate ex-refugees starting from repatriation. In this arena participation of the people in activities that directly affect their lives has been the exception rather than the norm.

6.3 Social conflict and reintegration

As conflict is inherent in all human relations, and the cause of social conflicts is as motley as human relationships themselves, integrative processes involving different categories of people cannot develop without conflicts. Whatever their causes and manifestations may be it is possible to consider conflicts as having both objective and subjective basis. Objective conflicts arise when individuals or groups clash over claims to scarce resources, territory, power, and social status or over ideologies and values (Balcha, 1989). Objective conflicts are sparked by contentions over tangible objects or issues. Subjective conflicts arise from aggressive impulses, from irrational resentment or hatred often directed against outsiders. They may arise from ethnic, or minority group ideologies and identities. Therefore conflict resolution has to be conceived as an important aspect of integration. Here conflict resolution is mainly regarded in terms of adjustment and accommodation between antagonists and not in terms of the victory of one unit, groups or class over another (Beyene, 1992). In this connection, it is worth reviewing activities of the EPLF during the armed struggle aiming at ironing out the differences and contradictions which could have impeded the successful creation of a united Front.

6.3.1 Leadership

The basis of the EPLF’s success as an organization lay in its ability to create and sustain the will and determination of its fighting force and the larger population to pursue its just cause. But justness or popularity of a cause does not necessarily translate into organizational effectiveness. To explain such effectiveness the elements, which contributed to the construction of a viable movement, must be carefully examined. One ‘external’ factor of importance was the relative isolation of the Eritrean national movement, which forced it to rely heavily on its own internal resources and strengths.

An anonymous prominent member of the EPLF, who was one of the founders of the movement, commented as follows:

In the beginning it is hard to conceptualize everything properly but it is natural to begin with some thing of concrete experience, and my first experience was with
ELF. Reading books and learning from other experiences does help a lot, but you can not start from outside and your source must be inside one’s country on one’s people. For example, if we take the military administrative structures of ELF in 1965, which was divided in five regional sectors, it was an alliance of tribal chiefs, where a chieftain of a region or someone from that region was given full authority for that region. He would levy taxes, he would punish people and would do anything to accumulate money but would do nothing to alleviate the economic and social problems of the people or educate them (Anonymous in-depth interview with one of the founders of ELF 13 April 1999 Keren).

Besides this they were more inclined to religious, tribal and ethnic affiliations. Attempts were made to democratize the ELF from within, but anyone who comes with such kind of new ideas was facing execution. Managing conflict by sheer power only is destructive for it exacerbates the conflict by increasing hostility, resentment, lies, threats, retaliation, revenge and distrust. Thus it was obvious the new front [EPLF] should start with a clear principle based on national unity, because as the proverb goes: ‘correct principles are like compasses, they are always pointing to the right direction’. He further elaborated on the importance of leadership as follows:

Leadership without its own perspective and point of view is not leadership, for you cannot borrow a point of view as you cannot borrow someone else’s eyes (ibid.).

Thus EPLF leadership has learned from the negative experience of the ELF and used the experience to develop its principles, which were not copies of concepts of other countries or revolutionary movements but home-brewed.

As one key informant of EPLF argued,

A leader is one who commits people to action, who converts followers into leaders, and who may convert leaders into agents of change. It is his/her duty to lead and to set an example through work (interview with Suleman Osman Kerkebet, 18 August 1999).

From its inception EPLF leadership trained the fighters and educated the people, to make them aware of Eritrea’s history, the background of the struggle, EPLF’s national policy, and the nature of struggles conducted elsewhere in the world. In addition, it was considered crucial for fighters to be able to face and solve problems and hardships s/he encountered. Leadership ability was inculcated to permit substitution for those who died in battle or to enable cadres to take new positions as the organization grew.
Persuasion, motivation and participation in all day to day activities that directly or indirectly concerned an individual built up trust meticulously. Thus the underlying issue of trust meant not only getting people on one’s side, but also having them stay there. So the basic thing in a liberation struggle is trust among all the fighters. In time of war and hardship a group can only be sustained by the trust they have in each other. For example when you are fighting, it is with the reliability in your compatriots alongside you, that you shoot and watch forward. A leader builds trust first of all by being committed to the cause and fulfilling what is expected of him/her in accord with the position s/he holds. S/He is responsible for looking after all his followers’ affairs. S/He is the last to eat and drink in time of scarcity and the first to face sacrifice in times of hardship. S/he has to help the sick, wounded and weak, s/he has to train and empower his/her colleagues so that when one day s/he falls they can follow his/her footstep. That is the meaning of leading by example.

Conflict among EPLF members led to an increase of understanding and trust, largely because differences were brought out into the open and ceased to be a source of hidden irritation. The following provides a sense of what the day-to-day activities in one unit of EPLF:

If the misunderstanding involves two individual members of the same unit, it is left to them to have a first go to settle the problem using criticism and self-criticism as a method of conflict resolution. If they cannot resolve it, they will be asked to discuss the issue by involving a third person (who could be the unit leader) or within the meeting of the unit. Thus resolving conflicts by conducting a meeting has an advantage because someone among the members usually has a clue to the disturbance or can recognize what was happening from their own experience. Besides it was a learning ground for others on how to go about conflict resolution. If the misunderstanding involves members from other units or with the local community it is resolved through holding meeting of the concerned parties. All conflicts were managed in the aim of building trust and unity (interview with Colonel Tesfamical Hawelti, Head of personal administration of MOD, August 12 1999).

The EPLF leadership ‘succeeded’ in bringing together the different sections of the population by garnering equal rights to all regardless of their religious, ethnic, cultural or sexual differences. A sense of solidarity, equality and mutual respect has been developed as a result. Flexibility and initiative were the two best characteristics of the EPLF leadership. Relying on the principles of the Front or on the mission assigned to him/her, any leader can take the initiative in solving problems and performing his/her tasks as long as it is for the benefit of all. It was not limited to this only anybody can do any thing s/he can, as long as it is to the benefit of all. Initiative
is also needed to face and perform duties that ask more sacrifice and hardship. But the question must be posed - why has this become more an exception than the norm after independence? One possible explanation might be that during the struggle the EPLF leadership operated through a less hierarchical and more informal procedure, which may have been suitable for the period of struggle but less appropriate and less effective as a system of government.

Salih Osman is a veteran fighter who joined the armed struggle in 1968. Salih was demobilized in 1995 and currently he is a shop owner. Before joining the struggle he was married to a civilian who is now a district council member representing the Melobso district. When the author was discussing with Salih, his wife was not present, she had gone to Keren for a monthly meeting.

This is one of the positive legacies of the armed struggle: the change of role, of women. Now we find women working in offices or elsewhere while the husband stays in the house and takes care of the day-to-day activities. When asked how he found his reintegration, his outright answer was “it is really very hard”. “But observing your shop it seems to be doing well?” “Economically, yes we are doing fine but we have big social problems. Political education of the Front and the day-to-day activities in the field has changed us into maize”. Puzzled by this response the author asked in what way? He explained,

if you want to eat maize, first you have to peel the covering leaves to get access to the seeds. The way of life in the field, the community of fighters in isolation, has formed a shield covering the precious accumulated experiences, at the same time protecting them and preventing them from being shared with the civilian society (Melobso, 28 April 1999).

Salih went on to explain his experience during the armed struggle and said,

I will start with the military training experience of EPLF. By the first dose of political education I was made to understand that I was nothing else but an Eritrean irrespective of ethnicity, religion, sex …etc. I have learned to think and act only as an Eritrean. It was a taboo to ask from which region of the country your colleague comes, or even to ask where his village is. On top of this, political indoctrination on equality of gender, ethnic…etc. was our daily bread. It was like putting everybody in a melting pot and in the end you have similar product - EPLF members (ibid.)

After Demobilisation/reintegration it would have been not only useful but also even necessary to work out appropriate mechanisms for bringing the different experiences of returnees and members of the local communities out into the open. This might
serve to minimize misunderstandings, which as Table 5.14 indicates is the main cause of tension and conflict between returnees, especially ex-fighters, and stayers. The Provisional Government of Eritrea right after independence announced reconciliation between the people who had been serving the colonial masters and the remaining population is an essential step to build a democratic Eritrea. The President of the new state, Isaias Afwerki, said in May 1993:

Reconciliation is vital because of the priority of healing the wounds of war and because national reconciliation and unity are necessary pre-conditions for peace, stability, economic reconstruction and the development (Profile, May 1993).

This policy was intended to give Eritreans who had been part of or supported the colonial power to repay the country they had been bleeding by participating in the process of recovery and reconstruction. The PGE offered “a general pardon’ and ‘a hand of reconciliation’ to ‘all those Eritreans who had been misled and misused by the colonial power, including those who had been working in the Ethiopian army and security and intelligence services.

The same policy was applied to the Ethiopian soldiers. At the end of the war of independence more than 100,000 Ethiopian war prisoners (out of which 6,000 –10,000 were Eritreans) were staying in various camps in Eritrea. Ali Said Abdelaa, head of Security Service of the Front in 1991, repeated to the author what he had told in relation to the treatment of PoW the members of EPLF who were acting as prison guards:

Everyone who is here for sure has bitter, fresh memories of the war that ravaged this land. That is also true for the entire leadership of EPLF. But as people and as a new nation we have to take responsible decisions, which will lead our country to peaceful co-existence and prosperous future. Controlling our individual emotional feelings can only do this. The ones who have a vision for a bright future can forgive, for it is of no good to live in dreams of yesterday. We have to reconcile, forgive and record the events of the past for the sake of our history and to pass our experience to the young generation but never for any revenge (interview with Michael Tesfaldet Mendefera, October 14 1999).

The author also discussed the issue of reconciliation between former adversaries with former fighters currently working in the police force side by side with Eritrean who had formerly been members of the Ethiopian security service called Dehnenet (Ethiopia’s secret security member). One made the following comment:

the war is over, we are making a fresh start, live and let live, now we are professional soldiers and we need to put away our past behind us for the sake of common good, after all we are all Eritreans (interview with Colonel Solomon Haile Asmara, 11 November 1999).
6.3.2 Dispute resolution
Dispute resolution is also important at the community level. Here the role and moral authority of community leaders and traditional leaders may prove particularly important. A case from Adi-Ibrahim—a place 18 kms north Tessenai can serve as an illustration. The most common practice used by a community in dispute resolution in Eritrea is mediation through which a neutral third party helps others resolve a dispute or difference. The ex-refugees from Adi-Ibrahim left for exile in 1967 when their village was first burned down to the ground by the Ethiopian armed forces. The whole population fled the village in panic. Many crossed into Sudan, but some of the population became internally displaced, and after independence they regrouped in their former place of residence. Traditional elders from the community spoke of the process of mediation as follows:

Third party mediators provide rural residents with access to justice and settling disputes which otherwise would have been a big problem. Usually people who are accepted as mediators are known for their honesty or they are individuals gifted by Allah and who can persuade disputants to comply. Usually mediators educate, criticize and effectively woo disputants towards their own position. (Interview, October 28 1999).

They then responded as follows:

We who are engaged in mediation work, should use our mouth, legs and eyes and be very attentive to the woes, worries, griefs…etc., of the population by and large. My son, this means we should constantly explain the importance of living together in harmony and tolerance without fatigue. For example, in order to understand the current situation of my people, I pay frequent visits to individual houses. When I hear or sense any symptoms of dispute, I attempt to settle them immediately before they create problems and become too serious (interview with Aboy Adhana Ferege Adi-Ibrihim, 07 March 1999).

Table 6. 14 Conflicts resolution by sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How conflict resolved</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervention from the police</td>
<td>16 (2%)</td>
<td>9 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervention from the army</td>
<td>3 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediators</td>
<td>347 (49%)</td>
<td>214 (28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting</td>
<td>15 (2%)</td>
<td>2 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Court</td>
<td>104 (14%)</td>
<td>49 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>485 (64%)</td>
<td>275 (36%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This persuasive role of shemagle was observed in nearly all the villages visited during the fieldwork. Mediation centered on consensus-building intervention is an appropriate model that has survived exile and is actively implemented within ex-refugee communities. As Table 6.14 clearly demonstrates, the majority 74 percent of ex-fighters surveyed reported that the myriad disputes or contradictions they faced in their day-to-day reintegration efforts were most commonly sorted out by mediation. The existence of mediators and mediation procedures could be seen as evidence that the moral authority of the elders continues to make a positive contribution and can serve as an indicator of social. If reintegration is to be successful, returnees need to negotiate their way through diversified processes.

6.3.3 The legacy of war
Traditionally it is assumed that war is the business of governments and armies, sustained by political ideologies, and that the violence of war applies mainly to soldiers. Now it is increasingly acknowledged that in modern wars civilians are the main victims. Modern wars only vaguely resemble formal ‘textbook’ definitions. In reality, warfare today ‘spills out across the social and cultural landscape’ to affect the entire population (Kinigma, 2000). War brings many types of violence, and some of which can be dealt with easily while others are more complex. Physical mutilation and massacres are horrible for those who suffer them, as well as for those who are witnesses or otherwise affected: women raped, ears and lips cut off, a friend or family member chopped to death with spade …etc. There is no excuse for these activities or easy solution to the suffering they cause. Healing the psychological and social wounds of war has been one of the neglected topics in post-conflict reconstruction and recovery work.

Galtung (1995) has argued that:

Violence and war leave behind much more damage than meets the naked eye. The visible consequences – the dead and the wounded, raped and bereaved refugees and the displaced – and the material damage to buildings and infrastructure are social catastrophes to be addressed immediately. But the deep damage to our attitude are equally important to set them right for they leave scars on the human mind as trauma, guilt and hatred, thirst for revenge. Reconstruction is much more than rebuilding, it is also rehabilitation of deeply wounded human beings, repair of social structure and of culture… What is at stake is the human capacity to handle conflict, itself always a major victim of war. If this is not addressed, wars and violence will be reproduced (Galtung, 1995).
One of the common military strategies throughout history is sexual attack on women. However, despite its prevalence, rape in war has long been mischaracterized and dismissed as a private crime, a sexual act or the ignoble conduct of the occasional soldier. Because of the shame attached to it, rape tends to be a highly under-reported crime.

Akberet Tewelde had stayed for 20 years in an unorganized refugee settlement in Sudan. When recalling the experience, which led to her exile, she said,

if you are raped or not you will be rejected by your husband and family in particular and by the society in general. While living in Asmara an Ethiopian officer raped me, and as an outcome I was stigmatized. When the pain was unbearable I left for exile in 1975. Rape was committed with the intent of impregnating Eritreans and thus dilutes the Eritrean identity, and at the same time they wanted to humiliate us. They were openly saying they wanted to make Ethiopian babies that will later rule Eritrea (interview with Akberet Tewelde Keren, 03 January 1999).

Thus impregnating women was a strategy of ‘ethnic cleansing’, designed to destroy the social fabric of the Eritrean family in particular and the society by and large. In the traditional Eritrean society the child automatically takes on the line of the father (except in Kunama ethnic group). Thus the father’s nationality is important and defines the nationality of the child. The sad thing is that the child born will grow up both loved and hated. The scars can not go by themselves and need to be addressed and acknowledged. Denying them will not solve the problem. Raising the issue of rape, Nordstrom said:

Rape, like terror-warfare assaults, is a time bomb left ticking in society – one that will last well beyond firing of the last bullet. Much more is attacked than a person’s body. Their sense of home and security; of self-potentialities, of the future are assailed (Nordstrom, 1994: 11).

As women raped in war represent a particularly vulnerable group, it must be asked: are these women receiving adequate medical treatment, and if they are, is it culturally appropriate i.e. is there enough female doctors? Are they receiving adequate psychological help or emotional support? What of the children born of such rapes? What of those women who have been raped and subsequently rejected by their families? Where do they go and how do they survive? The questions could continue on and on but the answers are few. The implications of ignoring the needs of women raped in war, and the children they bear, may seriously undermine national reconciliation and social reconstruction efforts.
6.3.4 Gender dimension of reintegration

The social dimension of EPLF’s intervention during the armed struggle was related to the transformation of the relations between people and sought to promote the equitable access to the means of production especially to land, education, services ...etc. It also implied recognition of the rights of minorities. It meant changing the gender relation between men and women. This philosophical basis of the EPLF led to many new projects initiated in the liberated areas. As a result, substantial progress in terms of women’s health, access to education and participation in civil, cultural, economic, political and social life has been achieved. However, women still constitute a majority of those who are poor, the illiterate and the disadvantaged. The number of women in public offices at a high level is a still too slight to give the confidence that the diversity of women’s voices is beginning to be heard. It remains to be seen how gains made so far in the struggle for gender equality will be consolidated. The vital question is, how far has Eritrea come in altering power relations in favour of greater gender equity and equality?

The inclusion of gender equity clauses into Eritrea’s constitution provides direction and emphasis at a formal level. It has established the ideological and institutional framework for the enhancement of the legal and social status of Eritrean women. The importance of regularly monitoring these policies and enforcing them cannot, however, be overestimated. Gender equity means an even number of women and men, but it also means an equal value placed on women and men, which is still far from being achieved.

Tsegga, a former fighter who is working as a lawyer, stated the problem of gender thus,

The problem of women in Eritrea is that we don’t know our legal rights, and this is very dangerous. If you don’t know your rights, you cannot protect yourself. One reason why women don’t know their rights is because they have not participated actively in the process of making laws” (Interview with Tsegga Awalom Keren, 8 October 1998).

Elaborating the problem and its solution, she said, the law is there but if you don’t know your right it is useless. There is a need to train the society in general and women in particular and to provide legal counseling services. Sensitization and awareness-raising campaigns for both men and women will be imperative in this respect. It is true the women were always involved in the struggle for liberation but does this involvement change them and their position within society? One often gets the impression that during the struggle tremendous progress has been made, whereas after the war the general belief seemed to be that all efforts had been vain.
Adopting a classical Marxist perspective, Eritrean leaders viewed the economy as the decisive realm in which the liberation of the Eritrean masses as a whole and of Eritrean women emancipation in particular is taking place. Economic transformation was perceived as key to overcoming the oppressive class relations and impoverishment that have victimized the vast majority of both men and women. It was believed that the mobilization and reintegration of women into the labor force was essential for successful economic development of the nation. While leaders regard economic rights as the fundamental lever for changing women’s status, they have also viewed political empowerment for women as key to energize and guarantee the emancipator process.

The war of liberation had ensured that women could participate in different fields that have an economic impact in the development of the nation. This had influenced the existing growth of women’s participation in the labor force as employees, employers and self-employed and may have contributed positively to achieving both greater gender awareness and greater gender equity at the same time.

But after independence the government’s role as a catalyst in the process of reintegration of women returnees in general and former fighters in particular is not up to the standard of the armed struggle and currently engendering process shows rather a sober picture. For example, if we see the land law it stated that every Eritrean citizen should have the right to get equal access to land irrespective of their sex, age...etc but there is no actual mechanism for implementing this principle. Moreover, data from Ministry of land, Water and Environment (MLWE) confirms that land is not distributed equally. Women in four Zobas got the following allocation of land in their villages. Maekel =29%, Northern Red Sea =19%, Debube =20%, Anseba =28% (MLWE, 1999). Thus even though there is political-will to redress the inequality of gender the implementation process is not rigorous. Currently it is facing resistance, in this case from elders who were not favorably disposed to women owing land and ironically from same former EPLF fighters.

Women’s rights should not be considered as concerning women alone but rather as an integral part of the social transformation process with equitable access to the means of production. A major emphasis will need to be placed on male responsibility and participation in achieving gender equality since Eritrean men exercise a disproportionate influence, at policy and program levels. Changes in men’s and women’s knowledge, attitudes, practices and behavior are necessary conditions for achieving gender equality in Eritrea. But the main actors in this should be the women. As Kudusan Berhe a participant in the 20 anniversary of National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW) November 29, 1999, put it,
Eritrean women had done every thing in our capacity to make the Eritrean’s dream of independence to come true, but now it is time to fight for our right.\textsuperscript{52}

But there should be no illusions about the difficulties involved. The cautionary note sounded by Edward (1994) in reference to Central American may apply to the Eritrean case:

Women who participated in the Nicaragua Marxist liberation movement in Central America reported that dedication and sacrifice on behalf of the movement did not translate into leadership in post-war institutions. Nicaraguan women warn Salvadorian and Guatemalan women not to equate participation in the armed struggle with gender equality (Edward, 1994: 52).

\textbf{6. 3. 5 An attempt to address psychological impact of war}

Many war survivors have endured multiple traumas –including physical privation, injury, torture, multination, rape, and incarceration, witnessing torture or massacre, as well as the death of family members. In some cases this has resulted in abnormal, or anti-social, behavior. Ongoing psychological counseling can assist in limiting the range of anti-social behaviors which adversely affect the social reintegration of ex-refugees in general and ex-fighters in particular. Thus an adequate number of people needs to be trained in counseling techniques and ‘coping’ skills to help returnees reintebrate.

To give credit to \textit{Mitias}, the Department in charge of Demobilisation and Reintegration of Ex-fighters has tried to address the problems faced by ex-fighters by training social counselors and assigning them to its branch offices in Asmara, Mendefera and Keren. The Social Counseling unit organized a training course in guidance and counseling (27/12/1996 to 17/01/1997) which included the following subjects:

• Rural and community development
• Sociology and social work.
• Case management
• Abnormal behavior
• Clinical counseling.

The training given was meant to enable \textit{Mitias} to perform its duties and responsibilities in all aspects effectively. Thus assist the counselors to meet the psycho-social needs of their potential clients consisting mainly of single mothers, elder veteran fighters, those disabled in consequence of the war and ex-fighters with

\textsuperscript{52} Personal communication.
mental disturbances. All of them have special needs, which can be categorized as follows:

- Ex-fighters with little education and skills face tremendous problems in finding a job. Thus they feel helpless and abandoned, especially if they lack family support. The counseling is mainly aimed at restoring their self-esteem and assisting them to find a job.

- Female household heads, widows, or women who are divorced or separated from their husbands usually have financial problems; if the father of their children refuse to give financial support, the counselors will have to find a means to make them do so. Where a woman is unable to because she has small children to look after, he/she will have to try providing childcare etc.

- Wounded, disabled, and traumatized individuals will have to be helped to get appropriate medical care.

Discussions with the counselors revealed a considerable variety of the conscious and concerted efforts to identify and reach the needs of many clients and provide appropriate solutions to them. The main task was focused on establishing trust and facilitating contacts by organizing individual and group discussions and encouraging them to set up self-help group. As of 1995 21 groups had been formed, with a total number 250 – 300 ex-fighters in Asmara, Keren, Decemhare, Assab, Mendefera.

The training given to the counselors was not to diagnose and treat but to enable them to identify symptoms of mental illness and take appropriate steps to ensure that clients were referred to the agencies that provide appropriate health services. Based on informal discussion with counselors, it was evident that they found the training useful and by and large relevant to their work. Some of them stated that the training they received had a positive practical outcome in providing an effective counseling service. This was one step in the right direction but there is a broader need to include examining beliefs and attitudes regarding a local cultural, social and personal perceptions and misconceptions, which may hinder the reintegration process. Since these points were not properly conceptualized and understood and the training was far too short to address all these issues the impact of the counseling and guidance activities were limited. Currently the organizational work is played down and most of its members are remobilize and only the name is existing.
6.6 Conclusion

Economic opportunities are pivotal to the adjustment of returnees to conditions of civilian life. They certainly facilitate the rate and the scope of integration. However, they don’t suffice. To achieve integration social and psychological aspects have to be taken into consideration. As shown in chapter six the role of extended family or peer-group affiliation is playing a role of safety net. This dimension was not given due consideration when designing reintegration programs.

But different example from the in-depth interviews shows that if economic intervention is not incorporated with social and psychological intervention can not lead to successful reintegration. But the emphasis of policy as well as of concrete measures was on economic interventions. It was believed that ensuring economic livelihoods for former fighters and refugees was of foremost importance, and once this was achieved, other problems would gradually became less pressing. But interviews with returnees in general, and with former fighters in particular, have provided persuasive evidence that social – and psychological – aspects have not been given due consideration in the design of re-integration programs and that this lack has had negative effects on the re-integration process. Paying attention to the psychosocial dimension of reintegration would certainly have helped the returnees to minimize the problems encountered while trying to adjust to their new environment. Adjustment refers here to the individual (or group) ability to live and perform various social roles and activities without suffering excessive or unbearable psychological stress.

Taking the psycho-social dimension of re-integration on board meant being attentive to the fears and hopes which fighters and refugees have nurtured before they returned ‘home’, as well as to the attitude of the stayers community into which they were supposed to reintegrate. It would have implied that the changes which refugees experienced while they were in exile in Sudan, and fighters experienced when they were participating in the liberation struggle would have been given due consideration. For example, the great majority of ex-fighters, 84 percent had no contact with their families during the armed struggle. In contrast, nearly two-thirds, 62 percent of ex-refugees had contact with their family while they were in exile. These difference may well have had a bearing on the ease with which re-integration occurred.

Due to a far more drastic change in values and attitude, which they experienced in the field, ex-fighters initially faced greater tension and more conflicts with the local community than did ex-refugees. But currently the trend of misunderstanding between the stayers and returnee community is decreasing (see Table 6.7). This
positive trend is to a great extent due to the survival of traditional systems of mutual and self-help and of mediation and conflict resolution.

As field findings show women, and in particular ex-fighters - face more problems in trying to adjust to their new environment than do their male counterparts. The gender analysis carried out during the armed struggle suggested that the patriarchal system rooted in economic structures is a primary source of inequality. Thus it was argued that addressing the issue of gender equality would have to wait until the main goal – national independence – was achieved. This analysis was inherited from Marxist traditions that subordinate gender transformation to economic processes. Hence, education and training, not political or social action, were considered the appropriate modes of struggle for women in this period for improving their situation. This policy didn’t leave space for broader and more inclusive activities for promoting gender equality, and this limitation in turn hindered the reintegration of women in general and ex-fighters in particular, once independence was achieved.

The tremendous social transformation female fighters experienced during the armed struggle were not given its due weight when the process of reintegration of ex-fighters was planned and implemented. The field findings show that currently the process of integration of women in all sectors of life has lost momentum and even the advances earlier achieved might have been reversed.

Two invalid assumptions have influenced the thinking and planning of both the Eritrean Government and the international agencies that were involved in the repatriation and rehabilitation process of Eritrean refugees from Sudan:

1. The assumption that the refugee community had been socially dislocated while in exile; and
2. That the refugees living in organized camps and being taken care of had developed a dependency syndrome.

These two assumptions led to a pessimistic view and influenced negatively the design and implementation of PROFERI. Field findings show that the traditional structures of mutual support and self-help have survived and moreover, that new support networks were created and brought back to Eritrea where they continued to play an important role in restarting new livelihoods and new communities from scratch. The same people whom Government and aid agencies, among them NGOs, believed to have become dependent during the many years spent in refugee camps are willing to participate actively in building their shelters, if the right stimulus is used. Table 6.11 shows that nearly half of the sample of ex-refugees surveyed 41 percent owned their house by 1998.
Successful integration also depends on the firm will to overcome internal divisions among people who were formerly enemies, once the war is over. It was to this end that the Provisional Government of Eritrea announced its policy of reconciliation between the people who had been serving the colonial masters and the remaining population. But reconciliation must not focus only on the ones who served under occupation force. It must also take on board other dissident groups or political opponents who are still in exile. For some higher officials this is hard to admit, but avoiding recognition of the problem, and of the need to tackle it by extending the offer of reconciliation to those involved, will be detrimental to overall integration.

To give it credit, the institution in charge of supporting the reintegration of ex-fighters, tried to address the psycho-social problems faced by ex-fighters by training counselors and assigning them to different places with a high density of ex-fighters, especially women. The role of the counselors was not to diagnose and treat, but to help solve serious psycho-social problems and to identify symptoms of eventual mental disturbances and take appropriate steps to ensure that clients were referred to medical services providing the necessary care. Unfortunately this task was not dealt with rigorously and did not receive the attention it needed were sustainable results to have achieved. Also it was not able to tackle the psychosocial effects of rape which are still considered as taboo and hardly ever mentioned in relation to post-war traumata.

Wastage of precious human resources can be seen in the government’s retrenchment of civil servants in 1995, when the Ministry of Agriculture had to lay-off around 2,000 locally based mobile extension workers, among them more than 800 former fighters. Equally the Ministry of Health had to lay off 523 bare-foot doctors, mostly women. Some of them had worked for more than 12 years. The same happened in all other line Ministries. Thus the government has forfeited years of practical experience that no paper qualification can substitute for. It would have made sense to upgrade the skills gained during the armed struggle rather than simply dispose of them.

Another shortcoming of the reintegration programs is the lack of effective participation of returnees in conceiving, designing and implementing appropriate support measures. During the struggle EPLF developed an autonomous political culture. The hierarchical organizational framework encouraged a compliant culture in which the ideal of a self-empowering citizenry was restricted and political creativity subordinated to the cult of efficiency and rationality. Although understandable during the armed struggle, this system did not allow the civil society to grow and serve as checks and balances on state authority. Participation was further played down after independence; it was shelved for later use. But if it has helped to
forge a unified people’s support for realizing independence, why can’t it be useful for reintegration, rehabilitation and development?
Chapter Seven

Conclusion, Recommendation and Prospects

7.1 Conclusion

This thesis assesses the impact of the efforts the Eritrean government has undertaken, with the help of international aid agencies, aiming at reintegrating ex-refugees – including IDPs – and demobilized fighters. Its focus has been at the level of the beneficiaries. The study is based on a broader concept of reintegration than generally used by other scholars. Since more conventional understanding can limit attention to the mechanics of settlement back home – or in case of demobilized fighters to the return to the civilian society – and to the capacity to sustain one’s livelihood and that of the family. The position taken in this thesis is that reintegration must be understood as the human dimension of a broader process of rehabilitation and reconstruction which in the case of Eritrea, has been underway throughout the post-conflict period. Reintegration is treated here as a process in which all segments of the society strive to overcome divisions – be they traditional or a result of changes due to war – and build a community as harmonious as possible. Thus the study examines the reintegration process by reference to four hypotheses, but they were used to focus dimension rather than limiting investigation on testing them.

The experience of Eritrea and that of other countries show that Demobilisation or repatriation and the ensuing reintegration process depend to a large extent on the specific context in which they take place. This refers not only to the type of war the country was involved in, but also to the historic period of its implementation and the degree of autonomy the national actors enjoy. All these aspects combined make Demobilisation/repatriation and reintegration in Eritrea a particularly interesting, if not a unique case.

After three decades of armed struggle for independence, Eritrea enjoyed only seven years of peace before war with neighboring Ethiopia resumed in May 1998. During this short peaceful interval tremendous efforts were made to rebuild the basic material infrastructure and to establish and develop the basic institutions of the new state. Post-war reconstruction included rehabilitation of the severely damaged social tissue by measures such as strengthening the rule of law promoting tolerance, family reunion and reconciliation, and encouraging traditional and new forms of mutual self-help structures and practices.
It has been argued that reintegration can be only successful if it is planned and implemented within the broader context of rehabilitation which in turn is seen as part of a long term development concept. It seems that the Eritrean government was well aware of the importance of the issue and place reintegration within the overall rehabilitation concept, given that it declared the reintegration of returnees as priority number one. Also it was aware of the necessity to link repatriation or Demobilisation closely to reintegration, and to consider it as a complementary exercise. Nevertheless, a comprehensive national framework in which all sectoral strategies could unfold was missing, and implementation was more or less ad hoc. This lack was aggravated by the absence of mechanisms to link the interventions of aid agencies – themselves conditioned by the rules of funding agencies – to the national strategy and institutions.

In order to understand the broader meaning of integration, it is necessary to go back to the specific importance of national integration, as it is understood in Eritrea. The process of national integration within the borders of “a country of one’s own” has been going on since the Italian colonization. But before the coming of EPLF there was neither the awareness of the need to create a common feeling of belonging, nor a policy which would – in the long run – turn it into an Eritrean national identity. The EPLF and, subsequently, the Eritrean government, however, have placed strong emphasis on mutual commitment, reconciliation and nation building. Thus re-integration is taking place as part of the overall process of nation building, through which liberation fighters, returnees from Sudan and other countries, and the population that has continued to live under the Ethiopian regime can be brought together to contribute to their own and the nation’s future.

Compared with other experiences, post-war Eritrea had one important positive prerequisite for successful reintegration, a strong feeling of belonging to one community. But this was not fully utilized because reintegration programs were designed tilted more towards economic intervention.

Despite all the destruction and disruption, the war has helped to forge a strong sense of unity and identity among various ethnic and religious groups, thus creating a platform for reintegration process to unfold. All across the country people adopted the common cause of national liberation and development. Confronted as they were by an adversary who was many times superior in terms of human and material resources, the various Eritrean groups had no choice but to put their differences aside. The lack of external support for their cause also contributed positively to encouraging them to rely entirely on their internal capacities. There were several other factors that also helped to create the social cement of the Eritrean nation. The
liberation forces recruited from all ethnic and social strata of the society. This together with the egalitarian distribution system of social services and education, as well as ‘democratic’ administrative structures that encouraged popular participation in the struggle, had a far-reaching effect in breaking down the various barriers that had always divided the society.

Immediately after independence, the Eritrean Government has decided to repatriate the majority of the Eritrean refugees living in exile in Sudan; to demobilise 60 percent of the EPLF fighting forces and to support the reintegration of the returnees. The Eritrean government discourse on reintegration was articulated in terms of social markers of responsibility and readiness to intervene. It was based on the conviction that during the struggle EPLF had been able to gain considerable experience in assisting refugees returning spontaneously from Sudan and drought victims in the liberated areas, and even in implementing rehabilitation and development projects, with the help of a few NGOs. With this experience and according to its principles of national sovereignty and self-reliance, the government opted for national ownership and execution of externally funded programs and projects. Unfortunately this approach proved to be at odds with the policy of the aid agencies that had offered their assistance.

To achieve the objective of reintegration of refugees returning from Sudan, the government has initiated the Program for Refugee Reintegration and Rehabilitation of Resettlement Areas in Eritrea (PROFERI). The programme was expected to cost US $262 million, but as the pledging conference generated only US $32.5 million, the ambitious plan was replaced by a far more modest Pilot Phase aiming at repatriating and resettling 25,000 refugees. Given the existing financial constraints and the need to develop its capacity, the government opted for national execution, with international organizations being asked to provide financial support and technical services, mainly in the field of capacity building, rather than substituting local capacities. According to Ex-commissioner Gerensie Kelati, the co-operation with international partners in implementing PROFERI was a good learning ground for diplomacy. The target group of PROFERI comprised neither refugee returning spontaneously from Sudan, nor internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Eritrea. Neither refugee who returned spontaneously from Sudan nor those Eritreans who had been displaced within the country were covered by PROFERI. This can be identified as an important limitation factor of reintegration.

The Eritrean government designed a programme costing of US $48 million to assist with Demobilisation and re-integration of ex-fighters, but only US $8 million was pledged. Unable to secure the necessary international funding the government
decided to rely primarily on its own resources. It took a loan of Birr 430 million for payment of severance money. The Government set up a special department within ERRA with the task of handling out Demobilisation money and offers various support measures aiming at facilitating the reintegration of the demobilized fighters. The severance money paid was meant to serve as a safety net for the first year, thereby easing the transition to civilian life.

Before assessing the results of the integration programs it has to be remembered that departing from any group or social setting which has given central meaning to one’s life is more or less painful and can even be traumatic. Returning refugees and demobilized fighters had to live this experience twice, they were first uprooted when they left for exile or the field, and a second time when they were repatriated or demobilized. This experience proved particularly difficult for the ex-fighters. More than any other group of people in Eritrea, EPLF fighters were heavily indoctrinated with socialist and nationalist ideology, learning and adopting new values like egalitarianism, gender equality, religious and ethnic tolerance, group solidarity, loyalty to the movement and unwavering commitment to the cause of national independence. Ex-fighters have faced more problems than former refugees have in their attempts to join the mainstream way of life. Finding of the survey indicates that 94 per cent of ex-fighters compared to 74 per cent of ex-refugees experienced initial difficulties - mainly based on difference of perception and understanding - in their relationship with the stayers community. After the initial phase however, these problems have tended to decrease progressively when they started intermingling with the receiving society until little difference with difficulties people experience in general can be found.

The findings of the study also show that women experience more problems than men do. Officially, on the political and legal level women are equal in Eritrea. Practically, however, patriarchal traditions are deeply rooted in civilian society. Women’s own economic standing is a precondition for gaining greater equality. Their active participation in the armed struggle empowered women. But after independence this progress is being steadily reversed. A large number of women are aware that they still suffer discrimination, and they are critical about what they regard as the Government’s relative abandonment of the struggle for gender equality. Female ex-fighters – especially frontline fighters - complain that they were not treated fairly when it was decreed that those among them who were mothers should be demobilized in order to facilitate their taking care of their children. The Moslem women among the ex-refugees are facing problems in using the skills they had acquired during their long stay in exile. Increasingly it appears that the tremendous progress made during the struggle in challenging inequality along lines of gender is
now little more than window dressing and that the traditional gender bias was only set aside temporarily during midst of the struggle. This trend is detrimental to reintegration as well as to progress in regard to gender issues in general. But, there is widespread awareness among Eritrean and international institutions of the precarious situation of women ex-fighters, not only in Eritrea. Nevertheless, there is still too little tangible support. Reintegration activities should therefore take on board the social transformation attained during the armed struggle in general and women’s interests in particular. Thus post-conflict rehabilitation needs to take into account the new roles of women and extra measures from a gender perspective should be put in place such as a gender awareness campaign.

Eritrea’s endeavor of reintegration for various categories of the population with the help of comprehensive programs and individual measures had broadly positive effects: no serious incidents have hampered the exercise, and the differences between the different groups have visibly diminished. This outcome is partly due to the fact that both (re) integration programs have benefited from a series of advantages specific to the Eritrean context:

- the whole country was at peace for the first time after 30 years;
- the government which had brought independence enjoyed the confidence of the population and its decisions were respected and followed;
- there was hardly any corruption and no debt burden, and
- those who had stayed in the country during the war welcomed both categories of returnees.

But some factors influenced the reintegration process in a negative way:

- the transition government had neither experience with large scale rehabilitation and development nor with the international, multilateral and bilateral aid agencies;
- its members were quite astonished to find out that their wishes were in contradiction with donors’ rules and practices.

The Eritrean reintegration programs for returnees show the Government’s commitment to go beyond the mere provision of relief aid, by offering substantial help for long term economic and social integration. But the positive results were hampered by shortcomings of the programs. Some of the problem encountered with PROFERI stemmed from the lack of prior surveys of the needs and capacities of refugees, as well as of the situation in the localities that were to receive them. In contrast, a comprehensive survey – including all fighters – was conducted prior to the Demobilisation exercise. The concept of reintegration of ex-refugees was based on the wrong assumption that because of their rural background returnees would want to go back to the country-side, and therefore agricultural settlements would be best
suited to accommodate them. The settlement policy – one of the pillars of PROFERI – has to be criticized for quite a number of deficits. A uniform model had been worked out, instead of different models based on regional differences. Also it should have encompassed the local community as much as the returnees, with special support measures for all groups of vulnerable people. The agro-pastoralists should have been seen as a group with special needs. Last but not least, support measures were not geared to economic sustainability of the settlements.

The last point deserves a few more lines. From the beginning the reintegration support measures were oriented towards solving economic problems, based on the belief that the aim was to help returnees strengthen their economic capacities, and that this in turn would automatically lead to reintegration. Without any intention of minimizing the importance of these measures, it has to be stressed that the findings clearly show that they have to be complemented by social support measures and in some cases by special psychosocial counseling activities. This applies especially to the women among the returnees, and especially to the female ex-fighters. Male fighters at their return were accepted by the society by and large as ‘liberators’, as if they had done miracle on their own, whereas female ex-fighters were expected to give up their new status and comply again with the traditional norms of the patriarchal society. This seems to be the main reason why the majority of women in general, and female ex-fighters in particular, have chosen to settle in urban areas, where they live on the peripheries of towns where conditions and service are poorest. The findings also show that women heads of households have benefited much less than men from credit schemes and skill-training courses.

The skill-training courses have certainly contributed a lot to the improvement of qualifications both of ex-refugees and of ex-fighters, and to their chances of becoming self-employed or employed. The training programs offered a wide range of skills; they took into account the very different levels of the participants and they showed remarkable flexibility. Nevertheless the skills and knowledge acquired informally by the fighters during the struggle, and to a lesser degree by the refugees in exile, were not recognized, their experiences were not taken on board and used in the different economic sectors that might have revived after the war.

All in all, as the author’s fieldwork results and other related studies show that the scope of the various support activities has not been sufficiently large. Also some measures and programme components had unintended effects. Conflicts concerning land rights, especially of pastoralists, lack of involvement of receiving communities in settlements for ex-refugees and ex-fighters, high expectations of all concerned;
members of local communities as well as returnees, and especially among returnees repatriated in an organized way.

The finding of the fieldwork also shows that the reintegration process needs time to gain momentum. When returnees initially started their new life either after repatriation or Demobilisation, they had high expectations which sometimes had been nurtured by promises and which were not always fulfilled. For example, as in the case of the refugees repatriated through PROFERI, or of the demobilized veteran fighters who expected to be rewarded for the years of sacrifice spent in the field. This resulted in disappointment and frustrations, sometimes slowing down the reintegration. The reception by the host community was always good when returnees came back to places where they had relatives and kinfolk. This usually proceeded without major problems arising, but it could have been even better if the receiving community had been involved in the preparation and implementation of settlement projects.

The PROFERI program tried to accomplish too much in too short a time. It overestimated the receptivity and absorptive capacity of the government of Eritrea with regard to technical assistance. A more modest set of clearly defined capacity building and institution-strengthening objectives in the early phase of post-war recovery would have been more appropriate for a programme of eleven components. By the same token, the programme aiming at reintegrating ex-fighters carried our by Mitias was over-stretched with its four roles, that is to act as coordinator, facilitator, advocate and counsel. Although this was inevitable when the program started, some of the tasks should have been delegated to other institutions to enable Mitias to work more efficiently as facilitator.

Finally, the reintegration process has suffered from two setbacks at the highest political level:

- over centralized execution, all decisions having to be taken or confirmed by the coordinating body in the President’s Office, and
- the change in policy occurring in 1996, when the government declared that the period of rehabilitation had come to its end and had to give way to development, without assessing in how far the long-term objectives of sustainable integration had been reached.

It is generally believed that the cessation of armed conflict, especially civil war, presents an unprecedented opportunity for war-torn societies to rebuild not only the country’s material infrastructure and restore its social capital and institutional set-up, but also to embrace reforms that have been elusive in the past. But at the same time a
post-conflict situation is heavily marked by the dramatic changes, which happened during the conflict. The case of Eritrea is well suited to illustrate this statement. As already mentioned national integration was a means as well as an aim of the struggle. Also from its beginning EPLF has insisted that the liberation struggle must take the form of a national democratic revolution. In accordance with this conviction it took steps to establish forms of democratic organisation in the liberated areas that were meant to be models for the future independent state. But unfortunately they were played down after independence.

At least three things make it difficult for the returnees to reintegrate into the civil society. The difficulties of the country’s post war economy, the fact that the society wants them to lose what they have gained during the struggle or exile and finally, the bitter feeling to lose what you have gained and tasted - this is the worst thing of all. Besides the transition from war to peace proved a more problematic exercise than had been foreseen. As long as the fighters were isolated in its Sahel stronghold EPLF was the only master of its decisions. With independence Eritrea became part of the formerly outside world, subject to rules set up by others. In this context the transition from a successful guerrilla movement to an effective administration became more difficult than anticipated. A mind set and attuned only to control, security and order found it difficult to adapt to the civilian environment and administration. At the same time a few of those who had been comrades in arms, now became the government, taking decisions for the others, trying to reconcile old and new norms. This dilemma started day one after independence and has not yet ended. The reconciliation effort which EPLF has started by abstaining from undertaking any reprisals on either captured enemy troops or, more importantly, Eritrean nationals who had worked, fought and even spied for the Derg, have to go on.

The field findings show that many former fighters feel bitter about their Demobilisation. Simultaneously monopolization of power reduced the political scene to the government and its mighty ally PFDJ, leaving no space to any other political actor and limiting popular participation. One of the negative effects of this policy can be clearly seen in the refusal of members of opposing, or dissident, organizations to return from exile and join in the effort of reconstruction as a group or party. But also with return to an outright war situation in May 1998, the positive results of the rehabilitation and re-integration efforts have been undermined and to a large extent reversed. This applies especially to the re-mobilized fighters. At this point in time it is premature to speculate on the full impact of the conflict on the reintegration of ex-refugees and ex-fighters. It is, however clear that the conflict has created new conditions which will again demand even greater efforts. For example, the situation of more than 74,000 (up to date) so-called ethnic Eritreans holding Ethiopian passport
having been deported from Ethiopia needs urgently to be addressed. Also as a result of the current conflict more than 1.5 million people were, and a great number of them still are, internally displaced. In addition 100,000 have crossed the border to Sudan for temporary exile.

The overall reintegration endeavor by the Eritrean government can be read as positive development but still there are serious flaws in the implementation process among which is the lack of national frame work of recovery.

7.2 Recommendations
For reintegration to be successful programs have to be comprehensive and well planned, in a joint effort of government institutions and the donor community, with overall responsibility remaining with the government. The programs have to fit the overall development strategy framework of the government of Eritrea. Comprehensive surveys or base line studies have to be part of the preparation of the reintegration exercise. They should not only assess the needs, but also the capacities of the future returnees. If during and shortly after Demobilisation/repatriation it might prove necessary to design special measures for each category, during the integration exercise all categories – returning refugees, IDPs, demobilized ex-fighters, and needy groups among the local population – have to benefit equally. According to international experience this could be done in the most appropriate way by community based development programs.

The importance of returnees as human potential is another aspect, which must not be missed in any concept of Demobilisation/repatriation and reintegration. Experiences of other Demobilisation or reintegration programs show that ex-fighters are often seen only as a problem, as a burden; rarely are they considered as a valuable potential for a society to rebuilt after a long and destructive war. In the case of Eritrea this means that the experiences, knowledge and skills of the ex-fighters, who had been considered as important change agents during the war, should be seen as useful assets, for their own integration as well as for the development of the country. This is equally valid for the ex-refugees but unfortunately it was not properly utilized.

Giving due consideration to the capacities of women would also contribute to overcome the gender bias, and further vocational training should reinforce this effort. Gender training and other empowerment measures should be carried out at all levels, to start with it can start at university level in order to create a new breed of intellectuals needed for elaborating a concept fitting the needs of the Eritrean women. This should be complemented by an overall gender awareness campaign and by
compulsory positive discrimination measures, as the government garage in Asmara having trained and employed more than 40 women already practices it.

Skill training programs should be conceived on the basis of detailed labor market studies and should comprise follow-up measures. Concrete help in job seeking and support for self-employment should complement them. Small loans for business start-ups are an important instrument, which has to be designed and implemented by appropriate loan schemes. But micro-credit alone should not be viewed as a cure or panacea for all problems and challenges presently facing emerging micro-enterprises in Eritrea. A solid system must be put in place if enterprises are to succeed in helping vulnerable groups especially returnees, in restarting their livelihoods. The support services required by entrepreneurs may cover a range of areas and subjects, including a) management and bookkeeping, b) marketing, c) technology transfer, d) infrastructure, energy and communication, and e) inputs/raw materials. The chief goal of the program is to promote profitable micro-enterprises.

From the beginning psychosocial counseling has to be given due consideration and the necessary funds and expertise. Counselors have to be trained in socially and culturally relevant issues, which can enable them to combine theoretical and practical knowledge, taking into account the differences in socio-cultural contexts. This has to be complemented by the establishment of an effective referral system. Attention should also be given to Eritreans living abroad. Economically weak Eritrea does not have the means to attract the relatively well off Eritreans from the Diaspora, unless other political forces than those at present in power are not only accepted, but also invited to join a broader national coalition. Otherwise they are likely to remain abroad and will even act as a pull factor for others to leave the country. Also the insistence of the government in power to alienate other political forces could serve as a pretext for not coming back.

An effective reintegration program is the outcome of concerted action of government and donor agencies. It is important, therefore, to identify at the designing stage the relevant line Ministries and agencies and to involve them directly in finalizing the programme or project design. This will ensure subsequent commitment to the project, which is an outcome of co-operative efforts. This is equally valid at local level where beneficiaries – returnees as well as local communities – should at an early stage be given say in project design and implementation.

The reintegration program must viewed as a melting pot where all actors and interventions play a role. The first stage can be to bring former refugees from exile or demobilize ex-fighters from the front. Once this group is settled in areas all the
interventions designed must address their issue together with the stayers and internally displaced people. The program must be implemented under one authority to maximize resource and coordinate projects so that valuable resource might not be lost. The diagram 7.1 elaborates this intervention. There is a need to develop a conceptual framework of recovery program for the country.

Cessation of hostilities, or at least the ebbing of widespread-armed conflict, provides an opportunity for war-torn peoples and countries to rebuild their societies, economies, and polities, and to start reforms and restructuring. This applies also to Eritrea. At least three main reasons can be given why the integration of ex-combatants is – in 2001 as much as in 1993 - an important factor for stability and progress in Eritrea. Firstly, in many cases social ties with their families or origin have been dislodged and their diverse experiences have made it difficult for them to settle into the sort of ‘normal’ life which they might otherwise have had. Secondly, since they form a sizeable group, Eritrea’s political stability and development depends to a large extent on their successful integration. Thirdly, their experiences during the struggle have often given them skills, abilities and insights which, if properly harnessed, can assist in the process of development. Thus, on the positive side, they might be assets to the young nation, if their experience is properly harnessed. On the negative side, however, they can become a destabilizing factor if a large number of them fail to reintegrate into civilian life.

The demobilization and reintegrations of ex-fighters represent a great challenge for Eritrea. Since it constitutes an integral part of the overall transformation of Eritrea from a war-torn to a reconstructed country, both the opportunities and the constraints that exist in present-day Eritrea shape this process. The Eritrean Government had the political will and vision to reintegrate ex-fighters within the wider context of rehabilitation but lacks a comprehensive strategy for reconstruction rehabilitation and reintegration program. Because of this pitfall programs/projects tend to be ad hoc and fire brigade management.

Given the complexity of rehabilitation in post-conflict situations, it is also important to rethink through whom rehabilitation aid is channeled. NGOs, for instance, have been relatively successful in rehabilitation initiatives in the aftermath of natural disasters such as droughts. But the focus of rehabilitation initiatives has often been on specific operations that have lacked the kind of coherent, integrated framework needed for realistic sustainable macroeconomic and household livelihood rehabilitation. More than anything else successful development requires development of an integrated strategic framework that “identifies priority areas, allocates
appropriate resources for them, and relates interventions to the achievement of the twin objectives of peace and development”.

We can not expect the donor community to come with an integrated strategy for the transition process which is currently unfolding in Eritrea. It is the sole responsibility of the government of Eritrea to come up with an integrated strategy through which different organizations and donors can play a constructive role.

The international actors (NGOs and donor agencies) are not going to provide a solution to the entire problem Eritrea is facing. They can provide small additional resources and will impose their political conditions. In order to decide what works and what does not there is a need to have an overall strategy of reconstruction rehabilitation and reintegration program. A policy framework should be worked out that charts out the context of integration; description of the target group and its features; the integration strategy; time framework; elements of the program; institutional responsibilities and budget. Thus the government can maneuver even if what is being offered by donor is a short-term and piecemeal approach. An overall framework is essential for the following reasons:
  c) To provide a basis for deciding what fits and what does not either in the long or short run and act accordingly
  d) To accept conditions when necessary and when it is important to the overall strategy.

It must be equally remembered that the short-term nature of donor funding of rehabilitation programs does not easily lead to achieving sustainable rehabilitation efforts that are directed toward sustainable peace and development. Because of lack of long-term resource commitments by the international community many rehabilitation programs are little more than “crisis management” interventions. “They are neither conceived nor implemented as sustainable programs.”
First Phase of Rehabilitation (Diagram 7.1)

Occupied Areas

Refugees (Exile or Diaspora)

Liberated Areas

Refugees from the Sudan

Fighters Community

Host Community and Internally Displaced

Spontaneous

Organized

Repatriation

Demobilisation

Reconstruction

Reintegration

Intended and unintended results

Long and Short Term
Second Stage of Rehabilitation

Assisted and non assisted

Economical

Non-assisted
Planed Government
Unintended result

Social

Political
Intended and unintended result

Nation Building Process
7.3 Forth-coming reintegreation exercise

Now that Eritrea and Ethiopia have signed a peace agreement on 12 December 2000, prospects for another demobilization/repatriation process seem promising. Once again the majority of the Eritrean armed forces will have to be demobilized and refugees repatriated, after that having been accomplished a new exercise of reintegration of returnees –comprising returned refugees, IDPs and demobilized fighters – into the civilian society will start. The thesis is meant to contribute to the elaboration of an appropriate concept for this exercise, which most probably will more or less follow the main lines of the previous programs, while avoiding their mistakes. The author would like to add a few more lines on the forthcoming demobilization process, which might prove different from the previous one.

The rationale identified in 1992 to demobilize fighters is even more pronounced now if the following points are taken into consideration. A country where 7 to 8 per cent of its population and 50 percent of its working force are under arms is very hard if not impossible to sustain. But demobilization primarily should be seen as a tool for preventing further outbreak of violence, and more emphasis must be placed on negotiating reductions in sizes of the two armies of the state involved. Additionally – and maybe primarily – demobilization has to be seen as a means to prevent armed conflict, and thus emphasis should be put on negotiating the reduction in size of both armies involved. As different as the post-war situations after the struggle for independence and the recent war with Ethiopia might be, the points the points raised in 1992 are still valid in the year 2000 and therefore deserve to be repeated.

- Eritrea’s economy cannot sustain the big army (200,000-250,000) built to confront the Ethiopian army.
- After more than three decade of war and destruction, and seven years of relatively peaceful development, Eritrea’s resource needs to be channeled to reconstruction and rehabilitation after nearly three years relapse to war with Ethiopia.
- The installment and nurturing of democratic civil institutions, the building of an effective police force and the strengthening of the judiciary should be given priority over enhancing the defense capabilities of the country.
- For long-term purposes, only an effective and small army is compatible with the economic resources of the country and its security concerns.
- Active and constructive policy and diplomacy with all neighbors and the region as a whole will have the necessary positive effects, which in its turn will reduce defense needs and expenditures.
Volunteers versus conscripts
The National Service program was vital to the overall social integration process in Eritrea, as it called on male and female Eritreans between 18 and 40 years of age to contribute 18 months of unpaid labor to their country and to participate in military training. Usually they were assigned in different line Ministries in order to acquire some work experience, which could help them to integrate into the labor force and into society. The National Service has not only provided the much needed human resources for a wide range of activities, it has also introduced young people from urban setting to the reality of conditions prevailing in the countryside, as it has broadened the horizons of rural Eritreans. It was hoped that such interaction would stimulate a stronger sense of national identity and consciousness among those involved particularly the younger ones. With the resumption of hostilities between Eritrea and Ethiopia in May 1998, the members of National Service were drafted to the front and the former demobilized fighters re-mobilized. In December 1999 the Eritrean Defense Force had more than 200,000 soldiers under arms.

There is a continued reliance on informal lines of communication among Front members, and on ad hoc decision-making and policy readjustments as issues and situations demanded. This might help to minimize some problems but cannot be an excuse for not creating a platform of broader inclusion. There is a challenge to incorporate the positive roles that could be played by non-government and civil institutions into the realm of political governance and social interaction. The role of civil society and local institutions in supplementing and consolidating civil governance is not to be underestimated. Eritrea ought to create a nurturing environment in which civil society is encouraged to consolidate national unity and democratic governance and results in integration of the whole society. The Government acknowledges that returnees [ex-refugees and ex-fighters] have sacrificed tremendously and are waiting for support to start their new life. Nevertheless, the Eritrean returnees are always reminded that they have to be realistic that they have to be relying first and foremost on themselves. Reintegration is hence supposed to be achieved mainly through the individual's initiative.

There is a lesson to be learned from the Eritrean experience regarding aid policy. If we look at the experience of Eritrean and other Sub-Saharan African countries the financial contribution of aid they got is limited not even covering 20 per cent of what was asked. Development aid comes usually with strings, which trap the government concerned. As Badru had rightly said, “at independence the Eritrean Government were asked to surrender their independence to the donor community”. Trying to satisfy donors’ demands would have left the country without its own policy direction. The national execution and ownership of reintegration programs must fall
on the government concerned, but government has also to develop a national reintegration program framework where the short and long term reintegration programs can unfold in the Eritrean case this was not fully developed.

In small peripheral societies such as Eritrea, economic and social conditions often become obstacles to the development of participatory democracy. Lack of resources, mass illiteracy, and the absence of democratic traditions all exert pressure towards bureaucratization, so that in the definition of the nation, the state is substituted for the people, bureaucracy for democracy, and passive obedience for active citizenship. Rather than the assertion of democracy from below, the nation instead becomes a pervasive organizing framework imposed from above, stressing the imperatives of obedience and loyalty to state institutions.

We may conclude from the findings of the survey that the social fabric of Eritrean society is still strong: community and family feel responsible for those of their members who need help. Especially in the in-depth interviews the author was told many stories about the support the returnees got from his/her parents and friends, and sometimes even from outsiders. This attitude is fostered by the respect and trust people have for their folks. These is more pronounced in the case of fighters, and would not have developed without the good relationship fighters and civilians had developed during the struggle. Nevertheless we also have to recognize that friendship often ends where business starts and returnees are seen as competitors. For the ex-fighters who have learned to share, not only material things but also knowledge and skills, this means not only a change in attitude, but also to take leave of some of what they call “the values of the struggle”. Some of them have developed strategies to harmonize the two worlds, like the owners of the glass workshop in Keren who invite the neighboring business people for socializing on Sunday afternoons.

The moral support the family extends to the returning fighter - be she or he demobilized or not is certainly an important help. On the other side the fighters feel responsible for their family. In the in-depth interviews we find many examples of ex-fighters - men and women - who after their return shouldered the responsibility for the whole family.

Even though the complexity and complementarily was recognized, reintegration of returnees - ex-refugees as well as demobilized fighters - was seen as a process by which these categories had to integrate into the mainstream of civilian society and to readapt to the ways of life of the stayers’ community. This meant ignoring the changes which all categories of the society had undergone during the thirty years
long war. Also the government missed the chance to use the re-integration exercise as part of its policy of nation building, in continuity with the practice of the EPLF during the struggle to emphasize existing integrative factors.

Further research or study
• How, and in what ways, can Eritrea’s existing land tenure systems can be modified to provide secure land rights to the landless, ex-refugees, ex-fighters and other households to secure access?
• Can these need be me in all areas, in a way that doesn’t involve a reduction in size of holdings to a level too small for adequate livelihood? If not, what alternative livelihood opportunities exist, or could be created?
• What types of modifications are needed to improve the efficiency of local institutional mechanisms for management and settlement of disputes over land?
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Appendix 1: ex-refugee and ex-fighters semi-structured questionnaires.

Questionnaire for ex-fighters

1. Background (D.B)

   ______ D.B.1 Full name ____________________________________________________________
   ______ D.B.2 Sex  Male ______(1) Female ______(2)
   ______ D.B.3 Origin Urban ______(1) Semi-urban ______(2) Rural ______(3)
   ______ D.B.4 Present Location
        Urban ______(1) Rural ______(2) Semi-urban ______(3)
   ______ D.B.5 Ethnicity  Afar ______(1) Bilen ______(2) Hidareb ______(3) Saho ______(4)
        Tigre ______(5) Tigrina ______(6) Kunama ______(7) Nara ______(8)
        Rashida ______(9)

Marital Status and Children

        Divorced ______(5) living with some one ______(6)
   ______ D.B.7 Why were you divorced?
        My family didn’t accept her/him ______(1) Religion reason ______(2) For we were not living
        together we hardly know each ______(3) We can not go along with ______(4) Family
        influence ______(5) Other ______(6) specify __________________________________________
   ______ D.B.8 If married how many times? ________________________________
   ______ D.B.9 If you are divorced who is your former husband or wife?
        Fighter ______(1) Returnee ______(2) Civilian ______(3)
   ______ D.B.10 Number of children None ______(0) One ______(1) Two ______(2) Three ______(3)
        Four ______(4) Five ______(5) More than five ______(6)
   ______ D.B.11 With whom are the children living with?
        Mother ______(1) Father ______(2) Grand parents ______(3) Both ______(4) Others ______(5)
        specify ________________________________________________________________
   ______ D.B.12 Is your husband living with you?
        Yes ______(1) No ______(2)
   ______ D.B.13 If not together do he support you financially?
        Yes ______(1) No ______(2)
   ______ D.B.14 If not why not?
        He is not working ______(1) Currently I don’t have contact with him ______(2)
        His salary is not enough to support us ______(3) He is irresponsible ______(4)
**Education and Skill**

- **D.B.15** Can you read and write without any problem?
  - Yes (1) No (2)

- **D.B.16** What was your level of education at the end of the arm struggle?
  - Elementary (1) Middle school (2) Secondary school (3) Above secondary (4) Other (5) Specify ___________________________

- **D.B.17** Origin of education
  - Before struggle (1) During struggle (2) After struggle (3)

- **D.B.18** Are you continuing your studies?
  - Yes (1) No (2)

- **D.B.19** If yes, What kind?
  - Formal academic education (1) Vocational training (2) Apprenticeship (3) Other (4) Specify ___________________________

- **D.B.20** Have you acquired skill?
  - Yes (1) No (2)

- **D.B.21** If yes, what kind?
  - Craftsmanship (1) Barefoot doctor (2) Radio operator (3) Mechanic (4) Petty-trade (5) Administration (6) Construction (7) Other (8) Specify _______

- **D.B.22** Origin of skill you currently have.
  - Before the struggle (1) During the struggle (2) After (3)

- **D.B.23** While active in the army what skill had you developed? ___________________________

**Age and Experience**

- **D.B.24** How old are you?
- **D.B.25** Number of years of service in the arm struggle. ____________.
- **D.B.26** Position held in the military (rank and file) in time of Demobilisation.
  - Ordinary (2) Unit (2) Platoon (3) Campany (4) Battalion (5)
  - Above battalion (6) other (7) specify _______________________

- **D.B.27** Non-military occupation (1) Logistic (2) Health (3) Security (4) Public administration (5) Communication (6) Social affairs (7) Mass organisation (8) Others (9) specify ___________________________

**Demobilisation and its effect (M.T)**

- **M.T.1** When was your date of Demobilisation?
  - Before 1993 (1) 1993 (2) 1994 (3) 1995 (4) 1996 (5) Others (6) Specify __________
M.T.2 Perception of personal situation at present
Bad _____(1) Medium _____(2) Good _____(3)

M.T.3 If your answer is bad, why?________________________________________

M.T.4 If your answer is good, why?_______________________________________

M.T.5 If your answer is medium, why?_____________________________________

M.T.6 Were you expecting Demobilisation?
It was unexpected____(1) I had expected it____(2) I was asking___(3) I had panicked ___(4)

M.T.7 Did your expectation matched reality after Demobilisation?
Yes____(1) No____(2)

M.T.8 If not, why not?_____________________________________________________

M.T.9 If yes, how come?_________________________________________________

Living condition (M.N)
M.N.1 What type of house are you living?
Tukul______(1) Agnet _____(2) Hidimo____(3) One room house ____(4)
More than one room ____ (5) Other____(6)specify ________________________

M.N.2 How do you rate your housing situation to the one existing before joining the struggle?
All the same____(1) Now, it is better__ (2) It was better before____(3) Other____(4)
Specify ______________________________________________________________

M.N.3 Who owns the house you are currently living in?
My family___(1) I own it___(2) My friend ___(3) It is owned by my relatives____(4) Government owned ____ (5) Other____(6) specify ______

M.N.4 If you rent the house, how much do you pay per month ________________

Life in the struggle and after (H.K)
H.K.1 Why did you join the struggle?
Enemy atrocity ____ (1) Fear of reprisal for being front member____(2) political consciousness _____ (3) Caught in the middle of the war____(4) Following friend or relative who had joined ____ (5) Discrimination ____ (6) Other____(7)
specify ______

H.K.2 Which enemy atrocity?_____________________________________________

H.K.3 Did you know what life in the struggle was like?
Yes ____ (1) No ____ (2)

H.K.4 If not, why not?___________________________________________________

H.K.5 If yes, what is your source of information?
Voice of the Mass ____ (1) Cell member ____ (2) Friends ____ (3) Organization written materials ____ (4) Other____(5) specify _______________________

H.K.6 How do you find life in the struggle?
Bad ____ (1) Good ____ (2) Not bad and not Good ____ (3)

H.K.7 Which front did you join?
ELF ____ (2) EPLF ____ (2) Both ____ (3)

H.K.8 Why did you choose to join the specific front? ______________________________
H.K.9 Which activity do you think have change you while you were in struggle?

(chose only one)

specify ___________________________

H.K.10 Do you have contact with your former unit members?

Yes ___(1) No ___(2)

H.K.11 If yes why? Chose one only.

It is easy To communicate (understand) with ___(1) We were like a family ___(2)
They are always ready to help in good and bad time ___(3) For I get information and Advice ___(4) They are every-thing to me ___(5) Other ___(6) specify ___________________________

H.K.12 If not, why not? Chose one only.

I don’t have spare time ___(1) what good had I got out of it ___(2) I don’t want to remember them ___(3) I am offended ___(4) The respect I had for them had Diminished ___(5) Other ___(6) specify ___________________________

H.K.13 Did your relationship change after your Demobilisation?

Yes ___(1) No ___(2)

H.K.14 If yes, why?

H.K.15 If no, why not?

H.K.16 As demobilised fighters how do you qualify your relationship with your surrounding?

Bad ___(1) Medium ___(2) Good ___(3)

H.K.17 If good, why? Chose one only.

For we fought brought freedom ___(1) Because we help them in day to day activity ___(2) For we are their sons and daughter ___(3) They respect fighters ___(4) They had respect for the Arm Struggle ___(5) Other ___(6) specify ___________________________

H.K.18 If bad, why? Chose one only.

Our livelihood depends on them ___(1) Economic reasons ___(2) We have different Perception in understanding things ___(3) Their attitude towards fighters is bad ___(4) Other ___(5) specify ___________________________

H.K.19 If medium, why?

H.K.20 Did you have contacts with your family or other members of your relatives during the struggle?

Yes ___(1) No ___(2)

H.K.21 If yes, how often.

In between 1-12 months ___(1) Yearly ___(2) Once in Two years ___(3) Once in three years ___(4) Once in four years ___(5) More than four years ___(6) Other ___(6) specify ___________________________

H.K.22 Did you go back to places where you had served before (after strategic retreat)?

Yes _____(1) No _____(2)

H.K.23 If yes, how often?

After one year ___(1) After two year ___(2) After three year ___(3) After four year ___(4) After five year ___(5) More than five years ___(6) Other ___(7) specify ___________________________

H.K.24 If not why not?

H.K.25 What are you doing currently?

Employed ___(1) Self-employed ___(2) Family enterprise ___(3) Working with a
partner ____(4) Unemployed ____ (5) Other ____ (5) specify _______________________

H.K.26 After Demobilisation what problems did you encounter? (select only one)
   Land ____ (1) Lack of skill ____ (2) House rent ____ (3) Lack of fund ____ (4) Health
   Problem ____ (5) Family and relative acceptance ____ (6) Child-care ____ (7)
   Other ____ (8) other/ specify ______________________

H.K.27 Did you settle in one area after Demobilisation?
   Yes ______ (1) No _____ (2)

H.K.28 If yes why?
   ______________________

H.K.29 If not, why not?
   To join relatives or family members ____ (1) In search of a Job ____ (2) In search of
   training ____ (3) In search of land ____ (4) Because of not being accepted by the
   community ____ (5) Other ____ (6) specify ______________________

H.K.30 Number of times you changed sites.
   One ____ (1) Two ____ (2) Three ____ (3) Four ____ (4) More than four
   times ____ (5)

H.K.31 How long do you intend to stay in your present place of residence?
   I have no intention of staying here at all ____ (1) Until I have enough money to return to
   my place of origin ____ (2) I had selected as my residence place ____ (3) Other ____ (4)
   specify ______________________

H.K.32 If you intend to move to another place why?
   Because of health problem ____ (1) Economic problem ____ (2) Family
   Problem ____ (3) Administration problem ____ (4) Other ____ (5) specify __________

2. Economic (Q.T)

Q.T.1 Did you receive Demobilisation money?
   Yes ____ (1) No ____ (2)

Q.T.2 If yes, how much?
   10,000 ____ (1) 5,000 ____ (2) 2,500 ____ (3) 1000 ____ (4)

Q.T.3 How did you spend it?
   To sustain livelihood ____ (1) To help my parents ____ (2) I invested it ____ (3)
      I put it in bank ____ (4) I gave it to money lenders ____ (5) other ____ (6) specify _________

Q.T.4 Did you get any support to enable you to carry out your present activity?
   Yes ____ (1) No ____ (2)

Q.T.5 If yes, who helped you? If so how much?
   Family ____ (1) Friends ____ (2) Community leaders ____ (3) Administration ____ (4)
      Others ____ (5) specify ______________________

Q.T.6 If you encounter a problem whom do you refer to?
   Family ____ (1) Friends ____ (2) Community leaders ____ (3) Administration ____ (4)
      Others ____ (5) specify ______________________

Q.T.7 Are you able to help your family financially?
   Yes ____ (1) No ____ (2)

Q.T.8 If yes how often?
   Regularly ____ (1) Some times ____ (2) Rarely ____ (3) Other ____ (4) specify _________

Q.T.9 Are you engaged in work the whole year?
   Yes ____ (1) No ____ (2)

Q.T.10 If not, how do you manage to make ends meet?
   Occasional job ____ (1) Petty trade ____ (2) Remittance ____ (3) Other ____ (4)
### Q.T.11 How do you spend your income? Quantify it.
- Food (1)
- House rent (2)
- Medicine (3)
- House utensil (4)
- Other (5)

Specify ____________________________

### Q.T.12 What property do you own?

Specify ________________________________

### Q.T.13 Who takes credit from fighters living around you?
- Man (1)
- Woman (2)
- Both (3)
- They are not interested (4)

### Q.T.14 Do women get the same salary for the same job?
- Yes (1)
- No (2)

### Q.T.15 Did you get any training after Demobilisation?
- Yes (1)
- No (2)

### Q.T.16 If yes, what kind?
- Business management (1)
- Credit training (2)
- Fishery (3)
- Others (4)

Specify ____________________________

### Q.T.17 Did you get on the job training after Demobilisation?
- Yes (1)
- No (2)

### Q.T.18 If yes, what kind?
- Carpentry (1)
- Mechanics (2)
- Embroidery (3)
- Driving (4)
- Construction (5)
- Others (6)

Specify ____________________________

### Q.T.19 Are you using the skill you learned?
- Yes (1)
- No (2)

### Q.T.20 If not, why not?

Specify ____________________________

### 3. Social (M.B)

### M.B.1 How do you spend your spare time?
- At home (1)
- Social obligation (2)
- Work (3)
- Other (4)

Specify ____________________________

### M.B.2 Do you belong to an association/ Organisation?
- Yes (1)
- No (2)

### M.B.3 If yes, what type of association/ organisation?
- Cultural (1)
- Religious (2)
- Economic (Ecube) (3)
- Political (4)
- Village organisation (Mahber Adi) (5)
- Other (6)

Specify ____________________________

### M.B.4 Do you have your own household?
- Yes (1)
- No (2)

### M.B.5 If yes, who are the members?
- Husband (1)
- Wife (2)
- Children (3)
- Parents or in laws (4)
- Dependent (5)
- Others (6)

Specify ____________________________

### M.B.6 Do you visit family members?
- Yes (1)
- No (2)

### M.B.7 If not, Why not?

Specify ____________________________

### M.B.8 If yes, how often?
- Rarely (1)
- Often (2)
- At list once a year (3)
- Other (4)

Specify ____________________________

### M.B.9 Do you ask family members for advice?
- Yes (1)
- No (2)

### M.B.10 If yes, what kind of advice?
- Personal (1)
- Business/ work (2)
- Economic related advice (3)
- Others (4)

Specify ____________________________
M.B.11 Do family members come to you for advice?
Yes_____ (1) No _____(2)

M.B.12 If yes, what kind of advice?
Solving contradiction or misunderstanding ___(1) Business/ work___(2)
Personal___(3) Social related problems___(4) Economy related issues___(5)
Others____(6) specify________________________

M.B.13 Who is your best friend?
Fighter ___(1) Civilian _____(2) Refugee _____(3) No difference at all _____(4)

M.B.14 Among your friends, which group is bigger?
Fighter___(1) Refugee___(2) Civilians _____(3) All the same _____(4)

M.B.15 Do you feel your experience in the field had helped you?
Yes _____(1) No _____(2)

M.B.16 If yes which experience? ____________________________________

M.B.17 Did you experience any problem(s) during reintegration which are due to your status as a fighter?
Yes ______(1) No _____(2)

M.B.18 If yes, what kind of problem? __________________________________

M.B.19 Where you able to overcome this problem(s)
Yes ________(1) No _____(2)

M.B.20 Is intermarriage common between fighters and Civilians?
Yes ________(1) No _____(2)

M.B.21 If yes, whom do they usually marry?
Male ___(1) Female ___(2) no difference ___(3)

M.B.22 Are there conflict among the returnee and host community?
Yes ________(1) No _____(2)

M.B.23 If yes what kind?
Cultural ___(1) Religious difference ___(2) Economic factors ___(3)
Difference of perception or understanding _____(4) Other ___(5)
specify__________________________________________

M.B.24 Give example of recent past?
___________________________________________________

M.B.25 Do you think that these conflicts are increasing?
Yes, they are increasing_____ (1) No, they are decreasing ________(2)
It has always been the same____(3) I do not know___(4) Other____(5)
specify________________________________________

M.B.26 How are conflicts resolved?
Intervention from the police _____(1) Intervention from the army ________(2)
Mediators ______(3) Meeting ___(4) Court ________(5) Other____(6)
specify__________________________________________

M.B.27 How is your economic situation compared to your friends?
Better ______(1) Equal ________(2) Worse ________(3) No comment____(4)

M.B.28 If worse can you specify it?
________________________________________________

M.B.29 Concerning women ex-fighters, how is their situation compared to that of struggle?
Good ___(1) Medium ___(2) Worse ___(3)

M.B.30 How do you feel being a fighter?
I feel ashamed being a fighter ___(1) I feel proud___(2) No comment___(3)
Questionnaire For returnees

1. Profile (Background D.B)

_____D.B.1 Full Name ________________
_____D.B.2 Sex Male ____ (1) Female ____ (2)
_____D.B.3 Place of origin Urban ____ (1) Semi-urban ____ (2) Rural ____ (3)
_____D.B.4 Present Location
  Urban ____ (1) Semi-urban ____ (2) Rural ____ (3)
_____D.B.5 Ethnicity Afar ____ (1) Bilen ____ (2) Hidareb ____ (3) Saho ____ (4) Tigre ____ (5)
  Tigrina ____ (6) Kunama ____ (7) Nara ____ (8) Rashida ____ (9)

Marital Status and Children

_____D.B.6 Marital Status a) Single ____ (1) Married ____ (2) Widow ____ (3) Separated ____ (4)
  Divorced ____ (5) Living with some one else ____ (6)
_____D.B.7 Why do you divorce your wife/husband? **(Select one only)**
  My family didn’t accept her/him ____ (1) Religion reason ____ (2) S/He was married
  with some one else ____ (3) Not going along ____ (4) Other/specify ____ (5)
_____D.B.8 If married, how many times? ______
_____D.B.9 If divorced, who was your husband?
  Fighter ____ (1) Returnee ____ (2) Civilian ____ (3)
_____D.B.10 How many wives do you have? ______
_____D.B.11 Number of children None ____ (1) One ____ (2) Two ____ (3) Three ____ (4)
  Four ____ (5) Five ____ (6) Six ____ (7) More than six ____ (8)
_____D.B.12 With whom are the children living?
  Mother ____ (1) Father ____ (2) Grand parents (grand pa or grand ma) ____ (3)
  With both father and mother ____ (4) Other ____ (5) specify _______________________
_____D.B.13 Did you lose a member of your household due to death since your arrival from
  Sudan or other country?
  Yes ____ (1) No ____ (2)
_____D.B.14 If yes, what was the age of the deceased? ______
_____D.B.15 What was the cause of the death? ___________________________
_____D.B.16 How many children live with you currently? ______
_____D.B.17 Do your kids help you financially?
  Yes ____ (1) No ____ (2)
_____D.B.18 Is your husband/ wife living with you?
  Yes ____ (1) No ____ (2) Not applicable ____ (3)
_____D.B.19 If not together, is he helping you financially?
  Yes ____ (1) No ____ (2)
_____D.B.20 If not why not? **(Select one only)**
  He is not working ____ (1) I don’t have contact with him currently ____ (2)
  His salary is not enough to support us ____ (3) He is irresponsible ____ (4)
  Other ____ (5) specify ___________________________
**Education and Skill**

- **D.B.21** Can you read and write without any problem?
  - Yes (1)
  - No (2)

- **D.B.22** What was your level of education when you return from exile?
  - Elementary (1)
  - Middle school (2)
  - Secondary school (3)
  - Above secondary school (4)
  - Other (5)

- **D.B.23** Origin of education.
  - Before exile (1)
  - During exile (2)
  - After exile (3)

- **D.B.24** Are you continuing your studies currently?
  - Yes (1)
  - No (2)

- **D.B.25** If yes, what kind?
  - Formal academic education (1)
  - Vocational training (2)
  - Apprenticeship (3)
  - Other (4)

- **D.B.26** Did you acquire skill during exile?
  - Yes (1)
  - No (2)

- **D.B.27** If yes, what kind?
  - Craftsmanship (1)
  - Builders (2)
  - Track driver (3)
  - Tractor Drivers (4)
  - Teacher (5)
  - Mechanic (6)
  - Administration (7)
  - Trade (8)
  - Health related (9)

- **D.B.28** The skill you are working on when was it acquired?
  - Before the exile (1)
  - During the exile (2)
  - After exile (3)

**Age and Experience**

- **D.B.29** How old are you?
- **D.B.30** How long did you stay in exile?
- **D.B.31** What position did you held in exile?
  - Community leader (1)
  - Group leader (2)
  - Branch leader (3)
  - Other (4)
  - Not member of any organization (5)

**Returning and its effect**

- **M.S.1** When did you return to Eritrea?
  - Before 1991 (1)
  - 1991 (2)
  - 1992 (3)
  - 1993 (4)
  - 1994 (5)
  - 1995 (6)
  - 1996 (7)
  - 1997 (8)
  - After 1998 (9)

- **M.S.2** What is your personal perception of your current condition?
  - Bad (1)
  - Medium (2)
  - Good (3)

- **M.S.3** If your answer is bad, why?

- **M.S.4** If your answer is good, why?

- **M.S.5** If your answer is medium, why?

- **M.S.6** Where you thinking of returning to Eritrea?
  - Yes (1)
  - No (2)

- **M.S.7** After returning from exile did your expectation matched with reality?
  - Yes (1)
  - No (2)

- **M.S.8** If your answer is yes, what was it?

- **M.S.9** If not, why not?
Living condition

_____ M.N.1 What type of house are you living?
Tukul __(1) Agnet __(2) Hidmo __(3) Modern-house __(4) Other__(5)
specify ____________________________

_____ M.N.2 How do you rate your current housing situation to the one existing before exile?
It is all the same __(1) It is better now__(2) It was better before ___(3)
Other__(4) specify ____________________________

_____ M.N.3 Who owns the house you are currently living in?
To my family__(1) I own it__(2) My friend__(3) It is owned by my
relatives__(4) Owned by the government__(5) Private owned__(6) Other__(7)
specify ____________________________

_____ M.N.4 If your house is rented how much do you pay?_______

Life in exile and after (H.K)

_____ H.K.1 Why did you flee?
Forced__(1)Voluntary migration__(2)

_____ H.K.2 If forced, what was the main reason for your flight? select one only.
Enemy atrocity __(1) Fear of reprisal for being member of the front__(2)
Political consciousness__(3) Caught in the middle of the war__(4)
Following friend or relative who had fled__(5) Discrimination__(6)
Other__________(7) Drought problem__(8)

_____ H.K.3 Which specific incident forced you to flee?___________________________

_____ H.K.4 If you left Voluntarily, why?
In search of job__ (1) To pursue education__(2) Health related issues__(3)
Some members of my family had already gone to exile__(4) Marriage__(5)
Other ________(6)

_____ H.K.5 Do you know what life in the exile was like?
Yes__(1) No__(2)

_____ H.K.6 If yes, what was your main source of information? select one only
Listening to the voice of the Mass__(1) I was member of the front__(2) From
friends__(3) Front publications__(4) Other__(5) specify ________________________

_____ H.K.7 How was life in exile?
Bad__(1) Good__(2) Not good or bad__(3)

_____ H.K.8 Which front did you support or were sympathetic to?
ELF__(1) EPLF__(2) Both__(3) None of them__(4)

_____ H.K.9 Why did you choose this particular front? _____________________________

_____ H.K.10 Was your migration(flight) planed?
Yes__(1) No__(2)

_____ H.K.11 After going to exile where was the last place you were living in ?
In camp__(1) Settlement__(2) Town__(3) Other__(4) specify ________

_____ H.K.12 Do you have contact with your former camp or settlement members?
Yes__(1) No__(2)

_____ H.K.13 If yes why? (Select one only)
It is easy to go along with__ (1) we were like a family__(2) they are with you in
your good and bad time__(3) I get help and advice from them__(4) They are
everything for me__(5) Other__(6) specify ____________________________

_____ H.K.14 If not why not? (Select one only)
I am engaged in my private life__(1) Recently we had drifted apart__(2)
I do not want to remember exile life__(3) Other__(4) specify_____________

H.K.15 Did your relationship changed after your return to Eritrea with your former colleague?
Yes __(1) No__(2)

H.K.16 If yes why __________________________

H.K.17 If no why not __________________________

H.K.18 How do you qualify this relationship?
Bad __(1) Medium __(2) Good __(3)

H.K.19 If your replay is good, why? select one only
We are their kin__(1) for they are having new neighbors__(2) Because they are getting extra human power__(3) we brought new skill and initiative__(4) For we had brought different materials __(5) Other__(6) specify_________________

H.K.20 If it is bad why? select one only
We depend on them for our living__(1) For we are sharing the economy with them__(2) Cultural difference__(3) The have negative attitude toward us__(4) Other__(5) specify_________________

H.K.21 If you replied medium, Why?

H.K.22 Did you have contacts with your family or others during exile?
Yes __(1) No __(2)

H.K.23 If yes how often were you seeing them?
1-12 month__(1) Yearly__(2) Every two year__(3) Every three year__(4) Every four year__(5) Every Five years__(6) After more than five years__(7) I was with them__(8) By Letter__(9)

H.K.24 Have you ever been to your area of birth?
Yes__(1) No__(2)

H.K.25 If yes, how often were you going?
Every year__(1) Every two year__(2) After three year__(3)
After four year Regularly__(4) After five year__(5) More than five__(6)

H.K.26 If not, why not?

H.K.27 Currently what are you doing?
Employed__(1) Self-employed__(2) Running family enterprise__(3)
Working with a partner__(4) An-employed__(5) House-wive__(6)
Daily worker__(7) Other__(8)

H.K.28 After your return which problems did you encounter (select one only according to importance)
Land__(1) Lack of skill__(2) House rent__(3) Lack of fund__(4)
Lack of health__(5) Family and relative acceptance__(6) Kinder-garden__(7)
No problem__(8) Other__(9)

H.K.29 Did you settle in one area after your return?
Yes__(1) No__(2)

H.K.30 If you answer yes, how many times?
One time__(1) Two times__(2) Three times__(3) Four times__(4)
More than four times__(5) Other__(6) specify_________________

H.K.31 If your answer is no, why? (Select one only)
To join relatives or family members__(1) In search of Job__(2)
In search of training__(3) In search of land__(4) I tried, but failed__(5)
Because of not being accepted by the community__(6) Other__(7)
specify ____________________________

H.K.32 How long do you intend to stay in the present place of residence?
No intention of staying here at all __ (1) Until I have enough money to return to
my place of origin __ (2) I haven’t decided yet __ (3) For ever (do not intend to
move else where) __ (4) I will stay until I find another alternative __ (5)
Other __ (6) specify ___________________________

H.K.33 If you intends to move to another place why? select one only
Because of health problem __ (1) Economic problem __ (2) Family
Problem __ (4) Administration problem __ (5) Not going along with my
neighbors __ (6) Other __ (7) specify ___________________________

H.K.34 If you have a plan to change, where do you intend to go?
To the Lowlands __ (1) Highlands __ (2) To urban areas __ (3) To rural
areas __ (4) Other __ (5) To place where I can get Job __ (6)

2. Economic

Q.T.1 Did you receive repatriation money?
Yes __ (1) No __ (2)

Q.T.2 If yes, how do you spend it? Quantify it.
To sustain livelihood __ (1) To help my parents __ (2) I invested it __ (3)
I put it in bank __ (4) I gave it to ushers __ (5) other __ (6) specify ___________

Q.T.3 How do you return to Eritrea?
Organized __ (1) spontaneous __ (2)

Q.T.4 How did you come to this settlement or to this place? select one only.
Own choice __ (1) Have had no alternative and took the opportunity __ (2)
Was brought here by authority __ (3) Arrived here directly without
planning __ (4) The choices we were given where limited __ (5) Other __ (6)
specify ___________________________

Q.T.5 Did you bring your property when returning to Eritrea?
Yes __ (1) No __ (2)

Q.T.6 If yes what kind?
Cash (money) __ (1) Live stock __ (2) Other __ (3)
specify ___________________________

Q.T.7 If you answer cash (money), how much? ___________________________

Q.T.8 If live stock, how much?
Cattle __ head (1) Sheep/goat __ head (2) Camel __ head (3)
Other __ (4) specify ___________________________

Q.T.9 Were you employed when you were in Exile?
Yes __ (1) No __ (2)

Q.T.10 If employed what kind?
Daily labor __ (1) Working in a shop __ (2) Tractor or car driver __ (3) Health
related __ (4) Mechanic __ (5) Porter __ (6) Teacher __ (7) Carpenter __ (8) Trade
related activity __ (9)

Q.T.11 Did you get any help from your relatives to enable you carry out your present
activity?
Yes __ (1) No __ (2)

Q.T.12 If yes, specify it in number?
Camel __ head (1) Goat and sheep __ head (2) Cattle __ head (3)
Donkey __ (4) Crop __ (5) Other __ (6) Ploughed __ (7)
Q.T.13 If not why not? ________________________________

Q.T.14 Who supported you to start up?
- Family (1)
- Friends (2)
- UNHCR (3)
- On my own (4)
- Government (5)
- NGO (6)
- Community leaders (7)
- Others (8)

specify __________________________

Q.T.15 If you encounter a problem mainly whom do you refer to? select one only
- Family (1)
- Friends (2)
- Administration (3)
- Community leaders (4)
- Community elders (5)
- ERREC (6)
- I try to solve it on my own (7)
- Others (8)

specify __________________________

Q.T.16 Where you able to bring your belonging from exile?
- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q.T.17 If yes what did you bring?
- House utensil (1)
- Livestock (2)
- Money (3)
- Others (4)

specify __________________________

Q.T.18 If not why not?
- The authority didn’t allow it (1)
- It wasn’t worth bringing it (2)
- Transport was expensive (3)
- I was deported (4)
- Other (5)

specify __________________________

Q.T.19 Are you able to help friends and neighbors financially?
- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q.T.20 If yes, how often do you help?
- Regularly (1)
- Some times (2)
- Rarely (3)
- Other (4)

specify __________________________

Q.T.21 Currently are you employed?
- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q.T.22 If yes, what kind?
- Government employee (1)
- Employed privately (2)
- Working with relatives (3)
- Self-employed (4)
- Daily laborer (5)
- Other (6)

Q.T.23 Is your income sufficient to cover the cost of subsistence for your family?
- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q.T.24 If no, specify the main point how you manage to make ends meet? select one only
- Help from relatives (1)
- Remittance (2)
- Relief (3)
- Do petty-trade (4)
- Other (5)
- On my own (6)

Q.T.25 How do you spend your income?
- Food (1)
- House rent (2)
- Medicine (3)
- School for children (4)
- Cloth (5)
- Others (6)

specify __________________________

Q.T.26 Do you own land?
- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q.T.27 If yes, do you plough it?
- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q.T.28 Did you get any training after your return?
- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q.T.29 If yes what kind?
- Business management (1)
- Credit training (2)
- Others (3)

specify __________________________

Q.T.30 Have you participated on the job training?
- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q.T.31 If yes, what kind?
3. **Social (M.B)**

---

**M.B.1** How do you spend your spare time?
- At home ____ (1)
- Social obligation ____ (2)
- Work ____ (3)
- Other ____ (4)
- Specify __________________________________________

**M.B.2** Do you belong to an association/Organization?
- Yes _____ (1)
- No _____ (2)

**M.B.3** If yes, what type of association/organization?
- Cultural ____ (1)
- Religious ____ (2)
- Economic (Ecube) ____ (3)
- Political ____ (4)
- Village organization (Mahber Adi) ____ (5)
- Professional ____ (6)
- Other ____ (7)
- Specify __________________________________________

**M.B.4** Do you have your own household?
- Yes _____ (1)
- No _____ (2)

**M.B.5** If yes, who are the members?
- Husband ____ (1)
- Wife ____ (2)
- Children ____ (3)
- Parents or in laws ____ (4)
- Dependents ____ (5)
- Others ____ (6)
- Specify __________________________________________

**M.B.6** Do you visit family members who don’t live with you?
- Yes ____ (1)
- No ____ (2)

**M.B.7** If not, Why not? _______________________________________________________________________

**M.B.8** If yes, how often?
- Rarely ____ (1)
- Often ____ (2)
- At list once a year ____ (3)
- Other ____ (4)
- Specify __________________________________________

**M.B.9** Do you ask family members for advice?
- Yes _____ (1)
- No _____ (2)

**M.B.10** If yes, what kind of advice?
- Personal ____ (1)
- Business/ work ____ (2)
- Economic related advice ____ (3)
- General ____ (4)
- Other ____ (5)

**M.B.11** Do family members come to you for advice?
- Yes ____ (1)
- No ____ (2)

**M.B.12** If yes, what kind of advice?
- Solving contradiction or misunderstanding ____ (1)
- Business/ work ____ (2)
- Personal ____ (3)
- Social related problems ____ (4)
- Economic related issues ____ (5)
- General ____ (6)
- Other ____ (7)

**M.B.13** Who is your best friend?
- Refugee ____ (1)
- Civilian ____ (2)
- Fighter ____ (3)
- No difference at all ____ (4)

**M.B.14** Among your friends, which group is bigger?
- Fighter ____ (1)
- Refugee ____ (2)
- Civilians ____ (3)
- All the same ____ (4)

**M.B.15** Do you feel your experience in the exile had helped you?
- Yes _____ (1)
- No _____ (2)

**M.B.16** If yes which experience?
- Specify __________________________________________

**M.B.17** Did you experience any problem(s) during reintegration which are due to your status as a returnee?
- Yes _____ (1)
- No _____ (2)

**M.B.18** If yes, what kind of problem?
- Specify __________________________________________

**M.B.19** Where you able to overcome this problem(s)
M.B.20 Is intermarriage common between refugee and Civilians?
   Yes ____ (1) No ____ (2)
M.B.21 If yes, whom do they usually marry?
   Male ____ (1) Female ____ (2) no difference ____ (3)
M.B.22 Are there conflicts among the returnee and host community?
   Yes ____ (1) No ____ (2)
M.B.23 If yes what kind?
   Cultural ____ (1) Religious difference ____ (2c) Economic factors ____ (3)
   Difference of perception or understanding ____ (4) Other ____ (5)
   specify ____________________________
M.B.24 Give example of recent past? ________________________________
M.B.25 Do you think that these conflicts are increasing?
   Yes, they are increasing ____ (1) No, they are decreasing ____ (2)
   It has always been the same ____ (3) I do not know ____ (4) Other ____ (5)
   specify ________________________________
M.B.26 How are conflicts resolved?
   Intervention from the police ____ (1) Intervention from the army ____ (2)
   Mediators ____ (3) Meeting ____ (4) Court ____ (5) Other ____ (6)
   specify ________________________________
M.B.27 How is your economic situation compared to your friends?
   Better ____ (1) Equal ____ (2) Worse ____ (3) No comment ____ (4)
M.B.28 If worse can you specify it? ________________________________
M.B.29 Concerning women returnees, how is their situation compared to that of exile?
   Good ____ (1) Medium ____ (2) Worse ____ (3)
M.B.30 How do you feel being a returnee?
   I feel ashamed being returnee ____ (1) I feel proud ____ (2) No comment ____ (3).
Appendix Two

The selection procedure for each stratum consisted of:
1. Calculating the sample interval for the stratum:

\[ I = \frac{M_h}{v_h} \]

where \( M_h \) is the total number of households in the \( h^{th} \) stratum.
While \( v_h \) is the number of villages/mimihidars) to be selected from the \( h^{th} \) stratum.
\[
V_h = \sum_{i=1}^{M_h} M_{hi}
\]
where \( M_{hi} \) is the total number of households in the \( i^{th} \) village/mimihidar.
While \( V_h \) is the total number of villages/mimihidars (zobas) in the \( h^{th} \) stratum.

2. Calculating the cumulated size of each village/mimihidar;

3. Calculating the series of sampling numbers \( R, R+I, R+2I, ..., R+(v_h-1)I \), where \( R \) is a random number between 1 and I.

4. Comparing each sampling number with the cumulated sizes.

The village/Mimihidar to be selected is the first village/Mimihidar whose cumulated size is greater or equal to the sampling number. The total number of household, villages/Mimihidars to be selected along with their sample intervals for the Zobas by place of residence is presented in Table 5 (see Table 5).