

SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROBLEMS OF THE ETHIOPIAN YOUTH: WITH A FOCUS ON EDUCATION, TRAINING AND WORK¹

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1. Introduction

The transition from childhood to adolescence and then to "maturity" (adulthood) is a stage of human development that requires serious attention of families, governments, schools and the community at large. The youth (those between the ages of 15 to 24, accounting for about 18% of the total population of Ethiopia) need education, training, guidance and a healthy environment for the development of their potentialities and to carry out the responsibilities of mature citizens of their country.

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In Ethiopia, only 49 and 10% of the relevant age group children are in primary (grades 1 to 8) and secondary (grades 9 to 12) schools. Higher education participation rate is less than 1% of the expected age group.

For the past several years, the attrition rates due to dropping out at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels are about 18, 10 and 13%, respectively. Only 10 to 15% of those students who complete high school education are admitted to higher education institutions (diploma and degree programs) per year. The enrolment in vocational -technical schools in 2000/01 was 4,561, of which only 17.08% were girls (EMIS-MOE, 2001).

The unemployment rate for the country was over 8% and for Addis Ababa it was 37.70% in 1999 (CSA, 1999). The largest number of the unemployed was young people between the ages of 15 to 24 years. In this brief study, the socio-economic situation of the Ethiopian youth in terms of education, training and work is discussed. The approach is mainly descriptive, focussing on general issues.

The paper deals with Ethiopia in general, but also points out the situation (where relevant) in the main urban centre of the country - Addis Ababa. The main sources of data are the Ministry of Education (MOE) and the Central Statistics Authority (CSA) documents. The main purposes of the study are: (a) making a general assessment of the overall situation of

education, training and "youth transition to work" in Ethiopia, (b) suggesting ways to improve the situation, and (c) inviting further deliberations/studies on the issue. To get a wider perspective, first description of the socio-economic situation of Ethiopia will be presented. Then, the general situation of education, training and work will be presented. Finally, conclusions and recommendations are offered.

2. General Socio-economic Situation of Ethiopia

According to the 1994 population and housing census, Ethiopia has a projected population of 65.3 million in 2001. 44% and 55% of the population are below 15 and 20 years old (CSA, 2001). Only 33% of the population is literate (UNICEF, 2000). The primary school age children (7 to 14 years old) are 12.90 million and secondary school age children (15 to 18 years old) are 5.73 million (EMIS-MOE, 2001). Life expectancy at birth is 43 years and the GNP per capita is US\$ 110 (UNICEF, 2000). About 84% of the population resides in rural areas and 90% of the labour force is working in agriculture and related sectors. It is estimated that 46% of Ethiopia's population lives on income less than US\$ 1 a day, below international poverty line (UNICEF, 2000).

There are 80 ethnic groups (nations, nationalities and peoples) in the country. Fifteen of the largest ethnic groups accounting for about 1% and above are Oromo, Amhara, Tigraway,

Somale, Gurage, Sidama, Wolaita, Silte, Afar, Hadiya, Gamo, Gedeo, Kaffacho, Agew and Kembatta. These ethnic groups account for 94% of Ethiopia's population. The population is predominantly Coptic Orthodox (51%) and Moslem (33%). Protestants, Catholics and others account for 10, 1 and 5% respectively (CSA, 1998). Despite the ethnic diversity in terms of languages, settlement areas, historical background and culture, the population reflects tremendous amount of similarity in various socio-economic and cultural aspects. Studies indicate that the dominant culture of Ethiopia includes the values of helping each other, education, peace, family, ethnocentrism, superstitiousness, authoritarianism in families, dogmatism, fatalism, intolerance of differences, filial piety, suspiciousness, revengefulness and passing problems to others (e.g., Habtamu, 1994; Korten, 1972). Over 100 "harmful traditional practices", which have adverse effects on the health of the people and/or violate various rights of citizens, particularly children and women are prevalent through out the country (Habtamu, 2000A; NCTPE, 1998). Female genital mutilation (circumcision), uvulectomy, milk-teeth extraction, tonsillectomy, child marriage, abduction and rape, tattooing, scarification and wide usage of physical punishment on children are some of the harmful practices.

3. Education, Training and Work

Various UN documents (e.g. UN, 1991; UNESCO, 1981) state that young persons have the right to receive education which stimulates their minds, and develops their capacities in vocational, civic, cultural and personal aspects. The Education and Training Policy of the Ethiopian Government (TGE, 1994) also states that the physical and mental potentials of children and youth will be developed, the citizens will be equipped with various vocational skills and they will be respecting human rights, etc. No doubt that education is the basis for the development of productive, responsible and fair citizens. The evidence is abundant that education (human capital development) stimulates economic growth and economic growth, in turn, stimulates education (e.g. Lockheed & Verspoor, 1991).

Gross educational enrolment (GER) has been increasing in Ethiopia in the past several years. The national average growth rate in primary GER for the past five years is 13.4% (EMIS-MOE, 2001). There was some growth in the secondary and tertiary levels enrolments too. There were 7.4 million primary, 0.74 million secondary and 46, 812 tertiary (regular) level students in Ethiopia in 2000/01 (1993 E.C.). For a country with a population of 65.3 million, these figures are small and show the low level of human resources development in general. The quality of education in terms of academic achievement and the abilities of the graduates at various

levels is questioned (e.g., MEDAC, 1999; UNDP, 1998). Quality, as measured by the number of qualified teachers, length of instruction time, availability of textbooks and other teaching materials, and the high rate of educational wastage (repetition and dropouts) is low at all levels (UNDP, 1998).

As measured by the Human Development Index (HDI), Ethiopia is at the lowest level of human development when compared to its neighbours and other developing countries...The country is at the lowest level in terms of human development..." (UNDP, 1998:1). It is to be noted that HDI measures include longevity (as measured by life expectancy at birth), educational attainment (literacy and enrolments at various levels), standard of living (mainly income), various equities (gender, regional), nutritional status (food and health), and political participation of the people.

Primary and secondary enrolment figures are provided in Table 1. It is to be noted that gender, urban-rural, regional and centre periphery disparities are large and do not seem to be narrowing for decades. The GER for girls was 47% while it was 67.3% for boys; the GER for Somale and Afar were 10.6 and 11.5% respectively, while it was 118.3 and 105.3% for Addis Ababa and Harari regions respectively. (The ratios are over 100% due to the over-aged children in that level). The GER in secondary schools for boys was 14.8% while it was 10.9% for girls and the participation rate of girls in higher education was 20.70% out of the total of 46,812 regular

students (EMIS-MOE, 2001). There were 11,331 graduates (diploma and degree) from the regular programmes of government and private tertiary level institutions in 1993 E.C. (EMIS-MOE, 2001), Only 19.77% of the graduates were females and most were from diploma (12+2) programmes.

Table 1: Total Population and Primary and Secondary Enrolments by Region, 2000/01

Region	Total Population (in million)**	Primary Enrolment (1-8)	Senior Secondary Enrolment (9-12)
Tjgray	3.69	562,635	74,703
Afar	2.22	27,832	3,865
Amhara	16.30	1,754,802	133,224
Oromia	22.35	2,680,868	216,087
Somali	3.70	85,840	2,516
Beni. Gum.	0.54	99,314	4,792
SNNP	12.52	1,638,501	106,849
Gambella	0.21	38,256	3,503
Harari	0.16	27,379	7,570
Addis Ababa	2.50	446,342	173,533
Dire Dawa	0.32	39,704	9,532
Total (Ethiopia)	63.49	7,401,473	736,174

Source: EMIS - MOE (2001) , p. 21.

** Please note that the population estimate used by EMIS-MOE is of 1992 E.C. while enrolment figures are of 1993 E.C. Hence, the GER reported would be lower than 57% for the country and also for the regions.

The national promotion, repetition and dropout rates for 1999/2000 for primary level were 73.09, 9.14 and 17.76% respectively. Though reliable data are not available, educational wastage at high school level is also large. Most of the dropouts tend to be girls.

Thirteen Government Vocational_Technical schools (e.g., Entoto, Awassa, Bure, Sehen, General Wingate), and ten non-Government VT schools (e.g., Selam, SOS, Necat, Hope, Addis, and Opportunity Industrialisation) exist throughout the country. They provide training ranging from one to three years in automechanics, accounting, electricity, general mechanics, secretarial science, drafting, plumbing, building technology and other fields. 2,184 persons graduated from the VT schools in 2000/01(Only 17% were females). Unfortunately, many of the trainees (these and earlier graduates) are unemployed or have not established their own "enterprises". MOLSA & Italian Co-operation (1999) report states that "Unemployment is a pressing problem in Ethiopia in general, and Addis Ababa in particular. The situation is going from bad to worse. Addis Ababa is the most affected administration by unemployment problem" (p. 6).

The youth of Ethiopia have been the victims of the problems engendered by war, drought, socio-economic stagnation, and poor governance. As an expert from MOLSA states "Massive unemployment coupled with lack of strong family and government support and lack of appropriate education and

skill training have adversely affected the youth and exposed it to many social problems such as delinquency, streetism, begging, prostitution, theft and robbery, drug abuse, HIV/AIDS, unwanted pregnancy, abortion etc. especially in urban areas of the country" (Kassaye, 2000: p.2).

CSA (1999) reported that 2.17 million persons were unemployed (in 1999) and looking for jobs in Ethiopia. Out of these, 1.17 million were illiterate. [Please refer to Table 2 for the details concerning the educational levels of the unemployed in Ethiopia and Addis Ababa. Annexes 1 to 2 also provide the industrial divisions and the occupational groups of the employed population of Ethiopia and Addis Ababa]. There were 449,049 persons (63.37% of them females) aged 10 years and above who were unemployed in AA. Of these, 34.02% have completed 12th grade or are beyond it. The unemployment rate for the youth aged 15 to 24 is 50.42%. Out of the unemployed, 68,493 are trained in various skills such as electricity, general mechanics, building construction, tailoring, computer application, typing, carpentry, home economics, metal work and driving.

In connection with the implementation of the new education and training policy, starting this academic year (1994 E.C), 10th grade completes (a little over 100,000 students) are placed into preparatory (academic) and vocational-technical streams. Though reliable data are not available, estimates are that 40% of the students are placed in the vocational -

technical stream. The training will take one to three (mostly two) years depending on the speciality. The work opportunities envisioned by the decision-makers for this large number of young graduates (many would be below 18 years) is a puzzle for many, including this researcher.

Table 2: Unemployed Population Aged Ten Years and Over by Educational Level, Ethiopia & AA, 1999

Education Level	Ethiopia	Addis Ababa
Illiterate	1,169,651	54,165
All Literate	1,001,917	394,713
Non-formal	69,818	13,652
Grade 1-6	372,244	83,465
Grade 7 - 8	186,227	73,543
Grade 9 - 11	142,522	71,288
Grade 12 complete	197,822	125,920
Beyond Grade 12	32,792	26,845
Not stated	663	171
Total	2,171,739	449,049

Source: CSA (1999), pp. 393 & 397.

Note that 53.86% of the unemployed population in Ethiopia was illiterate, indicating the too low human resource development in the country.

As could be observed from Table 3, there were 2.06 million (out of 2.17 million) people who did not have any vocational training. Typing and tailoring seem to be the most popular or available training, though without work opportunity. Please refer to Table 3 for the details.

Table 3: Unemployed Population Aged Ten Years and Over by Type of Training, Ethiopia and AA, 1999

No.	Training Status/Type	Ethiopia	Addis Ababa
1	Not trained	2,055,852	379,056
2	Trained	111,549	68,493
3	Pottery	16	-
4	Weaving	607	361
5	Carpentry/Woodwork	3,755	1,668
6	Electricity	3,601	2,663
7	Metal Work	2,121	1,376
8	Mechanic	7,120	5,247
9	Building Construction	4,237	2,235
10	Typing	23,954	14,115
11	Tailoring	13,020	7,467
12	Driving	9,781	4,760
13	Development Agent	47	-
14	Traditional Birth Attendant	1,142	567
15	Physician	1,891	723
16	Veterinary	100	-
17	Engineering	2,398	1,765

Table 3 - continued

No.	Training Status/Type	Ethiopia	Addis Ababa
18	Computer Science	933	867
19	Computer Application	3,431	2,885
20	Social Science	1,267	1,210
21	Natural Science	416	416
22	Business Economics	7,492	6,143
23	Agricultural Science	254	159
24	Low Level Agricultural Training	506	-
25	Hotel & Tourism	1,405	1,275
26	Law	101	-
27	Police	1,534	935
28	Military	3,894	1,354
29	Teaching	2,402	1,612
30	Home Economics	6,971	3,974
31	Others	6,045	4,334
32	Not Stated (Trained)	1,108	382
	Not stated (Trained or Untrained.)	2,333	1,502
	Total	2,171,734	449,051

Source: CSA (1999), pp. 398 & 403.

As could be observed from Annex 2, the professional and technical workers are only about 1% and the overwhelming majority resides in urban areas. The figures in the tables and annexes show that Ethiopia has a large labour force. But that labour force is illiterate, not well educated, not well trained, and not properly utilised (and not working).

Various policy documents tell us that the social sector in general and the education and training sub sector in particular will produce citizens who understand themselves, their society and the environment. The inculcation of some social, civic and vocational skills and preparation of the young for life (work, living, developing relationships, understanding and tolerance of others, coping with emotions and tensions) are also considered as the tasks of schools, families and the communities at large. But realities (implementation and achievements) are different from the policy statements and declarations.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

The Ministry of Education (1998) indicates that "the education system is characterised by low access and quality, inequitable distribution of educational opportunity, inefficient administration, low expenditure (due to) lack of finance "(p.1). The goals of the Education Sector Development Programme (ESDP) include improving equity by narrowing enrolment gaps

for girls and boys, for rural and urban population, expanding access to education with emphasis on primary education, achieving universal primary education by the year 2015, improving quality of education, reducing educational wastage, and increasing the budget of education.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (1995) lists the following problems related to the education sector in Ethiopia:

- Low education participation rate;
- Poor (low) quality of education;
- Gender bias in favour of males;
- Considerable disparity between urban and rural areas;
- Over- crowded classes and short school (learning) hours;
- High dropout and repetition rates;
- Poor linkage between the education outputs and the demands of the labour market;
- The laxity and breakdown of discipline in many schools;
- Prevalence of violence and sexual abuse in schools and communities;
- General disillusionment and exhibition of hopelessness about the future (among the youth);

Large and increasing number of HIV/AIDS infections and deaths among youth and adults;

Lack of awareness about rights and duties among the youth and the community members at large.

Most authorities and researchers including the Ministry of Education (MOE, 1996; Habtamu, 2001; Kassaye, 2000) would agree with most of the problems listed above. However, the challenge and the difference is on how to deal with these vast problems. Issues of poverty alleviation, preparation of the youth for work and life, the problem of interpersonal violence, violations of human rights (children, women) and issues of better or good governance (e.g. participation of the poor and the youth, competent leadership, legitimate authority, transparency and accountability, the rule of law) need to be issues of national importance and worth studies, deliberations, decision, implementation, evaluation, etc.

The Government's social policy states that "All efforts shall be made to create opportunities for youth to develop their abilities and become productive citizens making significant contributions to the development of the county" (MOLSA, 1996:68). Despite various good sounding policy statements concerning education, skills training, economic growth, poverty alleviation, respecting of human rights, creating opportunities, etc., the situation of the country, Addis Ababa, and the youth in specific is pathetically poor/bad and

depressing. Some important issues to consider (study thoroughly, discuss, plan, implement, etc) to improve the situation of the youth in making the transition to "maturity with work" are the following:

1. Conducive (enabling) environment (in terms of policies, tax breaks, provision of land, lesser bureaucratic red tape, etc.) would have to be created for various investments and work opportunity creation.
2. The goals and objectives of education and training at all levels need thorough study, deliberations and revision where necessary. This should be done with the socio-economic situation, national goals & culture of the country in mind! Also issues of the improvement of quality of education (relevant curricula, competent and motivated teachers, adequate teaching materials, etc), reduction of educational wastage and emphasis on marketable skills need to be addressed in concrete terms.
3. Policy /decision makers, the implementers and researchers need to have much closer link and share their views and findings. They need to have closer dialogue, trust and relationship than what exist now (Habtamu, 2000B).
4. Better information and relationship need to exist between the labour market and those sectors responsible for human resources development. Possible need projections, training and retraining possibilities have to be considered. [The

- author is aware of the lack of adequate and reliable data in many areas].
5. Non-formal education, community skills training and community needs based development projects where the youth also participate deserve better attention than what exist now.
 6. Some policies, strategies. and plans would have to be considered concerning the large migration of children and youth to Addis Ababa, where opportunities are not better than where they were. At least, they need to be aware of what waits for them (i.e. prostitution, streetism, crime, unemployment, beggary, etc) (Kassaye, 2000).
 7. Provision of some skills training, some credits/loan and other support facilities to the needy youth (mostly by NGOs) would have to continue (MOLSA & Italian Co-operation, 1999). This also involves (better) supporting the informal and service sectors, which accommodate a large number of youth.
 8. Better co-ordination mechanisms would have to be developed between the various ministries (e.g. MOE, MOFED, MOLSA, MOA), skills training institutions, the private sector, NGOs and other stakeholders of the youth and unemployment issue.

9. Provision of guidance and counselling services in the schools and the communities (about fields of study, jobs, personal problems, etc) would have to be seriously considered.

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Annex 1

Employed Population of Ethiopia & Addis Ababa by Major Industrial Division, 1999*

No.	Industrial Division	Ethiopia	Addis Ababa
1	Agriculture	19,869,083	17,540
2	Mining & quarrying	15,666	2,202
3	Manufacturing	1,107,229	123,788
4	Electricity, gas & water supply	28,024	9,825
5	Construction	228,525	48,095
6	Wholesale & retail trade, repair of vehicles, personal & household goods	1,463,110	188,445
7	Hotels and restaurants	878,749	39,260
8	Transport, storage & communication	122,971	51,387
9	Financial Intermediation	19,667	10,900
10	Real state, renting & business activities	33,824	12,160
11	Public admin. & defence	238,150	45,500
12	Education, health & social work	340,294	51,922
13	Other social, cultural & household activities	304,302	37,069
14	Private households with employed persons	200,125	96,518
15	Extra-Territorial organ.	7,253	4,037
16	Not stated	39,614	1,661
	Total employed pop.	24,896,576	740,309

Source: CSA (1999) , pp. 264 & 269.

Annex 2

Employed Population of Ethiopia and AA Aged 10 Years and Over by Major Occupational Groups, 1999

No.	Major Occupational Groups	Ethiopia	Addis Ababa
1	Legislators, Officials, Mgrs.	68,737	25,679
2	Professionals (scientists, teachers etc).	49,893	23,931
3	Technicians	242,991	61,399
4	Clerks (typists, cashiers, etc).	142,628	56,094
5	Service workers	1,404,375	155,056
6	Skilled agriculture workers	9,383,875	8,716
7	Crafts and trade workers	3,003,124	139,204
8	Plant and machine operators	135,510	49,838
9	Elementary occupation	10,420,300	216,905
10	Not stated	45,153	3,526
Total employed persons		24,896,586	740,308

Source: CSA (1999). pp. 238 & 243.