ETHIOPIAN
COMMUNITY PROFILE

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This booklet has been compiled by the national office of the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs to assist state and territory governments, service providers and other key settlement stakeholders to settle new entrants under Australia's Humanitarian Programme.

Accurate information about the pre-arrival experiences of refugees, including environmental conditions in camps, can be difficult to obtain and verify. While every effort has been made to ensure this document is factually correct, it may contain some inaccuracies.

Refugee experiences can vary considerably between individuals. Readers should note that this document is intended to provide a general background of the possible experiences of arrivals under the Humanitarian Programme. Information presented here may not always be applicable to individuals within the community in Australia or to new arrivals.

Where possible, more detailed information on specific groups of arrivals will be provided to service providers as an adjunct to this and other Community Profiles.

Policies in relation to Australia's Humanitarian Programme change over time. For current information visit the department's website at www.immi.gov.au.

The information provided in this document does not necessarily represent the views of the Commonwealth or its employees.

Introduction

Ethiopia forms a part of the Horn of Africa, or East Africa—an area that has seen decades of natural disasters, political unrest, war, drought and famine that have forced millions of Ethiopians from their homes to seek refuge within their own country as internally displaced persons (IDPs) or in other countries.

Cultural Profiles Project (Canadian Government)

The 1970s saw Ethiopia face drought, the Ogaden War with Somalia and an oppressive military regime (the Derg, or 'Red Terror') which caused the displacement of almost a million people. Most became refugees fleeing into Somalia and Sudan. The 1980s saw another prolonged drought with consequent famine that drove a further 100 000 refugees into Somalia, 300 000 into Sudan and 10 000 into Djibouti. During the 1990s, unceasing drought and famine combined with insurgent activities in the Tigray region and neighbouring Eritrea incited another refugee exodus into Kenya and Sudan.

Ethiopia, like many of its neighbouring countries, has also played host to refugees fleeing their own countries – particularly the Somali and Sudanese.

Since 2000-01, Ethiopia has been one of the top ten source countries for humanitarian entrants into Australia. For 2006-07, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has asked Australia to resettle a small number of Ethiopian refugees currently residing in Kenya and Somalia. Special Humanitarian Programme and family stream arrivals are likely to continue.

Community in Australia

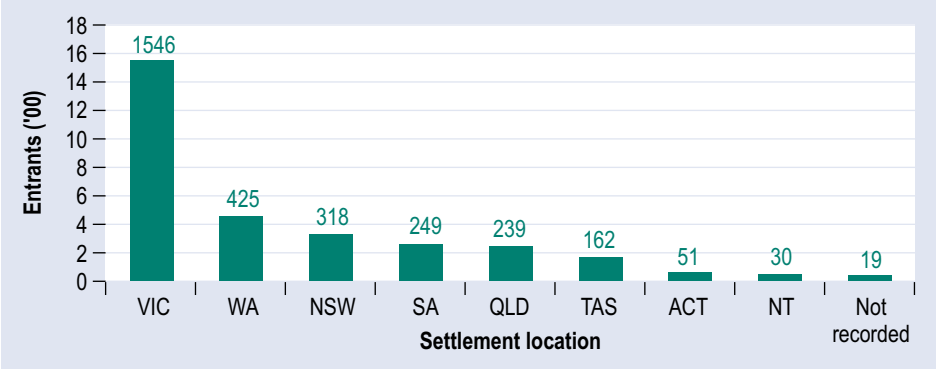
At the 2001 Census, 3600 Ethiopian-born people were living in Australia. Over the period 2000-05, the department's Settlement Database (SDB) identified approximately 3000 Ethiopian people settling in Australia[1]. The 2001 Census showed that the majority of Ethiopian residents were living in Victoria. This trend has continued – Figure 1 shows the settlement locations of Ethiopian arrivals over 2000-05.

Most of these entrants (approximately 60 per cent) arrived with poor or nil English language skills (Figure 2).

The increase in the Ethiopian population in Australia over the period 2000-05 has principally been through the Humanitarian Programme (65 per cent) with a significant number of family stream entrants (33 per cent) (Figure 3).

The majority (42 per cent) of Ethiopian arrivals were single persons. 33 per cent of entrants arrived as members of two person families. A significant number of entrants (three per cent) came as members of families with seven or more people (Figure 4).

Figure 1. Settlement locations of Ethiopian entrants, 2000-05



1 Readers should note that data on country of birth is not always a reliable indicator of the social, cultural or ethnic background of humanitarian entrants. There is often a great deal of cross-border movement in world regions affected by instability, and conflicts between neighbouring countries can result in borders moving over time. Additionally, children born in one country may have parents who were born in a different country. These children are likely to share the cultural, ethnic or linguistic characteristics of their parent's country of birth rather than their own.

Figure 2. Reported English proficiency of Ethiopian entrants, 2000-05

Figure 3. Migration stream of Ethiopian entrants, 2000-05

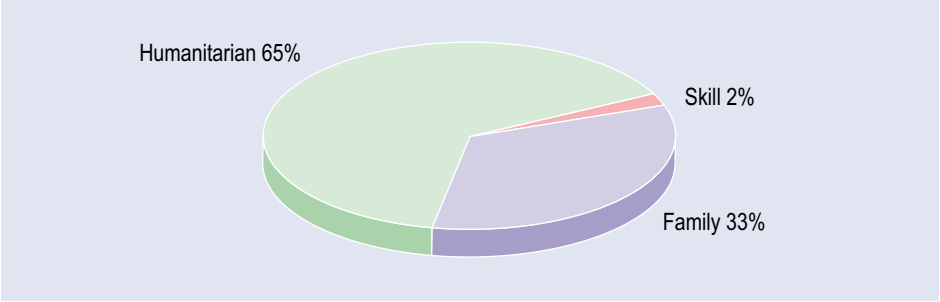
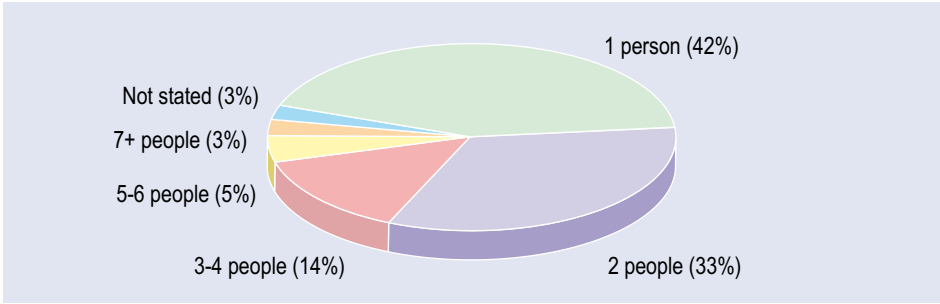
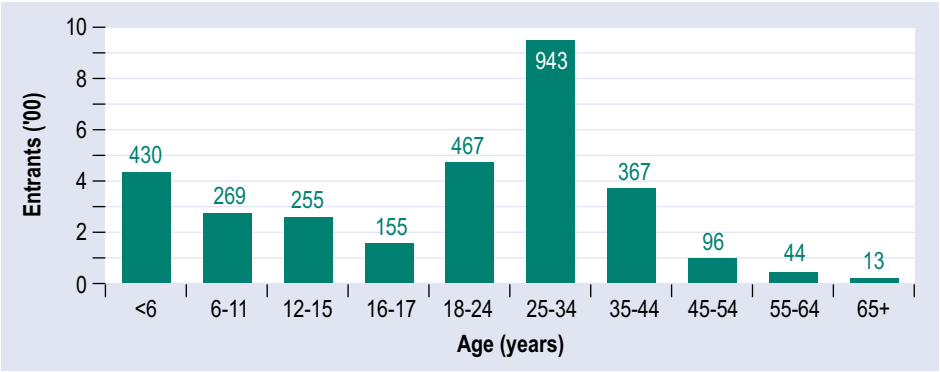


Figure 4. Family size of Ethiopian entrants, 2000-05



The majority of Ethiopian-born arrivals have been young adults and children – approximately 52 per cent were under 25 years of age (Figure 5). However, the 25-34 year old age group was the single most highly represented group over this period.

Figure 5. Age of Ethiopian-born arrivals 2000-05



Over the period 2000-05, males have constituted approximately 52 per cent of the intake and females, 48 per cent.

The ethno-linguistic structure of the Ethiopian community is complex. While these entrants share a common country of birth, there are many differences in ethnicity, language and religion within the community.

The Settlement Database recorded both the ethnicity (Figure 6) and main language (Figure 7) of large numbers of Ethiopian-born arrivals in Australia as not recorded, not stated, undefined or 'other'.

This may be due to an unavailability of fields in the department's data collection systems to record the large number of smaller ethnic and linguistic groups within this community.

As with language and ethnicity, the religion of many Ethiopian-born entrants was either not recorded, not defined or not stated (32 per cent). Of the remaining 68 per cent, various Christian denominations and Islam were the main religions identified (Figure 8).

Figure 6. Ethnicity of Ethiopian entrants, 2000-05

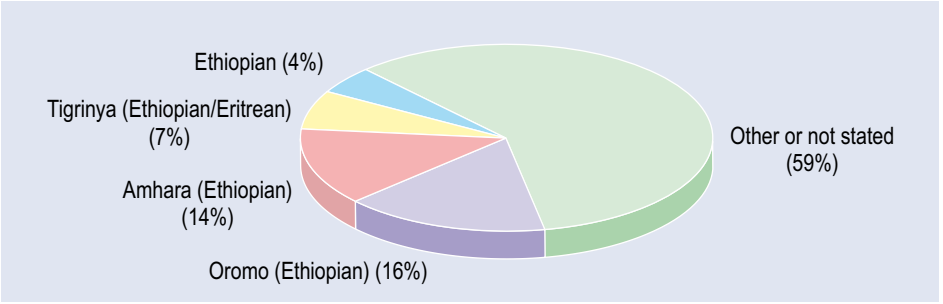


Figure 7. Main languages of Ethiopian entrants, 2000-05

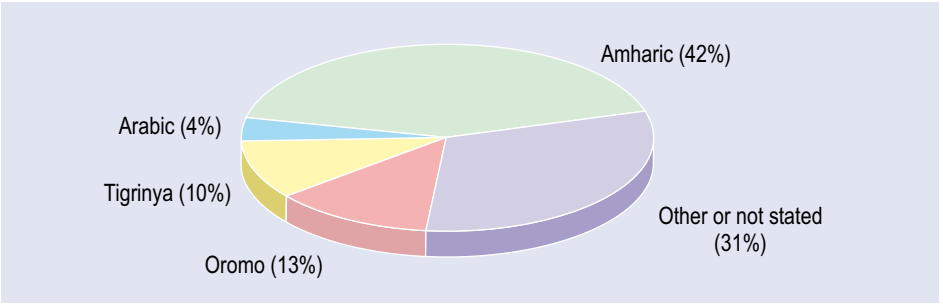
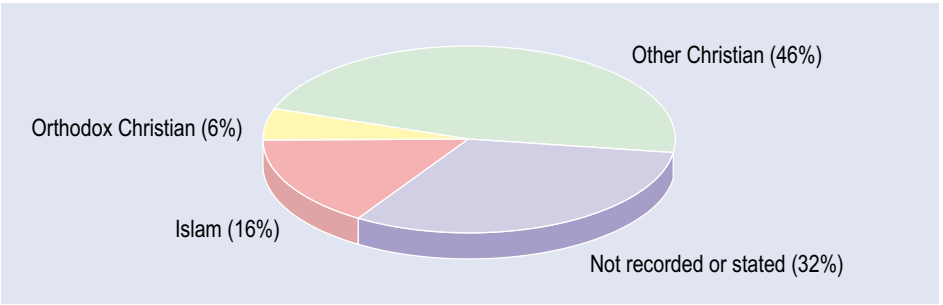


Figure 8. Religion of Ethiopian entrants, 2000-05



Pre-arrival experiences

Ethiopians arriving in Australia under the Humanitarian Programme have usually been living in refugee camps in surrounding countries such as Sudan and Kenya. Many refugees coming to Australia left Ethiopia when Eritrea gained independence in 1993 and non-citizens were expelled (see History and Political for more information). Repatriation was possible for a number of refugees from this dispute, however, some had entered into mixed marriages while living in refugee camps in surrounding countries. For some of these entrants, repatriation was not a viable option. Others are refugees for political and humanitarian reasons.

Some camps give shelter to tens of thousands of people and some a few thousand. Some camps provide basic accommodation and services, like schooling, while others do not have the capacity or resources. Camps are usually located quite a distance from major towns or cities, up to nine hours by car, making access difficult.

Residents of the camps have often lived there for many years and sometimes for more than twenty years. Children may have been born in camps and not experienced any other ways of living. Camp lifestyle affects individuals differently and can be a source of great stress, negative experiences and lasting trauma, adding to the existing trauma of the circumstances leading to flight from their country of birth. Entrants may also have resided in a number of different camps during their exile.

In the latter half of 2004, some 350 Ethiopians from Abu Rakham camp in Sudan were resettled in Australia. Most of these entrants were female-headed families who were at risk as they had no adult male support. Most identified as Christian, and of Amhara and Tigray ethnicity. Most came from rural backgrounds with little or no experience of urban life, and had lived most of their lives in camps.

Settlement considerations

The number of Ethiopian-born entrants to Australia has been decreasing slightly since a peak in 2003, when around 700 Ethiopians settled in the country. Ethiopian-born entrants are most concentrated in the metropolitan areas of state capitals. Very few are settled in regional areas, reflecting both the perceived level of assistance people of this community require during their initial settlement period, and their desire to be with their communities which are focussed in metropolitan locations. Mainstream agencies, particularly in metropolitan areas, will have had some experience in dealing with this community since numbers started increasing significantly around the year 2000. However, feedback from stakeholders indicates that an information gap exists on the settlement needs of this group.

Education levels are generally poor for the majority of Ethiopian refugees, with an average of less than 3-4 years school attendance. Children born in refugee camps abroad usually have less education than those who were born in Ethiopia. Some children may also be unfamiliar with formal schooling and need assistance to settle into the formal classroom situation. Illiteracy is common, particularly amongst women from rural areas. Those who are literate may not be familiar with the Roman alphabet as some Ethiopian languages use Ethiopics (Geez-Fidel), a script of characters based on phonics.

Most Ethiopians arrive with limited or no English proficiency and therefore require translating and interpreting services upon arrival. Consequently, acquisition of basic functional English is a key settlement priority.

Some Ethiopian families are significantly larger than the Australian norm (with a few families having up to seven or eight dependents or often including extended family). Suitable accommodation may be difficult to find for these families.

Many Ethiopian entrants come from rural areas and refugee camps and may be unfamiliar with a modern urban lifestyle. These entrants may need assistance to become familiar with living in Western-style housing, using utilities (electricity, telephone, internet), utilising a social welfare system, and learning how to access public services.

It is highly likely that entrants from Ethiopia will require assistance to gain training, work experience and employment. Some may have work experience in agriculture and service industries. Some men may have worked in or near refugee camps – working for the United Nations (UN) as drivers or in the nearest townships as bakers or in restaurants. Some women may have sold tea and food in the camps. However, many camp residents are unskilled, especially long term residents.

Health care in Ethiopia and in camps where Ethiopians sought refuge is limited. Common conditions include tuberculosis, HIV, hepatitis, poor eyesight, diabetes, malnutrition and high blood pressure. Some entrants may be unfamiliar with formal health systems, Western-style medicine and being treated by a doctor of the opposite gender.

Traditional Ethiopian age and gender roles may be significantly different to those in Australia. Settlement challenges such as unemployment, differing rates of English acquisition between family members, and understanding Australian laws, may cause some family friction. Western-style dress may also challenge traditional gender norms. A greater sense of freedom in Australia may also cause inter-generational or gender conflicts amongst parents and children.

To some Ethiopians, religion is a very important part of life and finding a denomination, religious community and place of worship may assist in the settlement process.

Ethiopian refugees will have a variety of documentation. The primary document from camps will be UNHCR ration cards and mandate letters. Some may have old Ethiopian or Eritrean passports. If a child was born in a camp there will most likely be a birth or baptismal certificate. Marriage certificates are less common. If the marriage took place longer than ten years ago, there will likely be no documentation. Some people do not know their exact birth date and in this case, birth dates are recorded as January of the year of birth.

Ethiopia country background

Location

Ethiopia is located in East Africa and forms part of the Horn of Africa. It is a landlocked country sharing borders with Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya and Sudan. Ethiopia covers approximately 1 120 000 square kilometres, which is almost the size of Australia's Northern Territory. The capital is Addis Ababa. The source of the Blue Nile, one of three tributaries of the Nile River, is located in Ethiopia's north-west.

There are currently nine regional divisions that have been delegated by ethnicity and two city areas that are not defined by ethnicity (Figure 9). These were created in 1995 and replaced a provincial system.

Figure 9. Regions of Ethiopia

1 Addis Ababa (City)
2 Afar
3 Amhara
4 Benishangul-Gumaz
5 Dire Dawa (City)
6 Gambela
7 Harari
8 Oromia
9 Somali
10 Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Region
11 Tigray

Andrew Golbez/ Wikimedia

Climate and topography

As the most mountainous country in Africa, most of Ethiopia is dominated by rugged peaks, highlands and plateaus that are dissected north-east to south-west by the East African Rift Valley. Elevated areas are surrounded by lowlands, fertile plains and semi-desert.

Ethiopia has a varied climate due to its diverse landscape and elevation, with temperatures ranging from 0˚C to 50˚C, over three climatic zones. Most of the year is dry with a rainy season from mid-June to mid-September. Ethiopia has experienced ten major drought-famine periods in the last forty years. Recent droughts are drastically affecting Ethiopia's agriculture and causing severe food shortages.

Population

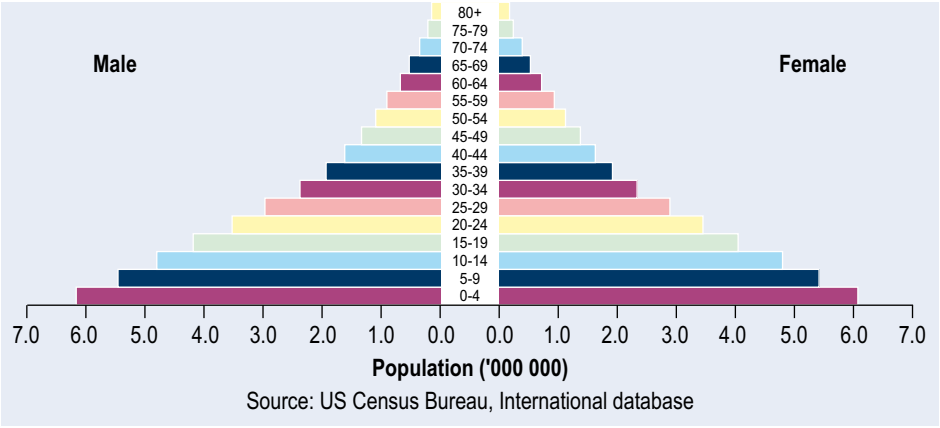
At 2005, Ethiopia's estimated population was approximately 73 million (Figure 10), with an annual growth rate of 2.36 per cent – one of the highest in Africa.

The infant mortality rate is 110 per 1000 births. Average life expectancy is 45.5 years (44.6 years for males and 46.3 years for females), making the median age 17.2 years and the proportion of the population over 60 a low 4.7 per cent (compared with around 12 per cent in Australia).

Language and ethnicity

The ethno-linguistic structure of Ethiopia is complex and diverse, with over 78 ethnic groups and 84 languages. The four main ethnic groups are Oromo (32.1 per cent), Amhara (30.2 per cent), Somali (6.2 per cent) and Tigray (6.0 per cent).

Figure 10. Gender distribution of Ethiopia's population as at 2006



Source: US Census Bureau, International database

Other smaller groups are Gurage, Sidama, Wolayta, Afar, Hadiya and Gamo. See Figure 11 for the distribution of these and other groups.

The top nine languages spoken are Amharic, Oromo (West Central, Eastern, Borana-Arsi-Guji), Somali, Tigrinya, Ometo, Sidamo and Afar.

Out of the 84 languages and 200 dialects, Amharic, English and Tigrinya are used as the official and national languages.

Ethiopian languages are predominantly spoken languages due to low literacy rates. There is an evident gender gap in adult literacy rates: 50.3 per cent for males and 35.1 per cent for females. The Ethiopics (Geez-Fidel) script is used to transcribe most languages, however, there is a recent trend (since 1991) to use the Latin alphabet for Cushitic languages (Oromo, Somali, Sidamo and Afar).

Figure 11. Ethnolinguistic groups in Ethiopia and Eritrea

National Library of Congress FRD

Family

The average Ethiopian family has between 5 and 7 children. The Ethiopian concept of family often includes extended family. Elders are respected and consulted to solve disputes or conflicts. Family cohesion is important and in times of difficulty relatives do what they can to help each other.

Gender and age

While Ethiopian law views men and women as equal, in reality, women are discriminated against in certain circumstances – particularly within families, in rural areas and with regards to ownership of property and rights to inheritance.

Social issues affecting females in Ethiopia are domestic violence, abduction for marriage, child marriage, lack of education, people trafficking and work prohibitions.

Social issues affecting children in Ethiopia are child labour, child abuse, trafficking (adoption, labour and prostitution) and military recruitment.

Religion

Ethiopia embraced a Coptic form of Christianity in the fourth century AD and, although facing challenges from the Muslim and Roman Catholic faiths, has retained this unique form of Christianity up to the present day.

Religion is part of everyday life in Ethiopia. 50 percent of people identify with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, forty percent with Islam and the remaining ten percent with Protestant or animist practices. Inter-religious relations are said to be amicable and both Christian and Muslim holy days are recognised by the government.

Dress

Western-style clothing is commonly worn in cities. In rural areas traditional clothing is more common and traditional dress is usually made from an Ethiopian cotton cloth. Men and women's clothing usually covers most of the body. Traditional shawls are worn by men and women, even with Western clothing. Some women also wear a traditional headscarf called a 'shash' which is a cloth that is tied at the neck. This is common among both Muslim and Christian women.

Food

Regional, ethnic and tribal differences contribute to dietary variation, and eating beliefs and rituals throughout Ethiopia. Some religions also dictate prohibitions concerning food (including pork and other animal products like dairy) and promote fasting at certain times of the year.

Ethiopians eat with their right hands rather than with utensils and before eating will wash their hands at the table using a jug of water and a small basin.

Generally, the Ethiopian diet (in times of prosperity) consists of:

- Meat – cow, sheep or goat, chicken and fish (from lakes)
- Vegetables – onions, kale, pumpkins, potato, sweet potato, cauliflower, cabbage, red beets and tomatoes
- Fruit – lemons, bananas, pawpaw and oranges
- Legumes – chickpeas, peas, lentils and broad beans (whole, split or as flour)
- Grains – teff, corn, barley, wheat and millet spices and oilseeds and
- Milk – cow's milk.

An Ethiopian meal usually consists of a stew (wot/achilla) of meat, vegetables and pulses and sauce including spices and is served with flat bread (injera/enjera).

Injera is a kind of bread usually made from teff seed, and is described as a sour pancake. Injera forms the major portion of the Ethiopian diet and is eaten with most meals. Pieces of injera are torn off and used to scoop up food. It is seldom eaten on its own.

Common drinks in Ethiopia are tela (a local variety of beer), tej (fermented honey wine or mead), tea and coffee. Coffee is one of Ethiopia's most abundant crops and is therefore a more common drink. It plays an important role in social interactions, particularly between women in the village who drink it when they gather together. It is used in a ceremony and marks friendship, respect and hospitality.

The coffee ceremony is a ritual that involves a server and guests and can take hours to complete. It can take place up to three times a day and is usually accompanied with conversation revolving around the community, politics, life and gossip. The server washes the green coffee beans in warm water to remove the husks and then roasts them over a fire.

Ethiopian coffee ceremony
Cultural Profiles Project (Canadian Government)

The server then crushes them into grounds with a mortar and pestle. The grounds are mixed with water in the coffee pot (jebena) which is traditionally made of clay and has a long neck and spout. Coffee is usually served to the eldest person first and then by generation. Sugar is added where available and snacks may accompany the coffee (barley, popcorn, peanuts). Incense is burned throughout the ceremony.

Sweets are not so common in the Ethiopian diet. Honey is used in some desserts and to make wine for special occasions.

Khat (also known as qat, gat or chat) and miraa, a flowering plant native to tropical East Africa, have been grown for use as a stimulant and as a highly valuable cash crop for centuries in the Horn of Africa. Their fresh leaves and tops are chewed, or sometimes dried and consumed as tea, as a recreational drug for their amphetamine-like effects. These drugs are most prevalent in the east between Dire Dawa and Haver. Chewing the stimulant leaf is a part of the culture of Ethiopia's Hararge region. The leaves are widely and legally consumed in Ethiopia and surrounding countries such as Yemen and Somalia.

Ethiopian Calendar

For centuries Ethiopia has followed a calendar which is based on the Julian calendar as opposed to the Western Gregorian calendar. The Ethiopian year is on average 365.25 days long, causing the calendar to gain a day about every 134 years. The Ethiopian year consists of 365 days, divided into twelve months of thirty days each, plus one additional month of five days and six in leap years. The Ethiopian/Eritrean New Year begins on 11 September and ends the following 10 September. The Ethiopian year also runs almost eight years behind the Western Gregorian year. For example, the Ethiopian year 1983 began on 11 September 1990, according to the Western (Gregorian) calendar, and ended on 10 September 1991. However, Ethiopia has substantially adopted the more universal Gregorian calendar for business and official use.

Health

Malnutrition from drought, famine and war is an ongoing concern. The AIDS/HIV epidemic has advanced from urban areas to rural areas and is responsible for 30 per cent of adult deaths. In turn, the number of children orphaned is increasing. Other common ailments are intestinal parasites and worms, infectious disease from insect bites, tuberculosis, typhoid fever, malaria, trachoma, syphilis, dengue fever, diarrheal illnesses and Hansen's disease (leprosy).

Traditional and herbal medicine are commonly used and trusted. Common beliefs about illness are sometimes supernatural. Injection is usually preferred over oral medication.

Some traditional surgical procedures are not necessarily performed by doctors and therefore result in complications (infections, tetanus, sepsis, bleeding, and anaemia) and sometimes death.

Education

Reports on current literacy rates in Ethiopia are inconsistent, with some sources reporting a rate as high as 59.7 per cent and some as low as 34.8 per cent.

While some sources say six years of primary education is compulsory, others indicate that there are not enough schools and compulsory attendance would be impossible to enforce. Education is free, however, students may have to cover costs of materials and uniforms, which is often problematic. Schools are generally oversubscribed and there is a lack of materials, leading to poor learning conditions within the classroom for students and teachers. In primary schools the teacher to student ratio is 1:65.

Often the buildings are poorly constructed, even hazardous, and classrooms do not have desks or chairs even for the teachers.

It is common for schools to have two shifts, the morning shift and the afternoon shift. The morning shift runs from 8.00 am until 12.00 pm and the afternoon shift from 12.30 pm until 5.30 pm. Students are in either the morning shift or the afternoon shift as there are not enough schools to accommodate student numbers.

Primary school is delivered in two cycles. The first cycle covers grades 1-4, and the second cycle, grades 5-8. Roughly half the school age population attends primary school. A gender gap still exists and male students make up the majority (42 per cent female and 52 per cent male). Ethiopian children start primary school at the age of seven and generally attend for five years. Drop out rates are high for socio-economic reasons.

A national exam in grade eight determines entry into secondary school. Around 30 per cent of children attend secondary school, which covers grades 9-12. To progress to tertiary education, students sit a national exam in twelfth grade. Attendance of tertiary education is around one per cent.

The school year runs from September to June. Tuition is delivered in national languages depending on the area (i.e. Amhara, Oromo, Tigrinya, Somali). English is taught as a second language, and is the language of instruction after Grade Eight.

Economy

Ethiopia is one of the least developed countries in the world, ranked 170 out of 177 nations in the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Human Development Index (2005). Conflict, gender inequality, disease, famine and lack of access to information are some of the obstacles to development. Almost half of Ethiopia's working population belongs to the informal economy.

Agriculture and animal farming account for the largest proportion of the Ethiopian economy, followed by government and services and then by industry and construction. Coffee is the country's biggest export and in 2004, Ethiopia was ranked as the eleventh biggest coffee producer in the world by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

An Ethiopian coffee-bean farmer
USAID: Sub-Saharan Africa Picture Library/ Wikimedia

Other agricultural exports are leather, khat, oil seeds, pulses, sugar, fruits and vegetables, meat products, livestock and floriculture products. Other agricultural interests include cereals, horticulture and cotton. Industries operating in Ethiopia are food and beverage processing, textiles, chemicals, cement and smelting.

History

The region known as Ethiopia has a long history of human habitation, including some of the earliest traces of human civilisation in Africa. Unique among African countries, the ancient Ethiopian monarchy maintained its freedom from colonial rule with the exception of the 1936-41 Italian occupation during World War II (WWII).

Although the period of Italian control was brief, it had a significant effect on Ethiopia's subsequent development, with many other areas of Italian East Africa (present day Eritrea) being incorporated into a newly federated Ethiopia following the end of World War II.

Figure 12. Colonial influence pre-WWI

Ken Mayer/Wikipedia

The Italians had control over Italian Eritrea and Italian Somaliland and merged these regions with Ethiopia to form Italian East Africa (an area covering today's Eritrea, parts of Somalia and all of Ethiopia - see Figure 12). In the fifth year of colonisation the British helped the Ethiopians to expel Italy and in 1941, power was returned to the Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie.

Politics

After World War II, Eritrea was removed from British power through a UN resolution, and from September 1951, became an autonomous territory federated with Ethiopia. However, Haile Selassie dissolved the Eritrean parliament in 1962 and made Eritrea a province of Ethiopia. This caused a war led mainly by the Muslim Eritrean Liberation Front, and eventually contributed to Selassie's downfall.

Selassie was overthrown in 1974 by a pro-Soviet/Marxist military junta, which set up a provisional administrative council of soldiers, known as the Derg. A military dictatorship under Lt. Col. Mengistu Haile Mariam (generally known as Mengistu) was created.

The Mengistu regime was known for its brutality as well as keeping Haile Selassie under arrest. People who posed opposition were summarily imprisoned and executed in a campaign known as the 'Red Terror'. Military rule was strict and conscription included all men from 18-70 years old. It is thought that the regime was responsible for the death of Emperor Selassie in his own palace.

During the internal conflict and turmoil that followed the fall of Haile Selassie, the Somali government took advantage and attacked the Ogaden region of Ethiopia (a Somali-inhabited region). The Somali invasion, known as the Ogaden War, started in 1976. In response, Ethiopia sought help from Cuban and Russian forces who helped to bring the invasion to a halt in 1978.

The late 1970s and early 1980s saw Ethiopia adopt a Soviet-style communism. By 1987, a new constitution was put in place by referendum and Mengistu became president of the newly named People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. The referendum was Ethiopia's first vote where most adults over the age of 18 participated. A heavy military presence ensured that the new constitution would be adopted and it received an 81 per cent in-favour vote.

During the 1980s Ethiopia was struck by famine and people fled from the then provinces of Eritrea and Tigre. However, these disasters did not stop the Eritrean independence movement progressing. Ethnically based opposition groups emerged - the Tigrayan Peoples' Liberation Front (TPLF), the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and others - and in 1989 joined powers to form the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF).

During this time, Soviet support for Mengistu waned due to insurgency and regime changes in the former Soviet Bloc. Without Russian assistance, Mengistu struggled to maintain power. In 1991, after entering Addis Ababa, the EPRDF overthrew the 17-year Mengistu regime. A democratic Transitional Government of Ethiopia was formed, a coalition of a wide range of former revolutionary groups with the TPLF as the majority party. In 1992 and 1993, the OLF and the Southern Ethiopia Peoples' Democratic Coalition left the government on the basis of differing political aspirations to the TPLF.

In 1994, a constitution and multi-party democracy were installed. Prime Minister Meles Zenawi was elected as head of government and introduced significant change, in particular, dividing Ethiopia into ethnic regional divisions. Alongside Zenawi, Negasso Gidada was elected as president for a six-year term. Girma Wolde-Giorgis succeeded the Ethiopian presidency in 2001.

In 2003, a federal system of government was adopted. A second general election was held in 2005 and Meles Zenawi remained undefeated as the Prime Minister. There were protests following the election with claims that the vote had been corrupt, and many people were killed during demonstrations and clashes around the country.

Separatist action from opposing political parties and movements are sporadic and ongoing. The government is facing dissent and serious accusations of genocide, torture, unlawful imprisonment and intolerance of any opposition.

As well as internal disputes, ongoing struggles with Eritrea have contributed to Ethiopia's instability. In 1993, Eritrea gained independence by referendum after years of struggle. 1998 saw the war between Eritrea and Ethiopia recommence, resulting in population displacement and many deaths. The war also left a legacy of landmines that are still a danger in the region today.

In 2001, a peace agreement (the Algiers Agreement) was signed by Ethiopia and Eritrea. However, border disputes with Eritrea have continued despite the peace agreement and the presence of around 4000 UN peacekeeping forces. Conflict continues to the present day with both countries remobilising troops along the border and sporadic fighting.

Sources of information

The information compiled in this report comes from a variety of sources as follows:

- emails from relevant staff working with this caseload
- discussions with staff in the department's national office as well as state and territory offices
- the department's Settlement Database and
- the following references:

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