

Development Interventions in Wollaita, 1960s-2000s

A Critical Review

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Acronyms

AFD:	Action for Development
AMRC:	Arba Minch Rehabilitation Center
CCCE:	Children's Cross Connection Ethiopia
CRDA:	Christian Relief and Development Association
CSO (A):	Central Statistical Office (Authority)
DFED:	Department of Finance and Economic Development (Soddo)
DARD:	Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (Soddo)
DPPC:	Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission
EDRI:	Ethiopian Development Research Institute
EPRDF:	Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front
FDRE:	Federal Democratic Government of Ethiopia
FGA:	Family Guidance Association (Soddo)
ICCO:	Inter-Church Organization for Development Cooperation
NCFSE:	New Coalition for Food Security in Ethiopia
MFT:	Mossy Foot Prevention & Treatment Association
NGO:	Non-Government Organization
RRC:	Relief and Rehabilitation Commission
SNNPR:	Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region
WADU:	Wollaita Agricultural Development Unit
WDA:	Wollaita Development Association

Summary

This study examines the development interventions of the last four and half decades from the point of view of three key determinants of poverty and destitution, namely, population dynamics and land shortage, urbanization and commercialization, and livelihood diversification

Wollaita is one of the most thickly settled areas of the country, and in some places, the population density compares with that found in the highly overpopulated areas of south-east Asia. The complex impact of demographic pressure on natural resources and living space, poverty and income, farming systems, the ecological balance of the rural areas, and public health is quite obvious but has not been seriously examined. Wollaita is a land of micro-holdings. Partly as a result of population dynamics, partly because of the specific farming system of the area, per capita land holdings have always been small relative to other parts of the country. The evidence indicates, however, that family holdings have been growing smaller through the decades, and in recent years this has been compounded by growing landlessness especially among the young.

Over the last four and half decades, considerable effort has been made and immense resources invested in Wollaita by government, NGOs and other non-state actors. The achievements are by no means insignificant. Since the 1960s, when Wollaita was almost totally neglected, a good deal of investment in basic infrastructure, social services, and agriculture has been made. All these investments are, by Ethiopian standards, essential elements of modernity. Hence, in many ways, Wollaita is different today than it was four and half decades ago. And yet, the problems of poverty and destitution, unemployment, disease, food insecurity, resource loss- in brief extreme rural hardship and suffering have not only persisted but also increased in magnitude and severity.

The development interventions in the last four and half decades by the government, development partners and others have, by and large, failed to address the key determinants of poverty and destitution, though the failure is greater or lesser in degree depending on the problems and policy interventions concerned. These determinants are, in my view, demographic stress and land shortage, urbanization and commercialization, and livelihood diversification. The issue of drought

has also been included, but drought is a common hazard that has affected many parts of the country and is not specific to Wollaita. Because of this failure, the damaging impact of these factors is more pronounced today than before. The study suggests that a considerable policy shift is needed to put these determinants at center stage and to accelerate the pace of development.