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New Generations, Old Challenges: Questioning Grassroots Development in the Horn of Africa

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Abstract

The Horn of Africa (HOA) is home to one of the youngest population in the world. In Ethiopia, the youth under the age of 25 constitutes 65% of the total population. And, population size and land area coverage in the rural HOA makes more than three quarters of each nation's entire population and land. In this context, one can assume that common concerns and projections over development in the HOA would be about a development for the new generation, and in the rural. Provoked by the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's), to some extent, there have been tangible improvements in lives of the new generation in developing countries. Yet, when it comes to HOA, national or international development reports have been very often challenged by the emergent but disregarded narratives of general life unease, specially to the grassroots community. No matter how we notice collective opinion convergences concerning substantial progresses in the region, there have also been inferential divergences when it comes to changes towards the marginalized grassroots communities. Literally, this article attempts to question the goal of development, by exploring the context of human development in the region. It attempts to unveil the depth of life unease in three rural neighborhoods in Ethiopia. Health and sanitation, education, agriculture and environmental conservation constraints are addressed. The article is informed by series of in-depth interviews and Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) involving the very rural residents, Development Agents (DA's), Health Extension Workers (HEWs) and local administrators. As a result, it is revealed that, developmental challenges in the rural neighborhoods are far worse than what has normally been quantified. The article urges policy attention and interventions.

Keywords: Horn of Africa, Grassroots Development, Marginalized Communities, New Generation.

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Yeni Kuşaklar, Eski Zorluklar: Afrika Boynuzundaki Kırsal Gelişmenin Sorgulanması

Abdulaziz Dino Gidreta*

Öz

Afrika Boyunuzu dünyanın en genç nüfusa en sahipliği yapan bölgelerden biridir. Etiyopya'da yirmi beş yaş altındakiler nüfusun %65'ini oluşturmaktadır. İşte bu durumda, bölgedeki sosyal gelişme ile ilgili ortak endişeler ve önerilerin gençleri merkez alması gerekmektedir. İşte bu durumda, sosyal gelişme ile ilgili endişeler ve öneriler bölgenin nüfusu ortaya koyması mecburundadır. Millennium Kalkınma Hedefleri'nin (MDG) teşvik etmesi ile, kalkınmakta olan ülkelerdeki genç kuşağın yaşamlarında bir noktaya kadar görünebilir gelişmeler ortaya çıkmıştır. Ancak konu Afrika Boynuzu'na geldiğinde, ulusal ve uluslararası gelişim raporları bölgedeki sıradan insanlara ait günlük hayatın zorluklarına dair hikayeleri ile sıklıkla karşı karşıya gelmektedir. Bölgede var olan değişimler hakkında genel fikir birliği olmasına rağmen, konu marjinalleşmiş topluluklardaki değişikliklere gelindiğinde çıkarımsal fikir ayrılıkları da mevcuttur. Bu makale kırsal Afrika Boynuzu'ndaki toplumsal gelişme seviyesini Etiyopya'daki üç kırsal bölgedeki yaşam güçlüklerini göstererek sorgulamayı amaçlar. Eğitim, sağlık, tarım ve çevrenin korunmasına dair sınırlamaları ele alınmıştır. Çalışma, kırsal bölge sakinleri, kalkınma ajansları, halk sağlığı çalışanları ve yerel yöneticileri kapsayan bir dizi derinlemesine mülakat görüşmesi ve odak-grup tartışmaları yoluyla yürütülmüştür. Sonuç olarak, bölgedeki gelişme sıkıntıları raporlarda ölçüldüğünden daha derindir. Makale Afrika Boynuzu'ndaki uzak kırsal topluluklara politik dikkat ve müdahaleye dikkat çekmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İnsani gelişme, Afrika Boynuzu, Marjinalleşmiş Topluluklar, Genç Kuşak

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Introduction

Home of the Nile Basin, the Great Rift Valley and the Red Sea, the HOA can be considered as one of the most strategic corners in the world. The region owns one of the youngest population; 65% of Ethiopia's population ages below twenty-five (CIA World Factbook, 2012). The HOA is also asserted as the cradle of humankind and provocation of human civilization, as proved by prevailing historical and cultural indicators like the Lucy. For Gebrehiwot (2017), Ethiopia remains the undisputed origin of mankind. In addition to its historical identity as the first adopter of Islam and Christianity outside the Middle East, Ethiopia has also been identified as a symbol of anti-colonial resistance with a long-lasting impact on independence movements across Africa, Central America and beyond (Gebrekidan, 2018). The region is also known for medium and long-distance athletics.

On the other hand, HOA has been struggling with a range of challenges; instabilities, disasters and slow development. The region has been subject to various conflicts triggered inside, either from Ethiopian, Somalian or Eritrean side. In Ethiopia, post 1950's marked high level tensions relating to history and identity. The narratives of Greater Ethiopia, Eritrean independence, the Tigran struggle and the Oromo struggle have been among the prominent affairs in Ethiopian politics (Sorenson, 1992). The alleged ambitious for a Greater Somalia, ethnic conflicts, and the issue of Al-Shabab have been prominent matters of dispute across Somalia. The region is also one of the most frequently famine-hit regions.

Due mainly to the aforesaid natural and sociopolitical reasons, development in general and rural development in particular has challenged the region. Indeed, there have been tangible changes particularly accelerated by the global MDGs; however, development claims have frequently been criticized for being dominantly economic and commonly exaggerated by highly administrative and statistical narratives. To the most part, national development reports are generally characterized by quantitative descriptions, unconvincing measurements and approximations as typical to positivist account of development (Servaes, 2007 & 2002; Moemeka, 1994).

In this sense, both the changes in the lives of the people and the way of studying development can be questioned. Postmodernists challenge scientific legitimacy of knowledge deduced through positivist approaches (Keat & Urry, 1975; Asgedom, 2007). They question positivist and modernist views for limiting the scope of scientific truth, and the process of scientific knowledge production, through random selections, probabilities, possibilities, and representation, and theory verification. In view of that, the methodological view that 'the majority is true' has become an old-fashioned interpretation after all.

A positivist account of development, as mostly associated with a modernization paradigm, disregards the human or social account of development. In this view, the indicator is a measure of well-being, and development is exclusively based on material wealth. In developing countries, improvements in welfare such as better health care, education and housing for the poor have not been tolerably emphasized (Dang & Sui Pheng, 2015: 12).

Thus, in modernist view, the measures of progress were Gross National Product (GNP), industrial bases, urbanization and the like; all quantitative criteria (Servaes, 2002: 19-20). It does not give significance to changes in actual human capacity and sprit. Due to multifaced challenges in reaching the remote, rural grassroots communities particularly are victimized by positivist narratives of development.

Concrete ethnographic observations and qualitative reflections about a certain development can challenge common quantitative narratives. In other words, interaction and observation give a way to listen to the people who have often been subject to approximations and generalizations within national and international development reports. Accordingly, research attempts should conformingly be informed by interactions with actual subjects (Silverman, 2004 & Yin, 2003:89), group discussions and reflections (Silverman, 2004:177), researchers' deliberate exposure to actual vicinities (Creswell 2009; Babbie & Mouton, 2001). By this, one can better understand the development problems of a given society not by a single technique, but by a combination of techniques - by triangulation (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:277).

In this fashion, development complications of the marginalized grassroots communities should be brought into academic and policy debates. This article intends to unveil the lives of rural communities mainly from a human development viewpoint. It aims to identify the prevailing socio-economic challenges, what the people have and lack; to prioritize challenges; and to propose ideas of intervention. It mainly considers challenges relating to health and sanitation, education, farming and deforestation. The discussion is established the way that national development strategies and reports are briefly introduced and subsequently criticized against real-life accounts of the people as learned mainly by personal observations, in-depth interviews, and FGDs.

Method

The methods applied to this study are more of qualitative. Qualitative researches allow the researcher to purposefully select participants and/or sites that will best inform the problem and the research questions (Cresswell, 2009: 178). Thus, in selecting a case site, the researcher attempts to consider familiarity and developmental distinctiveness. By this, the target case range includes rural villages of Weshamo, Guanguay, Sayba Dobba, Ashufe, Koto, Mehal Damota, Tach Damota, Kotiche, Tikore, Lay Dobba, and Mehal Dobba from Dobba kebele administration and Qarsamue, Tirkume, Lay wageshe, Tach Wageshe, Suhiya, Sadika, Sesenar, Tebade, Tinore, Wodesha and Agored from Wodesha kebele administration. The study was informed by series of in-depth interviews and FGDs in addition to the personal observations and document reviews. In-depth interviewees and FGD participants were purposefully selected as much for their knowledge and experience, age and exposure to certain developmental challenges.

Flexibility, high response rate, check on questions, probes, clarification, confirmation, prompts, connecting, non-verbal communication and timing of interview are among the major advantages of in-depth interviews (Miller and Brewer, 2003: 167). Silverman

(2004:177) states that FGDs provide a way of collecting data relatively quickly from several research participants; and free flow of discussion and debate among group members offer the researcher an excellent opportunity for 'hearing the language and vernacular used by respondents (2004:181). Personal observation is an ideal data collection means specially to describe situations in their natural setting. Creswell (2009:181) states that qualitative personal observations are those in which the researcher takes field notes on research sites. Babbie & Mouton (2001:271) also adds, qualitative researchers should make deliberate attempts to 'put themselves in the shoes of the people they are observing and studying, and try to understand their actions, decisions, behaviors, practices and rituals from their perspective'.

Thus, throughout the period of data collection, the researcher had been deliberately wandering across villages, and by foot. While absence of transportation service can be a reason; however, most importantly, the visits have been part of the researcher's curiosity to observe the lives of the people. Accordingly, in addition to visits during interviews, various activities and facilities were physically noticed. Among others, village homes, primary schools, health posts and local administrative centers were intensively observed. Various documents were also reviewed in search of helpful demographic data, including population breakdown, schooling, administrative structure and prevalent crops. Thus, it has been the researcher's curiosity to achieve some credibility by mixing multiple data collection techniques, triangulation. Triangulation is the best way to elicit various and divergent constructions of reality that exist within the context of a study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 277).

What is Development, and Whom is It For

The positivist conception of development has been criticized for not considering range of concrete changes in the lives of the people. It mainly addressed the qualitative characteristics of development as focused mainly on the GDP. Latter conceptualizations emerge giving much emphasis to the human and/or social aspect of development. The following paragraphs attempt to discuss various views and elements of development.

'Development', as a concept, has always been variously perceived, valued and described by individuals from different areas of expertise, experience, intellect and levels of 'development' itself. For Moemeka (1994:11) development is not only what many view it as a change in the economic, technological or a mere material aspect. Most importantly, it is also a change in people's mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual welfare. A comprehensive view of development that Moemeka familiarizes is a change for the better in the human, cultural, socio-economic, and political conditions of the individual and so of the society.

> *It is not solely a matter of technology or of gross national product; more importantly, it is a matter of increased knowledge and skills, growth of new consciousness, expansion of the human mind, the uplifting of the human spirit, and the fusion of human confidence (Moemeka 1994:11).*

Thus, there is a widely shared understanding of development as an attainment of a relatively comfortable socio-economic, political and cultural state by people in particular, and the country in general. Distinctively, it is about improvements in the social matters including physical and spiritual health, and general and technological literacy including media consumption; the economic basis beyond basic necessities; political conditions as can be measured by the level of stability, democracy, and tolerance; cultural productions like arts and literature; and scientific and technological advancements and the level of consumption of that. İn this regard, Servaes points out that these changes become genuine when individuals and social groups within the system move away from a condition of life widely perceived as "unsatisfactory" towards a situation or condition of life regarded as materially and spiritually "better" (2002:77).

There have been a range of views concerning the ingredients of a tangible development. Torado (1977) in Servaes (2002) underlines, development should be viewed as a multi-dimensional process involving major changes in social structure, popular attitudes, and national institutions as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and the eradication of absolute poverty.

> *Development, in its essence, must represent the entire gamut of change by which an entire social system, tuned to the diverse basic needs and desires of individuals and social groups within that system, moves away from a condition of life widely perceived as "unsatisfactory" towards a situation or condition of life regarded as materially and spiritually "better" (Torado, 1977: 62).*

Servaes (2002:78) adds that development for society means the development of the collective personality of society. In other words, it is a multi-variant quantitative and qualitative change, and may not be immediately measurable by cardinal means. This has announced that the meanings of 'development' will no longer be attached only or mainly to quantitative economic growths. Servaes (2002:78) summarizes the works of several scholars to come up with seven essential criteria for a meaningful development: basic needs, endogeny, self-reliance, ecology, sustainability, participative democracy, structural and sustainable changes.

Basic needs imply the realization of human, material and non-material needs. It begins with the satisfaction of the basic needs of those, dominated and exploited, who constitute the majority of the world's inhabitants, and ensures at the same time the humanization of all human beings by the satisfaction of their needs for expression, creativity, equality, and conviviality and the ability to understand and master their own destiny. *Endogeny* stems from the heart of each society which defines its sovereignty, its values and its future. Because development is not a linear process, there can be no universal model, and only the plurality of development patterns can answer to the specificity of each situation. *Self-reliance* implies that each society relies primarily on its own strength and resources in terms of its members' energies and its natural and cultural environment. Self-reliance needs to be exercised at national and international (collective self-reliance) levels, but it maintains its full meaning only if rooted at the local level, in the praxis of each community.

Ecology rationally utilizes resources of the biosphere in full awareness of the potential of local ecosystems, as well as the global and outer limits imposed on present and future generations. It implies the impartial access to resources and socially relevant technologies by all. *Sustainability* considers the interdependency of these resources in short, medium and long term in terms of time and in local, national, and transnational in space. As the true form of democracy, *participative democracy* is not merely government of the people and for the people but also, and more fundamentally, "by the people" at all levels of society. Lastly, *structural and sustainable changes* are required in social relations, in economic activities and in their spatial distributions, as well as in the power structure, to realize the conditions of self-management and participation in decision making by all those affected by it, from the rural to urban community to the world (Servaes, 2002:78-79).

Findings & Discussion

Overview of the Target Rural neighborhoods

The target neighborhoods considered for the case study are located in Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples' (SNNP) regional state, Guraghe zone, Enemor and Ener woreda, Ethiopia. They are situated at about 190 km south of Addis Ababa through *Wolkite-Hossana* main road. Out of the total distance, only 155km is asphalt-road, while all the rest following the city of Wolkite is all-whether gravel road that turns very challenging during the Ethiopian summer months. This road was constructed by the Gurage Roads Construction Organization (GRCO) before four decades (Nishi, 2008:14).

The target neighborhoods (*Kebeles*) fall within the hot and temperate climatic zones, locally known as 'Kolla' and 'Woyna dega' respectively (Menu & Ahmed, 2006). The average annual rainfall of the kebeles is about 1200 mm. Maximum precipitation occurs during June, July and August with a minimum rainfall in December and January. The maximum temperature is about 30 and the minimum is 4 in degree Celsius. The altitude varies from 1200m to 1700m above sea level. As part of the Southern Ethiopian Plateau, the target site lies beneath volcanic rocks of Tertiary Age. These volcanic rocks include the early tertiary age basalt flows of the Ashangi group which underlain the Malgdala group (Menu & Ahmed, 2006). For most part, both formations seem to be basalts adjacent to the area. The volcanic rocks are believed to rest on light colored Genesis and Schist probably of Pre-Cambrian Age.

The neighborhoods have serious shortage in terms of water supply, sanitation and hygiene education, health education and related basic facilities. For instance, Sadika Elementary School had been the only school among the three neighborhoods before other two primary schools were introduced years back. Although all the three neighborhoods are identified as exposed to various health hazards, there is no single health center in any of the three neighborhoods. If there happened to have any, residents have share same water with the cattle. These neighborhoods have never utilized electricity. For home lighting, they use an old-style wick-based kerosene lamps, locally called *Kuraz*. Regretfully, this happens at a time even one of the nationally giant electricity power generation sta-

tions is positioned in few kilometers range and the main electric line passes over these neighborhoods in its ways to Addis Ababa.

Typical to almost all surrounding districts, these neighborhoods are characterized by production of cereals, Enset (commonly referred to as *false banana*) and cash crops such as coffee and *Çhat*. Çhat, also called as Khat at the overseas, is a common plant native to HOA and the Arabian Peninsula. It contains the alkaloid cathinone (an amphetamine-like stimulant) which is said to cause excitement, loss of appetite, and euphoria (Gashaw, 2014). Chat is known to be one of the sources of income for lots of households in the district. In the neighborhoods, the average monthly individual and household incomes are estimated to be about 38.99 birr per person/per month and 194.95 birr per household/per month respectively (Menu & Ahmed, 2006).

Indeed, the urban Gurage community has been known for its wide-ranging contribution to the rural development, the most famous case being the tremendous contribution of the GRCO. Nishi (2008:14) explores, over the last four decades, GRCO helped to construct more than 450 kilometers of all whether gravel roads, in addition to dozens of elementary and secondary schools. Congruently, there have been continuous assistance from members of the Gurage community living in cities, mostly in Addis Ababa. However, contributions from the urban Gurage community's development assistance has never been comparable to the rural residents' persistent contributions in form of cash, labor and raw materials like wood. And, the urban contributions have often been complained for lack of good management and coordination no matter how contributions have always been vital to the rural. No matter how the rural Ethiopia has spent tough histories in terms of development, largely, lack of independent attention from the current government contributed for the delays in the reduction of developmental complications, if not for their extermination.

Development Challenges of the Grassroots

Schooling Anomalies

The Ethiopian government introduced a new Education and Training Policy in 1994 and launched the Education Sector Development Program (ESDP) in 1996. Over the past 15 years of the ESDP, the number of primary schools are claimed to increase from 11,780 in 2000 to 25,217 by 2010. The primary school gross enrollment rate is also stated to increase from 20.3% in 1993 to 51% in 2000; and jumped to 94.2% in 2010. And, the disparity in enrollment rates between male and female gross enrollment ratio had been narrowed from 0.75:1 in 1997 to 0.93:1 in 2010 (MoFED, PASDEP, 2006; FDRE, GTP, 2010; & EPA, 2012: 26-27). However, such common reports do not tend to include even a minimum signal regarding the type and/or quality of school (infrastructures) and the teaching-learning. Qualitative reflections, mostly based on interactions with communities and school observations, might go to the extent to disprove the status of 'a school' for the supposed rural primary schools accounted for the most part in the statistics.

In the context of the target neighborhoods under study, there is a highly sluggish progress in the education sector contradicting a practical-change expectation as compared to preceding decades. In recent years, the government has launched primary level schools in the three neighborhoods. Teachers are assigned (five for Dobba, while Wodesha and Shumoro have six teachers each), and text books distributed. Most importantly, parents tend to send children (HOARCM31, 23/04/11). However, once can simply detect various messes related mainly to the distance that most students should walk from and/to school, and school infrastructure and follow up.

The first crisis appears water scarcity in the schools. In all the three schools, there is no single water provision. While Wodesha primary school has the potential to collect some amount from a nearby water reservoir, the other two schools have no any reachable water source. As aggravated by water scarcity, sanitation has become the forefront challenge. Unquestionably, primary schools are supposed to be clean and comfortable, mainly because they are institutions where the ideal 'new generations' are emerging from. Regretfully, these schools do not seem to have a near future hope to protect school children health.

At some corners in the schools, one can notice 'imaginary latrines' in the sense that they are there for a mere presence. After all, they are already poorly built, and the children are totally un-oriented about latrine handling. As a result, these so-called 'latrines' turn terribly dirty, dangerously smelling, and completely exposed. One can observe the human waste already subjected to the reproduction of flies. As a result, there is high level of smell already disrupting the teaching-learning. Even if some students turn courageous enough to make 'use' of the latrines, they are not prevented from any harsh levels of the sun, the wind, the rain and the sights of others. Simply, these latrines are unexplainable. There is a risk that these so-called latrines, together with other sanitation problems, will have become a threat to the lives of all the children attending that school, while others not coming to school could avoid the risk to some extent.

Figure 1: A Rural Pre-school 'Classroom'.

Source : https//www.facebook.com/GURDA

School buildings, are not adequate compared to the minimum required in-school services. Most of the rooms agglomerate the maximum number of students that floors can cover. This already threatens the quality of teaching-learning by directly failing classroom management, the minimum level learning comforts and further health conditions of the students. Surely, part of the burden lies on teachers as they are required to scream, as they have to attain some level of silence and control over hundred students in a single classroom. After all, there is no way the students can achieve the required concentration, due mainly to the fact that they share a single old bench for five or six. This in turn catalyzes the transfer of various viral and bacterial diseases such as TB and common cold.

Some buildings are on the verge of collapse. Floors and walls are not constructed by cement, as a result the walls start to get ruined, grounds to get cracked. Of the three schools, the problems of primary school seem more dangerous, in the absence of any interventions. Classrooms are threatening the physical wellbeing of students (HOARCM14, 23/04/11). They are so disintegrating that students disrupt neighboring rooms through wider wall-hole (HOARCM31, 23/04/11). The grounds also become sources of dangerous insects biting the children's feet and revoking various diseases. In this regard, there have been attempts by Dobba primary school to apply indigenous mechanisms; covering the ground with cattle by-products (HOARCM31, 23/04/11). Nonetheless, this mechanism could not be a permanent solution as it demands an impossibly continuous labor and time. The following reflections also highlight the depth of the hardships.

> *The major complications are absence of, student and staff rest-rooms, any library and staff residence. And over 50 students sit in narrow classrooms and five students sit on a single narrow bench (HOARCM21, 26/04/11).*

> *The lack of desks, books, library, residence and classrooms are common to all the five schools which are under my supervision; I mean Sadika, Dobba, Shumoro, Bortena (HOARCM28, 26/04/11).*

Though the schools tended to solve the earlier travel sufferings, still there are kids coming from remote villages. Regrettably, at the age of six and seven, the students have no option but to walk an hour or more, indeed threatening their future physical strength. As all the primary schools run only grades one to four, the children are then obliged to run two or more hours a day so as to attend 5th grade at Meger Woyra Junior Secondary school. The students are too young for some of them to cope with daily journeys. And most seriously, they walk on bare feet already carrying the complete learning material, mainly books and exercise books (HOARCM4, 26/04/11). And the problems get worth when the students are instructed to carry construction materials for school development periods almost every week. HOARCM35 tells, "*I am 11 years old sixth grade student. I attend Meger Woyra school which is forty-five minutes away from here. I do not have shoes. I always walk by barefoot as my parents failed to afford to buy*" (25/04/11). HOARCM 7 also narrates, "*I am a grade-two student. Every morning we run on bare-foot for one hour to arrive at Meger Woyra school*" (23/04/ 11).

> *I always walk barefoot on every dangerous surface. I am frequently tortured by stones all over my way. Sometimes we carry woods and other building materials. These challenges have affected our learning achievements. As we lose three to four hours by walking on daily basis (HOARCM30, 24/04/11).*

In fact, costs and challenge of the journeys get much worth when students have to decide to register to Gunchire or Mikke for their secondary education. HOARCM29 (24/04/11), a student at Mike Senior Secondary School also shares a grievance which he claims common to all friends.

> *A trip to Gunchire costs ten to fifteen birr while Mikke costs only three to four birr. So, we preferred to go to Mike, without considering the quality of education. On a weekly basis, we need to travel minimum of two hours carrying our food. We usually leave to school on Sundays, and we come back home on Fridays. Neighboring the school, we rented a room for which we pay 70 birr per month, while even that amount of money becoming unaffordable.*

Moreover, the primary schools under consideration have no fences and guards to protect students' physical security. So commonly, cattle and residents come to damage school properties such as grass and trees in addition to frequent harms on classroom properties. "*In my observation the prominent problems are absence of any school fence, library and water service in the school*" (HOARCM16, 23/04/11). Highly discouraged by facilities, most teachers do not leave the school mainly for the sake of the community'. "*The single female teacher that we have in Dobba primary school stays only for she likes the community*" (HOARCM31, 23/04/11).

According to residents and institutional officials, the cause of all these problems is lack of permanent financial support and continuous follow up by the government. HOARCM31 (23/04/11) informs, "*The school has no any internal means of capital. All works and services are funded by annual contributions from the neighboring community*". And, despite all these difficulties, selected students from Dobba Primary School stood first out of 73 schools that show up for a district wide question-answer competition (HOARCM31, 23/04/11). As the closest possible body to the grassroots, the local government has the responsibility to address severe infrastructural affairs (Odo, 2014). The paradox is that concerned government bodies expect the community to cover all the required finance to run the schools even with such a failed standard. The community continues to urge assistance from any possible source, underlining its incapability.

Impediments to Health and Sanitation

The Ethiopian government claimed to have made impressive developments in health sector and expects to achieve the MDGs in health care. The government has initiated Health Post (HPs) projects, commonly called *Tena Kella*, throughout the rural neighborhoods as part of the famous Health Extension Program. Health posts are the most peripheral

health care units for the provision of healthcare to the rural grassroots community in Ethiopia, while health centers can be taken as common multipurpose clinics. The federal government reports that the number of health posts and health centers raised to 14,416 and 1,787, respectively, while the number of public hospitals increased to 111. And, over 33,000 HEWs were trained and deployed in the rural areas (FDRE, GTP, 2010). Moreover, the UNDP Human Development Index (HDI) has improved to 0.166 in 1991, 0.274 in 2000, 0.313 in 2005, 0.352 in 2009 and 0.363 in 2011 (UNDP, HDR 2011, in EPA, 2012: 26).

The reports claim that the percent of women aged 15-49 who received antenatal services has increased from 17 to 34 percent during 2000-2011. Infant mortality also declined from 97 deaths in 2000 to 59 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2011. Similarly, under-five mortality decreased from 166 deaths in 2000 to 88 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2011 (EPA, 2012:10). However, once again, one can directly object these common quantitative reports as non-explanatory and non-representative to the actual situation on ground.

In case of the three neighborhoods under study, there are progresses in 'establishing' the aforementioned health posts. Nevertheless, these supposedly village health posts do not meet even the minimum required number of trained experts, and they are quite far from minimum follow ups.

> *The government has provided several medical resources. Nevertheless, the center room is now almost ruined. There are only two health practitioners for the entire neighborhoods, and they could not find a suitable home to stay in the nearby. So, they cannot serve delivery cases unless it is a highest-level emergency case. Mostly, what the health practitioners provide for free is only vaccination (HOARCM31).*

The health posts seem failed mainly due to lack of practitioners, medical facilities, and sustainable financing. Only two practitioners are employed in each center with insignificant level of training. Their number is quite far from the total number of population in the kebeles (in 2011 the population of Dobba kebele was reported to be 4700, females making 2600 and males 2100). And the posts have supposed to be double-room but they stand almost with ruined walls and roofs. Although a single metal delivery-bed is available inside, apart from condoms and trapping nets (*agobers*), one cannot find any helpful medicine including some emergency painkillers. And employed practitioners have no incentives when they have to work during evenings and nights, while weekends become their self-declared working days for no extra payments again. The post's compound is completely far from a fine level unless we consider again the natural favors in term of fresh air for instance. The rooms are surrounded by long grasses and woods, almost becoming homes of various insects. Again, the rooms are not protected from outside thefts and attacks, as there is no any person as protector. Due to all these reasons, the claimed health posts could not even properly deliver prevention and first-aid services that they had been mainly intended for.

The people in these neighborhoods have long been threatened by malaria, TB, trachoma and bilharzias in addition to other water-borne diseases. And due to the geographical and climatic features of the area, there are widespread cases of malaria throughout the three neighborhoods. In this regard, Dobba area is the most affected as it stretches down to the desert connecting the Gibbe river (HOARCM14, 23/04/11). There have been attempts by the kebele health posts to assist prevention efforts by distributing special malaria trapping nets, A*gobers*.

> *Normally, we attempt to contribute to prevention of malaria. We distribute 'Agobers' to those who are at most risk. We do not have medicines, we commonly send victims to Weyra health centers when they come already infected (HOARCM45, 25/04/11).*

For years, malaria is frequently reported as a major public health problem in Ethiopia. In 2011, about two-thirds of the population was at risk of malaria (Loha & Lindtjorn, 2012: 450). The 2007 national malaria indicator survey shows the prevalence rate of 0.7% and 0.3% for Plasmodium falciparum and Plasmodium vivax malaria, respectively; the dominant vector is Anopheles arabiensis (2012: 450).

> *The types of malaria widespread in these areas are Falciparum and Vivax, and these types aggravate suddenly any point of a time. Victims need to go to clinic. But then as there are no assigned health practitioners for the night, victims have no choice but already forced to withstand at home (HOARCM20, 23/04/11).*

This level of medication effort cannot reduce health related complications in these rural communities. The foremost limitation is that health post workers are too limited (only two in each kebeles) that they can never reach even a quarter of households in the communities. As well, they are not able to serve in late evenings and the night. "*They give first aids and sometimes delivery. However, they do not have pays even when they are kind enough to continue to work till late evenings*" (HOARCM16, HOARCM31, 23/04/11).

The community members are not that experienced and determined to come to seek advice from experts. This worsened their awareness, specially of the prevention of malaria. And when they come already affected by malaria, the health posts have no resource capacity to prescribe pills. Therefore, patients must be carried to the distant health center at Woyra, which has also several limitations with regard to permanent medication and follow ups.

> *There is some improvement in the people's sanitation skills year by year. Many community members have built latrines. Hundreds of mothers have received trainings. In this year, about 236 mothers attended a one-week training on environmental and home-sanitation affairs. Certainly yet, there are frequent cases of malaria, typhus and diarrhea emergent in the neighborhoods (HOARCM31, 23/04/11).*

Due to lack of health and sanitation education, the people are subject to other diseases such as trachoma, typhoid and typhus. Trachoma, a contagious bacterial infection that affects eyes and caused by lack of access to latrines and an overall poor sanitation, has already become the challenging disease to hundreds of residents. The people lack the initiation to prevent or handle the disease at early stage. By its nature, trachoma is a disease that needs early intervention (Melese, 2003); or else, it becomes too challenging to cure as it develops. There are hundreds of victims, failed to cure. The victims who attempted to eliminate it through operation have been left with visible wound, at a cost of facial prettiness. In Ethiopia, the most common causes of blindness that have been reported are trachoma, cataract, glaucoma, malnutrition, and infections (Melese, 2003: 677).

Due to lack of proper awareness rural community members also become subject to *Typhoid* which commonly develops into *Typhus*. They do not meet the required daily amount of food. And if they have that, it is not with quality and variety. And most community members do not tend to be cautious about washing of hands ahead of meals. Farmers in particular can be found very inconsiderate about that. And commonly, this harmful habit transfers to children, entire family and villagers. For most part, the common water that residents consume is unclean, and the one they drink is unsafe. Even sometimes, children may tend to drink a given cup of water watching some sorts of 'objects' with the likelihood to be insects, alive deep inside the cups. Though most of the residents seem adapted to that regular water, large number of them get infected by water-borne diseases.

> *Typhoid is initiated due to dirty water wherein different bacteria and virus duplicate. And children disease is always there. There are government efforts, but they are highly limited to immunization. Malnutrition is also widespread especially if agricultural productivity is reduced that year. Employees of health posts fail to provide comprehensive services because they are limited in number; they cannot move everywhere physically; the community has not yet developed the average awareness to come to receive consultation services in advance (HOARCM20, 23/04/11).*

> *And additionally, there are spread cases of TB, bilharzias, and HIV. Victims of TB have options to attend Woyra health center and Attat hospital. Bilharzia victims, however, had no medication and awareness about it. They kept it as something natural and obliged to adapt the pain. There are seven HIV/AIDS positive individuals here in this neighborhood. What we give them is only advices. They have quite insignificant amount of UNICIEF financial support, provided quite in an extended interval of time. However, that is quite inadequate, only 50 or 60 birr for two and three years (HOARCM45, 25/04/11).*

Though there are progresses in mothers' side, the majority still lack even the minimum awareness how to handle pregnancy, delivery and child care. Only few, and mainly young mothers, tend to attend Woyra health center during pregnancy. While many appear re-

luctant to go, several others complain about the distance and the time they have to walk for periodic checkups. And during delivery, lots of mothers prefer home delivery, as commonly assisted by traditional birth attendants. Unfortunately, home delivery commonly instigates further health complications to the mothers and the newborn. This is mainly because these village birth assistants tend to do the business instinctively, and characteristically by contaminated and inappropriate tool.

> *I have got a child. I had to walk to Woyra clinic for six months during my pregnancy. During delivery, I preferred to go to Attat where I stayed a month and half until delivery (HOARCM12, 24/04/11).*

No matter how home delivery can be such dangerous, many families preferred it against a long distance that they must carry mothers by stick stretchers. In the neighborhoods under consideration, it is quite common to see young and mature male members carrying patients by legendary stick stretchers on their shoulders, while reserve groups walk aside in order to take turns at any moment in need. The stretcher trend turns dangerous especially when delivery would happen to be suddenly during the mid-night, and the worst happens when summer season coincides with a night - a summer night. Once mothers give birth, they do not have the knowledge and capability to toughen themselves and to protect their newborns. They do not get the required amount and quality of nutrition so as to adequately feed breast. The majority fail to take the newborns to a vaccination. And so, the newborns become victims of transmittable diseases and insects. Seemingly, considering such reluctance, currently, health sectors started house- to –house vaccination services.

Figure 2: Villagers carry patient to health center by stick stretchers over- shoulder

Source : https://ianbcross.files.wordpress.com/2013/11/img_0819.jpg

Complaining the lack of budget, the government seems it has left almost all burdens to members of the community. The community has frequently been urging potential donors, residents promising to contribute the labor, the raw materials and some sort of financial contributions.

Sanitation remains, one of the prominent qualifications as a healthy society; healthy society being a sum of healthy individuals. It has also been a cause for the majority of health issues in the rural. While the rural area has been favored by the natural biodiversity, it has been targeted especially by physical health complications. The residents of the target area are not different from this. Though there are progresses, it is far from what could secure their sustainable health. "*The people are now well improving sanitation, feeding, dressing, sheltering; but their pace of awareness and change is not far from slow*" (HOARCM16, 23/04/11).

As far as community sanitation is concerned, although the natural environment is highly favoring, residents are not doing any significant level of favor to the environment. They do not collect and burn the junk throughout home compounds and village corners. And in the absence of appropriate latrines, large number of families in these communities accustomed to pee and defecate at some corner in the garden, little far from home. If not for the favorable environment, the smell could have always come back to home, which happens sometimes in form of evaporation, and through insects, flies being the most common ones. Thus, the failure in the food and feeding, clean water and environmental sanitations gradually become common threats to the daily health situation of the residents.

Common Challenges of Crop Cultivation

Since agriculture is the main economic activity among the rural grassroots communities, the most effective tool for the realization of grassroots development has been agricultural programs (Odo, 2014). The federal government of Ethiopia tends to comprehend that the development of agricultural sector will provide the basis for rural development. Accordingly, rural development efforts have been planned to give priority to appropriate agricultural development strategies (MoFED, 2003:15). This seems to confirm the idea that agricultural development is closely linked to social development sectors such as education and health, as well as infrastructural projects including road construction (MoFED, 2003: 15). Regarding improving Farming Skills, the government's claimed priority is to improve the agricultural practices of uneducated farming population and thereby achieve a quick increase in agricultural production (MoFED, 2003: 18). There is an understanding that a healthy, industrious and sufficiently educated and trained agricultural labor force might emerge the foundation for agricultural development strategy (MoFED, 2003:21).

However, as typical grassroots farmers the people of the target kebeles lack the know-how of crop production, harvest, and post-harvest procedures. In fact, there are efforts by the government in assigning DA's. But the ones assigned are only one or two in each

kebeles, similar to the number of health practitioners discussed earlier. And they do not have central offices to give proper level of consultation services to farmers. They usually conduct house-to-house consultation and follow-up. But this becomes quite far from the maximum capability of individual practitioners who cannot manage to visit entire homes on a daily or even on weekly basis. And their knowledge and expertise are limited to some aspects of crop or livestock production.

Although the efforts in the past six or seven years brought some changes, they are quite far from productivity. Farmers in the target neighborhood are relatively good at the timing of crops, while they lack knowledge of what, where and how to cultivate. They do not have in-depth knowledge about the compatibility between particular soil types and particular crops. And even if they manage to guess the right crops for a given soil; they lack skill of plowing, erosion prevention, fertilization, and shifting cultivation. In other words, the farmers lack the awareness on latest ideas in terms of crop diversification (various crops instead of few) and crop intensification (increasing productivity). At this point, an emerging investor in the vicinity reflects on common weaknesses of the farmers:

> *The problem is the people do not have any idea about appropriate farm-sites for particular crops. For me, for instance, not Enset but banana can be effective for most part of these neighborhoods. And not avocado, but mango is more compatible and productive; this is mainly because avocado needs large amount of water (HOARCM38, 23/04/11).*

> *Mango is becoming a dominant and productive crop in these neighborhoods while the people are fond of unproductive crops. Avocado has also become an emerging and favorable crop here around (FGD, 23/04/11).*

HOARCM38 questions, "*The road continues to be a headache. How would you be productive when you think beforehand that you will carry three or four quintals of the yield to Woyra Gebeya*" (23/04/11).

> *The people are using the farming mechanism which has been used for over 100 years. They could not even have transferred into bull-plowing, as most of the bulls get affected by predominant cattle diseases like the Gendi, trypanosomiasis (FGD, 23/04/11).*

And as crops grow, they got destroyed by wild animals such as baboons, monkeys and porcupines. These animals attack the corn, maize, wheat, *Enset* and other ground crops. They appear devastating especially on seasonal crops such as maize and sugarcane. Some residents reflect that the harms by the wild animals become far serious than even lack of farming skills and widespread crop diseases.

Baboons too remain our pains. There were efforts even by the government side, but nothing stopped these baboons from destroying all what farmers harvest, painfully all at a time (HOARCM26, 25/04/11).

The most serious problem is the widespread of baboons and monkeys. They even eat Ensets. Last year, in a matter of a day, they devastated almost all what we had harvested for months. That time is unforgettable! (HOARCM13, 26/04/11).

Comparable to many rural districts of Ethiopia, in the targets neighborhoods, agriculture is far the dominant socio-economic activity followed by local trade activities (small scale household business) in which women play the most of participation. The most permanently cultivated crops include Enset, coffee and Çhat. Enset remained the most commonly and widely cultivated for food, while coffee and chat are the most helpful cash crops. And again, at seasonal bases the people cultivate vegetables and root crops such as peppers, cabbage, carrots, salad, potatoes, taro and yam; the last two, locally known as *Godere* and *Boye* respectively.

And once farmers tend to produce some sort of crop, they do not clearly know productive ways of storing and selling. They make use of old-fashioned harvesting mechanisms, and become victims of human theft, animal destruction, decay, and sometimes subject to devastation by accidental rains like in cases of delayed harvesting. And if they collect, they tend to sell it at local markets for insignificant price as compared with their labor and other resources, the raw material and time.

Most seriously, cultivated crops get infected by various diseases. Coffee and chat as major cash crops are the highly attacked by diseases. In villages across all kebeles, coffee covers wider area next to *Enset*. Coffee is one of the widely cultivated cash crops in Ethiopia. As the most exported item in Ethiopia, coffee covers the wider range of area followed by *Enset*, in almost all villages of the target vicinity. Almost every household has coffee trees in different numbers. One thing that makes coffee more productive crop is that once ripened the original tree continues to produce fruits for several years. Although the productivity depends on the type and the variety, almost all need physical care before and during harvest. As to a study conducted by Jimma University, Dobba kebele has been known for its coffee productivity among the entire *Kebeles*. Nevertheless, there is coffee plant disease by which the stem dries out and the farmers cut it out. And traditionally, the people do not use the same axe to cut healthy coffee trees, fearing transfer of the disease (FGD, 23/04/11).

The people use the cash money from coffee. Due to various diseases, however, it has not been as productive as it could be. There are common diseases which the people do not understand the causes, and thus the preventions. The diseases are not clearly identified by researchers. Simply sometimes in some years the leaves of the tree shrink, and the stem dries out latter lacking any amount of coffee bean or making premature beans. As a previously adapted care, some people make use of fluid medications dropping all over the leaves of trees as disease prevention mechanism. The appropriate consumption of this medication might be proper for one of the diseases but cannot be a solution for all types of diseases that might attack the coffee plants. So, there must be in-depth researches to identify the types of diseases in particular areas.

> *There is a coffee disease. Previously, we had been using preventive sort of medicine. But currently, even that is not available at all. So, our coffee beans continuously drop before maturity (HOARCM14, 23/04/11 & HOARCM16, 23/04/11).*

Being the most widely produced crops, Enset and banana are also affected by different diseases. "*There is also Enset disease which we do not clearly know. The disease forces the coffee plant dry, commonly starting from the uppermost. Enset is also affected by porcupine*" (HOARCM14, 23/04/11). HOARCM14, emphasizes, banana and Enset have similar diseases. They dry out by starting from their leave. And if the banana makes some fruit, it develops a hard-nonedible substance in the fruit. "*We commonly say it infested by snake, but unknowingly. And traditionally, we burn the whole plant (banana) hopping not to transmit to others* (23/04/11). He also notes, "*There is also traditionally termed 'Gind Adirk' (the stem drier) disease which attacks the banana crop from its early stage. And then removes it out totally*" (HOARCM14, 23/04/11). Thus, certainly, the farmers need proper awareness, training, support and follow up from governmental and non-governmental sectors.

Yet, the failures in crop production cannot be associated only to these environmental affairs. Other factors include work cultures, women participation, holidays, climate and topography. There are also widespread public opinions about the working habits of the farmers and women participation. In fact, several celebrations have been dropped as compared to the preceding decades. But, still several holidays are there the major ones becoming *Arefa* (Eid-Al Adha) and *Meskel* (The True Cross) celebrations (FGD, 23/04/11). Women have well started to take part in farming, yet far from being productive. They dominate commercial and home management affairs (FGD, 23/04/11). "*The people gave up drinking alcohol, but they chew Çhat. And, in recent years, they stopped chewing the Çhat during day times after they have been given lots of awareness. I see that women attempt to work in schedules and turn out to be more punctual. But they still spend too much time and potential compared to their outcome*" (HOARCM42, 23/04/11).

Some others seem discouraged by the climatic and topographic nature of the region. The climatic zone is *Kolla* (hot) as characterized by warmness, compared to several other neighborhoods of the district. And the soil type in the neighborhoods is a black one, the topography is full of ups and down, and so exposed to a gradually frequent erosion (FGD, 23/04/11).

Livestock Production Problems

The people of the target sites depend mainly on plant and animal cultivation. As crop production becomes ineffective for several reasons, animal production failed too. Among the foremost domestic cultivated animals include the cows, goats, sheep, and chickens. The cattle remained one of the capitals of the people in addition to coffee and *Çhat* productions. The cattle also provide a significant part of the daily nutrition requirements through

milk and milk products. And the farmers sell the cattle out in order to manage any of their personal and family financial needs.

However, there is a common cattle disease, *trypanosomiasis*, locally called *Gendi* or *Sutie*, spread throughout the neighborhoods and beyond. For decades, this disease has prevailed in these neighborhoods. There have been intervention attempts by the government in form of prevention. The disease is transmitted especially by tsetse flies, scientifically termed as *glosina***,** which are spread all over the grazing sites at the desert. Then the cattle get frail losing their appetite, and physically unable to travel long distance in search of grass and water. Subsequently, the majority dies without any medication attempts.

> *There are few kebeles where the livestock become a big capital as every farm animal healthily produces sequence of multiple substitutes. But here in our villages, once you buy a cow you regularly buy and inject medicine. This is also attributed to shortage of water. The people spend lot of money hoping that the cow will recover to productivity (HOARCM14, 23/04/11).*
>
> *There is a disease we call Gendi. It has no permanent medication. When our cows get injected several times, they get adapted to the medicine to death (HOARCM16, 23/04/11).*
>
> *There are human and animal water-related diseases. And, especially the cattle are highly affected. There is one case that a total of eight cows died in one household mainly because of water shortage (HOARCM31, 23/04/11).*

There were government attempts to control the disease, as when several traps were stretched across the desert. However, this has not continued long. There are no animal health centers throughout the target areas. The people are obliged to drive their unhealthy cattle long distance to Woyra, where they can find that single animal health center and only one individual as an expert. At the center, the cattle get common tablets and usually ordered to come on weekly basis for injection. The people are not motivated by the recurrent act of driving the cattle for this distance. So even once they start, they fail to continue to the end. And there is also problem in the experts' side in identifying the exact type and harshness of the disease; they simply prescribe common tablets and injections.

> *Trypanosomiasis is widespread across the neighborhoods. At least three cows die at each household. Of course, that is both by the disease and water scarcity. The cattle have no water; previously there was a local river, Anzeche. But currently even it has dried out (HOARCM17, 23/04/11).*
>
> *Our cows must make six to seven hours round trip to reach any accessible water. And then they get infected by 'Arekit' (a disease commonly caused an insect that cows sip together with water); especially when the water is not a moving one, even when in times rivers fail to move due to absence of rain (FGD, 23/04/11).*

The people of the kebeles frequently request for assistantship in identifying the type and characteristics of the disease, prevention methods and instruments as well as proper medication. HOARCM18 (23/04/11) notes a new cattle disease comes which we do not know, but the experts may know. There are also widespread health problems and deaths with regard to chickens. Besides the lack of the knowhow of poultry, the existing chickens are attached by regular and sudden disease cases. And the people have no knowledge about effective production ways, and disease prevention and treatment.

The Pervasiveness of Water Scarcity

Though Ethiopia is widely named as the water tower of Africa, water has not been accessed by the majority of the rural villages. Some regions have several local and regional rivers, while others lack any water body in the nearby. The target study neighborhoods appear among the most water shortage hit areas in Gurage zone, if not in Ethiopia. When asked to prioritize the problems, HOARCM33 (24/04/11) says, "*There are widespread animal and human diseases. But, none of them are as serious as the water shortage. Just show us where we could find water. Then we will dig*". Among the three main kebeles of our focus, only one is crossed by a major river called Zikir, though it's not sometimes traveling all the distance. In fact, there is a river which crosses over the edges of the Weshamo village. However, as it travels into the village it gets dry during Winter. So, absence of any major river crossing over the areas makes the area quite unique and different from many other kebeles in Enemor and Ener woreda. "*All kebeles have one small river except Dobba*" (FGD, 23/04/11).

Another reason is that most of the land is not conducive, to dig water-wells for ground water access. That has not been affordable to the majority of the residents, unthinkable for many others.

> *Previously, the people used water conservation technique to accumulate huge water reservoirs. Later, it is found harmful for it drags malaria and couple of cases that people fall to death (FGD, 23/04/11).*

So due to such factors most of the residents do not have access to clean water. The problem becomes more serious to those who reside close to the *Gibe bereha* (semi-desert area adjacent to river Gibe). Thus, in Dobba kebele the people of Sayba and Weshamo are the most affected. In shomoro and wodesha there are two water reservoirs serving currently. That is not reaching the majority, however. In wodesha, the people who live in Sadikay and Sesenar have also a severe lack of water.

The people of Sayba Dobba, in particular, travel over two hours to collect drinking water from a location in Lay Dobba, and also from Woyra town. Otherwise, they are obliged to spend seven to eight hours waiting for their turn in a nearby stream, named '*Chanche'* which s characterized by a very slow flow during winter.

The cattle are also common victims of water shortage. The absence of nearby rivers forced the people to drive their cattle for about two and three hours in search of water. In this regard, the people of Shumoro ride one hour toward Derke river (HOARCM16, 23/04/11), the people of Dobba and Wodesha travel three hours to the bottom Derke river, and the people of Wodesha rides their cattle for two hours in to another river in another neighborhood, Zikir river (HOARCM13, 26/04/11). The times mentioned here are one-way travel. This mean, the people and the cattle must make these compulsory trips twice daily. This affects both the people and the cattle in different ways; one by exploiting their energy so that they fail to resist any diseases. The productivity of the cattle, therefore, gets lower and lower. Surely, the waste of time is another disadvantage to the farmers.

Despite all these human and animal thirst, the attempts to provide water reservoirs has been sluggish. There are potential options that the water can be accelerated. One way is by pulling clean water from the nearby water rich grounds. The other is by digging out water from deep grounds. Either of these options cannot be affordable by the financial potentials of the people, however. So, the people have been looking for assistance from any governmental and non- governmental sectors. The following reflections reveal threats by water scarcity in the neighborhoods.

> *There is a critical water problem. Dobba is the most water affected neighborhood among the 66 kebeles. Residents had to wait 24 hours to collect five or ten liters of water at a stream. Sometimes men accompany the women. Even the wheel-water, that the most widely drunk, is not clean one at all. Fortunately, the people are not getting infected as feared. Due to water shortage, sometimes we do not drink. Particularly, Sayba Dobba is the most affected by the water. They bring water from Woyra on their way to the marketplace on Fridays and Tuesdays (HOARCM31, 23/04/11).*
>
> *There was a water-well built over there; however, it is not operative now. So, there is only one water stream for the entire kebele and the people have to wait for several hours to take a turn to collect. They do not even satisfy half of their water need (HOARCM16, 23/04/11)*
>
> *Water crisis is at its pick now; mothers go to fetch water at seven pm and stay until two am. That even affects their time and health. They get sick after extended stays, especially during a cold weather. That blocks their active participation in development activities (HOARCM17, 23/04/11).*
>
> *In our village we do not find water at a near distance if we tend to dig. The single river has dried out, not serving even the cattle (HOARCM18, 23/04/11).*
>
> *There is a stream over there. Every household tend to collect from that. It takes long time to wait to fetch, and long way to carry to home. There is no any moving water or river here around (HOARCM33, 24/04/11).*

A point of remark worth to share here is the case of a ten-year-old 2nd grade, HOARCM19. She carries 12 liters of water from a distance neighborhood. And that is what she does every day (23/04/11).

Deforestation, Grassroots Consciousness, and the Struggle for Survival

Concerns, for the existing level as well as the coming level of climate change, have maximized. There is a current revolution, and practical responses worldwide. Ethiopia is also widely involved in contributing to the control of the climate change. The Ethiopian Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) had given immense consideration to environmental protection. "…building a 'Green Economy' and ongoing implementation of environmental laws are among the key strategic directions to be pursued during the plan period" (GTP, 2010, p.119). (2012:8-9).

Over years, on the other hand, there has been deforestation in the target project sites. The common practice was, the destruction of the forest for charcoal production purpose, the burning of the grass and the forest for new grazing and farming. This in turn affected the wild life. As a result, by now, there are quite less number of wild animals as compared with their number years back.

> Some residents of the target area seem extremely concerned. "*We are almost changing to desert. The Sheppard and the cattle have no any shadow for day-time temporary shelter, and the grass and water; because the people cut the entire green plants*" (HOARCM38, 23/04/11).
>
> *The people have no adequate awareness about the tourism and the Gibe Sheleko National Park (GSNP). Only few, and the kebele administration members can be said to have some awareness (HOARCM17, 23/04/11).*

There are also recurring opinions for why this many community members had to do the charcoal business. "Regarding the charcoal, people are doing it to survive in the deteriorating life condition. There is some sort of improvement. The cattle experience serious level leg injuries as toes and legs burnt by buried fires. The government attempted to use force, but the most important thing should be awareness creation and communication. The people's health has also been negatively affected by that" (HOARCM17, 23/04/11).

> *Carbone monoxide, one of the most poisonous gases, caused by the charcoal. When the people open it, the carbon monoxide harms their internal and external bodies (HOARCM20, 23/04/11).*
>
> *There is charcoal production, mass burning and hunting. Currently, there is a park stretching from Kosse to Gerenbo, Gibe Sheleko National Park, and this would bring some hope (HOARCM16, 23/04/11).*

HOARCM18, the newly trained natural resource management expert says, “What we do is giving advice. I had deliberately gone to talk to some target community members, mostly females. There are, in fact, some people who seem to lose any other option. I have two such cases. There is, for example, one mother who raises several children without a father” (23/04/11).

HOARCM18 (23/04/11) insists that there is deforestation especially for charcoal by which many people and the livestock lose their legs. Previously, many wild animals used to show up. But now that visibility has become little more than seldom. “*Even honey bees failed to survive*”, he adds. As the following comments underline, most of the community members are giving up the practice no matter how they have been practicing this illegal charcoal production for survival.

> *Many members of the community practice this illegal charcoal production just for a current survival. I personally had to abandon this because I was repeatedly informed about its negative impact, especially on uterus. I think several others also need this awareness as soon as possible (HOARCM36, 26/04/11).*

> *Currently, the people are aware. It seems that they ceased charcoal production mainly due to its harms themselves (HOARCM44, 27/04/11).*

Certainly, forests remain homes and sources of food for the wildlife; and so, the wildlife is the immediate and permanent victim of deforestation. There had been regular hunting all over the forests in the so-called Mena area of the neighborhoods. After warnings and some awareness efforts, the people seem to lessen the frequency of hunting.

> *We used to hunt, but now we ceased to do that (HOARCM15, 26/04/11).*

Rural Road Constraints and Collective Impacts on the Grassroots

Infrastructural diversification has been always valued in facilitating all forms of social and economic developments. In this regard, telecommunication, transportation services, schools, health centers, electricity and clean water remain aspects of unquestionable essence. And almost all of these entities have strong relationships and impacts on one another. Noticeably, the establishment of one has a facilitating role for the establishment of the other.

Rural road, in particular, has enormous impact for the establishment of other infrastructures. It is only through long lasting roads that other service sectors such as telecommunication and electricity can be well accessed. Above all, a rural road is what local and foreign investors can be attracted by. Obviously, investors prefer to invest on places where there is favorable transportation service and/or at least a medium-level road. Primarily, they need it to scan the socio-economic and geographical environments. Most importantly, they need it to catalyze the productivity of their investment by timely transportation of yields to further rural, urban and foreign markets.

Residents of the target neighborhoods do not have even lower standard rural roads to connect to Addis Ababa -Hosana main road. The lack of transportation service has resulted in further disadvantages. Investors could not invest in the region as they could not drive-into villages and potential sites for exploration or implementation reasons. Local farmers, traders and students cannot promptly reach to where they want. And this difficulty has delayed the efficiency of their life duties. The people also take extra time for common trips to Addis Ababa. To reach to the main Addis Ababa - Hosana road, they had to walk a long way carrying bulks of stuff habitually males on their heads and females on backs. Additional reflections below from the residents confirms the extent of the challenges.

> *The absence of road, in turn, harmed a possible start and acceleration of other sectors such as water and electricity. And as we know, years ago, a water project came to our kebele. But fearing that large scale machines could not be carried by the current low quality of road, it has been taken to a neighboring kebele (HOARCM14, 23/04/11).*

> *The road even could not enable to carry the patients properly. When our cattle are affected by trypanosomiasis, we fail to ride to animal health center. That is mainly due to the absence of any proper road (HOARCM37, 23/04/11).*

> *Once again, an NGO came to launch water service to the people of Dobba neighborhood. But as the operators could not drive into the intended villages, due to absence of road, they had to go back to Shumoro neighborhood (HOARCM14, 23/04/11).*

Conclusion

In HOA, the rural makes up to 80% of each country in terms of size and population. And there have been various attempts by national and international organizations to make these vast rural zones the major center of development projects. However, considering plans and reports and observing the lives of the people, two things can be identified. Official development reports have been highly overstated as typically identified by tables, graphs, quantities, and approximations all narrating the economic growth aspect of development. In contrast, qualitative observations and critics reveal prevalence of series of developmental crisis mainly in relation to human development variants, as commonly veiled within official reports.

Health and sanitation conditions of remote grassroots communities contradict collective complaints and related development narratives in the region. Compared with total population, there are not even minimum required number of health posts, material facilities and experts, at least in terms of quantity. The reported accounts pertaining health development, considers overall national quantities, commonly in thousands; and thus, they tend to be misleading narratives. The number of health centers, facilities and experts narrated

nationally are quite insignificant, while observed locally from within the communities. The prevailing cases of malaria, TB, typhoid and typhus are still threats to the grassroots in the HOA. The common reports that the reduction of maternity and infant deaths can also be challenged by actual contexts of mothers and babies during pregnancy, and after birth. Lack of adequate sanitation and hygiene education accelerated the already deteriorating health conditions.

Quantitative narratives of infrastructural distribution can also be contested by specific break downs and concrete qualities. The actual distribution of schools is completely far from the number of residents and the distance covered. A single school for one kebele, in case of Ethiopia for example, is quite far from the average required number. Kids as young as four and five are forced to walk an hour and more. In short, the quality of the schools can literally be described by terrible classrooms, awful sitting arrangements, extremely high-class size and dangerous school latrines. Subsequently, it can be explained by inadequately trained and highly limited number of teachers and quite insufficient teaching - learning materials.

Despite the value that governments in the HOA given to agriculture, crop production and animal husbandry have been suffering from various problems. Farmers have almost no current idea about crop production, the cattle are devastated by series of diseases, and nourishment habits and health challenges of farmers themselves negatively affected productivity. Even in cases of a relatively better crop production, yields are shared by wild animals like baboons and monkeys.

Global and regional narratives of success about green economy can also be challenged by prevailing tendencies of deforestation in the region. In the absence of adequate nourishment, the people tend to make money out of forests, and or they clear forests to utilize the area for extended farming. While the staggering life, the economy and the growing population contribute to deforestation, there is little effort in educating rural communities about alternative ways of economic survival in place of deforestation, the further harms of deforestation and the significance of afforestation.

The sum of health and sanitation complications, lack of access and quality of education, un-productive agriculture and absence of environmental care can be perceived to cause a general unease to rural communities in the HOA; and these would become a threat to the communities' hopes and survival. Considering the area and population that rural communities cover, the HOA is far from handing prosperous countries to new generations.

This article would like to indicate the need for genuine interventions in form of awareness creating trainings and infrastructural provisions in the region. Series of health and sanitation skill development trainings could enhance disease prevention and family health care trends. NRM trainings should be designed with the direct aim to enable the people preserve the forest, wild life, water, land and mineral resources. Training programs on crop production and protection could also enhance farmers' productivity. As part of immediate

intervention, projects should consider improving school and health center facilities like in repairing and/or building classrooms, libraries, staff residences, latrines, and providing teaching-learning materials. Similarly, health care center development projects should consider supplementing infrastructural, medical and human resources. And not less important, medium level rural roads could simplify improvement of all other development segments, as it is through roads that construction and similar-purpose vehicles could go deep into villages for one or any other development activities.

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