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International Conference on African Development Archives. 63.
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Holistic Integrated Youth-Centered Development: Need For Change of Focus

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Abstract

Today, the world knows Ethiopia for its abject poverty, war, drought and severe HIV/AIDS prevalence. For these problems, many causes can be mentioned. Some of these are poor or underutilization of the available resources, Lack of good governance, lack of vision, lack of determination and commitment, absence of transparency and accountability. Equally, the inability to use the youth as a key development tool is the formidable cause for remaining in abject poverty. Due to these various reasons, we could not actualize this potential (youth) in to reality (for fighting poverty and achieving sustainable development).

In developing countries like Ethiopia, the key role and importance of the youth in fighting poverty and reversing the prevailing adverse trends in all aspects (for instance, in halting HIV/AIDS, alleviating poverty and perennial hunger, maintaining democracy and establishing good governance and achieving sustainable development) is hardly realized.

The youth, which constitute a large portion of the population (28.2%), are living in abject poverty and ignorance. They also lack up to date and relevant information in various social, economic, and more importantly on the effect of HIV/AIDS. Nevertheless, the youth can reverse this trend, as they are pillars for sustainable development. They can potentially alleviate economic and social problems of the country. Despite this fact, they have received scant attention from the society.

In Ethiopia, knowingly or unknowingly, the youth are the most forgotten, misunderstood and underutilized human element (development resource). Yet, the society largely puts all the blame on the youth for all the problems that prevail in the country. Paradoxically enough, the society expects much from the youth, while holding uncritical biases and negative attitudes towards them.

The Government is now on the threshold of building a better understanding of the potential power of the youth to stand in front of poverty and other social problems. This consciousness has now resulted in the official foundation of Ethiopian National Youth Charter in December of this year. It seems that the government has clearly understood that a country can develop hardly without active involvement of the youth.

The writer of this paper has started with the following assumption. To fight poverty and perennial hunger, and thereby to achieve sustainable development, a nation

should invest in the human element, particularly, the youth. In order to reap good harvest we have to invest on the youth since investing in the youth means investing for change. Indeed, investing on the youth is investment to make a better future. It is a real fact that in a country like Ethiopia, the youth can make a real difference.

But, to materialize the above assumption, first and foremost the society should value the youth, understand their needs and interests, empower them to participate in the poverty and hunger fighting campaign and the struggle for halting the spread of HIV/AIDS. It is also important to enhance and enrich their initiative and creativity in order to find answers to the precarious problems of the country by and by.

It is only when the youth are educated and transformed in to productive labor power and well-cultured citizens that they can commit themselves to their well-being as well as the overall welfare of their society. Thus, primarily this paper aims at elucidating the place and the role of the youth in fighting poverty, perennial hunger and halting the spread of HIV/AIDS in Ethiopia.

Since only youth know better about themselves and their problems, the paper makes the information extracted from the youth a source (its information base) for the argument. Based on the available data, and implications of practical personal insight observations and experiences the paper would try to address the intricated problems of the youth from broader perspectives.

Introduction and Rationale of the study

Much has been said and written, both formally and informally, about youth. Many people, from the common people to the elites, have been saying different things about the youth and their unique and undeniable energetic nature.

Sebihat Gebregziabier, the renowned Ethiopian writer, clearly articulated in his book entitled 'Tikusat', the great and unique energetic nature of the youth like:

“Youthfulness is very good. Being youth you have full health where you do not have money; you have brain where you do not have beauty; you have anger where you do not have happiness; you have hope where you do not have love; you have bragger where you do not have wisdom; you revolutionize when oppressed. Though it is not recognized, you have history since you are young”

The United Nations General Assembly defined 'youth', as those persons falling between the ages of 15 and 24 years inclusive. This definition was made for international youth year, held around the world in 1985.

Many countries in the different corners of the world use different age category for the youth, mainly due to practical socio-cultural, economic, institutional and political

factors. For instance, in Uganda it is between 12–30, in South Africa between 14–24, in India between 15–35, and in Nigeria between 18–35, etc (Addis Ababa Youth Association, 2002). Similarly, in Ethiopia, youth is considered as those persons falling between the ages of 15 and 29. This paper also shall stick to use this range.

Although the implications of the terms ‘young people’, ‘youth’, and ‘adolescents’ vary in different societies around the world in response to political, economic and socio-cultural circumstances, global statistics compiled by the UN use the categories listed below (UNFPA, 2002)

For the clarity of the issue at hand, below are the age limits internationally agreed by the UN as follows:

Adolescents: 10-19 Year old (early adolescence 10-14, and late adolescence 15-19)

Youth: 15-24 year olds

Young people: 10-24 year olds

Accordingly, for the purpose of this study, we follow also the same internationally agreed definitions and concepts, even including young generations to refer youth.

As UN presented in its web site dedicated for youth, approximately one billion youth live in the world today. This means that approximately one person in five is between the age of 15 and 24 years, or 17% of the world’s populations are youth. Among these, the majority (85%) of the world’s youth live in developing countries, with approximately 60% in Asia and a remaining 23% live in the developing regions of Africa. By 2020, the number of youth living in developing countries will grow to 89%. Therefore, it is necessary to take youth issues into consideration in the development agendas and policies of each country. Like wise, it is in this understanding and consensus that respective countries are focusing in human element, youth to their level best.

In Ethiopia youth (15-29) are 28.2% of the total population (CSA, 2002). From this fact alone one can understand that we can reach nowhere with out realizing this human potential to the sustainable development of the country. Youth are asset for the nation. As they are change makers of the society, we must better understand and create enabling environment for them to participate in developing and maintaining democracy and good governance in order to see better Ethiopia tomorrow.

The prevailing intricated problems, which forced us to live in abject poverty and perennial hunger place youth at the important crossroads in the development process.

Many reasons can be presented for the entire prevailing miserable situation. But, the inability to empower and utilize the youth in the development process is the root cause for all other problems.

It is so clear that there is no as such quick fix for these multidimensional and gigantic problems; however with due holistic integrated youth-centered development strategy and with better understanding and change of focus, i.e. with the genuine changing focus and all rounded empowerment to the “soldiers of development” (not actually always soldiers to keep her/his country and territory from enemies), we can reverse the prevailing bleak situation.

Thus, the main objective of this study is, therefore, to show that this is a time for change: to focus on youth. Though there is no as such quick fix, progressive measures should be taken from now onwards. Just now. Late is better than never. Moreover this study tries to show the way out on how, figuratively speaking, to get beautiful and shaped thing from ugly and deformed ones. In other words, it attempts to show how the threat can be changed to opportunity.

In Ethiopia, most people consider the youth as futureless and dregs of the society. Thus, a prominent rationale for this study is the prevailing lacuna in understanding the youth. It is just an attempt to give ear to the unheard voices of the youth itself and hence to better understand and realize the unexploited human element, the youth, for the betterment of the country. Above all, this paper tries to give a bare-fact and relatively full picture of the youth and their intricated problems.

Methodology

The main source of information is the youth themselves. In-depth purposive random formal and informal interview were held with a considerable number of young people youth about their problems, existing situations, on things that need to be done to get out of the vicious cycle of poverty and on those points that can be forwarded as a solution to the age-drawn youth problems.

Accordingly, standardized interview and questionnaire were prepared in English. During the interview, discussions were conducted intensively in Amharic. Some of the data collected in Amharic were very powerful and reveal about the existing situation and magnitude of youth problems in particular, and it reveals the extent of abject poverty prevailing in the country in general. However, in the process of translation, they lose much of their beauty, power, and bare meaning. Thus, the original Amharic version of some sayings, ideas and information collected from the youth informants is attached as annex in order to present the ideas in their original beauty and power. Surely, you will witness it and will have clearer picture about the various issues. Otherwise, it would be difficult to grasp its full context. I did it deliberately, because when we discussed in Amharic with some informants, they

articulated and put it in a very artistic and simple way, but yet pointing to their core intricate problems and the problem of their country.

Anyway, we have tried much to make the translation as meaningful and as clear as possible. When it was found difficult to translate, we shall just stick to the words of our informants.

One should believe that research aiming at studying and elucidating intricate youth problems would ultimately consider the active participation of the youth itself. I personally do agree strongly that though there is multitude of research conducted in different issues of youth, it will be full and reliable only if we put the youth at the center and study themselves and made them the main informants during the research.

To strengthen this fact I shall put one Ethiopian saying:

“S/he who sees the scar on the skin of Aberash never plays with fire
“This is an Ethiopian proverb to warn some body of some thing. Truly, one can imagine to what extent Aberash has felt the pain of burning. But nobody can express the feeling as Aberash does for she is the one who has suffered the anguish. Likewise, the society, experts and researchers might express the extent of anguish the current youth are in. Nevertheless, the youth can describe the problem they are facing much more than anyone speaks for them. This is the major reason for choosing the youth as core informants in this research.

Thus, the paper primarily considers qualitative information extracted from the youth as its ultimate source. Even, the writer believes that an intimate and intermittent discussion with the very target informants would result in better insight into the very issue at hand.

Besides, in-depth review of related literature was made. Relevant documents published by the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Culture, and Central Statistics Authority (CSA) were also consulted particularly to get some relevant and current statistical figures on different youth issues. Publications of Government and NGOs were also reviewed as long as they are relevant to the study at hand.

Since the information extracted from the informants were blue-true and to the points, I am convinced to write plainly based on this bare-fact. Equally, as the writer of this article is young by himself, he also reflects his own personal insight, observations, experience and education.

As to its significance and coverage, the study raises different issues related to the youth and the very unique nature of this study is that more than what it answers, it will pose more points. In other words, the paper will also help as a springboard to study further the various issues raised and glimpsed at in this paper.

Limitation of the study

Paucity of data and dearth of up to date and reliable information on the existing situation of youth are some impediments to understand the current challenge and to forward the future strategy for the “forgotten”, but undeniable role and place of youth in reducing poverty and achieving real and fast sustainable development.

I am convinced that studying such issues through questionnaire and interview at a national level is impossible in this point of time, due largely to lack of time, money and integration/cooperation. Hence, this study mainly depends on the information collected through in-depth random interview, from the youth and aged peoples, who are living in different socio-economic conditions, particularly in Dire Dawa, Alemaya University and some parts of Addis Ababa. Since the very nature of the youth problems are almost similar, the information collected from these groups will not be nub as such. It will have a big implication and can serve researchers as a starting point to conduct further detailed studies in some related issues.

National Youth Policy

During the discussion held recently in the formulation of National Youth Policy, one lady, NGO representative, so aptly stated that in Ethiopia there is no problem of drafting nice looking policies and strategies on white papers, rather the problem is in its implementation.

It is not strange to see some powerful and beautiful words in policy and charter documents like: unrelentingly fight... unwaveringly... Diligently... we will lay the foundation... Hand in Hand with the concerted effort... Determinedly... etc.

But more than this, the crucial task that is ahead of us is materializing all that have been promised into practice. Actually it needs, still I shall borrow the same nice phrase, the concerted wholehearted effort of all groups: from youth to the government and community.

In line with this, it has to be well noticed that research elucidating the intricated youth problems would ultimately consider the active participation of the youth itself. Need less to say, youth-centered development strategies would be better off if they are considered, intensively, the youth itself in the very formulation of youth policy and other related strategy documents.

During the discussion of the policy formulation, one young man commented that formulating national youth policy only focused on the problems and recommended ways, but it didn't discuss the causes. Thus, for him it is not as such full, unless and otherwise it is modified considering such critical inputs. Nevertheless, the good thing about the discussion was, unlike the previous trend, stakeholders were

invited to throw their input in the formulation of the policy. This has been really a good start that should be appreciated and sustained.

It is plain truth that as long as we couldn't discuss the root causes, we will not reach on the right remedial actions, since understanding and identifying real causes of the problems are half solution by itself.

Nowadays, in Ethiopia, due attention has increasingly been given to the youth: particularly to give them equal access and to empower them to participate in the development process and get in return the benefits accordingly. In this regard, as it has been indicated above, the Ethiopian National Youth Policy has already been developed and approved by the youth after a due discussion held between and among the youth and other stakeholders. The next step is to present it to the parliament for the final approval.

The Ethiopia National Youth Charter

In December 2002, the Ethiopian youth with the noble initiative and unreserved determination, produced a national youth charter, designed a plan of action, and set-up mutually beneficial structural bondage amidst nations, nationalities and regional states. Accordingly, different regional and federal cities' youth are formulating youth charter at their regional level.

In the introduction of the Ethiopian National Youth Charter document the youth themselves asserted clearly that to do all their best for the betterment of the society, their will power, determination, dedication, readiness and skill (gut) wit as follows:

“We to get away from the social and economic quagmire which engulfed us for years, Ethiopian youth – male and female united as one – have partaken in the attempt to: pursue democracy, establish good governance, and reap the fruit of our toil with the help of the charter and plan-of-action we produced and formulated respectively”

Indeed, it has to be underlined that participation only will not be enough, but the youth should reap the fruits of their toil as well, as clearly indicated in the charter.

We have to be careful that determination and just having vision are not adequate by themselves; rather visions should be changed to actions, particularly meaningful and timely actions.

Lack of Faith in Tomorrow

As it has been indicated in the study conducted in Washington D.C, Stephens (1997), the Gallup poll survey reported that 70% of 16 to 24 year olds believe that the world was a better place when their parents were their age, and 56% said it will be worse for their children. At-risk youth in particular, say they “live for today” and see no hope for their future.

As one can understand from the above paragraph, youth in Washington D.C. have lack of faith in tomorrow. If it is not exaggerated, lack of faith in tomorrow is the main headache of Ethiopian youth, too. Though, there is no as such a relevant survey made in this regard, one can simply say confidently that a great number of young people have as such no bright future.

Juvenile delinquency: Causes versus Effect

Once when an elder (my neighbor) speaks of youth, he said, “Even if God comes to earth, juvenile delinquency never vanishes.”

As one young man put it: “There is no as such destructive youth by nature, rather environment and conditions made him the same”.

Indeed, as the causes, types and extent of juvenile delinquencies are many and varied its very existence is inevitable. And, sometimes a specific youth problems may become a cause for other problem, and that problem in turn may still be a cause for some other problems. Thus, as the causes and problems are cyclically interrelated, the remedial actions should also be integrated.

However, above all other remedies, investing on the youth is the core cure for these problems. If we educate and empower our youth today, they can help us right the wrongs of the society tomorrow.

The youth are nothing but the reflection of the society. In a country like Ethiopia where everything is hidden, there will be a great tendency for the occurrence of different juvenile delinquencies.

If we see the critical existing situation of Ethiopian youth, they are rounded with various problems, starting from illegal video homes and disco bars to chronic unemployment. Thus, unless and otherwise we give answer for unemployment today, it is unthinkable to realize our visions of development.

Value Youth

First and foremost you have to give value to and recognize the role and place of youth in a society. Once the people value youth, they start to understand and empower them to the level possible.

Youth's key role in building democracy and good governance is unrecognized and undervalued

The society and the government need not regard the youth as problem. Rather, they should understand and empower them so as to explore possible solutions and find appropriate answers for the prevailing intricated youth problems.

However, in Ethiopia the youth are the most forgotten and yet criticized elements of the society. But, we should empower them socially, economically, morally and institutionally to reap good harvest from this untapped human potential.

Accordingly, a significant body of research shows that, if you invest in the youth and empower them to participate actively in the development agenda, they can best actualize their full potential and can play an indispensable role in reducing poverty and achieving sustainable development.

Moreover, they can develop feelings of responsibility for their family, communities and their lives. For this to happen, the government and communities must take the views of youth seriously and should respect them, for the very reason that all youth around the globe need to have their voice and needs heard. It is plain that the very nature of the youth is that they need to be carved out themselves in a society.

But, due to some cultural problems and 'unforeseen' reasons, in Ethiopia most youth are not encouraged to express themselves and participate in some occasions at different levels, starting from their childhood. There was, and still is, transparency problem even at family and personal level.

Until very recently, nobody listens to the cry of the youth, just their cry has been considered as some thing that itches ear. However, nowadays, a significant improvement has been shown in understanding and empowering the youth.

Since the youth's key role in building democracy and good governance is unrecognized and undervalued, empowering them in Ethiopia can be considered as a bedrock to actualize their full participation and leadership role in the country.

The Glass Half full

The participation of the youth primarily requires changes in the way the society perceives them. It needs, first to clear your own eyes before you are going to tell your friend's dirt in his eye, because once you have cleared your eyes then you can see the dirt in your friend's eye better. In other words, we as a society should first play our part effectively before we just throw negative words towards the youth. We need to learn to express the youth fairly and positively: the glass is half

full, rather than saying it is half empty. Admittedly, if we invest in the youth, listen to them, and empower and appreciate their creativity at every level of the society, no doubt we will have the responsible youth who can change Ethiopia tomorrow.

Youth Under - and Un - Employment

Over 70 million young people are unemployed and looking for work in the world. The International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates that unemployment status among young workers almost everywhere are at least twice as high as the adult average (UNFPA, 2000).

Many reasons can be mentioned as a cause for poverty in Ethiopia. However, as it has been clearly indicated in the Ethiopia Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2000/01-2002/3, the root cause is under-and un-employment which is generally felt to be quite high, though data are lacking (EIPRSP, 2000).

In Ethiopia, unemployment is not a unique youth problem. Rather, it is a national problem. Similarly, since there is lack of statistical data, it is difficult to know the exact under and un-employment magnitude of youth. But, in any case, under-and un-employment is also the main problem and indeed is the root cause for so many other youth problems.

In Ethiopia, the youth can be even considered as a cheap labour which ensure, inter alia, the profitability of respective organizations.

Thus, if we invest on youth (educate and empower them) and if the government, private sectors and NGOs can create job opportunities for them, we can change the threat to opportunity: i.e we have ample cheap labour, "just like china", which suits particularly for jobs that needs unskilled and semi skilled professional levels.

Youth At-Risk

The youth crises prevailing in Ethiopia is real and serious. For these impediments, so many points can be thrown as causes. However, above all other things, we as a nation are poorly treating the youth and unable to prepare them to shoulder the responsibly to work for their country by realizing their potential.

Hoopfer, in the study he conducted in Washhington, D.C. entitled: "Youth Are At-Risk, and So Are We", clearly stated the importance of focusing on the root causes than spending time on symptoms. He says:

"Youth are at risk, but the real problem is not teen pregnancy, substance abuse, or illiteracy. They are symptoms and outcomes of a much broader problem- our national neglect of children and families. When we focus on" fixing the kids" we try to ameliorate symptoms rather than root causes. Instead, we must recognize that it's our nation, our communities, and a way of life that are

at risk. If we want to make a difference in the rotten outcomes the symptoms accentuate, we must create environments within communities where young people can grow into productive, competent, caring adults”

Yes, neglecting the young generation has a long-term adverse implication in the country.

Youth and Reading Culture

“The Leading Nations are the Reading Nations” Thomas Jefferson

There is a nice African saying that “the death of old man in Africa can be counted as the destruction/burning of a big library” It is said so to reveal the fact that there is no adequate library in the respective countries, and yet one can, the other way, interpret and understand that the undeniable value of library for preserving the cultures of peoples and countries.

The availability and accessibility of libraries, both in urban and rural areas are of paramount building blocks to make young generations ready to take responsibilities of their country. It is crystal clear that reading is considered as investing for the future. Reading enable individuals to compete, understand, respect and tolerate each other. To put it in a nutshell, reading helps to create informed and civilized citizens (Yared, 2002).

For the least developed countries like Ethiopia, it has been increasingly recognized that the key task of libraries should be create informed and responsible youth who can defend and maintain the new born democratic society and good governance. Equally, libraries have the potential to deliver significant benefits in maintaining and developing cultural values in a society.

Research has revealed that the return on the investment made on the library is five times more than what is invested. It has been quoted in one of the paper presented at the CODI.3 (2003), entitled the value of library services in development, as:

“Research has produced hard facts that libraries pay fully for their existence, and even produce positive returns on the investments made on them. For example, long-term studies of technical libraries using return on investment analysis (ROI) established that in monetary terms libraries produce 515% annual return on investment, that is five times more than what is invested on them per annum (keyes, 1995; Griffiths and king, 1993). Cost-benefit analysis also showed that the benefits derived from library services outweigh the cost of providing them. (McClure et al, 2000)”

Accordingly, if we invest on libraries, no doubt, we will also get the best return that can be counted in many ways: Particularly in cultivating and developing responsible and well cultured generation. Similarly, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have an indispensable role in creating informed citizens.

Why Are We in Perennial Hunger?

“Should I be forced to be ashamed to be an Ethiopian again and again? For how long is the Ethiopian body going to be the object of the intrusive gaze, the indicting eyes, the biting remarks about those “historic but poor” Ethiopians? When is my shame going to end?”

Yes, shame is what Dr. Teodros Kiros and we all have to feel.

Bluntly speaking, we are in repeated hunger because we are so lazy, irresponsible and above all we do not get ashamed of begging others. In our particular case, hunger has nothing to do as such with drought or lack of water management or poor water harvesting. Rather, we should explore the root causes for living in extreme poverty and perennial hunger. We should not waste our time by talking on the symptoms. We are in looming famine; above all, because we could not manage and materialize all our resources, especially we could not exploit a greater portion of the society, the youth, in the forefront line in this regard.

Youth and NGOs

Nowadays HIV/AIDs case is incorporated and addressed as one project component in most NGOs activity. Similarly, we also recommend NGOs should develop and implement purely youth-centered community service programs as one of their project component in order to turn the youth into productive, happy and law-abiding citizens.

To do so, as some NGOs are already doing, they should address the problems of the youth earlier enough before it gets worst. In other words, they should focus more on prevention than curing the wound.

In action today costs much tomorrow

Mitigating youth problems needs work like a trojan. For those multidimensional and gigantic youth problems there are no as such quick fix as the problems are intricated. But, addressing at least some of the problems should start today. Today is the right time for action. Inaction today by itself has an adverse implication in the long run, both on the youth and their country. We should see it in a holistic and integrated manner for the just reason that the youth problems are just the national problem.

Indeed, the most difficult part in our life is to make decision. But, today we have to decide. We have to invest on and approach youth in a holistic and integrated manner. In so doing, it is clear that we will keep the country from further economic and social stagnation. Because, failure to decide on time will result in serious economic and social crises.

Youth Needs Models, Not Critics

“It would be good if every body could see older people as the bridge to our past and our future. We recognize that our future can only shine if we reconcile our dreams with the dreams of our parents and grandparents.” Virgilia Matabela, Minister for Women’s Affairs and Social Action of Mozambique, said on the second World Assembly on Aging.

Indeed, the youth have much to learn from their parents, for they are nothing but their reflection.

However, our parents only taught as how to be respectful and courteous (for example, child pours water for an elder while washing his/her fingers before meal, a younger leaves a seat for an elder, etc). This is what we have been taught. We have not been taught to be hard working people and to see work as virtue.

As one young informant said it,

“We were brought to become lazy - disrespectful of work and hard – working. A case in point is that in the past if a child wishes to be a janitor or office messenger the response s/he gets from his/her father is disappointing. The father says, ‘How come before I get buried’.”

However what we have been taught and seen is so far from this reality. Both young and old people are throwing uncritical and biased negative attitudes towards each other.

Particularly, if you have listened so consciously to most aged peoples, when they talk a bout their past, they just tell you (to the younger generation) about the pride and valor. They will tell you about what they ate and drunk just by saying ‘Yekoretnew Choma’, ‘Yetetanew tej’ etc. Nothing more than this.

Snap Shot of the Youth (and other peoples) Comment

How do the youth joke with a serious matter as HIV/AIDS? When I advised on young boy to protect himself against AIDS, he desperately said “Puh! I don’t get AIDS more than once”, showing that he has already, caught the disease. I learned that this young generation is very much desperate.

To be honest, today the youth are working any types of work that can secure them just penny.

It seems that the youth have become tired of receiving coins from others (parents and fiends). When I gave him some coins, he said that I better find him job instead of giving him money. I learned that youth are badly in search for job.

“A watch which has stopped functioning is perfectly right two times in twenty four hours.” Then, it is difficult to say to some body that s/he knows nothing.

Indeed, the youth know some thing. The society should listen to their unheard voice.

“For me creating job simply means loving job”

“The Jamaicans strive to take our looks where we strive to take their models. The youth have neglected their valuable culture simply following the alien models”

No matter how they have been informed about the danger of AIDS the youth are still boldly facing the disease. As one of the old man in my village put “The hall (up on which slogan is put) is more receptive of information about AIDS than human beings”.

“Ethiopia is a country overwhelmed by the sprit of donation”

Today, even children’s know very well about the transmission ways of AIDS.

Let me relate to you what a 3-year daughter of my elder brother said. While eating ice cream she found out the red spot on her ‘Agech’. Immediately she ran to her mother and said, “Mama, what if I throw away the blood spoiled ice cream because AIDS is transmitted through it”. This shows that even infants know that AIDS is a problem.

On the other day, these same child was playing “Eqa Eqa” with other girl kids. During this time, other boy kids came and knocked at the door to join the “Eqa Eqa”. The girl refused to allow them. When I asked why, she replied: “Males contract AIDS”. This shows that AIDS is already known as a serious problem at all levels of the society. But it is sad that we couldn’t control our selves. It needs the determination of individuals.

Concluding Remark

As it has been written in a book entitled “The Sophie’s World”, Aristotle was concerned with the change in nature. Substance always contains the potentiality to realize a specific form. We could say that substance always strives towards achieving an innate potentiality. Every change in nature, according to Aristotle, is a transformation of substance from the potential to the actual

I will conclude the study by quoting the funny story that I got from the book entitled “The Sophie’s World”, as follows:

“A sculptor is working on a large block of granite. He hacks away at the formless block every day. One day a little boy comes by and says, ‘what are you looking for?’, ‘Wait and See’, answer the sculptor. After a few days the little boy comes back, and now the sculptor has carved a beautiful horse out of the granite. The boy stares at it in amazement, then he turns to the Sculptor and says, ‘How did you know it was in there?’ “

How indeed! In a sense, sculptor had seen the horse’s form in the block of granite, because that particular block of granite had the potentiality to be formed into the shape of a horse. Similarly, Aristotle believed that every thing in nature has the potentiality of realizing, or achieving a specific form.

Yes, indeed currently the Ethiopian youth are facing intricated problems. But, we have to have a grand vision. And, we have to do all our best to change the grand vision in to action. In short, if we invest intensively on the “soldiers of development”, no doubt we will see tomorrow a responsible and well-cultured young generation who can fight the prevailing poverty and perennial hunger in a sustainable way.

“As to how” indeed, first and foremost we have to understand that we can change the threat to opportunity. To do so, it needs the concerted effort of the society. We should start the marathon today. We should not leave it to the government alone. We all have to play our part. And, the time is now. Inaction today costs us much tomorrow. Above all, to answer the question **“How”**, we have to create jobs for the youth. We have to give answer for unemployment in a sustainable way. It needs to shape our perception that we have about youth, and hence better understand and avoid the ‘lacuna in our understanding’.

Finally, the researcher proposed his simple way out for shaping the prevailing lacuna and realizes the potentiality (youth) in to a practical development resource, just by implementing the following points:

- ✓ Value youth; tell them they are assets for the nation
- ✓ Understand them
- ✓ Love them

- ✓ **Make them Visionary**
- ✓ Listen their unheard voice
- ✓ Respect them
- ✓ Reconnect youth with the community and the government
- ✓ Invest on youth
- ✓ Educate them
- ✓ Recognize their role
- ✓ Empower them
- ✓ Participate them
- ✓ Appreciate their creativity
- ✓ Create jobs for them (Because the youth are so poor)

In doing so, we will get a bold answer for **“How”**

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