MEDREK

EDUCATION: ISSUES FOR DEBATE

Articles By:

- ✍ **Bahru Zewde** *on Higher Education*

- ✍ **Damtew Teferra** *on Knowledge Centers*

- ✍ **Dessalegn Rahmato** *on School Feeding*

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The Forum is a Center for Research and Debate on Development and Public Policy.

EDITOR'S NOTE

*T*his is the second issue of the FSS *Bulletin* though for reasons beyond our control it has been delayed in coming out by a few months. In this issue, we focus on EDUCATION, offering three short essays, or rather 'think-pieces', on various aspects of the subject. While we do not suggest that these pieces give an adequate picture of the complex educational problems the country is facing, we believe each of the contributions in its own way provides insights that will stimulate debate. We believe Education is of paramount im-portance to this country because globalization is turning the world economy into a knowledge -based economy and without a highly trained body of intellec-tual workers and a skilled labor force it will become increasingly difficult to compete in the world market, and, more importantly, to survive as a nation. There is thus no alternative to investing in quality education and univer-sal literacy.

The three think-pieces look at different facets of education. Bahru Zewde reflects on the state of higher education in this country in the last half century. The history of higher educa-tion is full of ill-advised policy deci-sions and missed oppor-tunities, and the decline of Addis Ababa University, the flagship of higher learning in the country, is, to a large extent, a prod-uct of these circumstances. While in the last decade there has been an explosive growth of insti-tutions of higher learn-ing, both public and private, this has come at the expense of educational stan-dards. Damtew Teferra makes a strong plea for what he calls "knowledge centers", that is, higher institutions of science and technology. In a world increas-ingly driven by information and communication technology (ICT), and when changes in ICT are taking place at a breathtaking pace, poor coun-tries such as Ethiopia are not only left far behind but their national security is threatened. Damtew argues for the estab-lishment of colleges or universi-ties of science and technology and of a Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technol-ogy.

Ethiopia has committed itself to fulfill the objectives of the Mil-lennium Development Goals (MDGs), but it now appears that it will take the country a century or more to meet the tar-gets set in the eight MDGs. The third think-piece by Dessalegn argues that we should adopt a fast track approach to meet at least some of the MDGs within a reasonably short period of time. One such approach con-sists of a strategic intervention in education in the form of school feeding or food-for-education programs. The international ex-perience indicates that such pro-grams, if properly implemented, can improve school attendance, learning ability and the nutri-tional status of children.

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Reflections on Higher Education in Ethiopia under Three Regimes[*]

Bahru Zewde[**]

Introduction

Some three years ago, Addis Ababa University marked its Golden Jubilee with a host of activities: a series of exhibitions, poetry readings, sports competitions, panel discussions and a crowning ceremony when selected individuals from both faculty and non-faculty were recognized for distinguished and meritorious service to the University and the nation at large. In those fifty years of its existence, the University - like the rest of the country - has seen three regimes. Outwardly diverse as those regimes are - imperial autocracy, military dictatorship and ethnic-based federalism - they are united in their ambivalence to the University. And that ambivalence has been on an ascending scale, lowest under the imperial regime and highest in the post-1991 dispensation.

This reflection on higher education in Ethiopia is divided into three parts. The first part is in the nature of an overview of the expansion and transformation of higher education in the last fifty-three years. The second part focuses on the role of the state in higher education. For, although, some non-state actors have surfaced in the last few years, the state has played - and continues to play - a paramount role in the expansion and structuring of higher education in Ethiopia. The third part concludes with an overall assessment of the subject.

As is common knowledge, higher education in Ethiopia began with the opening of the University College of Addis Ababa (UCAA) in 1950. UCAA started as a typical liberal arts education institution. Although the Faculty of Science has now become probably the most important unit of Addis Ababa University, at that time, it was the Faculty of Arts that had a central place. It was only later on that Science became a full-fledged faculty. The first half of the 1950s saw a remarkable expansion of higher education with the opening of a number of other colleges: Engineering (Addis Ababa) in 1953 and Agriculture (Alemaya), Building (Addis Ababa) and Public Health (Gondar) in 1954. It was these various colleges, as well as units that emerged in subsequent years (Faculty of Education, School of Social Work, Faculty of Theology and College of Business Administration, in that order) that were eventually merged to form the Haile Sellassie I University (HSIU) in 1961.

Expansion and Transformation

HSIU probably represents the most fruitful and the most significant phase of higher education development in Ethiopia. This period lasted from 1961 to 1974. In the reconfiguration that attended the 1974 revolution, HSIU - and its name - became one of the casualties. The name "Haile Sellassie" had to be changed. It took some time to coin an appropriate substitute. After flirtations with such names as the "National University of Ethiopia" and the "University of Ethiopia", the Derg settled for the less controversial and probably more logical name, Addis Ababa University (AAU). AAU remained the only higher education institution in the country, with its affiliated colleges in the various regions (including subsequently the agricultural college in Awasa), until the enfranchisement of Alemaya as a separate university sometime in the 1980s.

In the last decade, we have witnessed a remarkable variegation

of the picture. On the one hand, we have seen a number of regional universities, although some of these grew out of the embryonic colleges that had formerly been affiliated to AAU, such as Jimma, Bahr Dar, Awasa (rechristened "Southern University"). Side by side with this development, we have seen the mushrooming of private colleges. The term "mushrooming" is not totally inapproprite for the growth in the number of these colleges has been little short of breath-taking.

When we pause and reflect on the state of higher education in the last decade or so, there is not doubt that it has witnessed considerable expansion. At the same time, however, we discern a disturbing element. And this is the fact that this expansion has been achieved without due regard to the availability of adequate facilities and human resources. The expansion has not been accompanied by commensurate staff training and development. If anything, the opposite has been the case. Ethiopia has suffered a veritable brain drain. Likewise, facilities have deteriorated, except perhaps for some of the relatively well-endowed universities.

A second critical point has been the inherent problem of allocation of students to the regional universities. This is a matter that has affected practically every family. Allocation has not been by choice but by a sort of random sampling, so that some of the best students have not had the chance to go to the institution of their choice.

A third critical point has been

the fact that, in all this process of expansion, the premium has been placed on quantity rather than quality. As a matter of fact, in most cases, quality can be said to have suffered and continues to suffer. This is particularly the case with AAU, which had relatively higher standards in the past.

As far as the private colleges are concerned, they have represented a positive development. If it were not for these colleges, a number of young people would have remained on the street, in their houses or in the video shops. Thanks to the colleges, their life has been changed from one of total despair and hopelessness to one of hope and purpose. On the other hand, there has been little regulatory intervention, other than the government certification that is paraded so ostentatiously when it is obtained. There is indeed an element of crass commercialism about the way these institutions have come about and operate. So the task of regulating this exercise remains the challenge of the future.

The Role of the State

The recent mushrooming of private colleges notwithstanding, the state has played a paramount role in higher education in Ethiopia. All the universities have been state institutions. And, as indicated at the outset, the state has had rather troubled relations with these institutions, particularly with the major one, Haile Sellassie I/Addis Ababa University.

The foundations of higher education administration were laid

under the imperial regime. The university as a chartered institution had its origin then. And that charter did mean something. Although there were occasional violations of the charter, by and large it was honoured. Much could be said to have depended on the nature of the leadership. With a president like Kasa Wolde Mariam, who, in addition to his influence with and access to the Emperor, had personal qualities of leadership, the University was respected. In addition to the charter, all the basic elements of a university administration - the Board, the Faculty Council (later renamed the Senate), the Academic Commissions, the Consolidated Legislation, and the registration rules and procedures - were laid down at that time. There has not been much improvement on them since their inception. If anything, there has been more infringement than improvement.

The relation between the state and UCAA/HSIU passed through two stages. There were first the halcyon days. That was the time when the Emperor, who regarded himself - and was regarded by quite a few - as the father of the nation, gave particular attention to the welfare and well-being of the students. He paid regular visits to the campus, dishing out dessert to dining students. He even attended the annual college days and gave prizes (in the form of watches) to winners of poetry contests until those functions became rather embarrassing in their stridency.

This paternalism gave way to confrontation in the early 1960s. The turning point came

with the abortive coup d'etat of 1960. It deepened with the adoption by the students of the revolutionary slogan of "Land to the Tiller" and reached its climax in 1969. That was the year that saw the first nation-wide student protest against the regime. It was also the year that witnessed the famous tract of Wallelign which denounced the emperor as senile. That tract shattered the image of the Emperor as the father-figure. It marked a point of no return. And we all know what followed.

Relations between the state and the University under the imperial regime thus underwent a shift from harmony to confrontation. The Derg period saw a reversal of the pattern, even if relations could be said to have been far from happy in the last days. In the beginning, it was all upheaval and turbulence. It started with the *zemecha* (or, in its official rendering, the Development through Cooperation Campaign), which had some positive aspects about it in the sense that students and their teachers were sent out to transform the countryside, as it were. The second *zamacha* of the mid-1980s, which dispatched students and staff to the remote west and southwest to build huts for resettled peasants, was sheer madness by comparison.

These conscriptions, for they were nothing short of that, were mild by comparison with the incarceration and exectutions that many staff and students suffered. Not to mention the exodus that deprived faculties and colleges of some of the best staff. For example, the Depart-

ment of Ethiopian Languages and Literature, which had proportionately perhaps the highest number of Ethiopian PhD holders, was a major casualty, losing most of them to the diaspora. The Department of History was another. The faculty strength of that department had been so strong that, in the late 1960s, there was serious talk of opening an MA programme. By 1978/79, the staff strength had been reduced to five.

Another aspect of the pressures exerted on the staff was the indoctrination process. This included the weekly so-called discussion forums, immortalized in the taxi called *weyeyet*, the summer orientations and the state-controlled staff associations. In the administrative sphere, the establishment of the Higher Education Commission represented the first major assault on the autonomy of the University. A university which until then was a chartered organization came to be subjected to an agency of the state. And that state of affairs has continued to this day. The name has changed. There is no Higher Education Commission. But the Ministry of Education continues to keep a watchful eye - not always benevolent - on the affairs of the University.

But it would be unfair to draw an unremittingly gloomy picture of the University under the Derg. In the 1980s, the Derg and the University came to some kind of accommodation. After the Derg had killed all it could kill, it came to realize that intellectuals and universities matter. There was thus significant expansion of higher education, particularly in the

graduate programme. From 1979 onward, most of the graduate programmes in the natural and social sciences that we have today came into existence. There was also active engagement by the faculty in research. Departments like Biology, Chemistry and History witnessed considerable staff development, diligent application to research and remarkable research output. Chemistry started its prestigious Bulletin. History produced its famous annual seminar proceedings.

The post-1991 period had a promising start. The first two years (1991-1992) could be described as a period of honeymoon between the government and the University The staff were told that they could have an association free of state control. And they did have their association and their freely elected officers. A third series of the staff magazine, *Dialogue*, also appeared carrying a number of articles that triggered lively national debate. For the first time in its history, the faculty also elected the University President and Vice-Presidents.

But things began to turn sour early in 1993, opening perhaps the darkest chapter in the history of the University. I do not think the University has yet come out of it. The crisis of 1993 is all too well-known to require recounting here. Suffice it to say that, in the unprecedented and still inexplicable mass purges that the government resorted to, the elected officers and officials (of the University Teachers' Association and the University Administration) became the foremost

casualties. What we have had since then is one long process of damage-control, admittedly not too successful. The government appears to have lived in the hope that the University would somehow wither away. In the meantime, it has shifted its attention and focus to institutions like the Civil Service College. This started as a sort of political school for the training of cadres (à la Derg) but has managed, thanks to the unstinting support and preferential treatment it had obtained from the government (including a salary scale that puts the AAU one to shame), to evolve into a viable academic institution.

The regional universities have also emerged as alternatives to AAU. There is no doubt that a country as big and diverse as Ethiopia was bound to have sooner or later regional universities. As a matter of fact, as early as 1970, a "Blueprint for Development" sponsored by the Ford Foundation had envisaged the decentralization of HSIU in the following terms:

… there are compelling reasons for decentralizing Haile Sellassie I University. Ethiopia is large and geographically heterogeneous. The development of the country will require that educational opportunities be provided in the various regions. There is also an urgent need to establish institutions in the provinces to enhance economic and cultural progress outside the capital.[***]

Similar recommendations for decentralization were made in the early years of the EPRDF regime. Yet, side by side with this legitimate measure of ex-

pansion, one could discern a tendency on the part of the government to engineer this move as a way of deflating AAU by making it one of many institutions rather than "the apple of the eye", as it had customarily been regarded.

Overall Assessment

The past fifty-three years have represented a long march in the history of higher education in Ethiopia. What started as **a** college has now become **universities**. The student population has grown from hundreds to tens of thousands. We have moved from a predominantly expatriate staff to an almost exclusively Ethiopian one, although in recent years there has been a regression in this respect, with desperate efforts to fill the gap created by the brain drain through the recruitment of expatriate (notably Indian) staff. The degrees offered have been elevated from BA/BSc to MA in many disciplines and even PhD in some.

Yet, when we look at the situation more critically, the expansion has been more quantitative than qualitative. Those who have been closely associated with AAU - as indeed the employers of the graduates - know all too well how far standards have gone down. To give just one example, the BA theses of the 1960s and 1970s are almost equivalent to the present day MA theses. The MA theses of the early 1980s are equivalent to the current PhD theses. I am sure closer investigation would reveal other indices of the downturn.

Moreover, one cannot help but

feel that this general expansion of higher education has been at the expense of the main institution, AAU. In fact, AAU could be said to have become the *bête noire* of the present regime. The saga of the charter, which has been eluding the University like a mirage since 1991, is one good illustration. One remembers in particular the pathetic pleas of one of the University presidents at almost every graduation ceremony. As these words are being penned down, the saga finally seems to be over, although the imminent granting of the charter appears to be accompanied with a disturbing conditionality of self-sufficiency.

Another disturbing affair has been the phenomenal turnover in leadership. In the past twelve years, the University has seen five presidents. This compares very poorly with the situation under the imperial regime, when Kasa Wolde Mariam was president from 1961 to 1968 and Aklilu Habte from 1968 to 1974. Even under the Derg, Duri Mohammed presided over the affairs of the University for some half a dozen years. What is even more disturbing is the fact that the presidents who lasted shortest (months rather than years) were the ones who were elected by the staff - President Alemayehu Teferra in 1992/93 (with ten years of imprisonment to boot) and President Eshetu Wencheko in 2001/2002.

Finally, another matter of serious concern has been the brain drain. This started under the Derg and, contrary to expectations, has continued after its fall. In imperial days, it was

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unthinkable for Ethiopians sent abroad for higher degrees to fail to return. Many did not even wait for the conferment of their degrees before they packed and returned. Nowadays, Departments who get back their staff after prolonged study leaves consider themselves fortunate. Staff have been lost not only to the diaspora but also to private and international organizations within the country.

Lest we conclude on such a somber note, some recommendations are in order. The chartering of higher education institutions - including AAU - is a matter of utmost priority. For the stifling of institutional initiative and enterprise remains the single most serious impediment to improving the standards of higher education. The successes registered by HSIU had a good deal to do with the fact that it was a chartered institution. Secondly, the expansion of private higher education facilities is to be encouraged, with the proviso that there should be some degree of control and regulation as well as the fostering of healthy interaction with the state. Thirdly, a mechanism has to be devised to attract or at least interact with the Ethiopian intellectual diaspora. Conducive conditions have to be created to make this attraction and interaction feasible. The sort of dialogue fostered by this conference - which I understand is the second in the series - is thus something to be welcomed.

Note

[***] I am indebted to Professor Johannes Kinfu for drawing my attention to this and making available to me a copy of the Blueprint.

Damtew Teferra*

Introduction

We live in a world driven by information and knowledge made predominantly possible by breakthroughs in science and technology. The crucial role of knowledge and information has received, more than ever before, increasing emphasis and recognition all over the world, particularly in the developed world where much of the impact of discoveries has been felt. As a consequence, the level and extent of scientific and technological discoveries have become a measuring index upon which the social, economic, and political vigor of a particular country or region is gauged (Teferra, 2003).

Higher education institutions in developing countries occupy a unique position as the most dominant institutions of knowledge and information brokerage. They are the leading agents of knowledge creation, access, and dissemination despite the pervasive challenges they constantly face.

It is the premise of this paper that the first major step forward in overhauling the Ethiopian knowledge system is to re-affirm that high-level education and science and technology are critical components of national development. I argue that building strong higher centers of knowledge is not simply a matter of national development, but rather a matter of national security.

Building the Rationale

The knowledge economy depends on the production of a critical mass of capable and competent high-level engineers, medical professionals, computer and information technologists, scientists and social scientists not only to produce knowledge but also to acquire, develop, package, adapt and adopt knowledge that is produced elsewhere. It is possible to import highly sophisticated and expensive instruments for the purposes of education, research, development, security, and defense. The country however needs not only those capable of operating the sophisticated instruments and machines but also experts with sound knowledge on what to acquire, emulate, order, and adapt—and equally importantly—those who can configure the wide ranging ramifications of these decisions. This can only be achieved if a country is endowed with high-level and competent workforce and strong academic institutions and research centers that produce them in good numbers. In the knowledge-based economy driven by information and communication technologies (ICT), maintaining high-level institutions should be equated as an important national duty as maintaining a national army and security forces.

I would like to draw on the following home-based and regional examples to solidify my argument. As an agrarian economy hard pressed to address the chronic problem of food security, Ethiopia needs to build a solid weather and climatic forecasting system by harnessing the massive information available. It is important to underscore that even if a country can be provided with up-to-the minute information, without an institution and appropriate system that have the capability to process and digest it, it can do little to effectively utilize it. One excellent, but poignant example illustrates this with remarkable thrust. Six months before the catastrophic floods in Mozambique in December 2000, British meteorologists had issued warnings about the danger, but there was no in-country capacity to analyze the scientific data, draw concrete conclusions, and recommend preventive measures that could have saved thousand of lives (World Bank, 2002, p. 13). That is what I mean by national security.

My experience illustrates that libraries in Ethiopia and for that matter many other developing countries often recruit librarians and information service providers from less qualified cohorts, often from the existing pool of administrative employees

(usually as a means of promoting them). Present day libraries however require highly trained experts in the field of information and communication technologies that are competent in locating, organizing, packaging, integrating, and delivering information, data, and resources (increasingly) from the Internet and online databases. This trend has special meaning to those countries that are at the periphery of the knowledge market (which Ethiopia is), and therefore Ethiopia needs to place highly skilled and competent professionals that can effectively and efficiently <u>browse the global knowledge market</u>.

One more example from the field of <u>biotechnology</u> and genetic resource development and I will bring my examples to a conclusion. Ethiopia is known for its rich flora and fauna. Ethiopian botanists reckon that one in ten plants is endemic (unique) to the country. This rich heritage can only translate into national wealth if these resources are tapped consciously and wisely. The exploitation of natural resources will remain illusive unless we identify, organize, and develop our resources. Doing so has become all the more important national duty as the multinationals, drug companies and other prospecting institutions are currently scrambling to identify patentable components from as many species of flora and fauna as is available. There is a great need to be conscious of potential global and regional threats and address them on timely fashion without imposing unduly restrictive and ineffective regulatory regimes to catalyze the development of our national resources. <u>The recent story that *tef*—Ethiopia's staple grain—was under the threat of patenting is a grim reality that hit not close to home, but home itself.</u> That is what I mean by national security.

The knowledge economy necessitates that for sustained socio-economic progress to be maintained a country needs to be endowed with a large group of highly trained individuals, stable government, and cheap labor. As transnational corporations emerge as vital source of foreign direct investment, countries are under increasing pressure to reposition themselves to get access to this massive and growing resource of economic development. Being part of the globalized world, whether by coercion or consent, the country must provide these ingredients—<u>without, of course, loosing sight of our long-term national interest</u>. Building and maintaining active and productive centers of knowledge—to enable the country to capitalize on and also actively participate in the emerging knowledge-led global economy—should be our top national priority.

The Need to Shift Gear

The Ethiopian government has opted for a national economic policy guided by "Agricultural-D e v e l o p m e n t - L e d - Industrialization". This position makes sense for a rural agrarian country like Ethiopia. The development of agriculture not just for self-sustenance but also industrialization is a well-intentioned policy. This policy however needs to be moderated in order to take stock of the emerging global knowledge-based economy.

Relying on agriculture alone to bring about industrialization and consequently achieve national development is now considered far-fetched and we need to <u>redefine and reposition our national policy within the context of the emerging global trend</u>. The recent bold decision by Vietnam, the world's second-largest coffee exporter, to destroy one-fifth of its coffee plantations is indicative of the direction the world is moving and we have to be conscience and vigilant of such changes. As a country, which is predominantly dependent on coffee production, this is a vital cue for Ethiopia.

World Development Report affirms that "the need for developing countries to increase their capacity to use knowledge cannot be overstated" (World Bank 1999: 16). Another major report also warns that:

- Lagging countries [which Ethiopia is a front runner,] will miss out on opportunities to improve their economies through, for example, more efficient agriculture production and distribution systems—which would increase yields and lower the proportion of food wasted due to poor distribution—or by making exports more competitive through better meteorology, standards, and quality testing.

  It goes on to reiterate that:
- Countries without a minimum scientific communication and technological capacity will also lag in realizing social and human benefits such as rising life

expectancy, lower infant mortality, and improved health, nutrition, and sanitation. Such countries will be increasingly vulnerable to emerging threats.

Except for countries endowed with massive natural resources of high current demand (and limited supply), such as oil and precious metals (diamond, gold, etc), the existence of natural resources in a nation is no more a guarantee for sustained economic progress. While there should be greater emphasis to feed ourselves—and therefore an urgent need to build a sound national agricultural system—achieving visible, tangible and sustainable development based on agricultural-led industrialization alone appears to me somewhat remote. A caveat emptor: I am not an economist by profession and cannot provide a complex economic analysis of development but for sure understand the trend and direction of development in the world; and Ethiopia, like others, need to take into account these global trends to achieve economic development. Ethiopia, therefore, needs to review its current policy by taking into consideration knowledge-based developments around the world.

Learning from Others

This recommendation is based on the observation and experience of many African and other developing countries that are gearing up to do the same. Later on, I mention some of these countries that are re-emphasizing science and technology and revitalizing higher education. But for now let me take a brief detour to explore what others are doing in areas of ICT that we should definitely pursue.

In a number of African countries, conscious policies have enabled home-grown initiatives and industries to operate and compete globally using ICT. The traffic citations that are served on the streets of New York are not processed in the US anymore. Ghanaian computer operators in computer centers in Accra, punch those citations twenty-four hours a day zooming them back to the US virtually.

Even more so, the Ghanaians are now gearing up to capture the outsourcing business of telemarketing dominated by Asia—particularly Bangalore in India. In Ghana, the sales agent of Rising Data dials up over the Internet, and tries to sell a mobile phone plan for a German mobile operator, T-Mobile, to people in the US. While it is legal for US citizens to call Ghana over the Internet, it is illegal for people or Internet cafes to offer that same service in reverse. The threat of losing business to India (unless the telecommunications industry and the government gave them permission to operate as such) worked, and Rising Data was eventually granted its license to use voice-over-internet technology via satellite rescuing the business venture.

Mauritius has embarked on a process of reform with a view to liberalizing the ICT sector and accelerating the transformation of the country into a knowledge-based economy. One of the ministries is in fact appropriately named as the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunications, which clearly indicates where the country plans to head. In its aim to play a key role in the development of Mauritius as a knowledge-based society and a regional IT hub in the Indian Ocean, the government established the University of Technology in 2000.

The Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology in Kenya is another example from next-door. Another example from West Africa is Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. The Government of Uganda not so long ago announced the founding of two more publicly funded universities: one of which, Kyambogo University, will focus on technology. One of the two public universities in Uganda, Mbarara University of Science and Technology, entirely focuses on science and technology.

With this background, I would like to turn to the main thrust of this paper. If a country fully recognizes that promoting higher education, science and technology is in its national interest, it must make a commitment to create a visible national body for that purpose equivalent to a Ministry and accountable to the Council of Ministers. I will try to make a strong case below for the need to do so.

Re-Engineering the Knowledge System

The development of high-level

expertise to create, access, consume, and disseminate knowledge has become too critical for national development. Integrating science, technology and higher education in a national development strategy has become mandatory to make meaningful social and economic progress. Pertinent institutions, departments, and expertise need to be reorganized and streamlined to capitalize on these emerging developments; the repositioning and reconstitution of ministries and organizations are therefore major steps in realizing this.

About two decades have elapsed since the Commission for Higher Education got disbanded; and the current organization of the higher education system in Ethiopia is also more than a decade old. There is thus a great need to overhaul our organizational system of higher education and knowledge institutions in keeping with global changes and challenges. We must be conscious of the changes that are shaping around the world, or else it will be even more difficult to keep pace. The world has changed dramatically over the last two decades—riding fast on the information highway. Countries all over the world are clamoring to overhaul their high-level knowledge institutions to tap them as an engine of development and we should do the same. We need not initiate change just for the sake of it; but the changes we do must be governed by long-term vision, genuine commitment, and above all national interest.

I am thus proposing the establishment of a new independent and autonomous institution that governs higher education, science and technology in the country. The Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology (MHESAT) will thus govern these domains in a more integrated manner with special focus on building national competitiveness. It is my premise that this institution will live up to the expectations and aspirations of the nation and its people.

The Need to Integrate the Two Institutions

What is the rationale for integrating these domains? Higher education and science and technology are two sides of a coin and constituting them to operate under one ministry immensely maximizes their impact and influence. The mission and objectives of the two entities are inextricably linked and

Table 1: Selected African Countries with Ministries of Science/Technology	
Algeria	Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
Benin	Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur et la Recherche Scientifique
Cameroon	Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur
Chad	Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur de la Recherche Scientifique et de la formation professionnelle
Cote d'Ivoire	Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur
Egypt	Ministry of State for Scientific Research
Gabon	Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur de la recherche et de l'innovation technologique
Mauritius	Ministry of Education and Scientific Research
Morocco	Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur
Mozambique	Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology (2000)
Namibia	Ministry of Higher Education, Training and Employment Creation
Niger	Ministère des Enseignements secondaire et Supérieur
Nigeria	Federal Ministry of Science and Technology
Sudan	Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
Tanzania	Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education
Zimbabwe	Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education

Source: Damtew and Altbach, 2003

organizing them around one ministry will help effectively optimize and reinforce the objectives and missions of the two entities in catalyzing national development.

Higher education and science and technology operate effectively under one roof of an organization. Moreover, the input and the modus operandi of the two entities are interrelated in nature. They are inherently interlinked and intertwined and bringing the two entities under one ministry is simple common sense. As the following example shows many African countries have already done so.

Mandate and Governance

What will be the mandate and governance structure of MHESAT? MHESAT will govern both public and private higher education institutions in Ethiopia. And all higher education institutions—private and public—will be accountable to MHESAT. Simply put, MHESAT will be an organizational body that will rein on all matters pertaining to tertiary education, science and technology. MHESAT will also play a leading role in the development of ICT in the country in close collaboration with the Ministry of Transport and Telecommunication and probably also with the Ministry of Capacity Building.

How do I envisage MHESAT to be different from existing (or even past) organizations whose mandates have been to run and manage higher education, science and technology in Ethiopia?

From the outset, it should be noted that the success of MHESAT depends on the generosity of the government in funding and autonomy. First and foremost, MHESAT needs to be an autonomous institution free from much of the constraints of cumbersome guidelines and provisions governing Ethiopian ministries.

Most African higher education institutions face challenges pertaining to governance, leadership, and management. In many countries, there is a growing shift to provide those institutions more freedom and more autonomy in running their own affairs, including exemption from immobilizing civil service regulations.

The need to furnish higher education institutions more autonomy and flexibility is not simply to extricate them from the debilitating bureaucracy. The exemption of these institutions creates a whole different perspective and operating capacity and vibrant culture in the institutions. This can only be achieved if MHESAT is organized as an autonomous body, unconstrained by guidelines of the civil service. MHESAT needs to be governed by a different set of rules and guidelines that strike a balance between accountability and autonomy.

A body that manages the knowledge capital of a nation needs to be led, without any doubt, by competent, prominent and highly revered experts. If a nation is making a conscious decision to make knowledge a powerful tool to extricate itself from pervasive social and economic deprivations, and a force

to capitalize on existing resources to become competitive in the global market place, it has to ensure that the knowledge institutions operate at their highest capacities, unconstrained by restrictive regulatory regimes that often suffocate bright ideas and initiatives. The development of the country, its national security, and its sovereignty and its future rest on how we, as a nation, organize, manage, and run our industries of knowledge creation, access, and distribution. At the heart of the knowledge system are the academics and more favorable and healthy policies need to be drawn to effectively utilize and mobilize them. The knowledge industries are critical catalysts of national development and national security. These industries of national significance should therefore be granted not just more funding but more autonomy, operating space, and more visibility.

The Ministry will be led by a minister and two vice-ministers. The ministry will have two departments each headed by a vice-minister. The two main departments will be higher education and science and technology. Each department will have several divisions that work very closely.

Leadership

The Ministry will be governed or advised by a board drawn from experts in higher education institutions (both from public and private), research institutions, and representatives from ministries of agriculture, education, energy, finance, health, industry, transport and communication and defense.

There has to be a conscious effort to include those leaders in private businesses, particularly in ICT and agro-industry. Furthermore, the presence of a representative from the highest executive branch of the government (in this case the prime minister's office) will help enhance the activity of this body.

It is my professional opinion that the Ministry needs to be established by merging the existing Department of Higher Education (under the Ministry of Education) and the Ethiopian Science and Technology Commission (ESTC). While my information on the new Ministry of Capacity Building is limited, it is my perception that the two may have many common grounds that can also be integrated.

The Department of Higher Education will have a number of divisions, units and offices that will incorporate existing departments and the envisaged entities in the Education Sector Development Program (ESDP II) —such as the Higher Education Strategy Institute and the Higher Education Quality Assurance Agency which is otherwise known as accreditation agency.

The program of action planned under ESDP II which is reported to be based on diverse technical studies—such as higher education administration and management, financing and cost sharing, strategic planning, cost effectiveness and efficiency, and capacity building and future directions—will be, I believe, implemented better with such reorganization.

The six departments of ESTC can be effectively reorganized with a sharp focus on enhancing the country's economic and social development and improving its competitiveness in the global marketplace. One recommendation is to create and nurture the "Office of the Information and Communication Technology" with a wide array of mandates to push the country forward to become an important player in the sphere of ICT in the 21st century.

The Formation of National Research Council

The most visible outcome of this reorganization, I envisage, will be the formation of a vibrant and high-powered research council. The Ministry will have a high-level research council that will direct, supervise, and fund research on higher education, science and technology with special emphasis to long-term national interest. The council will be run by outstanding and highly motivated board members made up of prominent Ethiopians (both in the country and the Diaspora) and expatriates. The board membership should be drawn from broad walks of life—in government, business, academia, think-tanks, and NGOs—to bring together leaders in research, business, teaching, economics and politics.

The Minister of MHESAT will preside over the Office of the Research Council. The board may, as need be, create several councils presided over by board members of the Office of the Research Council. The Council may also co-opt individuals for expert views on an ad hoc basis.

Office of International Relations and Diaspora Affairs (OIRDA)

The Ministry will have, among other things, a division that actively engages and cooperates with Ethiopian Diaspora communities who are especially involved in research and teaching. It will solicit and recruit highly visible Ethiopians abroad to team up with those at home to launch joint operations through this office. It will proactively mobilize the Diaspora to engage in high-level national issues through embassies, NGOs, and the Ethiopian Expatriates Affairs General Directorate at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry will address pervasive and chronic impediments that constrain the involvement of Ethiopians abroad in the development of higher education, science and technology.

Some of the Diaspora communities that can be tapped include Consensus Forum for Ethiopians in the Diaspora (CFED), Society of Ethiopians Established in Diaspora (SEED), Association for Higher Education and Development (AHEAD) based in Canada, Addis Ababa University Alumni International Network (AAUAINet), Jimma University Alumni Network (JUANet), Ethiopian Knowledge & Technology Transfer Society (EKTTS), and many overseas-based scholarly associations. Some of these have already expressed their interest and determination to

network with government and non-government institutions, the public sector, private businesses and civil society organizations on various areas.

The power of the Diaspora is immense—quantifiable and many not so quantifiable. The estimated three million Ghanaian Diaspora/immigrants, of whom 300,000 professionals, send remittances that approach US$400 million a year. This source has become the third largest foreign exchange earner for the country exceeding receipts from the sale of timber and timber products. As Ghanaian president Kufour acknowledges, the Ghanaian Diaspora is "the single most important development partner of the nation". Echoing on similar lines, his cabinet minister reiterates that there would be no need for the country to depend on international loans if Ghanaian Diaspora are effectively mobilized.

According to Global Development Finance-2003 (2003), workers' remittances reached US$80 billion in 2002, up from US$60 billion in 1998. The report points out that workers remittances in Sub-Saharan Africa doubled from US$2 billion in 2000 to US$4 billion in 2002—the highest level over the last six years. In 2001, remittances to the continent were US$2.4 billion. And yet two major sources of external financing for Sub-Saharan Africa are bilateral grants (US$10.4 billion in 2002) and FDI (US$7 billion in 2002). Unlike foreign direct investment, remittances are a more stable source of external finance than debt. Indeed, remittances tend to be counter-cyclical, buffering other shocks, since economic downturns encourage additional workers to migrate abroad and those already abroad to increase the amount of money they send to families left behind. For most of the 1990s, remittances have exceeded official development assistance. Over one million Ethiopian immigrants/ Diaspora reside around the world of whom there are 300,000 in the US and 20,000 in Canada (Luxner, n.d.). More than an estimated 5,000 Ethiopians migrate to the US every year; and while figures for those who decide to change their status in a host country are not available, it is estimated to be very high. These are great economic and technical potentials that need harnessing.

As I noted earlier, Ethiopia now has the highest migration/brain drain in Africa. While it is nearly impossible to stop the movement of people, especially highly trained personnel without draconian measures whose effect has not been productive, the country has to position itself to tap from its loss.

Recognizing the Diaspora as a potent force of national development is a growing and emerging development. In recognition of this potential and to enhance its input, foreign affairs ministers from more than 50 African countries convened on 21 May 2003. The ultimate mission of the meeting was to hammer out ways to mobilize Africans in both developed countries and developing nations to play a role in the continent's new socio-economic plan, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

We need to take the Diaspora rather seriously and OIRDA should play a visible role in boosting their contributions toward the country's development. It is my knowledge that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has established an office for Diaspora and immigrant affairs to do a somewhat related task. This office in MHESAT will need to work closely with this office in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to enhance the engagement of the Diaspora community for the development of the nation.

Endowment Office

Endowment is the least exploited means of generating resources for universities in the continent. And yet, the overwhelming majority of US universities and colleges generate billions of dollars through endowment. A few countries in Europe, notably Britain, and Africa are pushing to capitalize on that front.

With over a million immigrant and Diaspora community, Ethiopia has a good potential to capitalize on this untapped resource. The Ministry, through this office, should foster the establishment of Alumni Relations Office in respective universities to help generate resources from alumni, generous citizens, philanthropic organizations, and the Diaspora community. One means to achieve this is to embark on an endowment drive.

Other relevant institutions/ bodies to address issues such as accreditation, quality control,

distance/virtual education need to be established as necessary. In fact the Education Sector Development Program (ESDP II) envisages the establishment of Higher Education Strategy Institute and the Higher Education Quality Assurance Agency.

Conclusion

Before I conclude this proposal, I would like to quote a poem by a dejected Ethiopian solider some generations ago as the Ethiopian army got beaten in the hands of the invading Italian army that had total air control and supremacy on the battle field in the 1930s…in case more evidence was needed to underscore my argument.

BeMaychewm bekul mech yimeTa neber
BeMeqelleam bekul mech yimeTa neber

Besemay lay meTa bemanawqew hager
(Tekletsadiq Mekuria)

The translation of the poem in English goes somewhat like this:

Marching on Maychew could not have been possible
Marching on Meqelle could not have been possible
Had we known the new frontier of warfare—the sky

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First of Two Options Submitted for Debate

Dessalegn Rahmato*

Introduction

I would like to offer this short and preliminary discussion as part of my contribution to the debate on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and how the MDGs should be contextualized for our purposes. This and a second piece that I hope to present for public discussion will argue that if we wish to meet at least some of the MDG targets within a reasonable period of time we have to make hard choices and concentrate our resources on a few but strategic interventions. As will be shown in the discussion that follows, I do not believe this country will be able to meet any of the targets set in the MDGs within the time frame indicated. I therefore argue that there are two strategic interventions we can make which will help us meet a good number of the MDGs within two to three decades. These are investing in a well-thought-out school feeding program on the one hand and in clean water supply on the other. In both cases, the focus should be on rural households. I shall discuss the benefits of investing in clean water supply and the chances it will offer in meeting the MDGs in a second article to be published soon. I presume there are specialists on both subjects more knowledgeable than myself, however, my intention here is no so much to present new knowledge or new findings as to invite public debate.

The purpose of this short discussion is to draw attention to a subject, school feeding, which has not attracted wide debate nor been seriously considered as a viable program option by educationalists or development planners in this country. School feeding programs have been undertaken with positive results by numerous countries and under diverse circumstances. They have been tried in the U.S., especially among low income communities, and in poor as well as emerging economies in east Asia. The aims of school feeding have varied depending on the needs and policy objectives of each country, but broadly they have been undertaken to encourage greater school attendance, in particular at lower levels of the educational system, improve children's learning ability, to minimize the drop-out rate, to improve the nutritional status of children, and/or to support needy families. The basic assumption is that, other things being equal, children who have access to adequate food on a regular basis do better in school and if this food is provided as part of the school program there will be improved attendance. Children who are hungry and malnourished do poorly at school, are more likely to drop out or may not even enrol in school in the first place.

I would like to argue that a well-thought-out school feeding program, in particular at primary grades, will not only pay handsome dividends in terms of school attendance and class room performance but will be the best option we have of meeting some of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that this country has committed itself to. In other words, school feeding should be employed as a fast track approach to achieve, directly, at least three of the eight MDGs within fifteen to twenty years. What exactly do I mean by school feeding? A feeding program should consist of *at least one nutritious meal a day for every child* (or for targeted children from poor families) in primary school provided as part of the school's normal program activities. The food should be purchased, as much as possible, from the community in which the school is located. The program should obviously be launched after wide consultation with parents, teachers, school officials and pupils. An alternative approach is what is known as *food-for-education (f-f-e)* (or sometimes food-for-schooling, f-f-s), which is a variation of food-for-work programs except that parents are offered a regular ration of food grain for committing themselves to send and keep their children in school. This approach has been tried in Bangladesh with encouraging re-

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sults. We shall look briefly at the pros and cons of both approaches further down.

If properly implemented, a school feeding program (either through school-based feeding or through f-f-e) will have the following immediate benefits, especially in rural communities:

a) it will encourage more families to send their children to school, and those which already do so to keep their children in school

b) more children will stay in school, and this will drastically reduce the high drop-out rate which is common in most schools, rural or urban at present

c) better nourished children perform better in school thus more children will move on to higher levels of schooling than do at present

d) it will improve the nutritional status of children which at present is shockingly poor

e) it will reduce child morbidity and mortality which currently is predominantly caused by hunger and poor diet

f) it will improve the local economy and hence local income levels as the food for the children will be purchased locally; it will create employment opportunities in the school community

g) in the long run, it will reduce hunger and malnutrition as the children will grow up better schooled with better chances of earning a living

h) it will promote greater participation of parents and the community in school affairs (and hence greater grassroots democracy) since the feeding program will have wide impact, linking the school and children with parents and the wider community.

A fully fledged school feeding program is costly but I believe it is well worth making it a focal point of government investment even if this means taking away scarce resources from other priority areas. In the following pages I shall look briefly at the Millennium Development Goals on the one hand and primary education and child poverty in Ethiopia on the other. The aim is not to examine in depth these two subjects but to present the framework within which to place school feeding as a sound option.

The Millennium Development Goals

The MDGs emerged out of the UN Millennium Declaration adopted by 189 countries at the largest heads of state gathering in New York in September 2000. The leaders agreed to reduce extreme poverty, promote human health, and work for gender equality and environmental sustainability. The MDGs, a total of eight in number, that emerged from this gathering consist of specific measurable targets that countries committed themselves to achieve between 1990 and 2015. The Goals and targets are listed below- I have selected for inclusion only those targets relevant for this discussion (UNDP 2003):

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
> *Target 1: Halve by 2015 the proportion of people whose income is less than US $1 a day*
> *Target 2: Halve by 2015 the proportion of people who suffer from hunger*

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education
> *Target 3: Ensure that by 2015 all children, boys and girls, will be able to complete primary education*

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women
> *Target 4: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education by 2015*

Goal 4: Reduce child mortality
> *Target 5: Reduce by two-thirds by 2015 the under-five mortality rate*

Goal 5: Improve maternal health
> *Target 6: Reduce by three-quarters the maternal mortality rate*

Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other major diseases

Goal 7: Ensure Environmental sustainability

Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development

It is now recognized that many of the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, and a few elsewhere, will not be able to meet these Goals at all. The international donor community divides these countries into two categories: in the first category are what are called the *top priority countries* which consist of 31 countries, of which 25 are in Africa;

Ethiopia is included in this category. These countries have the least chance of meeting the MDGs. They have not only failed to show adequate progress towards meeting the Goals but are experiencing reverse progress. In the second category are what are known as the *high priority countries* of which there are a total of 28, with 13 from Africa. The situation in these countries may not be as desperate as those in the first category but they too will not be able to meet the MDGs. Indeed, according to the recent UNDP document, it will take the 38 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa from both categories (including Ethiopia) more than 125 years to achieve universal primary education, 145 years to halve extreme poverty, and 165 years to cut child mortality by two-thirds. No date has been suggested to end hunger because the countries' food security situation continues to worsen (UNDP 2003: Ch. 2). As readers are well aware, Ethiopia's food security situation has been deteriorating alarmingly for the last three decades, and today there are 14 million starving people in the countryside with an even larger number expected to suffer hunger and famine in the coming three to four years. In contrast, the countries in east Asia and the Pacific have already achieved some of the MDG targets and are on course to meet many of the others well before 2015.

Under these circumstances, it will be suicidal to take a conventional approach to the immense challenges facing this country: a radical and fast track approach is desperately needed.

Unless urgent, decisive but sound measures are taken to lift the millions of people in this country from abject poverty, to end hunger, and to provide education for all children within a reasonably short period of time, there will be universal suffering leading to a condition in which the very survival of the country as a nation will be in serious jeopardy. It is in this light that school feeding as a viable option and one promising a wide range of achievable results, is suggested. Let us now look briefly at the conditions of child education and child poverty.

The government's poverty reduction strategy, as set out in its SDPRP document (MOFED 2002) has been well received by the international donor community. More recently, the food security strategy proposed by the Coalition on Food Security (2003), a group made up of government and donor experts with participation by some NGOs, has similarly been appreciated by a good number of donors who have provided extensive food aid to the country for many years. A recent document by UNDP-Ethiopia (2003) on the challenges facing the country in meeting the MDGs provides a rather optimistic picture. It argues that given the government's successes in such areas as growth in GDP in the 1990s, and increases in the Gross Enrolment Rate, there is a good chance that the country could meet the goals of poverty reduction and universal education as set out in the MDGs. It concludes that Ethiopia's challenge to meet all the targets in the MDGs will not be an easy one, however, "several reforms on the home front and increased

commitment by the international donor community may make the dream come true" (:54).

I do not share this optimism nor the enthusiasm of the donor community regarding the government's poverty or food security strategy. It is my opinion and that of informed Ethiopians active in civil society organizations that unless some innovative and bold measures are taken the country will not meet the MDG targets within the time frame indicated. The strategies employed by the government to date, to reduce poverty and food insecurity are based on the same policies pursued by it since the mid-1990s. These policies have been responsible in part in exacerbating rather than reducing poverty, especially rural poverty and food insecurity. I have argued in a recent work that most rural households have been experiencing an erosion of their livelihood capabilities for the last three decades and that many households are falling out of poverty into destitution. Moreover, unless some radical reforms are forthcoming, agriculture, the source of livelihood for more than 85 percent of the population, will continue to decline progressively bringing misery and devastation to millions of people (Dessalegn 2003).

School Enrolment and Child Poverty

School Enrolment
In view of the limitations of space, we shall not attempt at a broad discussion of the state of education in this country here. Suffice to say that the country's

achievement in this area is deplorably low compared to other countries in Africa. Its rate of adult literacy, of school enrolment, resource allocation and other records compare very poorly with its neighbours and countries elsewhere in the continent. This is all the more shocking considering the fact that this country has had its own script and an educational system, admittedly rudimentary and one-sided, for many centuries whereas for many Africa countries education is a recent colonial import.

According to the latest official figures (CSA 2001), only about one-third of the school age children (between 7 to 12 years) were attending primary school in 2000. At the secondary level, there were only 12 percent of children between 13 to 18 years in school. There is thus a wide drop between primary and secondary education. In the rural areas, the picture is more troublesome: net primary enrolment here was 28 percent, and secondary enrolment four percent. Here, there are more boys than girls attending school at both levels. The figures for the urban areas are relatively better: net enrolment at primary level was 75 percent and secondary 48 percent. There are of course wide disparities in enrolment and educational facilities among regions and between town and country. As a general rule, there is relatively better school attendance and classroom performance in urban as opposed to rural areas. There are disadvantaged regions where the chances for primary or secondary education are very limited indeed. According to MOFED (2002), there has been

a slight improvement in school attendance at both levels between 1995 when CSA's first welfare monitoring survey was undertaken and 2000 when the second one was completed. Be that as it may, the figures show that a great majority of children who should have been in school are not pursuing education.

The other issue of relevance to our discussion is the gap in school attendance. According to a study carried out by EHRCO for the years 1991-1998 (2003: 46-48) there is a high drop-out rate from primary schools, and that in fact the rate has been growing for the five years for which it was able to collect information, reaching 12 percent in 1998. It shows that drop-out rates in the first grades are very high: in the 1997/98 school year the rate in the first grade was 27 percent. According to the CSA report noted above, the drop-out rate n 2000 from primary school was 15 percent, however, the figure was higher in the rural areas, where it was 18 percent as against five percent in the urban areas. The rate in secondary school was also 15 percent, but here the rural-urban gap was slightly higher, with 28 percent in the former and 10 percent in the latter. Interestingly enough, in all cases, there was a higher drop-out rate among boys than girls. Obviously school attendance varies with the economic status of children's families. There are less children attending school from poorer households than from richer households (see Tekie et al 2003).

The two main reasons frequently given for children not attending school are the need to

work, often to supplement the family's income, and sickness. The first is a function of poverty and the second, in many cases, hunger and poor nutrition. The available evidence shows a high incidence of ill health among children. According to CSA, some 35 percent of children under five have health problems. According to the recent survey by Tekie et al, 10 percent eight-year old children in the sample had long-term illness. Children will also discontinue schooling because the school is too far away from their home, because they have difficulty in learning or because of ill treatment by school authorities or bullying by other children.

Child Poverty
Let us now turn to child poverty and nutritional status, but first a general remark on rural malnutrition. The depth and extent of rural malnutrition is shockingly high by whatever yardstick we wish to measure it, and while there may have been some periodic dips in the figures due to fortuitous circumstances, the evidence suggests that over the long term nutritional vulnerability has worsened in all respects. Nutritional vulnerability can be caused by a wide range of factors, including insufficient diet, diet lacking in variety and basic nutrients, famine shocks, and past health experience (malnutrition of the mother, for example). Related to this is life expectancy and mortality.

The rates of child and infant mortality in rural Ethiopia are the highest in Sub-Saharan Africa. According to the latest DHS, the under-5 mortality rate

is reported to be 193 per thousand- a very high figure by any standard. Child and infant mortality reflect a cumulative process and are determined by the health status of the mother, particularly in childhood. Comparison of child malnutrition in Ethiopia with other countries indicates the harsh realities of poverty in the country. UNICEF's annual reports on the world's children show consistently that since the 1980s malnutrition rates among Ethiopian children are among the highest in the world.

One indicator of the nutritional status of children, in particular, which reflects *long-term* nutritional deprivation is *stunting* (low height for age). Since the beginning of the 1980s, stunting among children in Ethiopia has been getting worse and has remained the highest in the world (UNICEF 2000). According to the data in the CSA report noted above, 57 percent of children under five in the country were stunted (with 31 percent severely stunted). In contrast, under-5 stunting in Uganda was 38 percent and in Kenya 37 percent. Stunting among under-5 children in the rural areas is slightly higher. Another indicator of long term nutritional vulnerability is being under weight. The figures in the same report show that 45 percent of children were under weight; the figure for the rural areas was 47 percent. The figures show that boys are more prone to malnutrition than girls. The survey conducted by Tekie et al (:50) looked at the nutritional status of eight year olds; these are children who are or would if they were in school be in the first grade. The figure for stunting and under weight among these children was 33 percent, and in each case rural children were worse off.

School Feeding Experience

To the best of my knowledge, a full-fledged school feeding program undertaken as part of the regular services provided by schools to students, particularly at primary grades, has not been tried in this country. Such a program should not be confused with feeding services provided in boarding schools. One reason why they have not been tried may well be the problem of cost: school feeding is not a cheap service to provide nor is managing such a program easy. Moreover, there has been no serious debate on the subject even among educationalists and other specialists, leading one to assume that the subject was not considered important, relevant or feasible. In 1996, as part of a study on the creative uses of food aid commissioned by WorldVison, a large international NGO (whose development program included an education component), we asked school officials in the target woredas what they thought of the idea of employing food aid to run a school feeding program. The main problem of schools in these woredas was poor attendance, a high drop-out rate and molesting and abducting of girl pupils on their way to and from school. The school officials, who had never thought of school feeding as a viable option to tackle the problems they faced, laughed at the idea because they thought children will come for the food but will not stay in school once their stomach was full.

In the past, during the imperial regime, there were scattered programs to provide milk products to school children by UNICEF and other donors but these were not managed as a regular service of schools and were not sustained. During the Derg and at present some NGOs have run emergency child feeding programs as part of an attempt to encourage children to stay in school. The programs were discontinued once the emergency conditions had come to an end. It would be interesting to learn to what extent such emergency feeding impacted on school attendance and learning ability.

Elsewhere in the world, a variety of school feeding programs, some quite innovative, have been tried out with considerable success (for some of the literature, including Bangladesh's innovative food-for education program, see IFPRI's website). The literature makes a distinction between school-based feeding programs and food-for-education (or food-for-schooling) programs. In the first case, meals are provided to children in school, while in the latter food grain is given to the families as a regular ration. Both programs provide incentives to parents to send children to and keep them in school. School-based feeding has the added advantage of increasing a child's learning ability in the classroom but it does not alleviate short-term hunger outside the school. On the other hand, f-f-e transfers food to the family which may consume it or sell it to obtain cash to meet its non-food expenses. It thus immediately improves the income lev-

els of poor families.

For our purposes it may be relevant to briefly look at the food-for-education (f-f-e) program that was undertaken in Bangladesh in the 1990s, with IFPRI providing support in program design, monitoring and evaluation. As in Ethiopia, pervasive poverty prohibited large numbers of rural families from sending their children to or keeping them in school. As a remedy for that, the government of Bangladesh launched the f-f-e program which involved providing a free ration of food on a monthly basis to poor rural families on condition that they enrol their children in primary school and that the children maintained an 85 percent attendance rate. Families were free to use the food as they wished: they could consume it themselves, or sell it and use the cash for other expenses. The program covered over a quarter of all primary schools and was responsible for enrolling about one-third of all primary school students in the country by 2002. According to IFPRI's evaluation, the program served a wider purpose than simply providing support to needy families. It increased enrolment in primary schools by a substantial percentage. While enrolment of boys increased by 28 percent, the enrolment of girls jumped by 44 percent. IF-PRI concludes that it empowered children from poorer families with education, thereby paving their pathway out of poverty. This experience is relevant for Ethiopia not only because there are many similarities between Bangladesh and Ethiopia but also because there has been considerable experience by NGOs and others in this country in managing food-for-work programs in the rural areas.

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The following FSS publications, which came out recently, will be of interest to our readers.

📖 ***Rural Lands and Evolving Tenure Arrangments in Ethiopia: Issues, Evidence and Policies.* (**FSS Discussion Paper No. 10). Tesfaye Teklu. May 2003.**

Abstract

There are important changes in tenure arrangements and practices since 1975 but with mixed performance. Among the positive attributes of these changes is the simplification of the complex tenure systems as compared to the pre-1975 period albeit questionable if such level of homogeneity has a desirable mix of tenure arrangements. A large segment of the farm population is able to access and operate land. There is a broadening of the land distribution of the country by shifting the concentration of landholdings towards the middle and lower-sized farm categories. There are incremental policy changes that include transfer land to heirs, titling of use rights, and relaxing restriction on rental market in some regions. The constitutionality of some of these changes is, however, questionable since the 1995 constitution still prohibits any transfer of land other than through state mandated institutions.

On the other hand, there are increasing numbers of small-sized farms. Some of these are uneconomic in size. There are growing numbers of rural households with no access to government allocated land ("landless"). Insecurity of land and tree tenure effectively reduces rights in land, militate incentive to invest in land and grow perennial crops, and limits growth in rental market. There is also evidence of widespread breakdown in common property tenure arrangements such as common grazing and forestlands for lack of effective institution to economize on and efficiently use these resources. The residence requirement for having and maintaining access to government allocated land fragments land markets and restricts migration as a strategy for diversifying income and pooling risks, and easing pressure on land.

The history of land policy sequencing since 1975 has been guided by unbalanced policy framework with heavy emphasis on equity through administrative-based land allocation. A preferred path of policy development would have been to allow multiple channels of acquiring land, strengthen security of tenure and rights in land, promote rental markets as main market-based mechanism, foster effectiveness of indigenous institutions to economize on scarce land resources in the commons, set norms and regulations for protecting fragile ecosystems, encourage labor mobility, and enhance development of factor markets in a context of broad-based agricultural and rural development. Public policy has important role in future, but it needs informed and balanced view that emphasizes on searching for equitable but efficient and sustainable tenure arrangements that are mediated through the market place.

📖 ***Resettlement in Ethiopia: The Tragedy of Population Relocation in the 1980s.* (**FSS Discussion Paper No. 11). Dessalegn Rahmato. June 2003.**

Abstract

This paper was written and delivered at a public conference in 1989, at a time when the Derg's massive programme of emergency resettlement was in full swing with disastrous consequences. It is being republished now at a time when the present government is embarked on a resettlement programme in response to the food crisis gripping the rural areas. It is hoped that it will stimulate informed debate on resettlement in general and the terrible experiences of the 1980s in particular.

This country has a resettlement experience going back to the 1960s, but we do not seem to have drawn the appropriate lessons from this extensive experience. Resettlement is a complex and costly undertaking, and without careful planning, a sound assessment of the land and other resources available for settlement, and the close involvement of the beneficiaries themselves in both endeavours, the chances of success are very minimal. The international experience shows that out of the hundreds of settlement programmes undertaken in Africa, Asia and Latin America in the decades since the 1960s, only a handful have been judged to be successful.

Resettlement under the Derg had multiple objectives: it was meant to promote food security, to relieve the population pressure of the vulnerable areas, and to bring about the environmental rehabilitation of these same areas. In the end none of these objectives were achieved and yet the cost in human lives and resources was immense. In the period 1984-1986, the Derg resettled some 600,000 people, most of whom were from the northern highlands; the areas of settlement were for the most part the lowlands of western Ethiopia. In this same period, some 33,000 settlers lost their lives due to disease, hunger and exhaustion. An untold number of families were destroyed, and, for many years after, a number of NGOs were still engaged in attempting to reunite thousands of children who had been separated from their

parents at the time of settler relocation.

This paper is published at this time in the hope that the terrible experience of the 1980s is not repeated again.

📖 *Faces of Poverty: Life in Gata, Walo.* (FSS Studies on Poverty No. 2) Harald Aspen. June 2003.

Abstract

Faces of Poverty tells the story of four families in Gäta, South Wälo and depicts their daily lives over a short period of time. The author spent a month in Gäta in 1998, when the area was struck by a long drought and recurrent crop losses. The stories are to a large extent in the words of the people who lived there, providing a rare glimpse of some of the humans behind the grim statistics of poverty and famine in Ethiopia. It is a story about poverty, vulnerability, bad health and lack of education, but most of all it is a story about people and their joys and sorrows, worries and hopes.

Faces of Poverty is written without expert jargon and without attempting to tell a representative story. Illustrated with photographs it makes an easy access to a few lives which certainly are similar with hundreds of thousands of others in rural Ethiopia. In Gäta, the effects of the killer famine of 1984 are still felt. A treacherous climate makes it difficult to rebuild stocks of grain and animals in a subsistence economy. Even relatively good years have "hungry months" when there is nearly nothing to eat. The four families, all of whom are related, may seem to be in an equally bad situation, but at a closer look they appear to be differently endowed with land, draught animals and labour. Past events, unequal ability to work and cyclic household developments, in addition to sheer luck or bad faith, have produced differences between the families and their members which are subtly expressed and dealt with in their daily interactions.

Gäta is a Muslim community with a long history, and it hosts one of the famous Muslim shrines in Wälo. The religion permeates the daily life and the festive occasions, such as the *mäwäkäl* of the oldest member of the little community, an elaborate ritual in honour of the ancestors and Allah. But also everyday activities are filled with blessings, such as the coffee ceremony, and the *du'a* sessions, in which the mildly narcotic *ch'at* is consumed in Allah's honour.

Petty trade is a well established income-generating activity, and we follow the members of the Gäta families, mainly women, to the different weekly markets in the vicinity of Gäta – Kombolcha, Harbu, Ancharo and Adamé. A link to Komolcha, the district capital, is represented by the market and by a daughter who has settled there with her family to live on trade. Through her we also get a glimpse of the urban poverty, and the bonds of reciprocity between the urban and rural relatives.

FORUM FOR SOCIAL STUDES (FSS)

Structure of Governance

FSS is democratically governed, with decision-making shared by the General Assembly, the Board of Advisors, and the Management Committee. The General Assembly meets once a year to review and approve the broad policies of the organization. The Board, which meets more frequently, is responsible for drawing up the policies and strategies of FSS, monitoring the work of the executive, and reviewing and approving the finances. Of the nine members in the Board four are women. The Management Committee is the executive body of FSS. It is responsible for implementing the decisions of the Board and managing the activities of the organization.

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