

## **Assessment of the Contributions of Madda Walabu University to the Regional State of Oromiya**

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**Abstract:** The objective of this research was to assess the contributions of Madda Walabu University to the Regional State of Oromiya. There is a need for conducting a research on the above topic due to the government's policy of investing in education, especially in expanding and upgrading higher educational institutions so as to bring sustainable development in Ethiopia. According to the plan of the government, three additional universities will be set up in the Regional State of Oromiya, out of which Madda Walabu University, which was opened at Bale-Robe, is one. A descriptive survey research method was used for this study. The subjects of the study include officials working at various positions and 250 people selected as samples using purposive sampling technique. To gather the data, questionnaire, interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis were employed. The data was analyzed using qualitative approaches. Results of the study revealed that Madda Walabu University could contribute a lot to the Regional State of Oromiya in various aspects. To further promote the contributions of the university to the region, some recommendations are given at the end of the paper.

### **Introduction**

### **Background and Justification of The Study**

For a nation which is backward in terms of technology and economic development, there is an acute demand for highly educated and skilled manpower and technology, which are crucial for development. The demands for productive work and services are growing from time to time as we are living in a dynamic world. As a result, what is considered satisfactory today may become obsolete after some years.

Hence, we have to adjust ourselves to the changing world or modify it to fit to our needs. Education is a precondition and the most crucial

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factor in helping us to do so. To this end, preparation for the provision of education and training has to be in a position to accommodate such changing demands and fulfill the requirements in any sphere of work.

Just as environmental degradation affects the ecological system on which life depends, so does the education crisis threaten the human resources of knowledge, skill, attitude and self-confidence on which individual and community development depends.

Ethiopia is one of the countries in the horn of Africa which has a total land area of 1.126 million square km out of which about 65% is arable, but less than 15% is cultivated (Shibiru and Kifle as cited in Woube, 2002). Firstly, most of the population (88%) lives in the highlands (above 1500 masl) which constitute only 43% of the country's land area; the density of the population is very high in the highlands - more than 90 persons per square km, and low in the lowlands 10 persons per square km. Secondly, out of the total area, 60% is suitable for agricultural purposes. The natural forest covers only 2.4% of the total area; however, this continues to decrease due to various reasons.

Thirdly, Ethiopia has a large water resource potential which includes eleven major lakes with a total area of 7400 square km, twelve river basins with a total annual surface runoff about 110 billion cubic meters, and ground water with an estimated capacity of 2.26 billion cubic meters. The water resources provide large potential for hydropower generation, irrigation and fisheries. Fourthly, agriculture is the main economic activity, accounting for 45% of the GDP; the majority of the population depends on this activity, of which small farming is predominant.

Even if getting health care is considered as a basic right, due to the existence of a few number of hospitals and clinics, health professionals, medicine, etc., providing the service has become difficult in Ethiopia. It was reported that Ethiopia has one of the world's highest rate of child mortality (175/1000) in 1997 (UNICEF as

cited in Woube, 2002). Moreover, the great majority of the Ethiopian people do not have access to clean water and adequate health services.

According to the IMF and World Bank press release of 2001, the level of poverty in Ethiopia is indicated as follows. Ethiopia is among the highest in the world with per capital income of US\$ 100 and ranks the second lowest in the world and one-fifth in sub-Saharan Africa, and 171 out of 174 countries on the UNDP 2000 human development index. Life expectancy is 43 years, and prospects are that this number will fall with a spreading HIV/AIDS pandemic. Only one-third of men and less than one-fifth of women can read and write. Extreme poverty is exacerbated by high vulnerability of agricultural production to changes in weather conditions leading to high variance in the levels of essential food consumption. Rural poverty is consistently higher than in the cities, with 80% of poor living in rural areas.

Despite its possession of resources, historical relics, distinct customs, and pleasant weather condition, Ethiopia has been characterized by economic decline, social tragedy, civil war, and the spread of fatal diseases. These problems resulted in rampant poverty in the country (Woube, 2002).

The current Education and Training Policy of Ethiopia (TGE, 1994) underlines the relevance of investing in education especially in expanding and upgrading higher educational institutions so as to bring sustainable development in the country. Without adequate higher education and research institutions providing a critical mass of skilled and educated people, no country can ensure genuine endogenous and sustainable development and, in particular, developing countries and least developed countries cannot reduce the gap separating them from the industrially developed ones (UNESCO, 1998). Realizing this fact, the Ethiopian government has given emphasis to the quality of education. Of course, quality in education is relative and not easy to define and measure. Hence, expanding and upgrading educational opportunities should go with

the quality expected from the education system. In so doing, the establishment and expansion of education opportunities should be done based on the needs of the community which it intends to serve. In other words, before establishing some higher educational institutions, needs assessment should be made so as to know the contributions of the new establishments to the community in the economic, social, and political spheres.

### **Statement of the Problem**

According to the Physical Atlas of Oromiya (1997), Oromiya occupies the central part of Ethiopia. Its surface area extends from the southeastern national border with Kenya across the center extending to the border with Sudan. Having a total borderline of 5672 km, Oromiya neighbors all the regional states of Ethiopia except the Tigray Regional State. It has the longest boundary of 1860 km with the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State, 1410 km border with the Somali Regional State. Oromiya occupies central position in the country and is the industrial, commercial and cultural center of the country. Finfinne, being the seat of the central government and that of Region 14, is within the heart of Oromiya Regional State. Thus, Oromiya, as a region, occupies a rather unique position advantageous for its economic and social development venture through cooperative interaction with its national and extra-national neighbors in the horn of Africa.

Despite its central position in Ethiopia, like the other regional states, there have not been adequate accesses to higher education opportunities in Oromiya until recently. It is due to this fact that the government of Ethiopia has placed high priority in expanding higher education opportunities in the region. According to the plan of the government, three additional universities will be set up in the region: one in Adama, one in Bale-Robe and one in Nakemte.

To facilitate the establishments of these new universities and to make them responsive to the needs of the people of the region, their contributions should be investigated in terms of:

1. the economic and/or social infrastructures,
2. the likely and desirable ways the regional economy and/or social infrastructures will develop over the medium term,
3. how the education offered by the new HEIs and the organization, qualification structure and/or philosophy within them should be different from that of the existing universities, and
4. the ways that the new HEIs should contribute to regional economic and social development in terms of teaching, research and consultancy.

Hence, it is with this intention that this study sets out to assess the contributions of the new HEIs to the Regional State of Oromiya in general, and that of Madda Walabu University in particular.

Madda Walabu University is the university that will be established in Bale-Robe. According to the Atlas of Oromya Zones (2004), Bale Zone occupies the southeastern part of the Regional State of Oromiya. Currently, the zone is divided into 18 districts and 442 peasant associations. There is a considerable area variation among the districts; the largest (Madda Walabu District) accounts for 14% while the smallest (Kokossa District) covers only 0.9%.

Bale Zone comprises of several mountain ranges, massifs and plateaus and is dominated by heavy precipitations. It has different climatic zones ranging from semi-arid to afro-alpine moorland, which makes the zone conducive for the existence of various flora and fauna within a relatively small area. The north-central impressive massifs are habitats to many endemic wild lives and are the sources of over forty rivers draining to Genale, Weyib and Wabe Shebele Rivers. Thus, Bale Zone has an important role to play in the development of

the socio-economic and cultural aspects of Ethiopia in general and that of Oromiya in particular.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objectives of this study are to:

- find out the contributions of Madda Walabu University to the economic and/or social infrastructures of Oromiya Regional State,
- assess how this university contributes to the likely and desirable ways the regional economy and/or social infrastructures will develop over the medium term,
- figure out how the education offered by this new university and the organization, qualification structure and/or philosophy within it should be different from that of the existing universities, and
- propose the ways that the new university should contribute to the regional economic and social development in terms of teaching, research and consultancy services.

### **Benefits and Beneficiaries of the Study**

It is hoped that the research results will help Madda Walabu University to function properly based on the intended outcomes. Policy makers, curriculum experts, capacity building officers, and consultant officers can use the research results to facilitate the proper functioning of the university. The research findings can also help to create a link between the university and the community. Researchers can also use the results as springboards for further investigations that could lead to the improvement of various programs in the university.

### **Methods the Study**

To attain the above objectives, the following components are included in the methods of the study. These are research design, sources of

data, sampling procedure, tools of data collection, procedures of data collection, and methods of data analysis.

### **Research Design**

The research design is the descriptive survey method. The main aim was to survey the contributions of the new HEIs in general, and that of Madda Walabu University in particular to the country and Oromiya.

### **Sources of Data and Sampling Technique**

The sources of data in this research were: a) officials of Oromiya Trade, Industry and Urban Development Bureau, b) officials of Oromiya Education and Capacity Building Bureau, c) head of Oromiya Pastoralism Commission Bureau, d) officials of Oromiya Department of Tourism Promotion and Development, e) head of Oromiya Culture Bureau, f) head of Bale Zone Education and Capacity Building Office, h) head of Bale Zone Trade, Industry, and Urban Development Office, and h) selected people from Oromiya in general and from Bale Zone in particular.

As to the sampling method, the above sources of data are purposely selected as samples to get appropriate and holistic data.

### **Instruments of Data Collection**

Questionnaire, interview schedules, focus group discussion guides, and document analysis were used as tools of data collection in this study.

### **Procedures of Data Collection**

To gather relevant data for the study, a questionnaire consisting of relevant items was prepared. Besides, to get additional data, semi-structured interview schedules were prepared. The items of the questionnaire and the interview schedules were revised in such a way

that they address the objectives of the study. Moreover, the items of the questionnaire and interview schedules were made similar to cross-check the responses of the subjects of the study. Then, the questionnaire was administered to 250 persons working at regional and zonal levels, out of which 200 persons returned their responses. Furthermore, to make the results of the study more valid and reliable, interviews and focus group discussion were held with appropriate officials working at regional and zonal levels. Interviews and focus group discussion were also conducted with the dwellers of Bale Zone.

### **Methods of Data Analysis**

The data collected were presented and analyzed using qualitative approach.

### **Presentation and Analysis of Data**

This section of the study presents and analyzes the data collected from different respondents. Accordingly, the data obtained concerning the fields of studies or the faculties to be opened in the three new universities are presented as follows:

#### **Adama University**

- Technical and Vocational Education;
- Teaching and non-teaching fields;
- Oromo School of Cultural Music, and Theatrical Art;
- Information Science, and
- Business Education.

#### **Madda Walabu University**

- Medicine;
- Teaching Profession;
- Tourism;
- Ecology;



- Agriculture;
- Pastoralism, and
- Water Technology.

### **Wallaga University**

- Engineering;
- Geology/Mining Quarrying;
- Environmental Science;
- Teaching;
- Information Science, and
- Veterinary and Animal Science.

### **Analysis of the Fields of Studies to be opened at the Three Higher Educational Institutions**

The fields of studies to be opened for the moment at the three HEIs in terms of priority can be presented as follows.

### **Adama University**

#### *Technical Education*

According to the respondents, firstly, the mission of Adama University, apart from others, is training adequate and competent teachers for TVET schools of Ethiopia. Relatively many TVET schools are found in East Shewa Zone where Adama University is found. These TVET schools could be places where the would-be TVET school teachers can conduct practicum which supports and further enriches their formal training. Secondly, technical education is very important to bring sustainable development in the country. Thirdly, the university is equipped with adequate equipment, which supports technological education. Fourthly, the university has sufficient teachers who can teach technical subjects. Lastly, various industries and companies upon which practical entrepreneurship and internship could be conducted are found around the university. In the light of the above

findings, it is reasonable to strengthen and further expand the already existing-technical fields at Adama University.

### *Business Education*

Business education is very vital for business transaction, which in turn has a great bearing on the economic development of a country. Likewise, business education can contribute a lot to the efforts being made to bring sustainable development in Ethiopia. It should be noted that Adama town is a center of business transaction. According to the respondents there are many colleges/schools, which run such programs in the town that can help as resource centers from where experiences could be shared. The respondent commented that it is advisable to promote this field of study to faculty level at Adama University.

### *Information Technology*

Nowadays, we are living in a dynamic world where the world is assumed to be a village. The role of information technology in adjusting ourselves to this dynamic world is very high. All over the world, countries have been responding to the challenges of globalization and the information age by expanding their higher education systems (Ashcroft, 2004). It was based on this reality that this information technology has been made functional at departmental level at Adama University. In this regard the respondents said that Adama University has better access to information due to its central location and proximity to Addis Ababa. Furthermore, as there are a number of computer training centers in Adama town, which can help in the enrichment of the IT training delivered in the university through experience sharing. Due to the above realities, it is important to promote Information Technology to a faculty level at Adama University.

### *Oromo School of Cultural Music and Theatrical Art*

According to the respondents, even if the Oromo people are the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia, they have no cultural center where their cultural heritage, values, norms, customs, traditions, and the like could be learned and preserved for the next generation. Thus, there is an acute demand for the establishment of such a center at Adama University as the university is located at the center of the fourteen zones of the Regional State of Oromiya. Moreover, this cultural center enables the Oromo people and other interested individuals to study, preserve, and promote the culture of the Oromo people. Due to the above facts, the respondents recommended the opening of Oromo School of Cultural Music, and Theatrical Art at Adama University.

### *Teaching and Non-teaching Fields*

The views of the respondents underlying the opening of these two fields of studies are summarized below. The teaching field can contribute a lot to the efforts being made to reduce shortage of teachers at secondary school levels. Teaching fields can also help in producing adequate teachers that can alleviate the problems that may happen in relation to the government's policy of expanding secondary schools. The non-teaching fields, on the other hand, help in producing professionals in different fields that can work in different institutions of the country. In the light of the above justifications, it is worthwhile to launch teaching and non-teaching fields at Adama University.

## **Madda Walabu University**

### *Faculty of Medicine*

The responses of the respondents with respect to the opening of the faculty of medicine at Madda Walabu University are summarized below. If the faculty of medicine is opened at Madda Walabu University, the people of Bale Zone will get access to better health services. Besides, lessons of the field of study can be made practical

with the help of the Ginnir Referral Hospital. The would-be health professionals can also conduct apprenticeship and internship at Gobba Hospital. Furthermore, to implement the government policy of expanding health institutions, the opening of the faculty of medicine at Madda Walabu University can contribute a lot through producing health professionals. The existence of various species of flora and fauna in Bale Zone creates a fertile ground for conducting researches in the above-specified fields of study. To sum up, due to the above reasons and similar ones, it is logical to launch medicine faculty at Madda Walabu University.

### *Tourism*

The interviewers said that as Bale Zone has different tourist attraction centers such as Souf Oomer Caves, Dirre Sheek Hussien, Tullu Dimtu, Bale Mountains National Park, Madda Walabu, and the like could serve as bases for launching tourism as one field of study at Madda Walabu University. The Bale Mountains National Park which encompasses the magnificent high altitude plateaus, volcanic plugs, seasonal tiny alpine lakes, peaks, mountain stream, and flora and fauna of diversified species could create good condition for opening tourism faculty at the university. Furthermore, these tourist attraction centers could serve as bases for conducting scientific research, experimentation, and exploration which in turn enable Ethiopia in general and Oromiya in particular to get better income from tourists from around the world.

### *Ecology*

Nowadays, environmental degradation is one of the major concerns of the world. This is because environmental degradation is increasing from time to time due to misuse of the environment. This problem becomes very serious when we see the reality of Ethiopia. In Ethiopia, environmental deterioration is intensified through inappropriate land-use, clearance of natural vegetation for

agricultural use, settlement and urbanization, poor agricultural practices. These in turn lead to desertification (Derebssa, 2004).

Unless, this environmental issue is taken into consideration, it may have a negative bearing on the government plan of promoting sustainable development in the country. In order to achieve sustainable development, environmental protection shall constitute an integral part of the development process and cannot be considered in isolation from it (VanderZwaag, 1995).

This problem calls for urgent reaction, which could be made possible through environmental education. According to the respondents as Bale Zone, particularly the highland areas, are rich in natural resource, the opening of the faculty of ecology at Madda Walabu University will contribute to the sustainability and further expansion of these natural resources.

### **Wallaga University**

#### *Geology and Mining*

The respondents recommended the opening of Geology and mining is recommended at Wallaga University due to the existence of different minerals such as platinum, gold, phosphate, precious stones, and the like in the zone. So, to make the lessons of the field of study under consideration more practical and to effectively utilize these mineral resources, it is worthwhile to open geology and mining faculty at Wallaga University.

#### *Engineering*

The respondents said that engineering faculty is needed at Wallaga University due to the existence of crucial centers like Fincho Hydropower Station, Fincho Sugar Factory, and the necessary raw materials in Wallaga and around Wallaga. Therefore, the prevalence

of the above centers and the necessary raw materials necessitate the opening of engineering faculty at Wallaga University.

### *Teaching Profession*

The summary of the interviews with the respondents indicate that as Oromiya is a vast region, there is an acute demand for teachers, particularly in secondary schools. This is because most of the teachers teaching in secondary schools at the present time do not fulfill the requirements expected for the level. Hence, to get qualified teachers, which meet the standard expected of secondary school teachers, it is wise to open education faculty at Wallaga University.

### *Major findings and Summary*

The major findings and summary of the data collected from various people using various tools on the specific ways that Madda Walabu University could contribute to the Oromiya Regional State based on the four parameters given above are as follows.

### **Contributions of the university to the economic and/or social infrastructures of the region**

The establishment of the university:

- will create job opportunities (both permanent and temporary) to the people of the region.
- enables the community to get access to education;
- promotes natural resource conservation and protection i.e. promotes resource management;
- enables Bale Zone to attract the attention of governmental and non-governmental organizations, thereby get access to better telephone services, water supply, electric power supply, and particularly, **construction of asphalted road**;

- enables the region to get professionals in different sectors, which in turn promote the economic and social infrastructures of the region;
- disseminates modernity to the region in terms of tourism, trade, and cultural promotion; and
- promotes the study, protection, and promotion of the history of Oromo people, hence, the very name Madda Walabu University, and

**The Likely and Desirable Ways that the Regional Economy and/or Social Infrastructures Will Develop Over the Medium Term**

- The university will enable the region to get middle level and high level human power that can contribute to the development of the region;
- The establishment of Madda Walabu University at Bale-Robe has a great contribution to the expansion of Robe town, the zone's capital;
- Professionals of the university could create new ways of farming and animal husbandry and these new mechanisms could be adapted to the peasants;
- The establishment of the university could also help the dwellers of the region to get better access to market in terms of renting houses, selling various products, etc.;
- Appropriate professionals of the university could propose how to use Genale and Wabe Shabele Rivers and their tributaries for irrigation and make the nearby pastoralists settle and lead better life;
- The facilities that will be fulfilled in association with the new university will reduce professionals' turnover;
- Experts of tourism could study tourists' attraction places like Bale Mountains National Park, Souf Oumer Caves, Dirre Sheek Hussein, and Madda Walabu and the like, and propose better tourism centers in these places that could

attract tourists from around the world. This in turn develops the regional economy and social infrastructures.

**How the education offered by Madda Walabu University and the organization, qualification structure and/or philosophy within it is different from that of existing universities**

- The university creates a sense of belongingness to the people of the region;
- The organizational structures should be different from the earlier universities in that the region should participate in the administration of the university;
- The university should be development-oriented and should exercise societal- based system of administration;
- University teachers can plan, design, develop, and evaluate various regional development programs;
- The university can serve as a center of excellence;
- Graduates of history and sociology departments can study historical places like Souf Oumer Caves, Abba Jifar Palace, Gada System, Dirre Sheek Hussien, Dajasmach Kumsa Moroda's Palace, etc., and publicize them to national and international peoples.

**The ways that Madda Walabu University should contribute to regional economy and social development in terms of teaching, research, and consultancy**

- Through teaching, the university capacitates the people of the region;
- The university can promote access to education through regular, evening, summer, and distance programs;
- Awareness raising programs on how to use technological tools could be arranged on long-term and/or short-term training bases;



- The university teachers could serve the regional colleges and the TVET Schools as guest lecturers when the need arises;
- The teachers can introduce various development strategies to the community;
- The teachers can localize the theoretical frame-works and make them adaptable to the needs of the community through research;
- The professionals could study and solve the problems of the society;
- Through research, community-based and sustainable development strategies could be introduced;
- The university can give consultancy services on issues like child care, family planning, personal and environmental hygiene, use of better seeds, breeding better animals and the like;
- The university could also give consultancy services for private and governmental organizations;
- Government education policy strategies such as self-contained classroom, continuous assessment, use of mother tongue as medium of instruction, and the like will be studied and the constraints that hinder their implementation will be rectified;
- The university's professionals could introduce eco-tourism to the region where balance will be maintained between number of people and resources;
- Graduates of technical and vocational schools will get consultancy services from the professionals on how to create their own businesses.
- Problem-solving methods will be introduced to pastoralists as to how to store and use the available water wisely so as to settle at certain places;
- The professionals could also give agricultural training to the nearby pastoralists to help them adapt dry land farming;
- Pastoralists could also be helped to change the traditional way of breeding cattle to the scientific way of raising cattle;

- The professionals could give sustainable training on harmful traditional practices such as abduction, female genital mutilation, raping, and early marriage;
- The professionals could also give awareness to the community concerning communicable diseases in general and HIV/AIDS in particular.

## **Conclusions**

This research report revealed that Madda Walabu University could contribute a lot to the Regional State of Oromiya. In other words, the university can promote the region's economic and social infrastructures to a great extent. The education that would be offered by this new university, its organization, qualification structures, and philosophy within it can be different from the previous universities in that this university should exercise societal-based system of administration. Moreover, the research results showed that the university would also contribute a lot to the regional economic and social development in terms of teaching, research, and consultancy services.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the results of the needs assessment, the researcher would like to recommend the following.

- The intake capacity and/or expansion of the university should be made in accordance with the quality expected from the level;
- The primary objectives of the university should not be making profit. This means it should realize the financial potential of the people of the region in running programs like evening, summer and distance;
- The university should focus on societal-based administration. This means, regional authorities should participate in the administration of the university;

- The university should not isolate itself from the society. Rather it has to create strong link with the nearby community through research and consultancy services thereby solving the practical problems of the community;
- The university should help the lowland pastoralists of Bale and Borana Zones adapt dry land farming in which the pastoralists can get good harvests from arid areas using limited moisture;
- The university should do its best to introduce eco-tourism to Oromiya in general, and to Bale Zone in particular where balance will be maintained between number of population and resources;
- The university should study, conserve, and promote cultural heritages of Oromo people. Besides, historical places of Oromiya should be studied and publicized nationally and internationally;
- The university should find ways in which traditional way of farming could be changed to better way of tilling land, and this technology should be disseminated to the peasants of Oromiya, and
- Generally, the university should be center of excellence where various communities-based sustainable development strategies could be identified and introduced to the society.

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