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Addressing youth unemployment is a feasible option

BY WAKUMA KUDAMA

"We are graduates but jobless. Our parents invested a lot for our schooling thinking we can help them and our society later. But many of the investors who took tens of thousands of hectares of land have failed to create any job opportunities for us. Joblessness has become our enemy. We the young people are productive forces, and need to serve our society. Our government must provide us jobs," said a young man on one of the public gatherings during the deep renewal about a year ago.

One of the multifaceted benefits of attracting and encouraging investment is creating jobs for the local people. Especially countries like Ethiopia with large number of population mostly devise economic development policy which benefits the country through creating jobs for the people, especially the youth.

Accordingly, many of the investments in various parts of the country can be acknowledged for their contribution in benefitting the local youths from the jobs they opened up.

However, many others were also observed engaging in illegal activities with the licenses and facilities they received with the pretext of investment that benefit the country in general

and the local people in particular. Among such activities is the practice of illegal land grabbing.

Many local and foreign investors have been identified to have encircled massive plots of land without adding value and there by spoiling the developmental opportunity of the area as well as without creating jobs for the local youths.

The government of Ethiopia has been struggling unemployment even before the start of the deep renewal. In the course of the deep reform, it identified the rate of unemployment as one of the main socioeconomic problems that ought to get immediate solution. As a result, it has been introducing a number of reforms to revert the situation since then.

One of the victims of such failure to utilize developmental opportunities to create jobs for the youth is Oromia State. Evidences from Labor and Social Affairs Bureau of the State indicate that 17 percent of the youth in the state were unemployed. It is the main reason that gave rise to last year's social unrest which deemed necessary the deep renewal movement.

During the community dialogues that were part of the deep renewal the public and the government were able to identify poor land management as the main cause of unemp

loyment. "Our children would never have involved in the unrest if they were able to secure jobs from the development activities. The investors who took our lands could not create jobs for them. If they do not invest and create jobs, they must return the lands to us. Together with our children we can use it to improve our livelihood. Some investors who took lands even ten years ago failed to keep their promises," said one of the farmers at the public gatherings a year ago.

The State Chief Lemma Megersa said that the land grabbing that took place with the pretext of investment have caused public discontent in the region. And the farmers were cheated to abandon their lands without proper compensation.

"The injustices that had been done in the State brought damaging consequences on our society. We were able to identify those injustices in the course of the deep renewal. They were the major cause of public discontent and then unrest. The injustices grew to the extent we no longer tolerate. We have to correct them. The brokers who sold our lands illegally and unfairly still involve in trafficking our youth to Saudi Arabia," Lemma stated.

Following the deep renewal, the state

government set a comprehensive plan with a number of programmes to be implemented to solve the staggering unemployment. The first programme is allocating about six billion Birr to create jobs both in rural and urban areas. As a result, more than 1,225,000 youth who were organized in 110,000 unions have secured jobs since the deep renewal. "We are so pleased to get the opportunities; we work and improve our lives. Our government's commitment to transform our lives is very great. We change ourselves and serve as model for the generation to come. We bring very significant change in our community. This is a great opportunity to improve ourselves," said the beneficiaries.

"The 2736 shades that were illegally occupied in the last ten years have been transferred to the youth recently," according to Chaltu Sani, Chief Administrator of Legetafo-Legedadi Woreda of Oromia Special Zone Surrounding Finfine.

Next, using the natural resources in the State wisely was one of the proper solutions to solve problems related to unemployment. For instance, jobs have recently been arranged for about 76,000 youth to engage in mining development over 14,300 hectares of land in the State.

The beneficiaries said unlike before, they

are now able to transform their lives through the governments unreserved intervention to create jobs.

The State governments actions to mitigate unemployment in the region has also touched agricultural sector to benefit rural youth. Accordingly 177,000 youths were organized in unions to harness 45,000 hectares of agricultural land. This includes 241 hectares of land granted for 530 unemployed youth in Tolayi Woreda of Jimma Zone and a considerable size of land for some 4,000 youths in Biraro Sillito Woreda of Arsi Zone.

According to Lemma, the State will continue to strenuously explore all opportunities available in the region to maximize the benefits of the youth. "Through identifying the available job opportunities in our State, we will assist our youth to exploit them. Addressing the burning needs of youth is not only our moral obligation but also proper political decision. We can realize our nation's development plan only by empowering our youth economically."

In response to the devastating and unprecedented level of unrest that rocked various facilities in the state last year, the state government seems to be working towards addressing the problems from its root causes.



SHARE Bale Eco-region Project - from where to where?

Part III

Local Breed improvement

Livestock holdings of the community in Bale eco-region are mainly local breeds that are low productive. Therefore, enhancing livestock productivity through breed improvement was one of the interventions planned by SHARE BER project.

In this regard two strategies were applied: first was through Artificial Insemination (AI) and the second was through introduction of bulls of known and better local breed (Borena bulls).

While AI service was provided across the eco-region, highland and lowland, use of bull approach was made in the pastoral areas only. The project conducted AI on a total 1, 520 cows of 1, 171 households.

Particularly, the AI service is the first of its kind in pastoral areas in Bale area. AI service provided by SHARE BER project was much of a success. The pregnancy detection rate stands at 45.8%PD+ in the highland, which is much higher than 33-37% in Oromia Region. The semen used for breed improvement were Borena and Jersey as these breeds were suitable for the lowland areas and comparatively gives better milk and meat production than the local breeds. The pregnancy detection taste result ranges from 35 to 80 % in the lowland areas.

Some of the approaches that the



Photo on AI service

project has followed includes:

- ◆series of awareness to community on how to manage their cows before and after AI at 'Kebele' and sub 'Kebele' levels;
 - ◆hormone synchronization to enhance heat period;
 - ◆monitoring and continuous follow up on the site by AI technician; and
 - ◆Careful cow performance selection time for breeding.
- Buluk districts were selected, trained and

certified as CAHWs, which are currently offering animal health services in their respective areas. The CAHWs have received intensive training for two rounds (each round for 15 days) by certified CAHW's trainers and awarded qualification certificate by Bale Zone pastoralist development office. Up on completion of the training, the CAHWs were given tool kit, veterinary equipment and medicines. To ensure sustainability of the



CAHWs providing animal health service

service provision, it was agreed that the community will pay a modest fee as a service charge to CAHWs. The price for the service is set by the woreda Animal health department in consultation with the service users. This payment for CAHWs will have two benefits; one it creates employment opportunity and sustains the services, and secondly it avoids communities' dependence syndrome.

In the past one year, the CAHWs have

treated/vaccinated about 118,831 livestock (cattle, Camel, Donkey & shoats heads) in 10 kebeles. The system will be strongly supported by the government in terms of access to medicines and others support, and are made sustainable. The advantage of the CAHWs is that they are part of the community and are mobile service providers moving together with the pastoral households. They also provide home to home services upon request by households.