

CRDA

A Strategic Evaluation

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A report for **CAFOD, Cordaid, Christian Aid, EED, ICCO, Trócaire, SCIAF, and CRDA**

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Introduction

CRDA is one of the oldest NGOs in Ethiopia, and because of the wide breadth of its activities in Ethiopia projects very different images of itself to a wide range of people. To review even just the activities of the past three years would have required a different approach to the one I took. The present report does not attempt to evaluate all aspects of the work of CRDA. It is intended to review at a strategic level the programme and potential future of the organisation. CRDA management were already carrying out their own performance review of the past three years and it was agreed that I would try to avoid any duplication with this study¹. I therefore delayed completing this report until I received the draft of the internal study which provides a review of performance against the three year plan.

The prime approach of the present review was to garner the perceptions of as wide a range of stakeholders as possible. My time in Ethiopia was not spent reviewing past reports and documentation in the Addis offices of CRDA. Instead I met a wide range of people from: CRDA membership (Addis and regional); non-member groups; NGOs; some 'other civil society groups', again regional and Addis based; regional and national-based government entities; international donors (both NGO and official); and some other people with experience of the sector generally and CRDA specifically.² At certain points in the report I refer to the internal performance review and other reports where data seems relevant. However given that the emphasis was about what type of organisation CRDA is and how it is regarded by a raft of different stakeholders, I was less concerned about the efficiency of its delivery or specific programmes and more about where it fits within Ethiopian civil society.

The Terms of Reference (TOR) cover a series of important questions, and in some ways reflect the challenges behind both understanding CRDA, and the challenges within the organisation itself: the long history; the changed roles over the years; the evolving nature of the programme; the multiple variety and number of activities; and the simple fact that so many people have totally different views of what CRDA is, what it does and what it should do. It became clear to me very early in this review that the organisation has been through a difficult period, and - sometimes for very different reasons - the people I met were often critical of CRDA. However there was no single fault or action which led to this criticism. Instead there were many views of what CRDA is, and there were also many different (and sometimes conflicting) views of what it was, or what it had done wrong or had failed to do, or what it had achieved. It should be added that there were also many positive comments about certain CRDA services, and it should be said that even the most vocal detractors argued that CRDA needed to be helped to survive because it fulfils a key role within Ethiopia civil society.

The TOR³ focussed primarily on three major questions:

- 1) The impact of the work of CRDA on Ethiopian civil society;
- 2) The perceptions of different stakeholders of the performance of CRDA;
- 3) and the degree to which the "change process" has been taken forwards.

As the review progressed it became clear that underpinning these concerns were a series of questions which emerged from the interviews with stakeholders. They can be characterised loosely as :

¹ Development Studies Associates. CRDA 2005-07 Program Plan Performance Evaluation: draft December 2007.

² See list of interviews Appendix 1.

³ See TOR Appendix 2.

- What is the purpose of CRDA?
- What is the general health of civil society in the country and in particular the relationship between the government and CRDA?
- Is the membership policy clear and adhered to?
- Should CRDA continue to act as a “proxy” donor by on-granting funds to its members?
- Is the present business model sustainable?
- How representative of Ethiopian civil society and/or the NGO community is CRDA?
- Indeed has CRDA fully taken on board the distinction between NGOs and the wider concept of civil society?
- Has CRDA fully appreciated the policy of regionalisation in Ethiopia?
- In terms of the change process, are the outstanding issues primarily of strategy or management?
- Is there a future for an organisation like CRDA?

In the following sections I have tried to explain why these questions emerged and where appropriate what alternatives might be open to the board, members, donors and staff of CRDA.

Purpose

Since its inception the purpose of CRDA has changed quite radically from the physical coordination of relief supplies, through to casting itself as a representative body for the sector. Different people recalled the highlights of the work of CRDA over many years, including its early crucial role in relief programmes in the country. It has to be said that it should be of concern to CRDA that the range of stakeholders we talked to gave such markedly different views of what they **now** think is the purpose of CRDA. Perhaps it could be argued that such differences shouldn't really matter. However when these differences of view are so marked that members can carry almost contradictory views of what their organisation is, then it is time to worry about the reasons for such confusion, and to clarify and act on a more consistent approach to defining and agreeing the parameters within which work is carried out. Many of the other issues being confronted by CRDA stem from the lack of clarity around the question “why does the organisation exist?”. Regardless of the earlier (2004/5) reviews and discussions of strategy and the resulting agreement on the need for a process of change, the strong impression is of an organisation adrift⁴. Decisions seem to have been postponed despite being on the agenda for some time, though there clearly have been inconsequential discussions on issues around purpose, membership, the name, funding and so forth. Different groups of staff, members and others seem to be free to create CRDA in whatever image suits them. The earlier tendency towards fragmented departmental management also reinforced this problem, with departments seemingly free to go their own way. This reflects the failure of earlier leadership to provide a strong rationale for the organisation beyond merely institutional survival.

Historically the origins of CRDA were clear, as was its original organisational purpose. The dozen founding agencies, mainly from church related groups, joined together to coordinate relief efforts. The daily business often centred around joint logistics, trucks, food, distribution and related issues. The earlier non-Christian

⁴ This feeling is there despite the considerable work invested in the new MOA by the secretariat and membership.

members (OXFAM UK was one of the founders), coming from a western background, were hardly likely to object to the use of “Christian” in the name. The collective action clearly helped the sector cope with the less than supportive environment under the Derg, and provided a unity of purpose and face in this sometimes difficult context.

As CRDA expanded two key factors were important; the first was the gradual inclusion of local NGOs. It has to be remembered that local NGOs had few alternatives to joining CRDA, if they were interested in either improving their own levels of coordination with others, or if they wished to be represented in the context of wider NGO–government relationships and issues. Meanwhile CRDA changed from a body representing primarily church and international NGOs to the pre-eminent organisation of NGOs in the country.

The second major change was the move from the sole concern of relief into development and other areas of work, and later a move out of some of the old core activities such as relief distribution and logistics.

It would seem that CRDA no longer pretends to be a coordinating body of Christian groups, although we know that there are those, including some staff and others, who would like it to be so.

What is the purpose today?

After more than 30 years we should not be surprised that conditions have changed in Ethiopia and, for example, there are no longer shortages of truck and logistical systems for relief.⁵ Especially in the last three years there has been less call for INGOs to engage in major relief programmes. Although we are aware that many people do still depend on food aid, these needs are met within other existing systems and programmes, reducing the role for a private coordinating body. Of course conditions could always change and some ability to respond to future emergencies should be protected and encouraged.

The following discussion probably does not do justice to the wide range of services and activities in which CRDA is engaged, however I have tried to identify some of those areas of activity which come together to provide CRDA with its “purpose” as perceived by the people I interviewed.

CRDA as training centre?

The training programme of CRDA was the service most regularly praised in my interviews. An impressive number of people had attended different CRDA courses over the years and people compared the CRDA trainers well to other service providers. I don't think anyone argued that CRDA should turn itself into an organisation only offering training, but when considering the future all correspondents agreed that this was one of the organisation's most solid services to members. The only major caveat was from people in the regions who would prefer more training to be held regionally away from Addis. This one change alone would reduce the costs to participants, for whom the travel can be a significant issue.

My understanding is that CRDA have looked at the possibility of gaining some independent income from training, for example through contract work. It was less

⁵ One has to remember that in the 1970-80s, before food could be distributed INGOs had to raise the funds for and purchase the trucks used for the distribution. Now the roads of Ethiopia are full of private trucking fleets.

clear whether this was from training courses or just sub contracting some of the facilities in the centre itself.

CRDA as a “funder”?

For many people we interviewed the key purpose of CRDA is to distribute funds from external donors to its membership. A tradition has grown up of providing members not only with some non-financial services (such as training, advice & information) but also cash grants and some in-kind donations (computers etc), some for institutional development. In recent years CRDA has also developed programmes of delegated funding where the organisation manages funds on behalf of donors, for example the programme grants from SIDA & Irish Aid for HIV/AIDS work. Thus CRDA has turned itself into a “proxy” donor. The tensions created by this move will be discussed further below, as there are concerns over this funding role - what it does to CRDA in terms of its relationship with its membership, and what it does to its own internal working and self image.

CRDA as the interface with government?

Or is the purpose of CRDA primarily to interface with government and represent NGOs or civil society to government? This is for many, including some donors, the main purpose of the organisation, and the role is tacitly recognised by government, who often invite CRDA to represent NGOs in various committees (PRSP etc). Despite the difficulties between CRDA and the government over the 2005 elections, different government offices still interact regularly with CRDA in many important areas. Several senior civil servants argued that this was possibly the most important role played by CRDA, although in the same breath many also felt that CRDA itself did not always recognise the importance and potential of the role.

Correspondents in government and the international donor community reported that the failure to fully develop the role of interface with government was reflected in the poor preparation and lack of senior managerial time put into these activities. If indeed this is one of the main purposes of CRDA then it is not clear that an appropriate level of resources are devoted to it. The percentages of funds dedicated to this work seems small, and there is little evidence that priority is given, for example, to the maintenance of contacts or the preparation for policy forum meetings. There seemed to be inadequate research and consultation with members on policy issues, follow up from meetings, dissemination to members of information on the major debates and issues or explaining some of these policies to members. All of these and other activities might require different skills in CRDA in areas such as; research, understanding socio-economic policies of government and international donors, facilitating and coordinating information from members to respond to the debates in these committees.⁶

The new networks seem to have understood that it is possible to engage in policy dialogue in a critical manner with government officials in a way that seems to have eluded CRDA. If dialogue with government is evidence-based, including feedback from members, this seems to find a more sympathetic response from government officials. What causes antagonism within government circles is what they construe as “political posturing”. Whether government views on what constitutes political posturing are right or not, what did emerge from my interviews is that other networks have managed to lobby and engage with governmental authorities without necessarily incurring the sort of reaction suffered by CRDA. It is of course entirely possible that the reaction to CRDA is because the organisation is more

⁶ The performance review also noted that with the financial squeeze and staffing constraints the policy Forums seemed to suffer, with a low level of activity being registered (see below for further discussions).

representative and has a large number of members, which makes it appear to be more threatening to the government than other smaller “niche” advocacy NGOs.

CRDA as capacity builder?

Linked closely to the training, CRDA has tried to expand its concept of capacity building to include various forms of support to members, including direct advice on organisational development, some financial support and sometimes support in kind (computers etc). I did not look at this aspect of the work, but for the record we need to recognise the value and importance of this amongst other services. Over the years CRDA has supported many small new local NGOs through their early years. Reviewing actual expenditure it would appear that the capacity of members (including training and grants) accounts for almost a half of CRDA expenditure over the past few years.⁷ In any review of the future it will be necessary to assess whether this is the most appropriate distribution of resources within CRDA and whether the model can be refined without losing its edge.

CRDA as a forum or network?⁸

On paper at least there are a total of six Forums at CRDA. The Membership and Networking Development Department (MeNDD) is mandated to coordinate and lead the activities and operation of these Forums. Each Forum should have its own full time coordinator, a Steering Committee (SC) elected for a defined period by members, and General Assembly composed of all members of the respective Forums. All existing CRDA Forums have developed TOR and operational plans to guide their activities. Members of the Forums were actively involved in developing these documents.

Operationally the Forums seem to have a system of dual accountability; to their members through their Steering Committee as well as to the CRDA secretariat. The number of forums has increased to seven as the Water Supply and Sanitation Forum has been established as independent Forum on the basis of the request of CRDA members (I believe this has subsequently been launched in January 08). Two earlier Forums (PANE and CS-CAFÉ) have graduated and have become legally registered and independent entities.

Over the past two years the whole forum system seems to have fallen into neglect mainly because of :

- a turnover of staff (coordinators) and delays in replacing them (15 months to replace the coordinator for rural development forum);
- problems maintaining the interest of the steering committee in a context of lack of support (logistical, resources) and of poor leadership from CRDA;
- some confusion over how they were meant to be run, now hopefully resolved after some delay , by the production of new guidelines for the forums.

However we should stress the positive past and future potential of the forum idea:

- Previously they seem to have been relatively successful in commissioning research, sharing experiences, building the capacity and understanding of members, developing concept papers, holding workshops, interacting with government officials and advocacy over key sectoral interests. The fora were also reasonably successful in engaging regional members (based on evidence from the rural development forum).

⁷ See Appendix 3.

⁸ This section is based upon “ A rapid assessment of CRDA Forums.” Zero draft Jan. 2008.

- There would seem to be an obvious role for CRDA to promote these groups, and it is a way for a large membership organisation to focus on key issues of concern to them and to bring members together with common interests.
- It is argued by the present Senior Management Team that support for the forums are a key part of the future strategy. It will take some time to build up these initiatives given the poor performance over the past two years.

Other roles?

In reviewing the reports from CRDA, it is also possible to identify roles in “information and communications”. There is a resource centre; a small programme of occasional research; programmes to share experience between members (sometimes including under capacity building); workshops; direct lobbying; databases of CBOs; a programme of environmental protection; another to promote good governance, publications. Some remember past programmes of drug distribution, feeding and transport although these have I believe not run for several years.

In the context of both shrinking resources, a potential for membership growth and changing national contexts, CRDA will have to review and agree on a tighter view of its core purposes for the future. It is almost certainly not feasible to maintain such a wide portfolio of programmes and roles which will increasingly compete with each other for resources. Organisationally a decision should be made where to prioritise, otherwise the prioritisation is by default left in the hands of the donors who will choose what they want to support. It will be left to the varying competencies and success of individual CRDA managers and their individual fundraising success.

Membership

This discussion takes us from issues around the purpose of CRDA to its membership. In the case of CRDA the two seem to be inextricably linked. The issue of membership is crucial if CRDA is to claim to be the prime representative body of NGOs, if not other civil society groups, within Ethiopia. The reason is in part that CRDA is unique because it is the major membership organisation in Ethiopia. However, there is evidence that members look to the organisation for very different things. Some of the membership services are inhibiting the growth and function of the organisation as a membership body. The apparent contradiction will be explained below.

CRDA has created a patronage (clientalist) system whereby membership offers the possibility of funds and services. The provision of grants to members is a double edged sword. Yes it enables CRDA to support institutional development of smaller NGOs, and act as a fundraiser for members, so not surprisingly there is a back log of membership applications from people hoping to access these resources. As members have said: it is a good investment to pay 3000 Birr membership fee and get 50,000 Birr back in grants! However this system is one of the main areas for which CRDA is criticised. Those who do not get as much funding as often as they think they should accuse the secretariat of favouritism, or worse of exclusion of certain groups (see Tigray)⁹.

⁹ There are only a small number of members from Tigray and several of the NGOs I met complained of being on the waiting list for as long as three years. Not all of these were the “mass organisations” which are for some people too closely tied to the government party.

The large number of NGOs on the waiting list (some 300)¹⁰ wonder why they are having problems being accepted as members. It is clear that if CRDA opened the doors to the waiting list, then they could not afford the generosity of on-granting to the expanded membership. In other words has membership become linked to this patronage system rather than any other criteria? To limit the membership of CRDA because of the budget constraints of on-granting and linked services seems to undermine the claim to be the representative body of the NGO community. This single issue almost more than anything undermines the credibility of CRDA in many eyes. It arose in discussions not only about membership, but also about the overall role of the organisation, as well as concerns over the inbuilt conflict of interest surrounding the funding mechanisms.

For some people CRDA is the only viable coordinating body which brings together international and national NGOs and groups of different faiths. However the restrictive membership policy described above decries this role, as does some confusion about the exact nature of membership. Is it for all NGOs, or does it exclude membership associations and other civil society groups? The acceptability of membership by the “traditional NGO” is less controversial. There are however several grey areas including what are known as “mass organisations”, several of which grew out of state and party related bodies, hence the confusion and sometimes unease about their status and whether they are really off shoots of government or the ruling party or not. At some point the relatively new CRDA Membership Sub Committee needs to confront this issue as some associations are already members whilst others are not, causing tensions, ambiguities and concerns.

Whilst CRDA was never set up to support community based organisations, it has recently been asked to accept CBO members. Even here there is confusion as I think that some of the smaller local NGOs could have as easily been classified as CBOs (The Association of People Living with HIV/Aids, for example). Whilst some people have criticised CRDA for not engaging with non-NGO civil society groups such as the ubiquitous Idirs, others have felt that - however important these may be to Ethiopian society - CRDA’s focus and mandate lies elsewhere. It is possible that the weak legal definitions in Ethiopia reinforce these confusions.¹¹ CRDA does have to look at some of the changes however - including the tendency for many regional groups to register locally not nationally, which means they could rule themselves out of potential membership according to the present membership guidelines. One solution would be to only accept “Federations “ or other umbrella bodies of civil society membership groups/associations, thus reinforcing links between civil society groups. Another related idea has been to encourage local regional and sectoral umbrellas/networks and to accept these as members of CRDA, rather than encourage all of their individual members to join independently.

Many would argue that it doesn’t matter which membership policy CRDA chooses, however that it is crucial that it must make a decision soon on the membership base and stick to it. I would argue however, that the shortage of funding should not guide the membership decision making as this further reinforces the clientalist image of CRDA to those outside the organisation. Thus some who have not gained membership are unsure as to the basis of why they have not been accepted although they applied some time ago (some as long as years ago) and have neither been accepted or rejected, or why others slip easily through in a matter of months? The

¹⁰ The number comes from CRDA , via an interview with the acting director. In other words there are as many groups wait listed as there are members!

¹¹ At the moment CRDA is restricted to accepting legally registered NGOs hence unregistered and other forms of organisation are not eligible.

failure to define who can be a member reinforces the criticism from some quarters that decision making has lacked transparency in general and around membership specifically. It would be better to have a clear message to organisations rather than drag out the indecision.

Sustainability

CRDA does not have a sustainable business model, in that the present array of services cannot be funded just from membership contributions. Therefore some form of external funding will be necessary for some time to come. The concept of providing a basket of goods to members, including grants, in an apparently unstrategic manner does not lend itself to donor support in the 21st century. The rather blunt instruments of capacity building which have been offered by CRDA may be welcomed by some recipients, but holds CRDA to ransom if it is unable to deliver due to resource constraints. As a business model it also reinforces the confusion over purpose and priorities which the organisation has found it difficult to resolve. My understanding is that as income has dropped consistently over at least the past three years. It is likely to drop even further in the future¹².

Unfortunately, rather than agreeing to prioritise certain activities from the original plan, CRDA merely tried to do everything as before but less of it, by reducing expenditures and the scale of activities across the plan. It would appear that over the period of the three year plan (05-07) CRDA only received 57.5% of the requested budget (42 million compared to 73 million Birr).¹³ As far as can be seen there was no attempt to rethink whether the model is still fit for purpose, whether certain activities should be prioritised against others, and whether there are certain parts of the plan which would be better jettisoned altogether.¹⁴

It is important that for the next three year period a more realistic and grounded process of planning and budgeting is undertaken. There is little point going into a three year plan if the budget proposed is unlikely to be funded. There is a need to prioritise in advance what would be done by CRDA in this period by assuming a lower income, what is to be jettisoned, what to be reduced and what must be protected at all cost. This may mean some difficult decisions, but in light of some of the issues raised in this report there are areas of work which could and should be reconsidered.¹⁵

In the longer term it is unrealistic to expect the membership, local government or even the local private sector to financially support CRDA to the level they to which they were once accustomed. In particular the rather unguided form of funding of members by on-granting is not a very attractive option for most donors. It has to be said that some members are totally unrealistic in this matter: one member, when asked why he thought that the present system was unfair (because he felt that not enough of the funds came to his region) answered that he was going to raise a fund and would distribute it equally to all NGOs in his region. This demonstrated a failure to understand the link which should be there between the merit of a proposed action and whether it is supported. Rather the attitude inferred that this was a different form of “alms” to local NGOs regardless of the merit of their work.

¹² I base this on interviews and written responses from donors, plus trends elsewhere.

¹³ See appendix 3 for detailed actual figures.

¹⁴ I understood that the SMT may well not have been totally aware of the funding shortfall and projected shortfalls in the future as the ex-director did not share this with his colleagues.

¹⁵ It is always easier to expand activities should income be higher than expected than it is to try and pare down activities as income fails to meet the budget.

If CRDA were to propose itself as primarily a representative organisation, then it should probably build services around this core concept which would require some rethinking about the most appropriate services to offer and on what terms. It is suggested that services of information, research, representational skills, etc would predominate rather than - as at present - funding and some of the basic capacity building. The latter are both important to the sector but should they be within CRDA? (see below). Or at least, should the capacity building element be restricted to the well received training programme rather than be extended to funding and equipment provision?

Efficiency?

At the time of writing it is less clear to me whether the staffing and other expenses of CRDA are efficiently used. That prioritisation has not taken place despite an actual budget considerably less than proposed is however clear, and may indicate a poor overall distribution of resources amongst the competing departments and their activities in CRDA. Whether focussing and prioritising activities would increase efficiency is not as yet clear, although logically it would appear to be the case. The internally commissioned evaluation faced a major problem in assessing efficiency, relevance and effectiveness. The Log frame used to present the three year plan was written at a very high level of generality, with two major weaknesses. The first weakness was the failure to specify in more detail the activities, and this was linked to the absence of an organisation wide monitoring system for the plan. Thus the evaluators found it difficult to match activities (and resources expended) on specific "result areas" as the objectives were reasonably vague. Therefore it is almost impossible to make assessments in terms of cost effectiveness, efficiency or impact. The lack of defined objectives and activities probably lent themselves to purely qualitative assessment whereas this should ideally have been matched by quantitative information. The alleged lack of good cross departmental working, alongside this lack of management information, contributed to an organisational inability to reprioritise and re-visit the plan in the light of changing circumstances.¹⁶

The second weakness seemed to be the failure to assess adequately the assumptions and risks behind the plan, and then to amend the plan as these changed. For example, the tensions with the government (a risk) should perhaps have led to rethinking of the overall plan and strategy. The shortfall in fundraising should have led to some re-planning. And so forth. Our own problems in understanding the processes of managing over the past three years with an income significantly less than budget, illustrates the spongy management of resources in CRDA. This implies that it could well be the case that efficiency was very good and that many things were achieved on a reduced income, however it is not clear whether this is the case. Indeed some of the shortcomings, for example the failure to support the development forums, could just be the result of a shortage of funds, or poor management. It simply is not clear. Therefore the apparent failure to re-plan and re-budget has, we surmise, had a negative impact on a range of services.

The previous director seems to have failed to clarify the basis on which resource allocation was being made. The failure to run a senior management team with collective responsibility and awareness of organisation-wide decisions and parameters, allowed certain departments to continue to make decisions without reference to wider strategic priorities. If we review the actual expenditure it would

¹⁶ Development Studies associates CRDA 2005-07 Program plan performance evaluation (draft December 07).

seem to show that the expenditure was cut proportionally across the different result areas, with the exception of “administration and capital expenditure” which suffered a smaller reduction on expenditure compared to budget. (See Appendix 3 for figures).

The internal evaluation has made some very strong and clear recommendations that CRDA needs a more robust monitoring system and that any future plan needs to be sufficiently detailed to allow it to be monitored. A monitoring system which includes both activity and financial information should permit a better appreciation of the efficiency of CRDA in its use of the available resources.

The attempt to increase commercial income from some of the CRDA assets as yet do not seem to be producing a significant contribution to the organisation, although the size of the building and compound would surely suggest the possibilities of generating income. The quality of the CRDA trainers could also be used occasionally to generate more commercial rates of return to help cross subsidise other activities through charging consultancy rates for commissioned training.

Representative body or grant-maker?

This question seems to be at the heart of many discussions at the moment. Certain donors appreciate the ease of being able to use CRDA to spend money (SIDA/Irish Aid) and members increasingly regard CRDA as a proxy donor and source of funds. This does not however sit comfortably with the idea of CRDA as a representative umbrella body. Generally using membership bodies to distribute funds introduces a conflict of interest at the heart of any organisation. Even basic governance is undermined when board members are also dependent upon staff to distribute funds to their own organisations.¹⁷ It has indeed been put to me that it may be difficult at times for board members to criticise staff actions because they fear that staff may then punish them or their own organisations as a consequence, the next time they apply for support. It also undermines ownership by the members of the organisation if they regard the organisation as a funder. Clearly those who had not received funds or waiting list members feel that CRDA is acting against, instead of for, their interests. If the donors and the Board want to see CRDA as an active partner in wider development debates and in helping to coordinate the sector, serious consideration should be given to spinning of any on-granting facility to an independent entity with a “disinterested board”.¹⁸

I suspect that an independent grant making trust would be more likely - not less likely - to attract extra donor funding, as it could legitimately present itself as an independent vehicle to manage other donor funds.

I would recommend drawing up a plan to create a new funding foundation or trust, and that CRDA phase out of directly providing funds to members. At the most it might consider the nature of its capacity building programme and whether there is an argument in keeping a seed fund for organisational development interventions with members. There are sufficient experiences around the world where independent local funding mechanisms have been able to work with a high degree of local

¹⁷ It is not entirely clear to me whether the introduction of a separate grant committee has really mitigated this conflict of interest. Also I believe this system only works for the funds that are contracted to CRDA (Sida etc). These delegated funds are open to non-members as well as members unlike the other resources of CRDA.

¹⁸ I understand that this has been discussed within CRDA.

ownership (board, grant committees) which have avoided any conflict of interest by some simple rules of governance.¹⁹

Ironically by taking funding out of the services offered by CRDA the organisation could then accept all new applications for membership and reduce the waiting list, thus increasing total membership and in doing so the ability to claim to be more representative. It should be understood that possibly some members might leave if they felt that membership would no longer bring funding. Perhaps in this case it would not be a loss if remaining and new members joined with an aim of engaging in other non-funding membership activities..

Regionalisation

The process of regionalisation and the strengthening of “federal government” is now making progress in Ethiopia. Although I was unable to visit more than a couple of regions it is obvious that there is an ever increasing level of activity around NGOs and local government at the regional level. More NGOs, for example, only register locally rather than nationally. It often appears easier locally to get programme approval from regional government and even to initiate collaborative programmes with local government than it might be centrally. The Performance Evaluation also picked up on the potential for more work on promoting regional fora and NGO/Government councils. It was also stated that this regional nature of NGO /civil society work is likely to be reinforced by the new NGO law once it emerges.

There is a clear potential in the regions for the development of civil society generally. CRDA traditionally being based in Addis may have under-estimated the effects of regionalisation. The attempts to set up regional coordinating offices were not followed through as energetically as they might have been (whether because of resource constraints or lack of prioritisation is unclear). The space for regional NGO activity is however, already being filled in some areas through local initiatives, including regional umbrella bodies. Where this is the case CRDA will have to re-consider its strategy and probably work out how to engage with local networks and umbrella associations.

Overall CRDA may need to have a mixed strategy of allying with regional councils where they exist and encouraging local CRDA coordinating offices elsewhere as it has done in Awassa. Another option would be to formalise the governance of CRDA in a region with its own local general assembly and board. This could considerably strengthen the ability of regional members to work with local government, as well as bring services and support closer to the members. It could also lead to a more formal representation at the general assembly. The idea of regional representatives would be strengthened even more if Addis were to create its own regional chapter equally represented along with the other regions and feeding into a national body.

Civil society or NGOs

CRDA is not the only organisation which finds difficulty in distinguishing between these two concepts. Perhaps this challenge is more critical for CRDA because there are proportionally a large number of development and relief NGOs, both local and foreign, operating in Ethiopia. Their resources also compare favourably with the state in an otherwise resource-poor country. Many of the services provided by NGOs in

¹⁹ Prohibiting board members or their organisations from applying for funds, a board chosen to avoid accusations of being bipartisan, transparent and published criteria for funding, independent evaluation/ auditing etc.

Ethiopia are more customarily provided by the state elsewhere, and where this happens NGOs have different roles. Some people, including many government officials, make the distinction between NGOs as professional bodies and “associations”, the term used in Ethiopia to describe membership bodies working for their membership. This distinction breaks down a little when the members of an association are in fact other associations rather than individuals. It is very likely that the new law will confirm this distinction between associations and NGOs.

Returning to the debate about whether CRDA should be or is representing NGOs or civil society, the answer seems to be NGOs, because members are meant to be registered with the government DPPC, whereas many other civil society groups may be registered only with their local Ministry of Justice, or not at all. Some commentators have challenged this situation by saying the CRDA should represent and engage with “community” and other groups and associations. At least two things would mitigate against this: firstly it would totally change the nature of CRDA if it were to attempt to accept membership from groups such as the thousands of Idirs in the country. Secondly, many associations are not in fact registered legally if the evidence from research we carried out a few years ago for the World Bank is still the case.²⁰

There is some suggestion that some of the people who have applied to join CRDA, especially the “mass associations”, have not received replies from CRDA because CRDA itself is not entirely clear on membership criteria (see above). CRDA has to decide whether it is a body of NGOs or whether they intend to include associations or other civil society groups such as Idirs, which can now be legally registered. Some people have declared that CRDA should expand to include all civil society groups including community level associations. This view is also expressed by some donors as well who wish to ensure CRDA is genuinely engaging with the grass roots. The alternative view is that it is the role of CRDA’s member organisations to engage with community level associations, whether formal or informal, rather than CRDA itself. CRDA should restrict itself to representing these secondary level organisations and not get diverted into a role for which it is not well prepared and, given the large numbers of community groups, would not be feasible for a large centrally based NGO like CRDA to engage with in the way a federal organisation could.

Rather than recommend a single option the following factors and options should be discussed by CRDA members:

- a) If a wider range of civil society groups are accepted as members then CRDA would need to focus on a range of methods for gathering views from members with very different interests, plus an elaborate mechanism for feedback and information to what could be thousands of members. It is not clear that it would be realistic to continue with the present governance system if general assemblies were to be even bigger than at present. Therefore other mechanisms would have to be developed, possibly on a regional basis for example, for electing representatives to a smaller general assembly.
- b) or CRDA could encourage higher level organisations to join such as: associations of associations (e.g. regional federations, the associations of Idirs etc), and thus bring together other lesser apex bodies to ensure discussion between them. This would make more sense than encouraging smaller groups for whom the expense and value of attending Addis based assemblies are unlikely to be worth the cost and effort.

²⁰ See http://www.intrac.org/pages/completed_research.html, ‘Study on Effective Empowerment of Citizens in Ethiopia. PDF’

- c) Or CRDA could argue that it is a dedicated NGO representing and supporting NGOs who in turn may or may not work with other civil society groups.

At the moment there is a muddle within CRDA, with some mass associations being members, others excluded, some very small civil society membership groups are members, and others are not. It would probably not be appropriate at the moment to open say to individual Idirs. It is probably as important for some of the donors to recognise the distinctions here as it is for CRDA and its membership.

Strategy or Management

In donor terms CRDA presents a challenge. If we look back at least the last 10 years there have been consistent concerns about both the profile and performance of CRDA. At the same time most people, sometimes grudgingly, agree that CRDA's survival is important as there is a space in Ethiopia civil society that otherwise would be vacant. So whilst the argument has moved back and forth on some of the issues I am covering here there is an overall agreement by a range of stakeholders that we need to keep CRDA alive. There have been several attempts to turn the ship around through new strategic planning exercises; attempts to restructure; and the introduction of different consultants - some for short periods, others who have helped over many years. However despite these efforts we still seem to be talking about the same issues and missed opportunities in terms of the leadership role of CRDA amongst the NGO community, engagement with the state, development of new approaches to civil society in Ethiopia and new visions for the future.

It was not my role to look at actual performance but the recently carried out internal evaluation gives some flavour of the achievements and failings over the past three years. These reviewers found it difficult to identify the link between the plan and the actual work due to monitoring weaknesses. Despite this they were able to list some achievements and some shortcomings which have been incorporated into the current review.

Assuming some success at an activity level, albeit less than planned due to less than expected resources, one question comes to the fore. Are the slowness of change and the prolonged and unresolved debates the issue of poor strategising or of poor management? I would include in management here the role of the board as well as staff. The previous director and respective boards do not seem to have followed up on previous strategies and plans for change, have had inconclusive debates on issues such as the on-granting, the name of the organisation, membership criteria, the major emphasis of programming and so forth. Even where decisions have been made we see several examples where they have not been acted on: thus the MOA was the product of a great deal of discussion but there is still confusion over membership, and purpose of the organisation. Other changes have been made but often out of context. One example given to me was that there had been a process of discussion about getting rid of the deputy director roles and restructuring the organisation into teams around the major activities. In the event the deputy roles went but the teams were not created. This seems to be a classic example of avoiding the major debate and sidetracking it into a change taken out of context and as such of little real impact on the organisation.

Another example is that I understand that in 2003/4 there had been an internal process of strategic planning including wide discussions inside CRDA, then as this was almost finished the director seemingly made an arbitrary decision to hire Allan Kaplan to do a mapping of civil society in Ethiopia, a process which was superfluous

as at that time there were a series of such studies being carried out and available from several sources including EC, World Bank, DFID, and others. Instead Allan did a rather different sort of visioning exercise, meanwhile the previous strategic planning exercise was shelved!²¹

Hence my question is whether the problem was one of a lack of strategy or a failure to implement and follow through on changes, plans, concerns and actually manage the tensions and constraints faced by the organisation rather than live on its successes. To this extent past boards also carry some responsibility. Perhaps the short period of tenure of board members (2 years) and the complexity of the organisation, plus some degree of conflict of interest at board level has made it difficult for them to exercise their leadership role. However the issue must be raised. It is also likely that the previous director found that only by creating an un-transparent system and management culture was it possible to avoid some of the debates and decisions which could indeed dismantle the structure which CRDA has become.

In the questions to stakeholders I consistently asked people whether they thought the “change process” had paid dividends or not. I did get positive feedback, especially on the softer issues, around more recent moves to a more collegiate form of management, ability to have internal discussions inside CRDA hitherto dependent on a very autocratic form of management. On the performance side the messages were more mixed. There were some success stories, but many feelings that the organisation did not live up to promises (see section on Forum development above, for example).

I specifically asked some people whether they thought that more might have been achieved if the disagreement with government around the 2005 elections had not happened. The replies even here were ambiguous. On one hand some staff and observers felt that civil society space generally and specifically for CRDA had indeed shrunk. This it was felt in turn inhibited the work of CRDA including its ability to push ahead with the change process. Others felt that more could have been achieved despite this pressure from government. I suspect that the reality was somewhere between these views, with the confidence of CRDA being knocked by the problems in 2005, leading to people self censoring, and being worried about what they could and could not say in public. Meanwhile there is evidence from other groups and even some of the initiatives CRDA is engaged in, that more could have been done without a negative government reaction. The hidden resource crisis may have had as much to do with the problems of delivery by CRDA as the political pressure on the organisation.

In some ways the issues will be or have been the similar for some of the donor community. Should they continue to resource what suits them (on-granting for example) and leave the concerns over CRDA to someone else? Or should they pay for an inefficient structure because fills an important space in Ethiopia, not worry too much about the list of outstanding issues and hope that there are sufficient positive achievements to justify the investment? Or should they allow a slow decline and possible implosion and death, or a withering of the organisation through natural wastage and declining funding? The latter seems to be the present trajectory, whereby some of the old dominance and space and services provided by CRDA are being taken up by other organisations: new networks, new capacity building initiatives, new funding mechanisms and regional and sectoral representative bodies.

²¹ I was informed that Allan Kaplan was brought in by Actionaid (then member of CRDA management committee) but the point stands that his work seemed to be used to sidetrack the earlier strategic planning process.

It is likely that the new proposed law will make it easier to form representative umbrella bodies than at present and this will lead to more challenges to the “monopoly” position of CRDA²².

The present difficulty in finding a new executive director to me reflects the issues noted above. The failure to clarify certain issues around purpose and future priorities will inevitably make it difficult to attract a suitable director. Any serious candidate will be concerned that they are entering an organisation whereby there is insufficient clarity of purpose to allow a them to be able to know whether they have been successful or not. The job description was very general, whereas I would have recommended that the Board needed to provide guidance on some of the issues and changes that needed to be dealt with by an incumbent, in doing this it would have increased the chances of more suitable candidates applying.

My final question will be is anyone ready to make the changes necessary to fit CRDA to the present needs in Ethiopia? Or will change only come because donors continue to reduce funding to the point where the pain in the organisation forces change? The risk of waiting is that the present process whereby staff departures are not based on a planned staff reduction or the re-prioritising of skills but opportunistic departure of those able to get other jobs outside, means that the organisation could lose the staff and skills it needs and retains those no longer as valuable as they once were. This would result in a slow, lingering organisational death.

In summary

Returning to the key questions in the original TOR:

CRDA has suffered a declining influence over the past three years, in part due to reduced resources, also because of external political changes and internal weaknesses. Some have asked why the visionary perspective of the Allan Kaplan report wasn't realised. The answer depends on whether you feel that this report was realistic at the time. I would argue that it was “visionary” but in the short term unrealistic as the basis for a work plan. The events of 2005, barely a year after the report was written, would confirm this conclusion.

Despite the unhealthy political environment around 2005, there is evidence that more was being achieved by other groups who were managing to avoid some of the constraints felt by CRDA, in terms of focussed advocacy and lobbying. Ironically some observers felt that despite (or possibly because of) the conflict in the streets, the issues around the election strengthened not weakened civil society in the longer term by bringing issues more to the foreground of people's awareness.

Some of the services which might have contributed to civil society strengthening were unfortunately neglected in this period for reasons explained above, for example the Rural Development and other Forums. Other services were pared down because of budget shortfalls.

The weak monitoring has made it difficult to make a full assessment of the impact of those services which were offered (see the internal evaluation), so we have relied on interviews with a wide range of stakeholders with differing views as to the degree of success of CRDA in this period, and this is also reflected in the mixed reactions portrayed in the internal evaluation.

²² This point was made to me by more than one government representative.

There have been several discussions about the nature of support from the membership. In some cases staff have felt insufficiently supported by the members. Elsewhere the opposite has been reported by members feeling unsupported by the secretariat (again see report on Forum). In some cases it would appear that CRDA have not always used their members to the best especially where they have expertise unavailable within the staff.

I am more concerned that the long history and changed roles played by CRDA has led to a situation whereby the purpose of the organisation, rather than being clear to all, is a contested area. The failure to agree the purpose and role of the organisation leads to inefficiencies, confusion and inevitably more criticism of CRDA than is perhaps warranted.

Another contested area is that played by CRDA as a proxy donor. This leads to a conflict between staff and members and contributes to much of the bad feeling. It also has the bizarre effect of limiting the organisations ability to grow and accept new members!

There is scope for expanding membership, once the constraints are lifted (expectation that membership brings financial benefit), membership criteria are clarified (associations etc), and probably to resolve the name issue and change the 'C' from 'Christian' to something like Community or Civil society to encompass the half of Ethiopia which is not Christian²³. Although some Muslims have joined others would do so if the name was changed. As name recognition and branding is important I recommend that the initials maintained as 'CRDA' with the C changing to another word.

As noted elsewhere the present management systems make it difficult to comment on cost effectiveness although there is some evidence that improved monitoring, improved flexibility in amending plans to actual income, and a more transparent form of budgeting and prioritisation would go a long way to making good this weakness.

End note

At this point let us remind ourselves that there are opportunities and potential for significant impact on the development of civil society and the role it can play in the development of Ethiopia. CRDA has certain advantages which it should not lose through slow attrition. The organisation does have a large membership with many groups still wanting to join. It has a long and respectable track record of service to NGOs and the causes of poverty reduction. It has experience of training and capacity building; in the past it was successful in encouraging the thematic forums, and of hosting workshops. It has consistently been able to represent the sector through attendance on government and donor committees.

To be able to maintain its role in Ethiopia CRDA still has some way to go in transforming itself into an organisation fitted for the current challenges. It must be frustrating after many years of discussing the "change process" to feel that the organisation is still not functioning as optimally as it should be. The reality is that the change process has been slow and hesitant, sometimes for reasons outside the

²³ Many people I talked to suggested something like this, and not just the Muslim representatives. However not one person mentioned the fact that apparently a name change was voted down by a simple majority of existing members.

control of the staff and board but also because of a hesitancy and lack of real leadership from within.

There are many opportunities for CRDA for the future based on its existing skills and the needs in the country:

- There are mechanisms for consultations with government, such as around the Protection of Basic Services and the PASDEP processes which include donors and the government. These initiatives require serious attention from the NGO representatives to make the most of the processes, such as collating information from around the country research, feeding grassroots concerns through to the civil society representatives involved in these processes and feeding back from meetings with government to the CRDA members. All these processes probably require new facilitation and advocacy skills.
- To improve the basic information flow to NGOs and other CSOs on development policies, new initiatives with some comment, explanations for members.
- Accepting the increased importance of regionalisation, one obvious role is to encourage and compare experiences between regions.
- Programmes to be more aimed at small regional organisations not just a few already well informed inhabitants in the capital (including information services).
- Regional work exploring opportunities in different regions to work with government departments, improve local coordination around key issues, more local training programmes, as well as engagement with federations of CBOs,
- Sharing of information on the basic mechanics including registration, taxes, good practice guidance on governance, helping agree standards of accountability.
- The time is right for a new independent foundation or trust for grant-making in Ethiopia.

In total we can say that there is a role for CRDA to play in supporting civil society, especially NGOs engaged in poverty reduction. There are some questions whether the present organisation is as well suited to these aims as it could be. There are some recommendations around how CRDA could better meet its objectives through some improved focus and finally resolve some issues some of which have been hanging over the organisation for some time. If this is done there is still the potential for CRDA to build on its strengths and help Ethiopia move towards a positive future.

Summary of recommendations

Many other suggestions are in the text; in some places I pose alternative options rather than a single recommendation. The following are some of the key recommendations.

- 1) In any review of the future it will be necessary to assess whether the existing plans reflect the most appropriate allocation of resources within CRDA and whether the plans can be refined without losing CRDA's comparative advantage.
- 2) The opportunity to engage in PBS, PASDEP etc will require different skills in CRDA in areas such as: research, understanding socio-economic policies of government and international donors, facilitating and coordinating information from members to respond to the debates in these committees.

- 3) CRDA should explore further gaining independent income from commissioned work contracting out trainers and training facilities.
- 4) The previous neglect of the Forums should be reversed with more support from the secretariat, as the present SMT argue that support for the forums are a key part of the future strategy.
- 5) In the context of both shrinking resources, a potential for membership growth and changing national contexts, CRDA will have to review and agree on a tighter view of its core purposes for the future. It is almost certainly not feasible to maintain such a wide portfolio of different programmes and roles which will increasingly compete with each other for resources. Organisationally a decision should be made where to prioritise otherwise the prioritisation is by default left in the hands of the donors who will choose what they want to support. It will be left to the varying competencies and success of individual CRDA managers and their individual fundraising success.
- 6) It is crucial that a decision is made soon on the membership base of CRDA and actually implemented. I would argue however, that the shortage of funding should not guide the membership decision making as this further reinforces the clientalist image of CRDA to those outside the organisation.
- 7) It will be important that for the next three year period that a more realistic and grounded process of planning and budgeting is undertaken. There is little point going into a three year plan if the budget proposed is unlikely to be funded. There is a need to prioritise in advance what would be done by CRDA in this period by assuming a lower income, what is to be jettisoned, what to be reduced and what must be protected at all cost. This may mean some difficult decisions, but in light of some of the issues raised in this report there are areas of work which could and should be reconsidered.
- 8) If CRDA were to propose itself as primarily a representative organisation, then it should build services around this core concept, which would require some rethinking about the most appropriate services to offer and on what terms. It is suggested that services of information, research, representational skills, would predominate rather than, as at present, funding and some of the basic capacity building. The latter are both important to the sector but should they be within CRDA? Or at least should the CB element be restricted to the well received training programme rather than be extended to funding and equipment provision?
- 9) Serious consideration should be given to spinning of any on-granting facility to an independent entity with a "disinterested board". This would involve drawing up a plan to create a new funding foundation or trust and that CRDA phase out of directly providing funds to members.²⁴
- 10) The length of Board tenure should be revised from the present two year to allow better continuity.
- 11) If not too late, the job description for the proposed Executive Director should be revised. The Board should provide guidance on some of the issues and changes that needed to be dealt with by a new ED, doing this would increase the chance of more suitable candidates applying.
- 12) That the initials are maintained as CRDA with the C changing to another word.

²⁴ I aware that this programme does bring in some resources to CRDA. It is not possible to calculate the real net income, but I would suggest that it would be cleaner for CRDA to rent office space to the new trust and gain an income this way!

Appendix 1: List of interviews

Apologies, a few names may well be missing or spelt incorrectly.

CRDA Board members

Ato Yabowork Haile, Chair of the CRDA Board, and representative of ACORD
Ato Berhanu Geleto, CRDA Board Member and Executive Director of the Rift Valley Association
Ato Tesfaye Yacob, Secretary General, Ethiopian Kale Hiwot Church & CRDA Board Member
Ato Tessewra Worq Shimeles, CRDA Board Member and Board Member of JECCDO

CRDA Senior Management Staff

Wz Semira Alhadi, Acting Executive Director, CRDA
Wz Alembanchi Bogale, Acting Head of Communications, CRDA
Ato Kiflemariam Gebrewolde, Special Adviser, CRDA
Ato Luelsuged Asfaw, Head of Delegated Resources, CRDA
Ato Mesele Bizuayehu, Head of Resources, CRDA
Ato Regassa Aboma, Head of Membership, CRDA
Ato Tsehay Admassu, Head of Institutional Support, CRDA

Addis Ababa

Haji Abdulhasis Kermal, Islamic Supreme Council/ Muslim Development Agency,
Wz Abeba Bekele, HIV adviser, Irish Aid
Ato Abiy Hailu, Country Manager, Christian Aid
Ato Akalewold Bantirgu , consultant
Ato Bekele (Save the Children UK)
Ms Beverley Jones, Joint Country Representative for Trócaire, CAFOD & SCIAF
Wz Bizuwork Ketete, Irish Aid
Ato Dawit Wolde, AHA,
Ms Eva Smulders, ICCO
Ato Feyera Abdi, Director, SOS Sahel
Wz Fionnuala Gilsenen, Irish Aid
Ato Getachew Adam, MOFED
Ato Getahun Kassa, Executive Director, Ethiopian Human Rights Commission
Ato Girma Tadesse, EED
Ms Irene Mingasson, European Union Delegation
Ms Janelle Plummer, World Bank
Ato Jimo Dibo, Ministry of Justice,
Mr Joachim Neugebauer, EED
Mr Klaus Schmitt, consultant adviser to CRDA
Mr Konrad Rauber, EED
Ato Melaku Jemaneh, Ministry Capacity Building
Dr Nigussu Legesse, Orthodox Church
Wz Saba Gebremedhin, Network of Ethiopian Women's Organisations
Ato Tafesse Gedawo Dugo, Deputy Head, Economy Development Division
Ato Tassew , EIDR
Ato Yemer Mohammed, Yeteem children's agency,
Ato Zegeye Asfaw, Manager, HUNDEE

Awassa

Ato Berhanu Gezu, Regional Coordinator, CRDA Awassa
Ato Wolde Gebriel, Catholic Secretariat Awassa
Wz Tigist Alemu, Executive Director Tilla, Awassa
Dr Tilahun Lalrso, Mekane Yesus Church, Awassa
Wz Tigist Enyew, Bright Image for Generations Association, BIGA, Awassa
Ato Kusia Bekele, Southern Ethiopia People's Development Association SEPDA, Awassa
Ato Yonas, Mary Joy Awassa
Wz Adanech, Sister Bogalech, Ato Anadu Lukas - Dawn of Hope Association Awassa
Ato Tariku Tesema, Green Message for Ethiopia and Coordinator of Regional Chapter of PANE, Awassa

Ato Mammo, ex Regional Head of NGO desk at BOFED, Awassa
Ato Tafesse Gedawo, Deputy Head of Bureau Finance and Economic Development, Awassa

Tigray

Ato Yemane Solomon, Chair of Board of Alliance of Civil Society Organisations of Tigray (ACSOT)
Ato Abreha Gebrewahid, board member ACSOT
Wz Alemsehay Kiros, board member ACSOT
Ato Girmay Woldemariam, board member ACSOT
Ato Girmay Alemayehu, Coordinator ACSOT
Ato Abdu, Tigray Veterans' Association
Ato Kinfe Abreha, Women's Association of Tigray
Ato Tsegay Assefa, Relief Society of Tigray
Ato Mengesha, Save the Generation Association
Ato Getachew Tesfay, Operation Rescue Ethiopia
Wz Meselu Equar, Tesfahiwot Association for women living with HIV/AIDS
Wz Elisabeth, Tigray Disabled Women's Association
Ato Tesfay, Tigray Farmers Association
Ato Zemichael Gebremedhin, Civil Society Adviser to the President of Tigray
Ato Desta Gebreyesus, Bright Africa Youth Association

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Wz Teamrat Belai, Consultant, who coordinated the visits to Mekelle and Awassa.
Ato Berhanu Gezu, CRDA Regional Coordinator, who organised the Awassa visit.
Ato Mituku Abebe and his team from CRDA, who organised interviews in Addis Ababa
Ato Kederalah Idris, Consultant, for his work in evaluating the CRDA forums.

Appendix 2: Terms of reference

CAFOD, Cordaid, Christian Aid, EED, ICCO, Trócaire & SCIAF

Joint Evaluation of CRDA Terms of reference

1) Introduction

- a) CRDA underwent a significant change process from 2004 onwards, beginning with a consultancy undertaken by Allan Kaplan, by the subsequent member consultations and executive committee statements, the work of a change taskforce and the subsequent revision of the Memorandum of Association and bylaws, and subsequent structural changes within the International Secretariat.
- b) CRDA has conducted an internal Rapid assessment of the implementation of CRDA's program plan in 2005 and 2006
- c) CRDA have commissioned an evaluation of the implementation of their 2005 - 2007 strategic plan, looking specifically at the activity against plan, and whether the plan objectives were met.
- d) To complement this, it was agreed with CRDA that the donor group (ICCO, EED, CordAid, Trócaire, CAFOD and SCIAF) would organise a higher-level evaluation looking more broadly at the role and impact of CRDA within Ethiopian Civil Society. It is hoped that by organising this evaluation jointly we can avoid duplication and unnecessary strain on CRDA.
- e) The evaluation is intended to be forward rather than backward looking, and we hope that the product will assist CRDA in identifying strategic choices for the future.

2) Terms of reference

- a) What has been the impact of CRDA's work over the last 3 years?
 - i) In creating an enabling environment for civil society
 - ii) In its direct lobbying and advocacy work
 - iii) In building the capacity of its members to advocate on their own behalf
 - iv) Of the CRDA forums, including the Rural Development Forum
 - v) Of their other services and programs, such as capacity building of members.
- b) How is CRDA's overall performance rated by its different stakeholders (members, wider civil society, government, bilateral/multilateral donors)
 - i) Are the services offered by CRDA to its members the right services? Are they of a high standard? Are they – or could they become - financially sustainable?
 - ii) How do members contribute (beyond finances) to CRDA as a civil society network?
 - iii) How have CRDA managed their relationship with government, and how could this be further developed in order to maximise their influence as a network?
 - iv) What have been the costs and results of the branch offices within Ethiopia? Of the overseas offices?

- v) To what extent is there coherence between the organisational form of CRDA, and its key function (as defined by its members)? To what extent do the CRDA thematic programmes funded directly by donors complement or detract from its key function?
- c) How have the recommendations of the CRDA change process been taken forward? How has that future vision changed over the intervening years? What remains to be taken forward?
 - i) How does CRDA intend (following its MoA) to expand its membership base to a broader civil society? How might the portfolio of services need to change to accommodate the different needs of an expanded membership?
 - ii) To what extent has CRDA been successful in becoming inclusive of a far broader range of civil society organisations, and of organisations and individuals from different faith backgrounds?
 - iii) What potential roles could CRDA play in future in developing a vibrant Ethiopian Civil Society?
- d) In looking at the impact of CRDA's work, the consultant is also asked to comment on the cost effectiveness of CRDA in delivering this impact.

Consultants

The work will be led by Dr Brian Pratt, Director of INTRAC, who will visit Ethiopia between 21st November and 4th December 2007. Dr Pratt and INTRAC may also have a need for further consultancy support within Ethiopia, and if so will subcontract further consultant(s) as agreed.

Appendix 3: Actual expenditure 2005-07

For the period from January 1, 2005 to October 31, 2007

Result area/cost category	Budget 2005 –07 (A)	Actual 2005	Actual 2006	Actual 2007 Oct 31	Total Actual (B)	Balance (A – B)
R1	29,283,256	4,192,786	8,084,642	6,174,321	18,451,749	10,831,507
R2	6,100,649	1,264,604	1,494,217	854,901	3,613,722	2,486,927
R3	7,463,305	1,445,158	1,167,552	377,103	2,989,813	4,473,492
R4	12,032,654	2,445,445	4,899,986	2,708,879	10,054,310	1,978,344
R5	3,567,181	488,250	810,771	785,468	2,084,489	1,482,692
Sub –total	58,447,045	9,836,243	16,457,168	10,900,672	37,194,084	21,252,961
Admin & capital costs	11,145,852	3,880,682	3,737,071	2,245,165	9,862,918	1,282,934
Sub total	69,592,897	13,716,925	20,194,239	13,145,837	47,057,002	22,535,895
Contingency	3,479,645					3,479,645
Grand Total	73,072,542	13,716,925	20,194,239	13,145,837	47,057,002	26,015,540

Key:

R1= Result one, Capacity of for effective engagement and response towards societal transformation enhanced.

R2= Result two, improved availability, access and use of diversified relevant and up-to-date information

R3= Result three, Good Governance, Human Rights, Democracy and Ethics promoted

R4= Result four, Joint actions of members and partners and their responsiveness to emerging and existing issues of concern promoted.

R5= Result five, Capacity of the CRDA secretariat towards facilitating members and partners engagements enhanced.

Source CRDA Jan 08

Appendix 4: Selection of key documents used in the review

Aklu Girgire & Carsta Neuenroth: Rapid assessment of the implementation of CRDA's program plan in 2005 and 2006.

Allan Kaplan , Sue Davidoff, Study into the relationship between NGOs and civil society in Ethiopia for CRDA March 2004.

CRDA: Assessment of the Operating environment for CSOs/NGOs in Ethiopia , December 2006

CRDA Change process: summary report of the Memberships consultation, June 2004.

CRDA Three year budget assumptions 2005-07

CRDA; Together for a better future Jan. 2007

CRDA Memorandum of Association for CRDA , July 2005.

CRDA , audits 2006, 2005.

Development studies associates; CRDA 2005-07 Program {Plan Performance evaluation. December 2007

Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme council : Profile of the Ethiopian Muslim development agency July 2007.

Guidelines for Terms of collaboration between SNNPR and governments and NGOs operating in the region BOFED April 2006.

A rapid assessment on CRDA Forums with particular reference on RDF. Jan. 2008 draft