

University Students' National Community Services in Ethiopia: A Historical Glance (1964-1985)

Dechasa Abebe^{*}

Abstract: *University education in Ethiopia has a short history, less than a century. Since its foundation, students had been engaged in national community services for a couple of periods - during the Imperial time and the Derg time. So, this paper intends to disclose some of the experiences of the students during their national community services in different sectors and to draw lessons for the future implementation of university-community (industry) linkage. For this purpose, document analysis and interviews with the then students and their supervisors (instructors) were employed. The data revealed that the services during the Imperial period seem to have borne more fruit than those during the Derg era. The difference in their effectiveness lies in the initiatives, objectives and execution of the program. Thus, it is instructive that a university-community linkage needs a well-organized, financed as well as academic programs that need to go in line with community interest implementation rather than hasty politically driven initiative.*

Key terms: *University education, university-community linkage, national community services, politically driven initiatives.*

^{*} Assistant Professor of History, College of Social Sciences, Centre for African studies, AAU

Introduction

The history of university education is very old. There were ancient universities in Asia and Africa before the establishment of formal universities in medieval Europe. The European universities had their historical roots in the catholic monasteries. However, the foundation of formal universities in sub-Saharan Africa is as old as the beginning of European colonialism in the early 19th century. Even if, they were not monastery-based, colleges and universities in Africa were founded by the catholic and protestant missionaries since the 1820s in different regions of the continent (Apte, 2015: 4).

In the case of Ethiopia, it was only by the middle of the 20th century that the country founded its first formal university (Hussein, 2006: 292). The foundation of a university in Ethiopia could not be associated with monasteries or missionary institutions, although the country had a long tradition of monasticism. In fact, the government of Imperial Ethiopia recruited its first university staff from among the missionaries (*Ibid*).

The purpose of establishing a university was to serve the respective community or the nation both directly and indirectly. These days, conventionally, it is said that universities specifically in Ethiopia, are founded to accomplish three important missions: conducting teaching-learning, carrying out research activities and providing community services. Of the

three missions, this paper focuses on the historical experiences of community services in Ethiopia. It gives due attention to historical experiences of students' community services from 1964 to 1985. Of the experiences, three different campaigns are taken as case studies:

- a) The National University Service which was conducted for about nine years from September 1964 to 1974,
- b) The campaign for *Development through Cooperation* which was planned to be conducted for two years 1974-1976,
- c) The 1985 Shelter construction in Metekel and Gambella for the draught victims from Tigray, Wollo and some parts of Shewa.

Thus, the purposes of the paper are to:

- a) explore some of the experiences during those times of national community services,
- b) make a sort of comparisons between the campaigns during the Imperial and the *Derg* period, taking some indicators into consideration,
- c) draw lessons and suggest possible recommendations for the future proper implementation of university-community linkage.

Methods

This study employed qualitative historical research method. The method is used to reveal the general and the particular in historical phenomena to understand the various historical stages of development of the same phenomenon or different contemporary phenomena. It

comprises the techniques and guideline by which historians use different historical sources or evidences to write history (James Mahoney, 2004).

For these purposes, interviews and document analyses were used as tools for data collection. Interviews were conducted with the then university students and their supervisors. About eight participants were interviewed. Further, memoirs of individuals who participated in the programs either as student or supervisor were reviewed.

Concepts

In this discussion the term *university* is understood as an institution of higher education and research. It is an institution that awards academic degrees in different disciplines. Similarly, *university education* is the training for which academic degrees are awarded. The purpose of that education is to prepare people to work in different sectors of the economy, society and politics. *Community service* is a non-paying job performed by one person or a group of people for the benefit of the community or its institutions. It is different from volunteering since it is not always performed on a voluntary basis but for personal benefits (Taylor, 2014: 96) such as:

- citizenship requirements,
- as substitution of criminal justice sanctions
- requirements of a school, class or for graduation from higher institutions

- Pre-requisites for receipts of certain benefits.

For the purpose of this paper, *Community service learning* is a process of involving students in community service activities combined with facilitated means for applying the experience to their academic and personal development (Blosser, 2015: 21-29).

Review of Related Literature

Most of the available academic literature does not take the students' community services at least as one of the universities' historical experiences. For instance, a very thick article by Hussien Ahmed, who gives special attention to the institutional history of Addis Ababa University bypasses that part as if it was not part of the history of the institution. (Hussein, 2006). Similarly, Bahru Zewde who wrote an informative book on the university students' political movement has barely dedicated pages to the students' community services (Bahru, 2014). In fact, it is observed that the participants in the services rarely discuss the issue except mentioning, as a side issue, that they participated as a leader or co-coordinator of the programs like Aklilu in the case of national services and Shibru in the case of settlement program of Metekel and Gambella (See Aklilu, 2017 and Shibru, 2016).

It is obscure why both the national and expatriate scholars who wrote extensively on the student movements and history of university education marginalized the program of the

community services in one form or another. They left it out or could not take the issue as a subject of discussion as if it did not have any relation with the student movements. Most of the documents initially produced as partial fulfillment for MA or PhD degrees and later came out as books were overloaded with the discussion of political ideologies and students' pre-occupation with such activities rather than the actual activities of community services rendered to the people by the students. They were immersed in the political propaganda of their source materials produced by student associations. Such documents were pre-occupied by political ideology and denunciation of the then newly established military government that mobilized the students for the realization of the slogan "Land to the tiller" and the indoctrination of socialist ideology to the rural Ethiopia. Unfortunately, the students were mainly working against the *Derg* itself as were doing those documents. However, official documents from the government tended to be neglected or criticized as factious reports that could not reflect the appropriate picture of the campaigns or services (Fantahun, 1990); Balsvic, 1985; Beyene, 1977).

In the midst of this, there were academic contributions that took the services as topics of discussion. They tended to discuss the contributions made by the campaigns in disseminating the idea of the student movement to the provincial and district towns of the country. The former, however, overlooked the

contribution of the services to expanding the students' knowledge of rural Ethiopia's socio-economic conditions or the real contribution of the students' activities to the betterment of the life of the people in the respective areas they served (Legesse Lemma, 1979; Hiwot, 2012). Seyoum Gebre Selassie can be taken as one who eventually deviated from the former group and took the national service as his topic of discussion to show its contribution to the development of the country (Seyoum, 1971).

Contrary to the literature referred to above, memoirs from the then high ranking authorities showed the explicit intention and achievements of each program. For instance, Aklilu Habte, in his book on the history of Haile Selassie I university, allotted a chapter to the Ethiopian National University Service. Similarly, Fikre Selassie, Mengistu and Fiseha widely discussed the how, why and the outcome of the campaign - *Zemecha* - for *Development through Cooperation* justifying every bit of their decision and defending their position in the campaign and its achievements (Aklilu, 2017; Fikre Selassie, 2014; Mengistu, 2011; Fiseha, 2015).

Ethiopian University Students' Community Services (1964-1985)

Historical experiences of the students in those services can be discussed from different perspectives and the following questions: Who took the initiatives to commence the campaigns? What were the explicit and implicit objectives of the

campaigns? What did the process of the implementation look like? What were the achievements and challenges in the course of the implementation?

a) Initiatives

As far as the obtained historical sources are concerned, in none of the services were the initiatives taken by the students and the concerned communities but they were simply imposed from above without any consultation. In the case of the National University Service, the initiative was taken by the university. Initially, the idea was said to have been generated by Mesfin Woldemariam, who was an instructor in the university. He wrote a notice to the office of the then university president who considered and recommended the matter for further study by a committee organized for that purpose. The committee finally came up with a support to the idea and suggested further study on how to implement it (Aklilu, 2017:351).

The campaign for *Development through Cooperation* was initiated by the then military committee that got the idea from the university students themselves. Just like in the case of the University Service, the idea of this campaign was generated by an individual who was a member of the *Derg* - Sisay Habetie. It is said that he had good information about the political movements in the university since he was an extension student in the same university. He may also have had the news that university students in some African countries like Tanzania were

servicing their community in the rural area. Anyway, after Sisay generated the idea and got acceptance by the *Derg* members, the issue was forwarded for further study of implementation to a committee organized for the same purpose (Fikre Selassie, 2014: 155).

The main difference between the two initiatives was that in the case of the Imperial one, it was initiated by the university itself or by a faculty member, but in the case of the *Derg* time, it was raised by the government or an individual who was a member of the *Derg*.

The *Shelter Construction* of 1985 was also initiated by government officials. One of my oral informants said that higher university officials were summoned by the government and given explanations about what was going on in the country and the need for resettling the victims of the drought and famine that year. In fact, it was widely circulating among the university community that the Bahir Dar College had already started the service on the free will of its community. So, the university officials then were given the assignment to mobilize community members of their institution for the purpose¹. Some of the participants commented that it was a sudden drop to the university community (Shibru, 2016: 344). The way it was passed down was described as:

Students and academic staff, cooks, gardeners, messengers and sweepers-the entire university community-was all commanded by the government to go and aid the great “resettlement” of the

northerners. This was to a large extent against the will of the university community, where many questioned the wisdom of the resettlement project, because it was forced, not voluntary, but the leaders of the university were both members and instruments of the new, government-initiated Workers' Party of Ethiopia, and thus in no position to refuse (Balsvik, 2009: 269).

b) Objectives

The National University Service was said to be part of an attempt to Ethiopianize the university education. The idea was said to be adopted from the traditional church education which was characterized by a number of community services at each level of its progresses. In fact, broadly speaking, it was both service as well as learning. So, the main objective of the University Service was to familiarize Ethiopian university students with the real socio-economic situations of rural Ethiopia, so that they could contribute for the betterment of the lives of the peasantry. Thus, the objective was a two-way traffic, both services and learning (Aklilu, 2017:353).

Coming to the second one, the then new government, the *Derg*, said that the major problem of Ethiopia, particularly rural Ethiopia was the unfair possessions of land and land resources as it was articulated by the students themselves for long, at least for more than a decade, claiming "land to the tiller". So, the *Derg* decided to accomplish that aspiration of the students. The *Derg* hoped that the

measure would be supported by the university students and that they would assist in the land redistribution and awareness creation among the peasantry, but it actually did not turn out to be the case (Fikre Selassie, 2014:155-156).

Thus, they were asked, better say told, to go to the campaign specifically to accomplish the following among the rural people (Fiseha, 2015:133-134):

- a) Teach them the detailed objectives of "Ethiopia First!"
- b) Teach them how to read and write in Amharic and to perform simple arithmetic;
- c) Train them on how to improve their livelihood or living conditions;
- d) Identify the critical problems surrounding the land tenure system and implement the new proclamation of land to the tiller;
- e) Train the people on health care;
- f) Teach the people about heritages and their managements
- g) Collect data that will be used as input for policy development.

In fact, students were not the first choice of the *Derg* for the rural program but rather was the army. Unfortunately, it could not dispatch the army because of the then prevailing national security threats both from the northern and the eastern corners of the country. Then, it had to go for the, second choice, the students (Mengistu, 2011: 281-282). There was, in fact, a claim on the part of some students that the *Derg* sent them to the country to keep them away from city politics expressed in the form of violent demonstrations.

When we come to the third campaign, it was generally to construct resettlement shelters for the 1984/85 victims of draught and famine. It was to construct new villages in the “uncultivated but fertile regions of the country” and settle the victims according to the official proclamation of the *Derg* government (Shibru, 2016:345).

However, informants commented that the campaign seemed to remove the university community from the city political atmosphere to the peripheral hostile areas, probably drawing lessons from the campaign of *Development through Cooperation* in which the students had contact with the wider community of the country and imprinted in them the effect of the famine of 1973/74 of the Imperial regime. But in this case, the students were all “imprisoned” in the heart of the jungle where they could not have any contact with the community. Other informants did not agree to this commenting that the *Derg* by the time was victorious in every aspect and had defeated all internal political rivals, so there was no need to remove the powerless university community from the city. Instead, an informant contended, the *Derg* had two extra related objectives: to appease the university community (mainly the intellectuals) and attract them to the membership of the newly established Ethiopian Workers Party (EWP), and to show to the university community that it was powerful and could impose all its interest on the university community¹.

So, according to informants, the officially told objectives could be authentic.

c) Implementations

Primarily, all of them were made compulsory both for the students and recipient community whether they like it or not. For the first program, failure to participate in the national service resulted in failure to graduate or that one could not be awarded the degree. In the case of the second one, failure to participate would result in critical punishments (Fiseha, 1915: 135) which were denial of:

- a) admission to any educational institution on both regular and extension programs;
- b) employment in any government institution or organization;
- c) permission to go abroad for whatever purpose.

The third one was also associated with similar pre-conditions; failure to participate was automatically failure to graduate (Shibru, 2016: 344).

It seems that these decisions for punishment were as reactions to the stand of the whole or part of the university community that surfaced on the eve of each campaign. In the case of the first two, there were formal questions and protests by the university community which were partially or fully against the programs. But in the case of the third, it seemed the university community was not confident enough to question or protest against the program at least directly.

To raise practical examples, in the case of the National University Service, the issue was accepted by majority vote (24 for, 10 against and 4 abstinence) by the general assembly of the university faculty on April 7, 1964. Those members who were opposed to the program justified their position saying:

- a) Learning was not serving;
- b) Students were not assigned for the service according to their field of studies;
- c) Students would be pre-occupied with political issues;
- d) The program extended the graduation time of students;
- e) It was a loss for the government; the government had to wait for trained manpower for one more year; and
- f) It was a burden to the university; it was expected to solve the complex problems it had to face because of the program.

Those who objected to it even went to the extent of instigating the students for mass protest against the program (Aklilu, 2017: 356).

In the case of the second one, the *Derg* members argued that they were confident that the university community, mainly the students, would be supporting the program and have the interest to train and educate, the peasantry to solve their socio-economic problems. Unfortunately, when the program was officially announced by the *Derg*, the students totally rejected it through a majority vote in their council. They claimed the military, sending the students to rural

Ethiopia in the name of campaign, would strengthen its power (Democracia, vol.2, no. 25, 23rd Hidar, 1968 E.C). The decision of the students was very strange to the *Derg* members; they were even annoyed by the position of the students (Fikre Selassie, 2014: 157).

Regarding the third campaign, there was no explicit opposition from members of the university community to the program lest losing their education or employment opportunities. There were, in fact, rumors about the campaign among the university community for a month or two before the actual announcement of the program by the government. During those times, there was fear of talking about anything negative regarding the campaign but those who wanted to be seen supporting the program were talking about and justifying the merits of the program raising the Bahir Dar College community campaign as an example¹. In fact, it was strongly opposed by the communities who were victims of the drought and famine, and the then guerrilla fighters who argued that the program was not to save and rehabilitate the community but to drain the population of northern Ethiopia from where the guerrilla fighters drew their provisions and manpower (Africa Watch Report, 1991).

Generally, all the campaigns were implemented with this background. Anyway, the first one was preceded by well-organized plan and began to be implemented as of September 1964, and took place consecutively for nine years, sending out a batch of 3rd year completes

each year. The program was financed by the university and recipient institutions or organizations (Aklilu, 2017).

The program involved orientation or training for the students which took about two weeks dwelling on the nature of the recipient communities such as their culture, health problems, teaching methods etc. This training was later developed into a semester course with one credit hour. Then, the students were provided with items like folding beds, chairs and tables, kitchen utensils and first aid kits etc from the university and paid 175 Ethiopian Birr monthly besides transport costs. Finally, they cast lots for their place of assignments.

The first year of the service involved 129 student's majority (110) of whom were assigned to schools to teach in grades 7 and 8. The number gradually increased from year to year and came to be more than 500 for the year 1974. Over the years, from 1964 to 1974, a total of about 3,759 students were involved in the program. The recipient institutions also

increased from year to year and reached about 35 by 1974 (Aklilu, 2017:359).

Coming to the second campaign, the government (*Derg*) planned to involve about 60,000 students and teachers. In comparison to the first one, this was so massive; students from grades 11 and 12 were also involved, in addition to those from the university and colleges. The program was for two years. Students were provided with uniform and given orientation for a few hours in Jan meda in the presence of the Chairman and Vice-chairman of the *Derg*. It is said that about 10,000 participants attended the orientation and speech of the Chairman, Gen. Teferi Benti in December 1975. He stressed that the students should not oppose the campaign which they were demanding for long. Even though it was planned to dispatch 60,000 participants to 574 stations in the country, i.e., 30 students to each, it was only possible to send out about 48,000 participants to 51 centers sub divided into 397 stations (Fiseha, 2015: 135-136).



Source; (Mengistu, 2012: 283)

Informants said that participants were provided with food and shelter by the government, but unlike those in the

national service, the students were paid no salary or pocket money.

Regarding the third campaign, all the higher education communities, both students and staff, were involved. Initially, two task forces were organized for coordinating the campaign. These were the Abay and the Baro task forces, respectively led by Prof. Shibru Tedla and Dr. Aregay Waktola. The Abay group was sent to Metekel and the Baro group was sent to Gambella. Students from the Natural Science Faculty were sent to Gambella while those from the Social Science Faculty were sent to Metekel. Moreover, students from the then Asmera University and Alemaya College of Agriculture (currently Haromaya University) were sent to Gambella. In both cases, preparation was made for about two weeks and the groups were dispatched beginning from the third week of *Senie* (June 1985). About 10,000 students and faculty members were sent to each of Metekel and Gambella (20,000 in total) (Shibru, 2016: 350). The students had to survive with the very meager food and Uncomfortable shelters (tents) provided by the government. There was no pocket money or salary. There occurred frequent disturbances by the students induced by the poor distribution of the provisions. Sometimes the committees were forced to call the police who had to disperse or calm the disorder down by firing into the air. Water provision was also one of the critical problems. The participants spent most of their time waiting for water as it was brought from distance.

d) Achievements

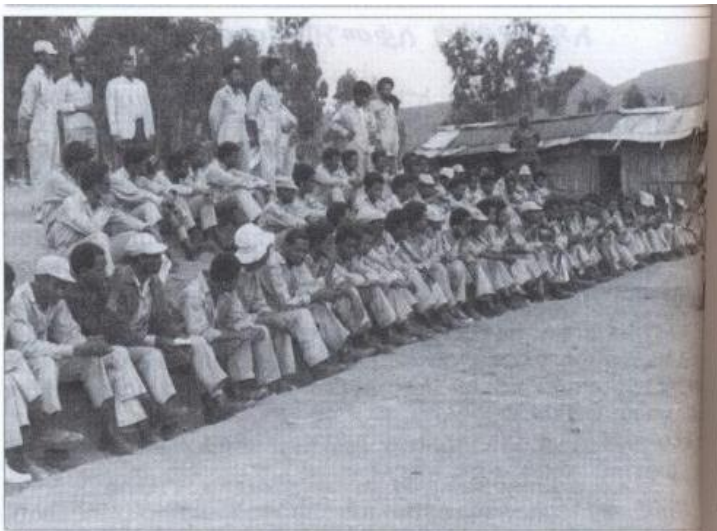
All concerned authorities claimed they achieved the major objectives in the respective programs (Aklilu, 2017:370-376; Fiseha, 2015:137; Shibru, 2016:351). However, the degree of their achievement varied very significantly.

To start with, the major objective of the Students' University Service was to Ethiopianize the university education, at most, and familiarize university students with the socio-economic conditions/problems of rural Ethiopia, at least. The achievement of the program can be seen from the opinions gathered from three different stakeholders, the university (both the teachers and management), the students and the employers (recipient institutions and communities). According to their opinions, regardless of a number of challenges, the program achieved its major objectives (Aklilu, 2017:370-376). Some of the students remarked that, unlike the uncertainties and oppositions at the beginning, they found the program helpful and it enabled them to understand the socio-economic conditions of rural Ethiopia. Similarly, the employers commented that the program was fruitful. Quantitatively, it is said that 82% of the employers recommended that the program should continue with minor modifications and improvements. The instructors, including those who were initially opposed to the program, also commented that it enabled the students to understand their country. They said that such an understanding was gathered from the students' comments and reflections in

the class after their return. The initial argument on the part of the university was that the students would not have a good understanding of the socio-economic conditions of the country from books since there were no materials written by Ethiopians on the subject relating matters to university education. The students were taught by expatriate instructors or by Ethiopians who studied for their degrees abroad in foreign languages and their education lacked direct relationship with Ethiopian situations. So, the curriculum produced foreign language speakers who acted like the Americans or the British with no deep

knowledge of Ethiopia. The program was thus meant to address such problems as much as possible. In fact, more than anything else, it is said that the program contributed a lot to the expansion of education in the country.

Coming to the second campaign, there were multiple objectives. So, the achievement can be seen against those objectives. In spite of all the challenges and casualties, the authorities claimed that the students worked well on the land distribution and organization of farmers' association in all corners of Ethiopia.



Source; (Fiseha, 2015: 132)

A report announced in the middle of the program (just after a year) described that about 5,537,000 farmers were organized into 19,341 associations. Moreover, the students could establish 55,000 defense committees.

They also built about 246 clinics, and trained about 750 health assistants, built about 158 schools and vaccinated 500,000 heads of cattle (Fiseha, 2015:137).



Source; (Fikre Selassie, 2014: 163)

Regarding the third program, even if the authorities argued it was a successful program, the interviewed participants said that it was a misery and nightmare for them. It was reported that a number of huts were constructed in each site, although it was not up to the initial plan. For instance, it was planned to construct about 40,000 huts in all the sites of Metekel, but it was possible to manage only 18,372. Even those ones were extremely poor in quality and were given the name “አትደገፋኝ” meaning, do not lean on me! (Shibru, 2016:351). An informant on the matter commented that students were mocking saying, “ቤቱ ተሰርቶ ስላለቀ ማስነጠስ ክልክል ነዉ!” roughly translated as, “Sneezing is forbidden as constructions are complete now,” implying that the huts are so shaky that they would fall down by the force of air released when one sneezes. The same informant said that there were also few groups and individuals (for instance, from the institute of Ethiopian Studies) who wrote a proposal for an ethnographic

studies and were given permission to do that. They studied the area and produced a report of about twenty pages in which was mentioned that participants in the campaign found the venture fruitful and gained knowledge and experience more than just the construction of huts¹. Other informants said it enabled them to practically understand the geographical and ethnic diversification of the country. They added they knew only what is in geography textbooks before the campaign and remarked the experience was an eye opening incident to the indigenous knowledge of our forefathers that both the government and the intellectuals should not undermine. Nobody asked why they did not have large scale farming in those vast, sparsely populated and apparently fertile areas. They knew that the areas were not suitable for growing cereal crops except maize in shifting cultivation.

e) Challenges and Failures

The University National Service faced four major challenges. Primarily, some

university instructors were not convinced by the idea that although the students would not solve the socio-economic problems of the society, they should understand them and graduate. As a result, they were not willing to supervise the students. Secondly, there was lack of cooperation or support from some employing organizations/ministries. Apart from the Ministry of Education which employed the majority of the students, other institutions/ministries were not ready to take the students on board under the pretext of lack of budget for the monthly pay of birr 175 and the students 'lack of necessary skill and knowledge to perform the expected activities. Thirdly, there was lack of adequate budget on the part of the university to cover the expenses of the program such as transport, teaching materials and other related provisions for the students. Finally, as expected, the students were predominantly preoccupied with political activities which became a great challenge to the university management as they were constantly in conflicts with the officials and police forces in the respective localities. They were in violent demonstrations even instigating the secondary school students to do the same. Finally, some officials tended to refuse admitting university students to their respective localities and organizations (Aklilu, 2017: 366-369).

The Development through Cooperation campaign also had some challenges. The first critical challenge was the opposition to and denunciation of the program by the then Ethiopian Peoples'

Revolutionary Party (EPRP) which had the support of the significant number of youths mainly in the central and northern parts of Ethiopia. The party officially denounced the program just a year after the official launching of the campaign (Democracia, 1968 E.C, on the 23rd of Hidar, vol. 2, no. 25). In fact, informants asserted that the group had made an underground conspiracy against the campaign from the very beginning while the students were still in the university. Thus, lots of the students evacuated their camps which significantly harmed the campaign. Even if the campaign was planned for two years, majority of the students left their stations after six months and went back to their home towns and began urban-based political struggle that led to the massacre of one another under the umbrella of *White Terror* and *Red Terror*. The rest of the students went back to their families in rural Ethiopia or district towns and were employed in any available opportunity. So, the major challenge that led to the failure of the campaign was the tense political atmosphere that prevailed in the country.

The second challenge was the aggressive reactions of some rebel groups and individuals to the nationalization and distribution of rural lands, urban lands and extra houses and other related properties. These groups attacked the students' camps in different parts of the country considering that the students were the main actors in the implementation of land distribution and other related measures. In areas like

Gonder, North Shewa, Gojam and others, the *gultegnas* (feudal land lords) and other members of the *Mesafint* and *mequanint* (the nobility) took such measure killing a number of students (Fikre Selassie, 2014:191-204). There were also secessionists and liberation fighters in the northern borders of the country that did the same. Moreover, interviewed participants in the campaign said that there were underground preparations by Somali aggressors to attack students in the eastern border of the country, even before their official opening of attacks on Ethiopia in 1969 E. C. As a result, the program suffer significant number of casualties particularly students. The *Derg* officially announced that about 116 students died or were killed during the campaign (Fiseha, 2015: 137).

Coming to the third, *Construction of Shelters for Resettlers*, the major challenge of the program was the hostile nature of the climate of both Gambella and Metekel, although official documents did not report about it. That was worsened by the scarcity of government provisions mainly food and water. Participants remembered with regret that they were not confident enough about keeping themselves alive using whatever means let alone thinking about the duties they were expected to carry out,. One of the respondents commented that many of them would have died or faced critical health problems had the program been extended just by one month. Because of the physical deterioration they had to undergo as a result of the hostile

environment and hardship, said some of the respondents, it was difficult for their relatives and families to identify them when they came back home.

They commented that the program was ill organized and that they were simply taken and dropped there without any preparation. Health problems because of malnutrition and poor hygiene were rampant. All the hardship that the participants had to face eventually bore no fruit.

The then Academic Vice President of AAU said that he went to visit the camps in Metekel after a year and found out that almost all the shelters they built were empty. Areas where peasants from other areas, mainly Wollo, settled were not hospitable and settlers could not carry out agricultural activities since the soil was infertile (Shibru, 2016: 352).

In fact, many of the participants including the authorities understood that the area was not hospitable. Observing the absence of water in the area, a member of the university community asked the authorities, “ለኛ ዘማቾች ውኃ በቦቴ እየተቀዳ ይሰጣችዋል፣ ጎጆ የምንሰራለችዉ ሰፋሪዎች ውኃ ከዬት ያገኛሉ?” roughly translated as, “For us, the campaigners, water trucks provide water. Where do the settlers for whom we build huts get water from?” The answer by one of the authorities was direct. “እኛ እኮ ያዘመኑናችሁ የሥራ ክብሩን እንድታዉቁት ነዉ።” meaning, “We made you campaign so that you know how worthy work is.” (Ibid: 356). Mr. Dereje

Gebre similarly noted in his diary as, “አሰማሪዎቻችን ከፍተኛ የሆነ በይል እያደረሱብን ነው። አዝናለሁ! በእህልና በውሃ ቀጡን..... የትም ላይ ጥለውን ይንፈላሰሳሉ.... እርስ በርሳችን ልንበላላ ነው። ተማሪው በሁላችንም ላይ ዓይኑን ማፍጠጡን ቀጥሏል።” This roughly goes as, “Our bosses are committing a serious crime against us. I am sorry. They punished us by denying us food and water. They are enjoying life abandoning us anywhere. We are about to devour each other. Students have continued gazing at us all.”

Contrary to what has been claimed in the objectives, some informants commented that the then national crisis caused by drought and famine, wars and conflicts created a sort of threat in the minds of the *Derg* officials that the university, as usual, would come up with critical questions or protests regarding the problem. So, leaving the students and the staff in such a hostile situation may buy them time to think about the way out as the leaders were also preparing for the 10th anniversary of the Revolution. The act does not go in line with the accusation they were putting against the Imperial regime for inhumane reactions to the 1973/74 drought and famine that took place in the country.

Summary of Major Findings

The National University Service enabled the students to understand the socio-economic conditions of the country as intended. Moreover, even if it might not

be the only factor, it pushed the students to protest or demand for the fundamental change of the system and disseminated the idea to different parts of the country. It was successful because the program was initiated by academic institutions for academic purpose and was relatively well organized and associated with reasonable incentive.

In the case of *Development through Cooperation*, it had two purposes against which its success can be measured. One was the political and economic purpose that was not as such satisfactory except for the campaigners’ understanding of some of the ups and downs and also the socio-economic conditions that prevailed in the different parts of the country. The program did not target any academic achievement as it was not initiated by academic institutions but from the community service perspectives, it was successful to a certain extent particularly from the angle of the objectives of the *Derg*. Anyway, the measure could soften the violent student demonstrations and protests from the heart of political contest. Whatever the objectives, there was no association of academic purpose with the community services.

In the case of the third campaign, *Construction of Shelters for Resettlers*, the researcher could not see any success in it from available evidences or from official reports. Of course, if we look at it from the point of removing the university community from the towns and confining them to the heart of the jungle to prevent any possible protest against the system, it

was fully successful. All the participants were confined to a hostile climatic region where the students could not take their own measure, even in terms of thinking about academic issues / research such as ethnographic studies, environment, history and other related topics although that was feasible.

Anyway, the major reason for the failure/little success of the last campaign was lack of commitment from the side of the participants as there was no interests and incentives from the government. Of course, lack of skills might have contributed to the little success of the program.

Recommendations

There is no question on the importance of university-community linkage, but it was and would be advisable to consult both the students and the recipient communities so that they could be part of both the initiatives and objectives of such services.

The objectives of such programs should be two-way, both the community and the academics should benefit. Moreover, the program should be led by professionals than by mere politician's/party cadres.

There is also a need for proper planning so that it could be manageable both for the academic institutions and the recipient communities or institutions. Adequate time, reasonable number of students, capacity of recipient community / institutions have to be considered. The program should be supported by

reasonable amount of budget both by the university and recipient institutions, industries or communities.

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