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# MEDREK



The Newsletter of the Forum for Social Studies

A Centre for Research and Debate on Development and Public Policy

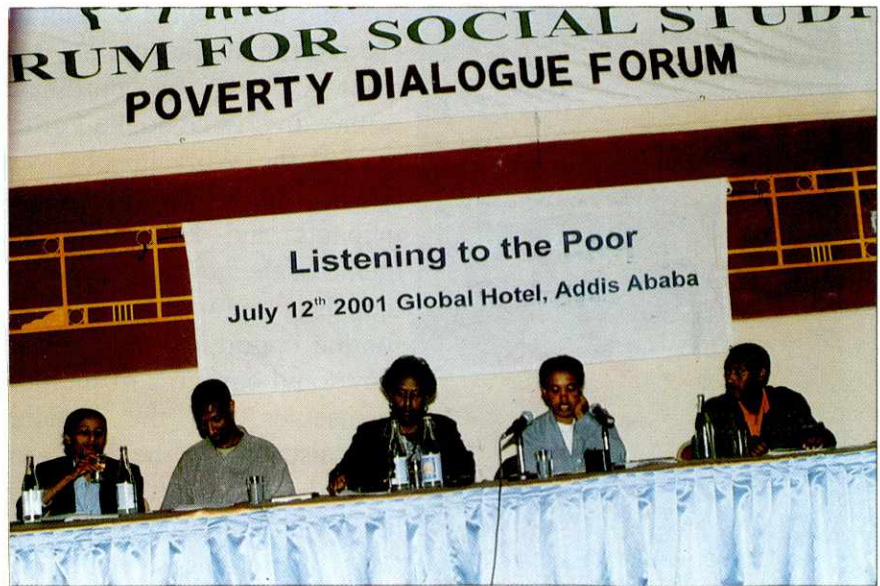
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## To Our Readers

This issue of *MEDREK* carries a summary report of a rather unusual workshop hosted by FSS on 12 July 2001. As part of its Poverty Dialogue Forum, FSS has been holding public debates on poverty and poverty reduction all through the year. What was unique about the workshop in question was that all the speakers were poor people. FSS thought the poor should have the chance to tell their own story in their own way, and that we should also listen to them rather than just talk about them. The workshop was entitled *Listening to the Poor* and while we do not claim to have succeeded in bringing together a representative view of the poor in Addis Ababa, it was a sobering experience to learn about poverty from

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Poverty Dialogue Forum

## LISTENING TO THE POOR

### Introduction

The fourth Workshop of the Poverty Dialogue Forum, which was entitled *Listening to the Poor*, and which was held on 12 July 2001, marked a significant departure for FSS. For the first time in the program, FSS provided a forum to the poor to tell their own story and to participants of the program to learn about poverty from the poor themselves. The Poverty Dialogue program had so far been talking about the poor but had no opportunity of listening to them. Quite often, poverty debates are undertaken among

people who themselves are not poor, and the subject of the debates, i.e poor people, are frequently not consulted. FSS wanted to make a break with this tradition and to give the poor the chance to participate in the discussion about poverty and poverty reduction. The program brought together four women and two men from various poor communities in Addis Ababa to talk about their experience and how they have been able to cope with poverty. Following is a summary of the presentations.

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## 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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## To Our...

*(Continued from page 1)*

the men and women we had invited for the occasion. Other articles in this issue include a short discussion of ADLI and a commentary on the education

## Listening to...

*(Continued from page 1)*

Dr. Konjit Fekade, lecturer at the Faculty of Technology and a freelance consultant, chaired the Workshop. Dr. Meheret Ayenew, the coordinator of the Poverty Dialogue Forum, opened the Workshop by welcoming the speakers and participants and introducing the theme of the program. He noted that the program was fortunate for the opportunity to hear the views and concerns of the poor themselves. All the panelists and discussants, he said, are from the poor community and have kindly consented to share their experiences with us. While some of them had been able to improve their condition to some extent thanks in part to their involvement in programs run by NGOs working with the poor in the city, the other speakers were less fortunate and were still in difficult circumstances. Each speaker was given enough time to tell the audience her/his life story, to reflect on what it means to live in poverty and to suggest programs that government agencies and NGOs may undertake to reduce poverty and to improve the lot of poor people.

## What It Means to be Poor

The **first speaker** was Gizachew Haile, a young man of 24 who was born and

component of the Government's IPRSP. The last piece in the newsletter is an article on information technology and development in Senegal, which may be of interest to some of our readers.

brought up in the poorest section of Addis Ketema. His family, which initially consisted of his parents, his two brothers and a sister, was very poor and his parents found it hard to support their children. As a small boy his parents sent him to the neighborhood "Priest School" not because they were keen about religious education but because it was cheap and a good means of keeping him from getting into trouble. He then attended regular school working part time to support himself. Both his parents died while he was in grade school and in his early teens, and he was forced to assume responsibility for the household. This meant doing odd jobs part time and going to school part time. After a while, his two brothers left the city to seek opportunities elsewhere which greatly reduced his family burdens. His sister, whom he was helping to go to school, dropped out and became a maid to support herself. Gizachew found it very hard to work and continue with his education and he had to drop out of school several times because of the difficult circumstances. It was only when he joined one of the credit programs run by PROPRIDE, a local NGO working in Addis Ketema and elsewhere in the city, that he was able to return to school and complete his high school education.



Gizachew characterized poverty as a malignant disease. To be poor, he said, was to lose hope, to give up on life itself. Poverty gives rise to conflict in the community and leads to crime. Poor people, he noted, suffer social exclusion. He believed that if Government and NGOs could find ways to create employment opportunities, it would be an effective way of reducing poverty. Providing skills training to the poor, he thought, would improve their chances of secure employment.

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The **second speaker**, Senait Zenawi, was a young woman of 24 who was born and still lives in the Tecklehaimanot area of Addis Ababa, one of the poorest areas in the city. The family consists of nine people: her parents, three brothers, two sisters, her son and herself. She is unmarried. Her mother is a washerwoman and her father is retired and has a small pension. Because her parents were unable to make ends meet and found it hard to care for their children, she was forced to drop out of school and seek employment at a very young age, when she was about 16. Like her mother she became a washerwoman, and for six years she

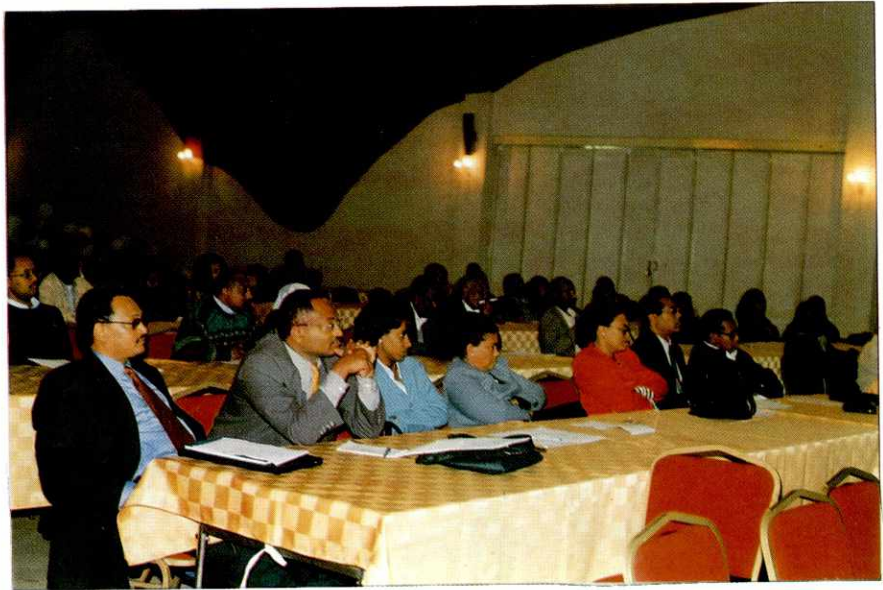
earned an average of 60 Birr a month washing clothes. Moreover, as her parents were getting old and her brothers and sisters were much younger than her, she assumed responsibility for the whole family. With her meager earnings and the occasional support of her mother who continued to wash clothes to earn some income even though she was getting old, she has managed to keep her three brothers and one sister in school. Her son is too young to go to school and one other sister does not go to school because she cannot afford to pay for her. Senait said that life became increasingly hard because the income she and her mother earned (her father's pension was inconsequential) could barely cover the growing needs of the family. A lucky break for her was the chance to enroll in a training program run by Hope Enterprises, a local NGO working with the poor in the city. She is now training as a cook and housekeeper. She has also been able to benefit by the organization's micro-credit program.

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Senait described poverty as the loss of respect and trust. The poor, she said, are considered the lowest of the low: they are looked down upon, not trusted, and not respected. They play a marginal role in the life of their community. Senait thought that the best way to reduce poverty was to create employment opportunities targeted to the poor. Both the Government and NGOs should make employment creation, in particular employment for the poor, their priority if they hope to reduce poverty in the city. She was emphatic that if just one person from a poor family has a secure job, earning a decent income, it will help bring considerable improvements in the condition of the







family. Another important factor for poverty reduction, she thought, was providing education to the poor. She felt NGOs and the Government should put more resources in extending educational opportunities to the poor.

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The **third speaker** was Sisay Gessesse, a young man of 25 who is now actively involved in programs run by the Forum for Street Children, one of the local NGOs working with street children and children in difficult circumstances in Addis Ababa and a few other towns. The story of his life is similar in many ways to that of the panelists who spoke before

him. Sisay was born in the Kirkos area of Addis Ababa, a neighborhood with a large population of poor households. His family consisted of nine children and his parents, but his father died when Sisay was very young. As the eldest child in the family, he dropped out of school and tried to support his family by vending cigarettes, candy and chewing gum. He soon became a street child, living off the street but not on it. Gradually, this led to drug taking, violence and a very insecure life. For a while, he was taking hashish, snorting petrol, and chewing *chat*. Because he was young (he was barely in his teens), he was frequently victimized by the older street children, sometimes beaten and attacked. Sisay's break came when he met development agents working for Save the Children US and became involved in one of their urban programs. He was about 13 at the time. Later, he joined the activities run by Forum for Street Children with whom he is still attached. Sisay said he has now given up drugs.

Sisay pointed out that poverty leads to the breakup of

families, to social conflict, and marginalization. To be poor is to lose the trust of one's neighbors, to lose the chance to be a member of the *idir* in one's neighborhood, and to be dehumanized. Sisay thought that NGOs' saving and credit programs have played an important role in improving the life of poor people. He also believed that providing skills training for the poor, especially for street children and unemployed mothers, would offer opportunities for both wage employment as well as self-employment. It was his opinion that credit services and employment for the poor would be the best method of tackling growing urban poverty.

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The **fourth speaker** was Marta Tadesse whose life experience was slightly different from the rest of the speakers. Marta, who said she was 22 years old, has three brothers and four sisters, but initially her family was not quite poor but became so because of what she called an unexpected misfortune. Now, her mother does embroidery to earn an income,



her father is engaged in petty business activities and she and her second sister have become petty traders. While her brothers were able to continue with their schooling, she and her sisters had to work part time in order to finance their education; one of her sisters had to drop out because she was unable to cope with school and work. To improve her earnings she managed to take training in embroidery but this has not lead to better income for herself. She has recently joined the micro-credit program run by PROPRIDE, a local NGO, and has benefited by it.

Marta thought poverty was the inability to work and earn a living because of the lack of access to economic assets, in particular money. Because of the lack of money, many who are capable of earning a living are not able to do so. To be poor, she said, was to lose one's humanity. Marta believed the way out of poverty was to provide credit services to the poor, to encourage trade and to provide skill training to the needy so that they can improve their employment opportunities and earning ability.

This concluded the presentation of the panelists. Dr. Konjit, the Chairwoman, then invited **Wzo. Alganesh Abebe** and **Wzo. Yeshi Mohammed**, two poor women who had consented to participate in the debate and who were sitting with the audience, to make brief presentations. **Wzo. Alganesh**, who spoke first, said she was forty-five years old, a mother of five children and comes from a military family background. She said she has experienced

the bitter fruit of poverty and had once reached a stage where she could not support her children nor send them to school. She is a lone parent but she was fortunate in that a few years back the Forum on Street Children helped her eldest daughter to pursue her education. This, she said, lifted a great burden from her shoulders. Her daughter is now in secondary school.

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Moreover, through the support of the Forum she became involved in a credit program together with other women in her neighborhood. She said she was the first member of her credit group to take out a loan. The program has been of considerable benefit to her. She has so far taken three loans and has used all of them to good effect. She thought that one way to reduce poverty was to provide poor people interest-free loans to enable them to invest it and be economically active. Interest on loans, she thought, was a burden on the poor and tends to discourage them from using their loans effectively.

**Wzo. Yeshi**, the other speaker, said she was born and

grew up in Wollo. She did not say how old she was but our estimate is that she is in her early thirties. She migrated to Addis Ababa and initially found work in one family's home. She had her first child while working with this family as a maid. Then she moved to one of her relative's home, became a fuelwood carrier and had her second child. It was hard, she said, bringing up two children with income from the sale of fuelwood. From time to time she baked *injera* to earn more income. The relative with whom she was staying wanted her to take her two children and go back to Wollo but she refused and had to move out of the house. After persistent petitions to officials of her *Kebele*, she finally succeeded in getting a small "house". However, she said, the house was a flimsy structure and had virtually no roof. One day when it rained hard the house collapsed and almost killed one of her children. Her only source of income was still fuelwood vending, and bringing up two children on such small income was very difficult for her. She wanted both her children to go to school but she did not have the means to pay for the education of both of them. Then, about three years ago, she met development agents from ACCORD, an NGO working with the poor in urban areas, who encouraged her to join a savings and credit group organized in her neighborhood. She joined the group and has been able to take out loans several times. She said she has benefit a great deal from the program. She has been able to send both her children to school and her eldest son is now in 11th grade. She now



bakes and sells bread and this has improved her income. She believed the kind of micro-credit program she has been involved in is of great benefit to poor people.

There was a warm and extended round of applause at the end of all the presentations. The audience was visibly moved by the life stories of the speakers and the experiences they related. Many listeners were impressed by the way the speakers were able to articulate their views and priorities. The panelists in particular were quite knowledgeable about poverty and its impact on individuals and communities. There were numerous questions and comments from the audience, most of which the panelists (and *Wzo Yeshi* from the floor) responded to adequately and in a clear manner.

### Poor People's Views of Poverty Reduction

What came out of the discussion was that the poor have clear views of what it means to be poor and what must be done to reduce the level of poverty in the urban areas. To the poor, poverty is not primarily an economic phenomenon. Only one speaker, Marta Tadesse, defined poverty in terms of lack of access to economic assets. Poverty for the rest was a social and human problem. To be poor was to be

dehumanized, to lose the respect and trust of one's neighbors, to be marginalized and socially excluded. Several speakers pointed out that poverty leads to crime, social and family conflict and drugs. Asked about the causes of poverty, the panelists cited the following as major contributing factors:

- a) lack of employment opportunities, and of employable skills;
- b) large family size and the inability to practice family planning;
- c) lack of access to education.

All the speakers had something to say about what must be done to bring about improvements in the life of the poor and to reduce the level of poverty in the urban areas. They were all aware that there are far too many poor people in the country. None of them believed that poverty was ordained by God. They were of the opinion that it was possible to improve one's status through one's effort, given the opportunity. They were conscious that sound programs by Government and NGOs can go a long way to help reduce poverty. The programs that were frequently cited as being critical to the effort to reduce urban poverty were the following:

- a) **Employment schemes for the poor.** For this, both

NGOs and Government agencies need to promote skills training, specially targeted to young people, women, and the unemployed. By employment opportunities the speakers were referring not so much to civil service jobs but rather to skills-based employment in manufacturing, construction, or the occupational trades.

- b) **Access to education for the poor.** All the speakers regarded education as a way out of poverty. But education was costly and most poor families are unable to pay for their children's schooling. Programs that help the poor to keep their children in school were therefore considered to be very important.

- c) **Access to credit services for the poor.** Many of the speakers had benefited by the credit programs of the NGOs with which they were involved. Sound savings and credit programs therefore were seen as an important lifeline for the poor.

The full text of the proceedings of the Workshop will appear in *FSS' Consultation Papers on Poverty No. 4.*

Financial support for the Workshop was provided by the FRIEDRICH EBERT STIFTUNG.

### Fifth Poverty Dialogue Forum

The **fifth** Poverty Dialogue workshop, focusing on the role of the private sector in poverty reduction, was held on 31 August 2001. The panelists consisted of three prominent persons from the business world, one of whom was a businesswoman. A large number of participants from the business community took part in the discussions. The full text of the presentations and discussions will be published in *FSS' Consultation Papers on Poverty No. 5.*



## DEBATES

We would like to invite readers to participate in an on-going debate on issues related to development and public policy in Ethiopia in Medrek. Send us think pieces, comments and letters (not more than 2000 words for publication in these columns).

### Is Agricultural Development-Led Industrialization (ADLI) a Poverty Reduction Strategy?

Senait Seyoum  
Independent Consultant

One of the requirements indicated by the World Bank for the development of a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) is broad-based participation by civil society, professionals and the private sector. In this spirit, and as part of FSS's efforts to foster public debate on poverty, I would like to offer some comments on the Agricultural Development-Led Industrialization (ADLI) strategy pursued by government since the mid-1990s and viewed as a major poverty reduction building block in the I-PRSP (2000).

#### **ADLI: A Panacea for Poverty?**

ADLI is essentially a smallholder led agricultural development strategy emphasizing market orientation and focusing investments on generic productivity enhancing technologies, expanded extension services and infrastructure development (particularly rural roads, water supply and sanitation), with a view to increasing domestic production of food and export commodities in Ethiopia. Though it is believed to have led to an improvement in the performance of the agricultural sector in recent years, ADLI has not paid much atten-

tion to issues of risk, vulnerability and poverty reduction. This direction appears to have limited its impact and to have biased it towards better potential areas and/or relatively higher income producers who, in many respects, are easier to serve and better able to take advantage of services provided them.

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*It thus remains doubtful if ADLI, which argues for agricultural intensification and for rendering Ethiopian agriculture internationally competitive on grounds of inadequacy of domestic demand, has benefited the large majority of resource poor farmers.*

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Based on the rather tenuous assumption that poverty in Ethiopia has declined significantly in the 1990s, the I-PRSP argues that the 'reduction' was a result of economic adjustment policies and the implementation of the ADLI. In the absence of evidence on the impact of ADLI, it is, however, hard to conceive of an efficiency-based and accelerated

growth promoting strategy such as the ADLI as equity oriented, or, in the words of the I-PRSP, as 'envisaging a growth process that is inherently poverty reducing'.

It thus remains doubtful if ADLI, which argues for agricultural intensification and for rendering Ethiopian agriculture internationally competitive on grounds of inadequacy of domestic demand (related to poverty?), has benefited the large majority of resource poor farmers. While firm empirical data is lacking to establish the direction or strength of relationship between ADLI and poverty reduction, there is evidence showing a continued and widespread prevalence of poverty in Ethiopia during the period of ADLI implementation.

Several aggregate indicators of poverty such as number of relief beneficiaries, prevalence of wasting (a reflection of recent malnutrition caused by food shortages or serious infections) and stunting (reflecting long-term or accumulated nutritional deficiency) among children less than five years old, changes in land and other asset holdings, low crop yields, application of inputs below recommended rates, low



Evolution of some indicators of poverty and ADLI since 1992

	1992	1995	1998	2000	Percent change
No. of relief beneficiaries (Million)	8.73			10.5	20%
Prevalence of wasting among less than 5 years old (rural)		7.6%	9.7%		
Prevalence of stunting among less than 5 years old (rural)		66.6%	66.2%		
Prevalence of stunting among:					
■ lower income group		50%	59%		
■ upper income group		70%	49%		
% of rural households owning:					
■ dwellings		96.4%	49.9%		
■ land		96.6%	50.1%		
■ <i>mofer and kember</i>		65.6%	53.0%		
No. households with less than 0.50 ha land	2001			4361	118%
Percent of all households	35%			41%	
No. households with less than 1.00 ha land	3511			6923	97%
Percent of all households	61%			65%	
No. of households with more than 1.00 ha	2268			3815	68%
Percent of all households	39%			36%	
Average land holding per household (ha)	1.23			1.00	-19%
Area under improved seeds ('000 ha)	41		185		355%
Area under fertilizer ('000 ha)	1778		2966		67%
Quantity fertilizer applied ('000 quintals)	1074		2965		176%

Source: CSA 1992; 1995; 1998; 1999. RRC 1992; DPPC 2000.

technology adoption rates, limited expansion in area under permanent/export crops (as against area under temporary/grain crops) point to an impoverishment of the Ethiopian peasantry in recent years.

*If one is to give credence to the figures in the Table, no significant reduction in poverty has occurred in the last 5 to 8 years in spite of substantial achievements in terms of increase in cultivated area under improved farm management practices and quantity of commercial fertilizers applied.*

Some evidence derived from official CSA and DPPC sources (e.g. welfare monitoring surveys, agricultural sample surveys on farm management practices and land utilization) for different years are presented in the Table above for illustrative purposes.

If one is to give credence to the figures in the Table, no significant reduction in poverty has occurred in the last 5 to 8 years in spite of substantial achievements in terms of increase in cultivated area under improved farm management practices (e.g. application of improved seeds, pesticides, fertilizers, irrigation) and quantity of commercial fertilizers ap-

plied. As the data shows, the prevalence of stunting increased among less than 5 years olds in lower income households, declining at the same time in upper income households, and the percentage of rural households owning land and farm assets (e.g. *mofer and kember*) declined significantly (CSA 1996 and 1998). Furthermore, the number of households with less than 1 hectare of cultivable land (implying sub-optimal holdings) increased. It is noteworthy that these households represented 61% of farm households in 1992 and 65% in 2000. Average land holding per household declined from 1.23 ha. in 1992 to 1.00 ha. in 2000.



## Some Suggestions for the Final PRSP

If anything, the picture depicted above indicates that the assumed link between ADLI and poverty reduction in the I-PRSP is weak. The implied link seems to be premised on the assumption that since ADLI has a rural focus and seeks to enhance agricultural production, and since poverty is widespread in rural areas, ADLI can bring about a transformation in rural livelihoods and is *de facto* a poverty reducing strategy. For the final PRSP to be more coherently and effectively formulated than it is at present, it might be worth considering the following suggestions.

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*The ADLI strategy of promotion of agricultural technology is largely driven by efficiency considerations. As such, it does not address the needs of many poor farmers who lack the resources and access to take advantage of packages and services offered under the ADLI.*

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### **Conceptualization of poverty**

The I-PRSP conceives poverty as a generalized and uniform phenomenon mostly affecting rural areas and communities. The fact that poverty is widespread in rural Ethiopia and that the underlying conditions contributing to its prevalence are often similar appears to have obscured the need for the I-PRSP to acknowledge the

diversity in poverty or livelihoods conditions. The cursory two-page description of the poverty situation in Ethiopia provided in the document indicates a poor understanding of the multidimensional and dynamic problem of poverty. The description shows that the conceptualization of poverty is based more on subjective judgment than on an objective understanding of conditions on the ground, this being clearly reflected in the statement on pp.7-8 which reads '*Following the removal of the monarchy in Ethiopia, there is no landlessness as all farmers have land-holdings*'!

In preparing the final PRSP, there is a need to move beyond a generalized and uniform concept of poverty, towards clearer poverty and livelihoods concepts which should provide a basis for more effective strategy formulation and future impact assessment.

### **Poverty targeting**

A strategy that claims to be poverty reducing needs to specifically target the poor (not all who are broadly defined as poor), and to pay adequate attention to their particular needs, potentials and constraints. Because poverty varies widely in space and time, micro-level household livelihoods need to be considered. Such aspects have an important and direct bearing on the assessment of poverty and on the choice of appropriate and cost effective interventions for poverty reduction.

Appropriate and cost-effective interventions need to

be devised to address the problem of poverty in light of the prevailing diverse and variable socio-economic conditions, and related private/public capacities to deal with these problems. The ADLI strategy of promotion of agricultural technology is largely driven by efficiency considerations. As such, it does not address the needs of many poor farmers who lack the resources and access to take advantage of packages and services offered under the ADLI. There are also other population groups (e.g. internally displaced, victims of natural disasters, non-sedentary/non-farming groups, urban unemployed, homeless and residents of collective quarters) who are poor but not targeted by the ADLI. The PRSP should be made responsive to the needs of these disadvantaged population groups through the development of a program of support driven by problem analysis and effective participatory processes.

### **Poverty data, assessment and monitoring**

The I-PRSP provides little in terms of disaggregated socio-economic and poverty related data that could be used for a better assessment of poverty and monitoring the impact of various interventions on poverty reduction. There would, in fact, appear to be a bias in the paper towards aggregate measures and averages (especially related to macro-economic stability) at the neglect of ADLI and poverty related data.

Little use is made of available data from official sources and where such use is



made, it tends to be with a view to justifying arguments about particular directions followed. As a case in point, the I-PRSP supports its argument of significant decline in poverty in the 1990s with reference to the findings of a survey of 'six below average villages' without so much as citing a source or indicating whether the survey is nationally representative. Similarly, there is a tendency to exaggerate the gains of ADLI by referring to the impressive expansion of the agricultural extension system or micro-finance institutions providing credit to farmers, to greatly improved access to education, health, rural water supply and roads. Although it is encouraging to witness such improvements, it is also worth mentioning problems like low farmer adoption rates, application of inputs below recommended rates, poor agricultural research-extension-farmer linkages, agricultural subsidies, etc.

Overall, it would be useful to undertake a critical

review of ADLI and other development policies of relevance to poverty reduction; this could include coverage and effectiveness of the extension system, credit provision, grain price developments and impact on farmers, and the sustainability of the export promotion drive. Such a review could benefit by the development of differentiated poverty and livelihoods profiles based on gender and wealth disaggregated data. Quite apart from better characterization of poverty and factors influencing it, this should allow a more precise targeting of the poor and of interventions, and provide a basis for strengthening interrelationships between the major building blocks of the I-PRSP, mainstreaming poverty in policy, developing concrete actions for poverty reduction, and setting up of an effective monitoring and evaluation system.

#### *Partnership and participation*

It is not clear whether I-PRSP or the PRSP are sup-

ported by genuinely participatory processes (see *MEDREK*, Vol. 3 (1)). To-date, the main responsibility for the preparation of the strategy papers appears to have rested with government offices and donors, and not to have involved much public debate by different stakeholders (civil society, private sector professionals, bilateral, multilateral and non-governmental organizations, and last but not least, the poor themselves).

As noted earlier, the ADLI strategy is largely geared to delivery and transfer of agricultural technology, much less to poverty reduction. If responsiveness to the needs of the poor is viewed as a primary concern of the I-PRSP and the final PRSP, greater participation of the poor than appears to exist at present is called for in the process of strategy formulation.

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# Some Comments on the Education Sector Program in the Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (IPRSP)

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## Introduction

The *Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper* (IPRSP) of the Ethiopian Government submitted to the IMF and the World Bank states that agriculture, education, health, and road construction will be given serious attention in the effort to reduce poverty. My comments will focus on the education sector program, its plans, problems, and issues of implementation. It is commendable that the Government has given high priority to education and will be allocating considerable resources to the sector.

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*Several studies show that the education sector is plagued with numerous problems including low enrollment, low standards, large disparity between regions and sexes, inadequate resources and low community participation. Family life education is not offered adequately, there is inadequate attention given to non-formal education*

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Several studies (e.g., Amare et al. 1998, Tekeste 1996, and Habtamu 2001) show that the education sector is plagued with numerous problems including low enrollment, low standards, large disparity

between regions and sexes, inadequate resources and low community participation. Family life education is not offered adequately, there is inadequate attention given to non-formal education, and youth unemployment increasing.

The IPRSP makes the following points about the sector:

1. The Education and Training Policy and Strategy (ETPS) was issued in 1994; The Education Sector Development Program (ESDP), initiated in 1996, is being implemented
2. A "policy framework is in place" for the participation of the private sector, communities and parents in financing and managing education
3. The ESDP envisages a primary enrollment of 7 million by 2001/02, the end of its first five-year period, raising the enrollment rate to 50% (which has now been pushed up to 60%)
4. Girls' enrollment is to increase to 45% by the end of the ESDP period
5. Several hundred new primary schools are to be constructed, and existing ones are to be upgraded, rehabilitated and refurbished
6. Sixteen new boarding schools are to be built for children coming from nomadic areas
7. "Thousands" of primary school teachers will participate in pre-service and in-service training programs
8. Non-formal and distance education programs will be expanded and strengthened, and
9. Tertiary education will be expanded by opening new training programs.

The main indicators and targets provided for the education sector are the following:

1. Primary Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER), an international development goal, is universal primary education by 2015; Ethiopia hopes to achieve 65% by 2005
2. The repetition rate for grades 4 - 8 is to be reduced to 6.4% by 2002 from the current 12.1%
3. The primary school dropout rate is to be reduced to 4.2% by 2002 from the current 12%
4. The number of primary schools, which is 11,051 at present, is to be expanded to 12,595 by 2002
5. Education's share of the total budget is to be 14.5% by 2002/03 from the current 12.5%
6. It is also indicated that diploma granting institutions (for agricultural extension agents)



will be established by 2001/02

7. Vocational and technical training programs are to be "overhauled to fit the development objectives", and

8. Various in-service training and human resource development initiatives are envisaged.

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*Issues of the improvement of the quality of education at all levels, the development of a "democracy-friendly educational system", the preparation of young people for life and work, and measures to reduce the increasing gender and regional disparities need to be dealt with in a more clear and determined manner.*

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## **The Education Sector**

It is gratifying to read in the IPRSP that "education and health are given top priority" (p. 20). However, if this commitment is to be serious, there are issues other than those noted in the education component of the document that need to be addressed in the next few years. Issues of the improvement of the quality of education at all levels, the development of a "democracy-friendly educational system", the preparation of young people for life and work, and measures to reduce the increasing gender and regional disparities need to be dealt with in a more clear and determined manner. The focus of the IPRSP and ESDP seem to be on quantity- ie. moving

large numbers of pupils through the education system. But what children learn and are able to do are also important.

The concept of quality in education is elusive and complex. For our purposes, it means the achievement of relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes for life and work. It calls for relevant curricula, competent and motivated teachers, adequate teaching materials, effective leadership at all levels, and pupils interested in learning. It means high standards, fitness for life and work, and meeting the needs of society, employers and Government. Both quantity and quality of education share the common goal of successful school completion by pupils. The two aspects of education can coexist and efforts should be made in both directions.

There is a large body of evidence that shows that heavy investment in education (in human capital) greatly helps in reducing poverty and in socio-economic development. Education stimulates growth and socio-economic growth stimulates education. The growth of the East Asian countries (e.g., Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan) is a good example. The development of a literate, skilled, disciplined and loyal labor force highly contributed to their rapid development. The public and private sectors invested in education and training, public participation was high, well informed and research-based decisions became the norm, and there was great public commitment.

Though the share of the

budget pledged for education, ie. 14.5%, is higher than earlier times, many studies show that 20% reflects a more serious commitment for growth. Of course whatever the amount, it has to be properly employed or spent. We all know that budget allocation does not mean budget implementation and for the right purposes.

Data from the Ministry of Education (MoE 1999, 2000) and other documents show that the disparity between regions, urban and rural areas, boys and girls is increasing. The urban areas, the central and northern regions, and boys are the advantaged ones. The peripheries of the country, such as in the South, and the Afar and Somali Regions have very low enrollment rates.

The gross primary enrollment rate for Ethiopia in 1999/2000 was 51%, while it was only 9 and 8% for Afar and Somali Regions respectively (MoE 2000). There is a lot to be desired about the reliability of the data, since, as some argue, the figures are based on September/October registration figures and hence exaggerated. Many students quit school after October, which is the beginning of the harvest season in most parts of the country. It is also to be noted that not much has been said in the IPRSP about secondary education. Of the total of 15.5 million children aged 15 to 18 in the country, only half a million, ie. only 10%, are enrolled in secondary schools. The low participation rate of girls in secondary and tertiary level education also deserves more serious attention. Perhaps one may need to con-



sider preparatory schools and programs to address the problems of disadvantaged social groups.

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Though it is not a problem of the education sector alone, the issue of rising youth unemployment deserves serious consideration. Data from the Central Statistical Authority (CSA 1999) show that over 2.17 million Ethiopians are unemployed and of these 230,000 have completed high school or have some tertiary level education.

The development of young persons with marketable skills and desirable attitudes is an important objective and requires serious deliberation and planning. It is not enough to aim to overhaul "the training programs of vocational and technical training to fit development objectives" (p.35), more detailed commitments need to be elaborated. It should be pointed out that most of the graduates of the existing vocational technical schools do not get or create jobs. CSA's re-

cent labor force survey shows that over 111,000 persons, mostly aged 15 - 24 years, who have some skill-training are unemployed. Areas of training include electricity, general mechanics, building construction, typing, tailoring, driving, computer application, home economics, carpentry and metal work.

UNICEF's 1999 report on the state of the world's children correctly notes: "Going to school and coming out unprepared for life is a terrible waste.... Learning for the 21<sup>st</sup> century requires equipping children with a basic education in literacy and numeracy, as well as the more advanced, complex skills for living that can serve as the foundation for life" (p. 22). The ETPS states that the curricula in general will be based on societal needs, and will be oriented towards work and self-employment. In line with this, the education sector, at least at tertiary, vocational-technical and secondary levels, has to pay attention to the country's human resource requirements and the labor market; if labor market information is not available, it should take measures to make it available in collaboration with other ministries and sector agencies.

Though not clearly specified, the intention to expand and strengthen non-formal and distance education is highly appreciated. A country with a literacy rate of only 35%, and with 58% of its population below 20 years of age cannot reach the ambitious target of Universal Primary Education by 2015. Some authorities also warn that economic growth and

development requires a literacy rate of over 70%. Hence, serious commitment, immense resources and a wide range of educational programs are needed.

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*The educational system should promote friendly debates and discussion, critical thinking, accommodating individual differences and conflict resolution in dialogue, and respect for the truth and basic human rights. How to promote these values should be seriously addressed in the final PRSP.*

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## Conclusions

The social sector in general and the education sector in particular need to work towards the development of democratic values and behavior in the schools and the community at large. The educational system should promote friendly debates and discussion, critical thinking, accommodating individual differences and conflict resolution in dialogue, and respect for the truth and basic human rights. We are all aware that the dominant culture encourages aggression and violence, obedience, manipulation and nepotism; it favors white-collar work, and condones abuse of children's and women's rights. The civics education offered in schools is more of "politics and history" than education in democratic values. Its contents, the school environment and the educational system in general need to



be "democracy friendly". All these issues need serious attention.

Physical and mental violence such as female genital mutilation, corporal punishment, abduction and rape, superstitious beliefs, dowry payment and various other harmful traditional practices prevail throughout the country. The education and

social sectors need to strive to change or eliminate these and similar beliefs and practices. Efforts have to be made to develop values and attributes which inspire respect for human rights and encourage fair play. Openness and receptivity to new experience and change, orientation towards the present and future (rather than the past), and awareness of the dignity of oneself and

others need to be developed in the family, the school and society at large. So too tolerance for individual and cultural differences, delaying gratification, and respect for education and science. The education sector has a high responsibility in promoting these values and hence the subject should be seriously addressed in the final PRSP.

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### Just Off the Press ... Just Off the Press ...

#### Consultation Papers on Poverty

No. 3 *Civil Society Groups and Poverty Reduction*. Papers by Abonesh Haile-Mariam, Zena Berhanu and Zewdie Shite. Edited by Meheret Ayenew, August 2001

#### FSS Conference Proceedings

*Natural Resource Management in Ethiopia*. Edited by Alula Pankhurst. Addis Ababa, August 2001.

#### Special Publications

*Thematic Briefings on Natural Resource Management, Enlarged Edition*. Edited by Alula Pankhurst. Produced jointly by the Forum for Social Studies and the University of Sussex. Addis Ababa, 2001.



## Information Technologies and Social Development in Senegal

Olivier Sagna

(Extract from *UNRISD News*, No. 23, 2000)

Senegal has one of the most highly developed telecommunications and information technology infrastructures in sub-Saharan Africa.

Before independence in 1960, radio played a role somewhat similar to that of the Internet in today's world. The overwhelming majority of programmes were produced outside Africa, and their content was primarily oriented towards Europeans and the urban elite in Dakar. Then, shortly following independence, efforts were made to reorient radio toward more broad-based development.

As the radio was slowly becoming a common consumer item, a new technological leap brought television onto the scene in 1973. For a long time, there was only one television channel, run by the Office of Radio and Television Broadcasting of Senegal. Both television and radio were carefully controlled by the government, which refused to authorize reception of international channels or the establishment of private national alternatives to the official system.

All of this started to change at the end of the 1980s. Faced with growing criticism from the political opposition, the government began to consider measures that would guarantee greater freedom of expression on the airwaves. This process has moved slowly. *By*

*the end of the 1990s, there were six private FM radio stations; and satellite television provided new alternatives for viewers with the ability to gain access to it. Community radio stations, which could play a significant role in development, are still weak - in large part because their legal status has never been fully clarified and they must apply for authorization to broadcast on a case-by-case basis.*

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*In fact, Senegal has the largest number of public telephone lines in Africa.*

*Twenty-two of the 30 Departments [i.e. provinces] of the country also enjoy fibre optic connections.*

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In contrast, progress in the field of fixed and mobile telephony has been remarkable. In the wake of an emergency plan implemented by the government in 1985, a poor-quality analogue system, reaching few areas outside the principal cities and towns of Senegal, was transformed into an entirely digital system in which all principal rural communities have public access. *In fact, Senegal has the largest number of public telephone lines in Africa.* Twenty-two of the 30 departments [i.e. provinces] of the country also enjoy fibre optic connections.

Over the past decade, "phone shops" have played an extremely important role in extending the reach of telephone service within Senegal. This experiment - by all accounts, extremely successful - began in 1992, when the national telephone company (SONATEL) authorized private individuals to create small businesses selling access to telephones. Pent-up demand was so great, and competition among private telephone shops so strong, that SONATEL's revenue from this source grew exponentially, while the cost of a unit of telephone use for consumers dropped by as much as 30 per cent. *By 1998, there were almost 6,800 private telephone shops; and by late 2000 the figure had risen to more than 10,000. Approximately 1,000 of these are equipped with computers and some also have modems that allow access to the Internet.*

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*By 2000, there were 13 Internet service providers in Senegal, and approximately 8,500 registered subscribers. In addition, a dozen or more cyber cafés were scattered around Dakar, and more were being set up in most large provincial towns.*

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The Internet fist reached Senegal in 1989, through the



efforts of a French development research programme (ORSTOM), and through a separate initiative of the Senegalese NGO Enda Tiers-Monde. At that time, the Internet was the concern of no more than a few dozen people. As in many other parts of the world, the real breakthrough in Internet use came in 1996, when SONATEL and the American company MCI signed an agreement allowing technical updates that signaled the beginning of the commercial Internet era. By 2000, there were 13 Internet service providers in Senegal, and approximately 8,500 registered subscribers. In addition, a dozen or more cyber cafés were scattered around Dakar, and more were being set up in most large provincial towns. The fact that SONATEL offers a single Internet access rate throughout the country is greatly facilitating the growth of Internet use outside the capital.

The past few years have also seen an explosion of the mobile phone market. Initiated in 1994 by SONATEL, cellular telephone service had 1,492 subscribers in 1996, approximately 7,000 subscribers at the end of 1997 and almost 100,000 by the end of 1999. It is not clear why there has been such a phenomenal jump in mobile telephone use, especially since mobile communications cost as much as 20 times more than communication over fixed lines. Who make up the clientele for this service? How likely are mobile phones to replace fixed lines, thus obviating the need for further investment in the latter? Both the economics and the social profile of this

startling shift deserve attention.

### Development Issues

Understanding the new uses of information and communication technologies (ICTs) is essential for answering a broader and more significant question: What are the development implications of the expanding role of telecommunications, the Internet and non-official media in Senegalese society? Senegal is a low-income country, struggling to emerge from deep economic crisis. Open urban unemployment stands at approximately 29 per cent. One third of the population is poor or very poor. What role can the new ICTs play - or are they playing - in providing new opportunities for people to lead a better life?

Certainly, the new ICTs meet some very basic needs of migrants, who have been forced to leave rural areas - and often to leave the country - in search of work. Many are illiterate, and they have been quick to make creative use of technologies that eliminate the need for writing and reading messages.

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*When people are not well informed about different policy options, they are likely to defer to the opinion of technocrats and specialists. But the development implications of ICTs are too important to be left in the hands of technical experts alone.*

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Some years ago, tape recorders and videocassettes became

important tools for maintaining close contact with family and friends. Today, as telephone rates drop, it has become easier for Senegalese abroad to talk directly with people at home; and some migrant communities have even begun to take advantage of Internet telephony. Less high-tech applications, such as faxes, also play a fundamental role in the management of household finances and facilitate the transfer of funds through informal financial systems.

There can be no doubt as well that ICTs have a role to play in improving the quality of education. But here a number of difficulties arise. Since 1997-1998, for example, the World Links for Development programme of the World Bank has provided equipment and software for computer programmes in 40 Senegalese middle schools. It has also provided training for instructors, while the government has agreed to cover the cost of subscribing to Internet services, as well as telecommunications charges, computer maintenance and salaries for personnel involved in coordinating the project.

### ICTs and Democratization

ICTs have played a pivotal role in the process of democratization that marked the 1990s in Senegal. Although government-run radio and television were slow in providing time for opposition parties to air their views, the growth of private FM radio stations contributed to redressing this imbalance. In fact, during the presidential election of February 2000, won by the opposi-



tion for the first time in 40 years, the main private radio stations deployed hundreds of correspondents, armed with cell phones, who reported from across the country. Senegalese abroad, not to be outdone, organized "chat" sites on the Internet where major issues were debated. The Ministry of the Interior made electoral registers available on its Web site. And on election day, the near-instantaneous dissemination of the vote count from polling locations meant that two hours after the close of the voting booths, the Senegalese people knew the unofficial results.

If Senegal is to continue to expand access to ICTs, on

terms that are advantageous for an ever-growing segment of the population, it is necessary to deal with basic issues of public regulation and corporate governance. The most important of these grows out of the recent privatization of SONATEL. For many years, SONATEL was that rare exception in much of Africa - a well-managed public telephone system, providing quality infrastructure and service with high profits and low levels of debt. Following several years of debate on the merits of privatization and liberalization (confined largely to political decision-making circles, technical personnel, private sector managers and funders), 42 per cent of SONATEL was

sold in 1997 to France Telecom, while the remaining shares are held by the government of Senegal (approximately 24 per cent), small investors (approximately 23 per cent) and employees (approximately 10 per cent).

When people are not well informed about different policy options, they are likely to defer to the opinion of technocrats and specialists. But the development implications of ICTs are too important to be left in the hands of technical experts alone. Here it seems obvious that social science research has a critical role to play in improving the environment for informed policy choices.

### FSS Library Update

The FSS library has recently acquired the following publications.

- Abera Jembere (2000). *An Introduction to the Legal History of Ethiopia 1434 - 1974*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.
- Action Professionals Association for the People (2001). *An Overview of Corruption in Relation to the Ethiopian Legal System*. Addis Ababa.
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- Tegene Tekla ( 2000). *International Non Governmental Organization in Rural Development in Ethiopia. Rhetoric and practice*. Frankfurt: Peter Lung.



## FSS Publications List

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### FSS Newsletter

*Medrek* (Quarterly since 1998. English and Amharic)

### FSS Discussion Papers

- No. 1. *Water Resource Development in Ethiopia: Issues of Sustainability and Participation.* Dessalegn Rahmato. June 1999
- No. 2. *The City of Addis Ababa: Policy Options for the Governance and Management of a City with Multiple Identity.* Meheret Ayenew. December 1999
- No. 3. *Listening to the Poor: A Study Based on Selected Rural and Urban Sites in Ethiopia.* Aklilu Kidanu and Dessalegn Rahmato. May 2000
- No. 4. *Small-Scale Irrigation and Household Food Security. A Case Study from Central Ethiopia.* Fuad Adem. February 2001
- No. 5. *Environmental Impact of Development Policies in Peripheral Areas: The Case of Metekel, Northwest Ethiopia.* Wolde-Selassie Abbute. Forthcoming, 2001
- No. 6. *The Environmental Impact of Small-scale Irrigation: A Case Study.* Fuad Adem. Forthcoming, 2001

### FSS Monograph Series

- No. 1. *Survey of the Private Press in Ethiopia: 1991-1999.* Shimelis Bonsa. 2000
- No. 2. *Environmental Change and State Policy in Ethiopia: Lessons from Past Experience.* Dessalegn Rahmato. 2001

### FSS Conference Proceedings

1. *Issues in Rural Development. Proceedings of the Inaugural Workshop of the Forum for Social Studies, 18 September 1998.* Edited by Zenebework Tadesse. 2000
2. *Development and Public Access to Information in Ethiopia.* Edited by Zenebework Tadesse. 2000
3. *Environment and Development in Ethiopia.* Edited by Zenebework Tadesse. 2001
4. *Food Security and Sustainable Livelihoods in Ethiopia.* Edited by Yared Amare. June 2001
5. *Natural Resource Management in Ethiopia.* Edited by Alula Pankhurst. Addis Ababa, 2001

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### Consultation Papers on Poverty

- No. 1. *The Social Dimensions of Poverty*. Papers by Minas Hiruy, Abebe Kebede, and Zenebework Tadesse. Edited by Meheret Ayenew. June 2001
- No. 2. *NGOs and Poverty Reduction*. Papers by Fassil W. Mariam, Abowork Haile, Berhanu Geleto, and Jemal Ahmed. Edited by Meheret Ayenew. July 2001
- No. 3. *Civil Society Groups and Poverty Reduction*. Papers by Abonesh H. Mariam, Zena Berhanu, and Zewdie Shitie. Edited by Meheret Ayenew. Forthcoming 2001

### Books

1. *The View from Below: Democratization and Governance in Ethiopia*. Edited by Bahru Zewde and Siegfried Pausewang. Forthcoming (Co-published by FSS)

### Special Publications

*Thematic Briefings on Natural Resource Management, Enlarged Edition*. Edited by Alula Pankhurst. Produced jointly by the Forum for Social Studies and the University of Sussex. January 2001

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