

# **The Experience of Villagisation: Lessons from Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Tanzania**

Oxfam-GB  
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January 1999

## **1. Introduction**

This report evaluates the process of villagisation in Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Tanzania and draws out issues from the experience of these three countries that are relevant to Rwanda or any other country considering or implementing a villagisation policy today. The report shows that villagisation is much more complicated than a simply physical process of shifting people. Its rationale may be social, political, environmental, agricultural, militaristic, administrative, or a mix of several of these. The motivations for and methods of villagisation have differed between countries; likewise, the implementation and the experience of those villagised have differed considerably within countries. Yet there are some overarching lessons to be learned from the experience of villagisation in these three countries, in particular the possible consequences of villagisation if it is implemented in certain ways. Heeding these lessons may help other countries to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past and, if villagisation is deemed the best way forward, to pursue it in a more informed - and hopefully more successful - manner.

The methodology of this study has included the following: a) an extensive, although not exhaustive, review of the literature on villagisation in Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Tanzania, b) interviews with appropriate academics, Oxfam staff, and others knowledgeable about the subject<sup>1</sup>, and c) the consultation of relevant Oxfam archival materials. Part 2 of the report briefly describes the history of villagisation in Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Tanzania. Part 3 evaluates issues and implications of the policy in the three countries, and part 4 contains the conclusions of the report. An appendix reviews Oxfam archival material. All sources are listed at the end of the report.

## **2. A Brief History of Villagisation in Ethiopia, Mozambique and Tanzania**

This part of the report examines the history of villagisation in these three countries. Some definitions are needed at this point. Villagisation has been defined as "the grouping of population into centralised planned settlements" (Survival International 1988). It is frequently confused with 'resettlement' as the two policies often occur at the same time and may overlap. The basic notion of villagisation is regroupment into villages, which usually does not involve moving significant distances. The houses in the villages may be laid out in straight lines, in a grid pattern, but this is not always the case. Resettlement involves large-scale movements of the population. A sub-form of resettlement is 'sedentarisation', which aims to settle pastoralists and may not involve moving away from the area in which people were living (Chambers 1969: 11). Both resettlement and villagisation involve elements of planning and control. An important distinction can be drawn between the concept or policy of villagisation and its implementation. Furthermore, the term 'village' has been criticised for its lack of theoretical content and precision, "for the world's villages are as

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<sup>1</sup> Travel to these three countries was not within the scope of the research.

diverse in their form and functions as they are ubiquitous" (Abrahams 1985: 4). The report acknowledges the heterogeneity that is inadequately captured by the term 'village' - but uses it anyway. In considering the process of villagisation in Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Tanzania, this section addresses three basic questions: When? How? Why?

## • Ethiopia

The period of Ethiopia's political history of direct relevance to the policy of villagisation begins when Haile Selassie was deposed in 1974, in a military coup. A group of army officers, known as the Provisional Military Government of Ethiopia (PMAC) or the Derg, came to power. After a bitter power struggle, Mengistu Haile Mariam became the chairman of the party and eventually the head of state. The PMAC increasingly adopted a socialist mode of government, including nationalising all rural land (Pankhurst, H., 1992). In 1984, the north of the country was devastated by drought and famine, which led to the massive and controversial resettlement of 600,000 people from the affected areas (Parker 1995). This programme is distinct from but related to the programme of villagisation, which began in 1985 and became a nationwide campaign in 1987. It lasted until Mengistu revoked it in 1990. He was then forced to flee Ethiopia in 1991, and Meles Zenawi became the president, which he remains today.

Resettlement in Ethiopia is particularly noted for the high level of coercion involved and the degree of family separation. The government has been criticised for relocating people to areas where their farming skills were not relevant or which were unsuitable for other reasons. For our purposes, we note that the post-famine resettlement villages with an organised grid layout were a precursor of the villagisation campaign (Pankhurst, A., 1992: 55). Villagisation was intended to regroup the scattered homesteads, small hamlets and traditional villages of the entire countryside into a completely new pattern of grid-plan villages, laid out in accordance with central directives (De Waal 1991). By August 1988, 12 million people had been villagised.

The official aim of villagisation in Ethiopia was to introduce social and economic change through a socialist agrarian transformation which also included mechanisation and cooperativisation (Pankhurst, A., 1992: 77).<sup>2</sup> The constitution included the following: "The state shall encourage the scattered rural population to aggregate in order to change their backward living conditions and enable them to lead a better social life" (Jansson, Harris and Penrose 1990: 113). Villagisation was intended to improve agricultural production, to facilitate the delivery of services such as health and education to populations which were difficult to reach in their scattered homesteads, and to improve the land use of the peasants (Kelkil, interview, 1998). Transport was a main factor in creating villages, with villages located near roads.

Villagisation in Ethiopia contained counter-insurgency elements as well. It was first launched in Hararghe to combat the activities of the Oromo Liberation Front, and as such, was conceived in a military manner. The implementation of villagisation varied

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<sup>2</sup> While the collectivisation of agriculture was probably one of the ultimate goals of villagisation (and one which made farmers very apprehensive), "fewer than 4% of the farmers in the country were members of producers' cooperatives by the time the policy [of villagisation] was abandoned" (De Waal 1991: 234).

considerably depending on the level of insecurity in the region, and in regions of intense warfare such as Tigray, villagisation did not happen at all.

Other theories of why the government wanted to pursue villagisation include a theory of Amhara-ization - that the government sought to erase other ethnic identities in the country. Some saw villagisation as a way for the government to increase its power and control and to extract more resources from the peasantry. Villagisation made parallel markets more visible and harder to operate (Pankhurst, H., 1992: 51).

As noted above, the implementation of villagisation, particularly the level of force involved, varied. In Hararghe where villagisation began, the level of force is believed to be considerable, including executions of uncooperative farmers, the burning of houses and crops, and the theft and killing of cattle (De Waal 1991: 232). In Hararghe, 2115 new villages were built with more than 2 million people relocated. Subsequent phases of villagisation were thought to be conducted with less force, although there was more violence in border areas where the government found it harder to keep control. Cohen and Isaksson, writing in 1987, concluded that the villagisation process in Arsi region worked fairly well, with little physical force though considerable psychological force. Yet they thought it might not go smoothly in other places, and they were proven correct. It is difficult to determine the exact level of force in any region; several writers note that critics of villagisation were prone to exaggerate the level of force. Many Ethiopians who felt threatened by villagisation fled to Somalia as refugees and managed to escape the potential threat. Although there was little violence in some areas, all sources agree that villagisation was definitely involuntary. A detailed report from Survival International (1988) portrays villagisation in Ethiopia as utterly ruthless and notes that "peaceful does not necessarily mean voluntary" (1988: 22). The report concluded that villagisation in Ethiopia destroyed cultural identity and inhibited peoples' independence and organisational ability.

For those villagised, one of the most difficult aspects of life in their new homes was the long walk to their fields which could take hours per day and made the fields more difficult to protect from theft or animals. In many regions, "village sites were chosen with a view to defense rather than access to water, fuelwood, pastures or fields" (De Waal 1991: 233). Villagisation undoubtedly disrupted food production in the year of its implementation, and there was "a perceived incompatibility between the livestock economy and dense human settlement" (Pankhurst, H., 1992: 69). Farmers had to construct new houses and pay for the costs of materials themselves. Many writers express regret at the destruction of the beautiful traditional housing styles across the country. Because village sites were selected by urban officials in a top-down manner, with little or no consultation with local people, the sites often lacked adequate water or drainage; some had to be relocated as a result. The lack of service provision in many areas, ostensibly a reason for villagisation, frustrated farmers. In Arsi region in 1987, Cohen and Isaksson noted that the most immediate services needed were communal pit-latrines and water systems, which were conspicuously absent in most villages. Another difficulty was the "heart-wrench of moving from an old and perhaps long-established locality" (Pankhurst, H., 1992: 63). Living in close proximity to others raised concerns about the risk of fire and the spread of infectious diseases. The lack of privacy from neighbours required adjustment.

A rich and detailed series of Ethiopian village studies (Bevan and Pankhurst 1996) includes interviews with elders about their memories of the villagisation experience. They recount

that villagisation was done forcibly, was resented by people, and created uncertainty and apprehension. They remember having to spend much time on the construction of houses, making less time available for farming. Epidemics broke out; few of the promises regarding service provision were fulfilled. The programme is remembered with "bitterness and dismay" (Gashaw, Bekele, and Sellassie 1996: 4).

A book by Dawit Wolde Giorgis (1989), the deputy commissioner of the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission who defected from Ethiopia in 1987, is very critical of both resettlement and villagisation. He notes the lack of time for planning, the forcible rushing of people into sites that were not selected by experts, the adverse effects on production, and the extensive deforestation. He felt that resentment, distrust, fear, and support for rebel groups were the main achievements of these programmes, and he concludes that "what was frustrating was that even as we attempted to get the peasants back on their feet again, the villagisation programme defeated our purpose" (Giorgis 1989: 307).

A Cultural Survival study (Clay, Steingraber, and Niggli 1988) is extremely detailed for those seeking a more in-depth understanding of villagisation in Ethiopia. It expresses particular concern over human rights violations. Interviews in a Somali refugee camp revealed terror and intimidation, armed guards forcing participation, the disruption of farming, and a complete lack of social services in some areas of Ethiopia.

In short, the programme was deeply unpopular throughout the country and inspired some unobtrusive sabotage and even some violent resistance. One expert notes, however, that villagisation took place in a longstanding coercive framework, and she has observed caution in criticising it, a 'why talk about it' kind of fatalism (Pankhurst, H., 1992: 59).

We should heed, however, a warning against an overly rigid view of state policies and a simplistic interpretation of their implications (Pankhurst, H., 1992). Pankhurst notes that although most reacted unfavourably to villagisation, it was seen to bring potential improvements in lifestyle. The move away from the more isolated homesteads of the past was appreciated by many children and some vulnerable households, such as those lacking adult men. Some services became more easily available (Pankhurst, H., 1992: 175).

#### • Mozambique

After years of struggle, Frelimo gained independence from the Portuguese in 1975. The new government inherited an impoverished and crippled country (Hanlon 1991). Its leaders felt that the setting up of communal villages would be an efficient way to manage its redistribution to the peasantry of scarce resources and services, such as marketing services, health care, and education, by communalising peasants rather than allowing them to stay in highly dispersed traditional family units (Vines 1991: 114). The communal villages were called 'the backbone of rural development'. Villagisation was a way to 'urbanise' and 'modernise' the countryside ('cities born in the forest': Frelimo 1976), as well as a way to enable people to take political control of their own lives. Villagisation represented a sort of social contract (West 1997). It was also seen as a useful response to internal insecurity. The similarities to the protected villages or *aldeamentos* set up by the Portuguese during their colonial rule to keep peasants away from Frelimo were lost on no one (Finnegan 1992). "There can be no doubt that the aspect of political control is as appealing to Frelimo as it was to the Portuguese" (Vail and White 1980: 399).

Villagisation was adopted by Frelimo at its Third Party Congress in 1977 as a core policy for its administration of rural areas throughout the young nation (West 1997: 198). When the programme began, it was optional, except in areas where the government felt particularly insecure. Peoples' expectations were raised by the promise of benefits from the state as soon as they were gathered together and at the reach of social services, and quite a few villages emerged, especially in Cabo Delgado (Coelho 1993: 332). Communal villages were seen to provide a new and better life and were frequently popular with residents (Hanlon 1990: 122). Large-scale forced villagisation only began in the early 1980s in part as a response to the opposition group, Renamo, supported and armed by South Africa. When war intensified with Renamo, some people moved together of their own volition, not into official communal villages, but into villages which were nearer the road and less isolated (Wessels, interview, 1998). Eventually, however, "government encouragement of rapid villagisation brought about peasant discontent and resistance, when it became obvious that the government had little to offer in return" (Vines 1991: 115). Officials denied food aid or burned down the property of peasants who refused to move. By 1990, 1350 communal villages had been created, with 1.8 million inhabitants (14% of the total population and 18% of the rural population) (Hanlon 1990).<sup>3</sup>

Although Frelimo encouraged farmers to participate in collective production by providing incentives for cooperatives such as access to agricultural technicians and technological inputs, Mozambique's experience with peasant collectivisation has not been very successful (Davison 1988). Out of a million Mozambicans relocated to communal villages by 1981, only 70,000 were involved in agricultural cooperatives. Still Frelimo seemed to place greater importance on - and more resources into - the state farms and cooperatives than on the family farming sector (Knight 1988, Bowen 1993). At any rate, people were more likely to join communal villages for protection or to take advantage of available services (Davison 1988: 237).

Some people found the communal villages attractive. Young people found them appealing socially and appreciated the educational opportunities in some villages. Village living facilitated communication and the sharing of news. People thought the villages might lead to a more prosperous future (Minter 1996). It has been argued that the communal villages were at the forefront of the struggle against the subordination of women, particularly the fight against initiation rites, child marriages, polygamy, and bride-price (Isaacman and Isaacman 1983, Hanlon 1991). Schools, literacy classes, and health clinics were launched in some villages. Reactions to villagisation depended in part on one's livelihood. Small traders could be better off in a village with a larger clientele. Those who worked mainly on the land and found themselves living far from their fields found villagisation more difficult (West, interview, 1998). In Mueda, bitter conflict erupted over where to put villages (Schafer, interview, 1998). If the village was sited near to people's land, they were more likely to be enthusiastic. People living far from their fields often went to stay in a small hut on the field during the rainy season.

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<sup>3</sup> It is important to note the immense costs of the conflict to Mozambique; by the early 1990s, more than a million and a half Mozambicans were international refugees, 4 million were internally displaced, and between 1 and 3 million deaths were attributed to the conflict (Penvenne 1998). In Mozambique, villagisation took place in a context of war, which is of comparable significance to its outcome as the ideology behind the policy. "The mass villagisation in the 1980s was primarily war-related settlement (both voluntary and involuntary), secondarily an administrative action by officials seeking to meet quotas, and least of all a rural development strategy" (Minter 1996: 269).

The planning of the villages was seen to be quite poor in many instances. A lack of studies and of popular participation in the location of the villages meant that they were often poorly located in terms of water, building materials, firewood, and distance from fields (Coelho 1993). Increased walking time to fields hurt productivity and also differentiated economically between farmers who lived further from or closer to their fields. "Functionaries and development planners within the state administration in Maputo had insufficient knowledge of the realities of the rural areas. The planning process was further divorced from Mozambican reality by the presence of Soviet and East European state officials and planners" (Abrahamsson and Nilsson 1995: 30). Villagisation definitely became involuntary, but the amount of physical force used is not clear" (Hanlon 1990). Threats to people who hesitated over moving meant that in practice they had little choice. Resentment grew over the fast pace of villagisation, as officials were pressured to meet targets. Manica had too few staff to plan villages; the target of moving everyone in a year in Inhambane was totally unrealistic (Hanlon 1990). "Explaining to people the advantages of villagisation is a long, slow process; people do not easily give up their old homes and ways which have served them well for generations (Hanlon 1990: 130). People felt that their land had historical value; ancestral spirits were linked to the land, and relatives were buried on the land. In many of the new villages, people were frustrated with the lack of service provision; "Frelimo proved incapable of fulfilling the promises of socialist modernisation" (West 1997: 212). Frelimo was also seen to be using the villages to monitor the population and to try to maintain state security and control.

Over time, the forced villages led to antagonism against Frelimo. One of the biggest debates in the discourse about villagisation in Mozambique is the extent to which popular resentment of the programme inspired support for Renamo (Vines 1991, Newitt 1995, Finnegan 1992, Penvenne 1998). In areas where people were particularly unhappy with villagisation, Renamo found a population "with no great desire to inform on them, even an active welcome" (Vines 1991). In the northern province of Nampula, Renamo had its greatest successes in those areas where villagisation had been most extensive (Finnegan 1992: 277). Particularly susceptible were youths who found their own social and educational advancement blocked by the lineage elders who dominated the Frelimo power structure in the villages. Youth may also have seen Renamo as an exciting alternative to life in the villages - or at least as a source of food. Villagisation led to unexpected social stratification in Mozambique, which Renamo was able to exploit to obtain support (Vines 1991). The debate over the contribution of Frelimo agrarian policy to Renamo successes is far from settled; the links between the two were probably more apparent in some areas than in others and may be more a sign of discontent with Frelimo than any active interest in Renamo. The important point for this study is that forced villagisation can create considerable popular dissent. It has been argued that Frelimo progressively lost touch with the rural areas (Abrahamsson and Nilsson 1995).

#### • Tanzania

Tanzania's villagisation process took place in a far less conflict-ridden environment than Ethiopia's or Mozambique's. With the Arusha Declaration of 1967, President Julius Nyerere and TANU (the Tanganyika African National Union) set a path for Tanzania towards socialism and self-reliance, with villagisation as an important component. In his 1968 policy statement, *Socialism and Rural Development*, Nyerere expanded on the objective of building

socialism in Tanzania based on the traditional family values of mutual respect, sharing of basic goods and services held in common, and the obligation of everybody to work (Komba 1995: 38). His famous concept of *ujamaa* (which means 'familyhood' in Swahili) refers to 'socialism in the villages'. The villages would be "rural economic and social communities where people live together and work together for the good of all" (Nyerere 1968: 348). He acknowledged that "the first few years of *ujamaa* village living will be very hard" (358) and that the move into villages might have to be accomplished gradually (363).

Villagisation began as a voluntary programme in Tanzania, although government officials took advantage of unseasonal floods in 1969 to persuade people to move. The lure of social services attracted people to villages. When Nyerere learned that his officials tended to use force to start villages, he said: "No one can be forced into an *ujamaa* village. . . then it will no longer be an *ujamaa* village" (Coulson 1982). However, the tune eventually changed. Nyerere and his government felt that villagisation was proceeding too slowly; their promise to transform rural areas might lose credibility. In November 1973, the President was quoted in the *Daily News* as saying: 'To live in villages is an order' (Havnevik 1993: 205). It has been argued that compulsory villagisation was meant to reverse the process of the peasantry slipping away from government control (Hyden 1980: 129).

Forced villagisation in Tanzania happened through 'operations', and several writers emphasise the appropriateness of the military terminology. Operations were aimed at the massive villagisation of people in a short time; in 1973, Nyerere made it compulsory to live in villages in three years (Raikes 1978). The campaign had spectacular results, although the numbers are disputed. The government claims that 13 million Tanzanians, or 90% of the rural population, had moved into villages by 1976 (Lappé and Beccar-Varela 1980: 99). More conservative estimates posit that villagisation involved around five million Tanzanians (Hyden 1980). Some regions allocated a day per village; this was quick work. Officials competed to produce impressive figures (Scott 1998, Raikes 1986).

Force, or the threat of force, was used liberally against those who would not go voluntarily, and houses were destroyed to make sure that peasants did not move back into their old homes (Raikes 1975: 50). "The ends of villagisation justified the means" (Hyden 1980: 144). Hill (1979), writing on Operation Dodoma, and De Vries and Fortmann (1979), writing on Operation Sogeza in Iringa, note poor planning in terms of village location and the lack of services; "many people objected not so much to the move as to the way it was done" (De Vries and Fortmann 1979: 130). Some people were forced to move their houses just 50 feet. In the short term, Operation Sogeza in Iringa generated both a lot of problems and an increased demand for government services (De Vries and Fortmann 1979: 134). Usually, people were left with their belongings at the new sites and told to construct houses for themselves (Abrahams 1985: 7). In many areas of Tanzania, the distance to fields from the new villages posed great problems to farmers, as it did in Ethiopia and Mozambique, and villagisation was often implemented irrespective of the consequences for agriculture, for example, situating villages near main roads (Hyden 1980). Agricultural production suffered; the risk of soil exhaustion grew. The practice of shifting cultivation became impossible. Administrative convenience, not ecological considerations, governed the selection of sites, and the population often exceeded carrying capacity of the land (Scott 1998: 235). Yet there were some benefits from villagisation. They include considerable gains in the supply of social services and education (Havnevik 1993, Hyden 1980). Furthermore, many people saw

advantages to being nearer to roads and schools (Coulson 1977: 93). Quality of life was seen to improve considerably in many rural areas (Legum 1988).

An important aspect of forced villagisation in Tanzania was the accompanying de-emphasis on *ujamaa*. Instead of *ujamaa* villages, the government espoused 'development' villages or 'planned' villages. The *ujamaa* idea of living and working together was short-lived. As one writer suggests, simply decreeing that villages are cooperatives does not make it so (Maghimbi 1992: 228), and very few villages genuinely fit the definition of *ujamaa*. All pretence of socialism was, at any rate, dropped (Raikes 1978: 289). The nucleation of settlements took precedence over the collectivisation of production. According to one expert, "the original aim was (a) to provide a happier life for people by living together and (b) to increase production by working together. But many peasants were hesitant about the first, and the second did not work" (Coulson 1975: 57).

However, in one frequently cited case, 'working together' was successful - but seen as a threat by TANU. The Ruvuma Development Association (RDA) was founded in 1960 and was a flourishing and successful cooperative. It was dissolved with its assets confiscated in 1969 (Maghimbi 1995). It is difficult to see how the state could feel threatened by an association like the RDA, but "some have suggested that it was too committed to egalitarian and cooperative ideals. . .too small" (Lappé and Beccar-Varela 1980: 99). Although it put into practice Nyerere's espoused goals, "its refusal to fit into the centralised scheme of the party was fatal" (Scott 1998: 234).

Villagisation affected pastoralists in Tanzania. A recent study of its impact (Lane 1998) argues that whatever the potential merit of providing improved services to rural populations, the settlement of pastoralists poses serious challenges to "common property resources management". The Barabaig herders who settled did so out of poverty and had no choice but to limit their migration to the distance their herds could travel to and from the homestead in one day. The concentration of animals in villages had a negative ecological impact and led to a further decline in levels of production (Lane 1998: 11).

Ironically urbanisation in Tanzania increased faster than almost anywhere else in the world in the 1970s (O'Connor 1988). People's dissatisfaction with the villagisation programme led them to continue to the towns. In particular, villagisation reduced people's freedom and concentrated power and control in the hands of local party leaders, which may have been an incentive for others to move to town. Also, people had been wrenched from the land where they had always lived; once they were on the road, they often decided to move further to the city.

### **3. Issues and Implications**

This section of the report is organised by themes rather than countries. It examines several of the main issues arising from the experience of villagisations as described above and their implications for different aspects of a country's development. Although the reasons for a villagisation policy differ between the three countries above, as well as in different regions or at different times within each country, it is possible to draw out some of the key reasons. Villagisation was seen as a way to improve productivity of farmers. It was seen as a way to facilitate the delivery of services, such as health care and education, with which people living in scattered homesteads had been harder to reach. Villagisation often had a political agenda,



ranging from an ideological framework to the need for control or counter-insurgency. It also tended to have a modernising agenda.

The problems arising from villagisation can be divided into those derived from the way villagisation was implemented and those arising from the actual experience of living in the new villages. In the first category fall the use of force which fostered resentment among rural populations, the lack of adequate planning, the lack of consultation with people involved, the speed with which villagisation was often carried out, and the lack of services which felt to people like broken promises. The second category includes problems relating to the physical location of the villages, especially their distance from the fields, in terms of walking to them and protecting them from vermin and theft, and lack of water and fuelwood. It also includes adverse effects on the environment and particularly on the land used for farming or grazing, the increased risk of communicable diseases, and adverse effects on social equity or community harmony.

Potential benefits from villagisations include the increased access to service provision in some areas, the more sociable and often safer environment of a village community, and the chance to develop some form of meaningful village government. The perception of benefits was sometimes generational, with young people having a greater appreciation for the social and educational opportunities offered by the villages. Proximity to roads and transport afforded greater mobility.

This section of the report looks more closely at the costs and benefits of villagisation, the tensions it generated, the extent to which people's lives were disrupted, and in general, what works well and what does not in the context of a villagisation policy.

#### • Costs

A basic contradiction of villagisation is that it is necessary as a means of development because of the lack of resources, yet that lack impedes the process itself. (Hanlon 1990: 123)

Like the problems associated with villagisation, the economic costs can be divided into those associated with living in villages and the short-term costs of the move itself (Coulson 1982: 260). In Tanzania, the marketed production of almost all crops fell. The total costs of the villagisation, including the value of property destroyed, the direct costs of the 'operations', and the value of crops that were not planted or harvested, were very great indeed (Coulson 1982: 261). Coulson concludes that these costs were not calculated before the decision to go forward was taken. Similarly, it is argued that the Ethiopian government undertook no cost-benefit analyses, social or environmental impact assessments or even projections of population growth and their implications in the new village sites (Clay, Steingraber, and Niggli 1988: 135).

Schemes such as villagisation tend to have extremely high costs of administration; "such policies seem inevitably to cost a large amount to the central revenue" (Raikes, pers. comm., 1998). Yet some of these costs are 'decentralised' in the form of local taxes or through requiring people to pay for their own new homes. The costs borne by households tend not to be included in any cost-benefit analyses (Cliffe, pers. comm., 1998). For households, increased distance from agricultural land is often considered the primary economic cost

(Pankhurst, H., 1992). Joint and individual labour time is also costly in villagisation. Coulson makes the point that the costs are not only financial; "the social cost is an uncooperative peasantry" (1977: 96). Furthermore, contrary to Nyerere's original intentions, *ujamaa* and villagisation provided opportunities for accumulation by rich peasants. As the opportunity for expanded production is usually lost through villagisation, almost the only channels left for investment and profit-making are corrupt and illegal transactions (Raikes 1978: 313). Such a development also poses societal costs.

All three countries had model villages which were successful and thriving examples of the best possible outcome of villagisation, but the governments lacked the resources and administrative capacity to carry out similar efforts in all but a few villages. The key point here is the importance of carrying out careful cost-benefit analyses before embarking on a villagisation policy.

### • Service Provision

Villagisation is often imposed on rural populations with the justification that it is 'for their own good'. This argument is clearly present in the claim by governments that villagisation will facilitate the delivery of services, such as health care, education, or marketing, to previously scattered populations. Despite the paternalistic nature of a 'for their own good' argument, it must be said that service provision is the area where villagisation attracts the most praise. Where schools and clinics were built and functioning, villagers appreciated the services and felt that their quality of life had improved.

For example, in Mozambique, in 1982, more than 60% of the communal villages had benefited from water works and were provided with schools, while more than 30% had health posts and health agents (Coelho 1993). Although the classes were open air with poorly trained teachers, these drawbacks "do not overshadow the fact of a great effort in the establishment of such facilities, of a great dynamic in their growth, and particularly that these were perhaps, beyond political mobilisation, the most important arguments capable of attracting people into the villages" (Coelho 1993: 363). A study of the environmental impact of villagisation in Tanzania (Kikula 1997) argues that even with long-term negative aspects for the environment, there were many positive things from a social perspective, especially social service infrastructure, such that the success or failure of villagisation depends on the angle from which it is examined (1997: 214). Tanzania made very impressive achievements in literacy and primary education in the 1970s (Coulson 1982).

However, some problems exist with the service provision argument. The first is that the promised services often did not appear. A study of villagisation in Tanzania notes a lesson: 'Don't advertise what you can't deliver' (Lappé and Beccar-Varela 1980: 103). More services were promised, in all three countries, than could be delivered from the country's own resources, and production simply did not rise fast enough to pay for these services (Coulson 1975). In Tanzania, it has been argued that the government created impossible demands for services, thus embarrassing itself and upsetting village dwellers. "Angered when expected services did not materialise, villagers understandably doubly resented efforts to make them produce more. In some cases, the reaction of villagers has been to sabotage production" (Lappé and Beccar-Varela 1980: 104). Also in Tanzania, people were moved into areas where the population density was already high enough for services, such as the Sukuma heartland, which makes the service provision justification for villagisation less compelling.

In Ethiopia, the Survival International report (1988) notes that the government argued that it never made any promises to supply services; rather what villagisation will give the peasants is the organisation that will enable them to get these things for themselves. The authors of the report see this argument, that without villagisation peasants are incapable of cooperating or organising, as fallacious. They also find in their interviews that promises of services certainly were made, at least by some government representatives (Survival International 1988: 26).

Finally, we should consider the provocative question: Is saving a journey to the clinic better than saving a long walk to the fields? (Cliffe, pers. comm., 1998). All aspects of villagisation must be weighed against each other; service provision may not always be worth the costs of the policy.

### • **Agricultural Production**

Along with increased access to services, villagisation is often justified on the basis of increased agricultural production. It is difficult to assess the long-term impact of villagisation on agricultural production; the impact was undoubtedly negative in the short-term. Villagisation disrupted work in the fields when it was implemented, and the increased distances from their fields for many of those villagised undermined their production. In Mozambique, it is argued that villagisation did not take into account the fact that existing settlement patterns enabled better and more timely access to resources that were important, such as grazing, rivers, farms and forests (Wilson, pers. comm., 1998). A specific example of diminished production comes from Tanzania; the cashewnut authority's purchases fell from 140,000 tons in 1973 to 44,000 tons in 1978/79, a decline partly associated with villagisation because peasants were moved far from their trees (Havnevik 1993: 49). In all three countries, farmers who were moved to areas with poor soil or water supplies or where the ecological conditions were unfamiliar suffered a downturn in production.

In Tanzania, problems with the state's input delivery system, associated with villagisation, affected agricultural production (Bryceson 1990, Raikes, pers. comm., 1998). Untimely delivery and poor storage of inputs reduced their efficacy, and some inputs were wrong or even harmful for the different agro-economic zones in the country. Use of inputs required additional labour, and villagisation had exacerbated labour shortages (Bryceson 1990). Raikes poses this question about high-input agricultural modernisation: "Can one expect that the yield increase from using inputs will cover the costs of buying and applying them and leave an increased profit?" He notes that in Tanzania, peasants were being advised and sometimes forced to undertake loss-making input-use. These costs combined with villagisation-induced disruption contributed to falling crop deliveries on official markets (Raikes, pers. comm., 1998).

However, it should be noted that several factors affect agricultural production, and it is difficult to isolate the effects of villagisation. Particularly in Mozambique, but also in parts of Ethiopia, war interrupted regular agricultural practices. It has been argued that rural production in Tanzania declined as part of a general downturn in the economy (Legum 1988). In Tanzania, Bryceson (1990) also notes the effects of state regulatory measures and economic crisis triggered by drastic price changes in the world market. Raikes (1986) writes of cotton production decline in the 1970s in Tanzania; a major growing area, Sukumaland,

suffered a considerable decline. Raikes attributes this to an energetic villagisation campaign and crop-failures in some of the new settlement prices, but he notes that these were exacerbated by low and falling producer prices. Yet he accords greater significance to the effects of villagisation; "I think villagisation was a disaster for Tanzania...Where I differ from many is in seeing villagisation and the enforcement of regulations as being of at least equal importance with falling producer prices in reducing production levels" (Raikes, pers. comm., 1998).

The effects of villagisation on agricultural production are therefore not clear-cut. That the policy disrupted agricultural production in the short-term is clear; in the longer term, it is more difficult to separate the various factors that affect production. Furthermore, outcomes varied for different crops and in different regions (Bryceson 1990).

### • Land: Use and Rights

Issues around land are closely linked to the above discussion of agricultural production, for it was changes in land use and access to land that caused much of the unhappiness associated with villagisation and that undermined production. Issues related to land degradation will be discussed in the following section on the environment.

First, people were very concerned about land ownership and the loss of rights to land which often accompanied villagisation. "The fact that much of Africa is covered by 'communal tenure' does not by any manner of means imply that people are unaware or unconcerned about individual or family land-rights - and the prospect of losing them through resettlement" (Raikes, pers. comm., 1998). In Mozambique, people objected to being moved off 'their' land, since although there was communal tenure, there are strong claims to land on the basis of historical occupation which allow people to speak of their own land and to consider it as theirs (Schafer, pers. comm., 1998). Elders interviewed in a series of Ethiopian village studies remember landholdings becoming much smaller after villagisation (Fule and Tadesse 1996). Collectivisation in Ethiopia also hurt small landholders by removing their ownership of land (Rahmato 1993).

In Tanzania, it is noted that Nyerere's 'Socialism and Rural Development' did not give directions as to how to deal with the most problematic issues related to the transition, such as the land conflicts caused by villagisation (Havnevik 1993: 201). Many people were settled on land belonging to other villagers and were uncertain of future claims to the land. New conflicts developed over claims to uncultivated lands that were under cultivation prior to villagisation (Swantz 1996). The commoditization of village land in Tanzania was one of the many unintended consequences of villagisation resulting from the disruption of the land tenure system (Swantz 1996: 147). At the time of villagisation, the selling of land was rare, but it became common practice from mid-1970s. Treatment of land rights varied a lot throughout the country, depending on the strength of pre-existing claims to land ownership (Swantz 1996: 148).

Yet from 1967 to 1975 in Tanzania, there was no legal basis for land holdings by *ujamaa* villages. Individuals whose land was cultivated by villages could in principle have sued for compensation (which would have been paid had the land been acquired for a state farm or government project), but the courts refused to hear such cases. Those whose homes were destroyed during villagisation between 1973 and 1975 could also have claimed compensation,

as the government later admitted (Coulson 1982: 221). We will look at how communal property tenure relates to the concept of village-level government in a later section of this report.

Access to land was a complicated issue during villagisation. In Mozambique, villages became overcrowded, and the pressures on land increased, although this was due to the security situation as well as to villagisation (Schafer, pers. comm., 1998). Of Mozambique it is written that "the clustering of people meant, in itself, increased land scarcity because of village location problems, of more candidates to the available lands, of the disorganisation of household production relations, of greater distances between the villages and the lands" (Coelho 1993: 349), and this appears to hold true for all three countries. In Tanzania, it has been suggested that villagisation might have accentuated land shortage because some villages were badly situated in areas where there was little usable land and large concentrations of population led to reduction in average plot size (De Vries and Fortmann: 1979). Social stratification related to land was another result of villagisation. If a family's land is close to the village, they are privileged. Those less fortunate may walk two hours a day. This means that the belts around the village are overfarmed, and the land further out is not effectively used. In some areas, people with land at great distances became day labourers for those with more accessible land (West, interview, 1998). The issue of social stratification will be examined further in the discussion of community harmony later in the report.

#### • The Environment

Villagisation had environmental consequences as a result of the concentration of dwellings, people, and livestock. As an expert on Mozambique explains, "peasants live in a scattered manner because the resources in Africa are scattered too. If you put them together, there will be no possibility of regeneration of the resources" (Serra, pers. comm., 1998). In Tanzania, villagisation made soil fertility an immediate problem (Coulson 1982). Planners neglected both the soil and the water aspects. Ecological issues like deforestation were hardly considered (Havnevik 1993: 220). The concentration of settlement and cultivated land led to a change to more permanent or annual cropping of the same fields, which eliminated the previous system of natural regeneration and caused lower yields (Kjærby 1986). It is argued that the draconian conditions of Ethiopian villagisation meant that it was even more destructive of peasant livelihoods and of the environment than its Tanzanian counterpart (Scott 1998: 250).

That said, two recent studies in Tanzania are very revealing about the links between land degradation and villagisation. Lindberg (1996) has studied Mamire and Mutuka in northern Tanzania to look for linkages between household poverty, land degradation, and social structure. After villagisation, land degradation appeared on a large scale in the area for the first time. Land was intensively used, and the new ploughing techniques increased the risk of soil erosion. The declining soil fertility in the fields became a topic of discussion among the farmers.

Kikula's study of the policy implications of villagisation on the environment in Tanzania (1998) is of further interest here. He conducted his study in four villages of the Mufindi District of southern Tanzania. He argues that the historical isolation of the area is of particular importance to his study because the isolation minimises the effects of external factors on the land and makes the area ideal for evaluating the effects of villagisation. His

study measures and compares changes in the social and biophysical environment before and after villagisation. He argues that too little time was devoted to planning, such that potential environmental problems received too little attention. His basic findings are that villagisation led to significant changes in land use, accelerated the depletion of vegetation and accelerated deforestation, led to increased soil erosion, led to land degradation, and meant a complete change in land resource use, including land tenure. He concludes:

Even if social gains outweighed the environmental degradation losses, they would not justify the latter. Other countries in Africa which for one reason or another may be forced to embark upon resettlement programmes as a possible long-term solution to the prevailing famines should consider the lessons of the Tanzanian experience. That is, the story does not end with the mere physical resettling of people. Careful planning is required to prevent environmental degradation. (Kikula 1998: 213)

Villagisation has effects on the living environment for animals and people as well. Tanzania witnessed unprecedented cholera and typhoid epidemics (Coulson 1982), as well as the return of the tsetse fly which kills animals (Anacleto, pers. comm., 1998). People caught pneumonia from sleeping outside on cold nights, and intestinal diseases spread rapidly in villages when not everyone used latrines (Coulson 1982).

#### • **Community Harmony and Disharmony**

Villagisation often managed to add to community harmony and disharmony simultaneously. There is evidence in Mozambique that villagisation improved the position of women in the villages (Hanlon 1991); "involving women as full and equal members in all aspects of communal village life has made significant although uneven progress" (Isaacman and Isaacman 1983). In 1978, Anacleto examined the issue of community harmony with villagisation in Tanzania and its impact on culture. He found that young people liked the semblance of a town. Older people thought it broke social solidarity. Now it is more accepted. People were told they could leave the villages if they wanted. Nobody has; they feel secure (Anacleto, pers. comm., 1998). Although elders felt that their loss of control over young people was one of the negative effects of villagisation, they have grown used to it and now feel they can help one another better in the villages than living in remote areas (Anacleto, interview, 1998). Similarly, in Mozambique, an anthropologist observes that although elders complain about villagisation, there are some advantages: you know what's going on and are part of a larger community (West, interview, 1998). In Ethiopia, an anthropologist observed an increase in both socialising and friction; she notes that village life makes everything more visible (Pankhurst, H., 1992: 68).

Societal divisions in the villages may have historical origins. People may be moved into areas historically occupied by other people, and long term residents may have hostility towards immigrants. The two groups may compete for political power in the village and alliance to state bureaucrats (Wilson, pers. comm., 1998). Divisions may also occur along ethnic or religious lines in the new villages.

Social stratification may arise out of villagisation, often as an unintended consequence. In Mozambique, villages were frequently located so that the area's most influential family had its traditional land close to the new villages; other families were simply lucky to have their

land near the village, and they profited while others suffered (Abrahamsson and Nilsson 1995, Finnegan 1992). These better-off families had more political and economic power than others. As a result, Frelimo's social base changed; its alliance with the peasants was weakened (Abrahamsson and Nilsson 1995: 81). Along similar lines in Tanzania, decision-making fell to local party leaders in the new villages; this was one of the drivers behind the increase in urbanisation.

In terms of external discord, villagisation often fosters dissent against the government, as is clear in part 2 of this report (Littlejohn, pers. comm., 1998). Perhaps the most striking example of this comes from Tanzania in 1971, where opposition to villagisation among larger land owners culminated in the killing of the Regional Commissioner for Iringa Region, who was shot by a farmer when propagating for the creation of villages in Ismani (Havnevik 1993: 203).

#### • **Control/Protection**

Control and protection of rural populations are arguably two sides of the same coin; both reduce individual freedom, and efforts at control may be called protection, somewhat euphemistically, in situations of insecurity. Neither has been an explicit or official reason for villagisation, yet both have clearly been reasons in Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Tanzania.

In terms of security, it can be considered safer to live together in a village than alone in a homestead; the earlier description of Mozambique's villagisation process notes that people moved to villages of their own volition when war with Renamo intensified. Similarly, research in southwestern Ethiopia showed that people felt that coming together protected them. This was seen as a positive aspect of villagisation, especially for women-headed households. "If they cry, someone comes" (Kelkil, interview, 1998).

Yet it is the issue of protection or control that highlights the similarities between post-colonial villagisation and colonial 'protected villages' under the Portuguese and neighbouring Rhodesians and the 'strategic hamlets' in 1950s Malaysia or 1960s Vietnam, similarities that make some observers uncomfortable (Raikes, pers. comm., 1998). Coelho (1993) compares the villagisation policies of the colonial and independent states in Mozambique and concludes that "both ignored or took little account of local perspectives; both attempted, through villagisation, to achieve local political and administrative control". In Ethiopia, villagisation was thought to make it easier for the government to collect taxes, conscript young soldiers and generally keep control, for it was impossible to move without permission (Mason, interview, 1998).

#### • **Compulsion/Participation**

The issue of control is directly linked to the issue of how much force or compulsion was used in villagisation and, on the other hand, how much rural populations were able to participate in the planning of the process. These two issues have been explored at length in the individual country discussions, but we will return to them briefly here.

The amount of force or the threat of force used in villagisation varied considerably between and within countries; it was, however, used in all three countries, implemented by bureaucratic government officials or by the military. Villagisation in all three countries

tended to be 'top-down' in its nature, directed by centrally located officials, often with very little prior planning or research. In Mozambique, this centralised perspective increasingly ignored peasant participation (Coelho 1993).

It has been argued extensively that decisions about villagisation should be subject to participatory decision-making. "The socialisation policies of the Derg pursued with great haste and without peasant consent further heightened peasant insecurity and led to loss of incentives for land improvements or increased effort" (Bruce, Hoben, and Rahmato 1994: 5). A former Oxfam representative in Ethiopia argues that if villagisation had been done on a voluntary basis, more sensitively and with more preparation, it could have been much more beneficial (Mason, interview, 1998). As it was, "the inability of the villagers to defend the programme results from the fact that there was little grassroots involvement in its formation" (Cohen and Isaksson 1987: 451). In Tanzania, "the way in which villages were created hardly encouraged grass-roots participation, because there were such obvious shows of government force, and so little time for discussion or real planning" (Coulson 1982: 255). In all three countries, it is noted that villagers were uncertain about why they were being moved, which left them ill-placed to deal with problems or take advantage of their new lives.

Both the level of compulsion and the lack of popular participation are related to the extremely fast pace of villagisation in these countries; it is unlikely that people would have freely chosen to move this quickly. In all three countries, the pace was usually related to competition between officials for who could villagise their region fastest. In Tanzania, the rush to villagisation is seen to have short-circuited technical planning - "planning which might have avoided the serious problems faced now in the form of village overcrowding, villages on infertile land, villages far away from water sources etc. Even to build a common understanding about what villagisation means takes considerable time" (Lappé and Beccar-Varela 1980: 104).

Several observers argue strongly that there are compelling human rights arguments against villagisation - or at least against the way in which the policy is often implemented (Cliffe, pers. comm., 1998). About Tanzania, Raikes writes that "the coercion of the mid-1970s took forms and reached levels which would be considered an outrageous intrusion into the rights of the individual in most Western countries" (1986: 133).

#### • Villages as Models of Local Government?

It may seem strange to move from the suggestion of human rights arguments against villagisation to the proposal that villages may prove the ideal location for effective and accountable local government. Yet strong local government may be a way to take advantage of a village infrastructure and to maximise the positive aspects of villagisation.

Of particular relevance here is Wily's (1998) study of forest commons as communal property in Tanzania. She argues that a "statutorily-defined institutional framework for common property management is already well-established at the community level and able to be brought into play" in Tanzania (1998: 1). She argues that the village councils created in the 1975 Villages Act and upheld in a further Act in 1982 are well placed for community-based forest management. Over the last 25 years, the authority of the village councils has grown, not lessened, and villages and their elected councils are indisputably rooted as the grassroots agency in all areas of development and social management (1998: 10). Wily acknowledges



diversity in "activities and success" but argues that "the governance experience and potentials of the Tanzanian village render it an obvious and viable locus for devolved authority" (10). Villages, both legally and in terms of capacity, can thus be the main partner in the management of National Forest Reserves; already around 20 Village Forest Reserves have now been declared in village lands. More people are realising that the holding of property in common may not be inappropriate or un-modern, after all (12).

Along these lines, a study of pastoralists in Tanzania (Ndagala 1998) argues that the improvement of pastoral land should continue to be communal, possibly through the villages which are developing into stable social as well as residential units (161). Eventually each village will evolve its own grazing scheme and share an understanding with neighbouring villages of how to manage and use these shared resources, and the registration of the villages and the issuing of titles will change pastoral land from being public into legal common property of the village communities (1998: 167).

Wily's findings and Ndagala's arguments stand in contrast to the following observations from Ethiopia: "We understand that there have been some unsuccessful experiences with community management of resources in Ethiopia in past decades, but those are the product of seriously flawed institutional arrangements. Community forests, for example, were often not perceived by local people as community forests at all, but as state forests on land taken from the communities for that purpose, with the community having little control over management of the forest and little vested interest in its success or failure" (Bruce, Hoben, and Rahmato 1994: 63). This contrast reflects the importance of community ownership and control of resources as an incentive for effective and sustainable management (Bruce, Hoben, and Rahmato 1994). These three authors note that a village council is one of many institutional arrangements that can be used to manage common property, although they warn that it is best to work with existing institutions; "the difficulty of creating a new management organisation from scratch should not be underestimated" (1994: 64).

However, the relative success of the Local Council (LC) system in Uganda belies their point, for this system, while it has not supplanted long-standing civil society organisations, was virtually created by the present government of Uganda when Museveni came to power in 1986. Briefly, the LCs, ranging from LC1s at village level to LC5s at district level, represent a viable system of local governance. Although the system is still being developed, it is part and parcel of Uganda's decentralisation programme and has been praised for "dismantling the indirect rule regime at the local level and replacing it with village self-governance" (Mamdani 1996: 215). It has encouraged political participation among the local population and has arguably strengthened political accountability. Although the LC1s tend to be under-resourced, the model of the LC system and its successful aspects may be of interest to other countries.

Finally, a study of 22 villages in Tanzania (Ngware and Haule 1993) draws very different conclusions from Wily's study. This earlier study highlighted poor performance of local governments. Its findings include: weak institutional and organisational structures of local governments in general and village governments in particular, limited authority of the village governments, structural weaknesses of village governance, and a weak resource base in many village governments. Ngware and Haule argue that government has not been able to commit enough resources and manpower to local and village governments (1993: 5). They add that village governments are poorly integrated with higher levels of government, that village

leaders lack basic skills and credibility, and that villages display weak participatory democracy. The faith of people in their village governments was reduced when services were not delivered (1993: 46). Some villages were seen to have a weak economic base because they had been established in inappropriate settings (i.e. near a road but badly placed for agriculture) during villagisation (1993: 61). It is difficult to compare Wily's study with that of Ngware and Haule. It is possible that democracy and accountability at village level improved in some Tanzanian villages in the five years between these studies. Yet Wily acknowledges that performance varies considerably between villages, and it is more likely that she is citing examples of 'best practice' in her examples of village management of forest reserves while Ngware and Haule are looking at less successful cases. At any rate, Wily's study affirms the potential benefits of villages both as legal entities and as vehicles of local democracy and good governance, while Ngware and Haule's study reminds us not to be too optimistic, particularly in contexts where resources may be scarce.

### • **De-Villagisation**

It seems important to note here than when President Mengistu unexpectedly announced the end of the villagisation programme in Ethiopia in March 1990, villagers showed "great energy and initiative in redividing their farmland and returning to their original homesteads" (De Waal 1991: 236). This process of 'de-villagisation' has, unsurprisingly, happened most in regions of Ethiopia where villagisation was perceived more negatively, despite how difficult it is to move (Mason, interview, 1998). About 60 to 80% of villagised households had left or were in the process of leaving the village to return to their former homesteads by 1994 (Bruce, Hoben, and Rahmato 1994: 19). The main exception was in villages with water, electricity, or especially favourable market location, which is significant since these are the services that were meant to attract people to villages in the first place. In the area of Dalocha, people have made claims to their agricultural land which had been villagised and had other people's homesteads on it. These claims are mostly being resolved "by traditional means without becoming acrimonious disputes" (Bruce, Hoben, and Rahmato 1994: 19). This reflects the strong connections people have to their land and also the level of discontent with villagisation in Ethiopia, arguably higher than in Mozambique and Tanzania.

### • **Benefits without Villagisation?**

A final question must be: Can the benefits of villagisation outlined above be achieved without the physical movement of people? Many observers argue that this is possible, by constructing services as a way to attract people to urban centres (Raikes, pers. comm., 1998, West, interview, 1998). This idea of 'village service centres' ensures the concentration of facilities while challenging the necessity that everyone has to move their houses first; that can be left to people once they see the advantages (Cliffe, pers. comm., 1998). An Oxfam staff member in Ethiopia remarks, "The services should have come first. Gradually people know the advantages. There is no need to move them; they will ask to move" (Kelkil, interview, 1998). Of Ethiopia, an anthropologist discusses this option in terms of the state "offering people a carrot rather than threatening them with a stick" (Pankhurst, H., 1992: 64). She notes that the government argued that this would take too much time and money. A Mozambique expert notes that if governments are in fact genuinely interested in social services, a nucleated supply site strategy is appropriate. Yet villagisation has often tended to be more about monitoring, surveillance, and security (West, interview, 1998).

#### **4. Conclusions**

The above country-specific and issue-based discussion has drawn out several key messages about villagisation. First of all, while the policy of villagisation can in some cases be a feasible solution to a country's problems, the implementation, if done in certain ways, can be extremely difficult and painful for the rural dwellers involved. Some ways to avoid this have emerged from the report. One is to place far greater importance on planning than did the governments of Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Mozambique during their villagisation process. As Scott writes of Tanzania, "it seems incredible, in retrospect, that any state could proceed with so much hubris and so little information and planning to the dislocation of so many million lives" (1998: 246). Strategic planning for villagisation should involve rigorous cost-benefit analyses and should address agriculture, social issues, the environment as in a Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment as recommended by Kikula (1997), land issues, and the proposed governance of the villages. Most importantly, it should address the needs and wants of the people concerned and acknowledge that these needs and wants will vary between regions and indeed within communities. "The issue that really lies at the heart of the villagisation policies is that they needed to be implemented with sensitivity, especially in respect of geographical, regional and traditional structures and variations" (Vines 1991: 114).

There is a great need for open communication with the population about agenda, timetables, and visions. This openness would ideally go beyond keeping people informed and would get them involved, so that they would participate in a process which will, after all, change their lives. In this light, if it is decided to implement villagisation, the experience of these three countries reflects the crucial importance of proceeding at a reasonable pace. Their experience also reflects the value of thinking in the long term about what can realistically be achieved and about the possible benefits of adopting a framework oriented towards principles of democratic governance and accountability.

## Appendix

### **Archival Material: Oxfam's Perspective on Villagisation in Ethiopia**

In any country where a policy of villagisation is being contemplated or implemented, an NGO like Oxfam will be confronted with the dilemma of how to engage with the country's government around this policy. In this regard, archival material from Oxfam's Ethiopia office in the 1980s is very interesting. In terms of institutional learning or memory, the Ethiopia files show that Oxfam has confronted this dilemma before. Of particular significance is how Oxfam's partners managed their work in light of villagisation, the concerns felt by Oxfam and its partners, and the nature of Oxfam's efforts to obtain solid information about the process and its effects. A short review of this material will roughly follow chronological guidelines, to demonstrate how the thinking of Oxfam staff evolved as villagisation progressed.

In Oxfam Ethiopia's Annual Report for 1985/86, the office is coming to grips with the recent launch of the villagisation programme. The report notes that "once villagisation is completed, only a minority of the population will be able to live outside government control" (1985: 3). It also acknowledges a "gap between planners in Addis and the level of implementation" (1985: 5). Although there are security advantages in villagisation, Oxfam staff felt that planners had revealed a remarkable ignorance of how people actually live, with no obvious provision for livestock etc. It is noted, however, that in one part of Hararghe, people were better off with villagisation, as they had moved down off a mountain to a place which they could then irrigate (1985: 6). Finally, the question is posed: How can Oxfam live with resettlement and villagisation without supporting them?

In the subsequent Annual Report for 1986/87, Oxfam staff note "a variety of encouragements for villagisation, none of which accepts a refusal to move" (1986: 4). The report argues that the impact on centuries of cultural evolution should not be dismissed. Studies have shown serious interruptions to home consumption and cash incomes, as well as possible negative environmental impacts. Other problems noted include theft, poor sanitation, inadequate water, the spread of disease, and the long walk to fields. The report concludes that it is unfortunate that the government is choosing rapid villagisation versus a step-by-step approach. It would be better to have a waiting period to see if the Hararghe experiment works before villagising the entire country.

An evaluation of an ox and seed project funded by Oxfam (McCann 1986) notes the impact of villagisation in the area:

Farmers appear resigned to the process though they are clearly not happy with the prospect of pulling down their houses and moving into new standardised ones which ignore the local architectural styles, family size, or landholding patterns. Given the absence of any government services in the project areas, it would appear unlikely that any services would be available to new villages. Given the general lack of government's familiarity with the area, site selection may not be ideal. The main issue is not villagisation itself, but the negative impact of rumours and farmer speculation about what it will mean. Fears (of collectivisation) in Hararghe caused widespread destocking, a serious fall in livestock prices, and a general fall in productivity.

(McCann 1986: 14)

This reference to rumours and speculation reinforces the importance of open communication about the policy stressed in the conclusion of my report.

Also in 1986, Oxfam Ethiopia decided to commission a study of villagisation in Oxfam-assisted project areas in Hararghe (Raven-Roberts 1986). The study found resentment over the reallocation of land, poor water and wood supplies, and no real evidence of services. Raven-Roberts noted that in Hararghe, as in other regions, the timing and implementation of the villagisation process varied from area to area (1986: 10). She predicted likely shortfalls in crop production in regions where the building process took place during the planting season, although long run effects on farming activities remained to be seen (1986: 11). She argues that "apart from the general inconvenience and upheaval caused, perhaps one of the saddest facts, physically speaking, is seeing the destruction of the very distinct and often beautiful traditional housing styles around the country. The greatest concern, however, remains that without proper services, the villages will soon be health hazards (dirty disease infected ghettos)" (1986: 12). However, she concludes with a compelling point: despite the insensitive

implementation of villagisation, "the fragmented approach, the novelty of community life, and the variety of cultures and economies in Ethiopia makes generalisations both unwise and unhelpful". This point applies to Tanzania and Mozambique as well.

An internal Oxfam memo (Goyder, April 1986) lists some questions which the office might want to pursue concerning villagisation. This list could be very helpful for any Oxfam office currently addressing similar issues and is reproduced in its entirety below.

General Questions:

- How uniform or diverse are the methods and policy of villagisation?
- Where is villagisation being done?
- What planning is the government doing? How much are people participating in the planning?
- What is the attitude of the people towards villagisation and resettlement?

Human Rights:

- How much undue force is being used?
- How much house burning is taking place?
- Is there any bribery, such as extra food to 'encourage' people?
- Is there a hidden agenda of control?

Further Questions:

- What are the short-term implications for crop production?
- What are the long-term implications for crop production and availability of food?
- What is the impact of villagisation on pastoralists?
- Who is paying for villagisation?
- What is the situation with land ownership? Is any redistribution equitable?<sup>4</sup>

Another Oxfam study of villagisation from 1986 confirms the point made by Raven-Roberts that the experience of villagisation varied considerably within Ethiopia. Some parts of Hararghe had bustling villages with small gardens and a range of activities that were felt to show a commitment to the new villages. Others had desolate rows of uncared for huts which "seem to reveal in their stark and uncared for symmetry a despondency that does not bode well for the future". At this time, Oxfam did not feel that villagisation would necessarily produce economic disaster although there was no denying the insensitivity of its implementation.

In contrast, an article from the *Ethiopian Herald* (Berhana, date missing) from this era which was included in Oxfam's files reflects the government stance on villagisation:

Villagisation has the enthusiastic participation of the peasantry. . . The pattern of settlement posed an obstacle to technological progress. The scattered life and traditional agricultural methods exposed the masses to hunger, disease and poverty. It has been a cause for soil erosion, quantitative and qualitative deterioration of wild-life, forests, and recurrent drought in the country. The villagisation programme is a measure designed to solve these problems. It helps peasants to leave these hazardous regions to more fertile and relatively accessible areas suitable for the use of modern agricultural equipment. . . Generally the villagisation programme creates conditions suitable for the development of economic and social services, raising the level of productivity and ensuring the general well-being of the rural masses.

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<sup>4</sup> Related to this memo from 1986 is a list of questions that a current staff member of Oxfam Ethiopia told me that he would ask a government official from any country contemplating villagisation (Kelkil, interview, 1998). His questions would be: Do people need it? What are the different livelihoods? What factors would make a household come and settle in a hamlet? What are the types of households? What is the time limit? (It cannot be short; it can take a generation.) His advice to the government would be: First, introduce key social services and see how it goes, as this can motivate people. Analyse existing structures, capabilities, and resources. Avoid or minimise the state/cadre/civil servant role in implementation; they should only be supportive and coordinating. Encourage the opinions of the people, through conscientisation, on policies and debates. See what people think about it. Make it open, not to be perceived as a threat to the government. Be cautious by the lessons of other countries, not to repeat the same mistakes.

In contrast to this article, a piece in the journal called *International Agricultural Development* (March-April 1986) argues that villagisation is "a way in which the Ethiopian government is showing its lack of priority for agriculture" (1986: 2). It notes that food output is hurt by villagisation (7). It argues that many Ethiopian farmers feel that the right to live on their land, rather than miles away in village centres, would help them to get the most from that land (8). It finds that party members generally told people what villagisation was rather than consulting them about it first, although this appears to have varied considerably (9). People were given little choice but to leave the land where they and their ancestors had farmed for generations.

In even more direct contrast to the article in the *Ethiopian Herald*, another internal Oxfam memo (Winer 1986) notes that in Southern Shoa, a community was given its comeuppance for refusing villagisation, and six people are dead. The Peasant Association chairman had repeatedly represented his community's views that they didn't want it to the government. On being told to do it anyway, the community refused; violence ensued.

Oxfam's Annual Report for Ethiopia for 1987/88 continued to express concern over villagisation although it noted that "some positive elements within the program are attracting favourable attention. Particular amongst these is the having of neighbours which, for many, is a new experience" (1987: 8). It is argued that the longer term environmental worries continued along with the destruction of much of a nation's cultural diversity. Furthermore, "as with resettlement, the ultimate intentions of the government remain clouded in contradictions. Thus despite repeated assurances that villagisation has nothing to do with the creation of producer cooperatives, some hint that it will". The report finds that sociopolitical programmes such as villagisation and resettlement were serving to erode the confidence of the poor in their government (1987: 20). It concludes that "we find no workable policy positions with regard to villagisation and resettlement. We will not work in association with coercive resettlement" (1987: 23).

In 1987, Oxfam-supported water projects in southern Ethiopia were visited (Davis 1987). The evaluator reflected at length on the dilemma of Oxfam's position on villagisation and reached a stronger conclusion than the annual report cited above:

With regard to villagisation, wells could be continued to be dug as at present for existing villages with future new villages in mind. For those "new villages" which one year or more after villagisation still do not have a protected water supply, there is a good case for the construction of wells under the programme. This is no way promotes villagisation but alleviates a problem which recognises the government's inability to support their own ill-conceived scheme and I would have thought enables Oxfam to comment more authoritatively on the drawbacks of villagisation as presently practiced. More importantly it meets a humanitarian need in a situation where we are ineffective in changing a policy which is going ahead anyway.

(Davis 1987: 15)

An internal Oxfam memo (Naumann 1987) calls the destruction of the traditional livelihood of the people of Hulul Mojo, Koreso, Wehel, Dire Jera and Hala Hulul "a stark example of how the government's villagisation programme fails to recognise the value and diversity of the traditional rural economy" (1987: 2). The memo argues that the most damaging effects of villagisation will be felt in precisely the areas of Ethiopia which are most vulnerable to drought. In Southern Ethiopia, the loss of perennial crops and a more exclusive concentration on cereals is seen to increase vulnerability to drought.

In 1988, Oxfam staff submitted a tour report from a visit to Ethiopian Catholic Missions and the Gamo Gofa Mission Development Program. In this report, the standpoint of an Oxfam partner on villagisation is discussed at length:

The Gamo Gofa missions have adopted a pragmatic approach to villagisation. They are not happy with the policy but consider that people's day to day needs come first; they are therefore prepared to work in newly villagised settlements where there are clearly water and health needs and where they are asked to assist with these. They are even prepared to go one stage further and make suggestions for siting new villages. They claim that they have actually altered plans for the siting of villages where there has, for example, not been water easily available. Their philosophy is: let us work with the villagisation authorities and humanise the results of their work. This is not a position Oxfam could take, but it is a plausible one and appears to have had some good practical results. (1988: 9)

While on their tour, Oxfam staff visited the newly villagised community of Badaye in Wolaiyta. This was a marshy site with rigidly straight lines of very poor quality houses replacing the traditional long-lasting and sturdy Wolaiyta style of houses (1988: 12). The report notes the challenge of "how to cope with villagisation that is being instituted with great energy at present in Wolaiyta - should they speak out at the injustices? Are they encouraging it by providing water - or has villagisation to be regarded as an objective external circumstances about which nothing can be done?" (1988: 13). No answers are given.

The final document in Oxfam's Ethiopia archives which mentions villagisation is the Strategic Plan for 1989 (Lloyd 1989). The plan notes that the rural areas (Oxfam's main focus of development work) have taken the brunt of the problems associated with the government's policies of resettlement and villagisation; "the rural areas have often failed to obtain real advantages from policies which seem to be designed to benefit them" (1989: 1).

On this rather banal note, the archives share their last thought on villagisation in Ethiopia. The indecision and worry over this policy within Oxfam emerges clearly from the files, as does the concern over the best way to engage with the government on this policy. Perhaps the most useful lessons to learn from these files are a) the importance of seeking as much information as possible, in an organised and thorough way, about villagisation and b) the importance of watching and listening to partners as they engage with what is, at the end of the day, their government.

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5. Debre Birhan environs in North Shewa (Researchers: Melese Getu, Teferi Abate, and Million Tafesse)
6. Do'oma in Gamo (Researchers: Dereje Feyissa, Gebre Yntiso, Girma Kebede, and Mesfin Tadesse)
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