

The Reality of Poverty, Inequality and Quality of Life in Ethiopia: Issues arising from Workshop I

PRESENTATIONS

Dr Kassahun presented the summary of the major points as discussed by four groups. The points focused on:

- The impacts of policy and governance on poverty,
- The worsening of poverty between 1995-2000 (about 10 million people starved),
- Reduced capacity of CBOs due to high consumption of scarce collect funds in dealing with victims of HIV/AIDS,
- Ethnicity and regionalism as obstacles to tackle poverty.

These points were more elaborated as follows. Poverty is more severe in rural areas due to drought and famine. This has developed dependency on relief and aid. Migration has created environmental degradation, tension and conflict among certain groups of population. Attempts to reduce poverty have been challenged by:

- Scarce resources to fill the gap,
- The agricultural led industrialization has been played down at the cost of industrialization,
- Investment is constrained by regionalism, corruption and excessive bureaucracy.

Hence, poverty reduction requires favorable policy, appropriate implementation, and consistent checking of the system.

Dr Habtamu reflected on the Quality of Life. He began by forwarding the problem in defining it. He attempted to provide some attributes, which could explain the quality of life (details could be secured from his notes).

Dr Fekade provided a presentation on the use of folklore in research. He claimed that folklore are important because they are original in the sense that they existed before a written literature, researchers are identified as individuals hence easy access to information, they could be gathered from any public scene, etc. He provided about 52 Amharic Proverbs related to Poverty and the Poor (details are in his notes).

DISCUSSIONS

Dr Allister thanking the presenters, made the following comments. He assured that his group is ready to consider important inputs for the improvement of the framework. He also admitted that the study project seems ambitious and will try to make it more realistic. As regards to the issue of culture, he commented that culture, though complicated, is important to consider. As far as folklore are concerned they should be used as methods to collect data but in a context. Some of the public values may need to be changed. For instance, in Bangladesh, people do not tend to repay government debt arguing that it is their share as citizens.

Dr Alula, similarly presenting his thanks for the presenters, forwarded the following comments. Addressing Dr Berhanu's presentation, he said that issues should be seen in a dynamic process and any change as in reaction to these changing situations. In reaction to Dr Habtamu's presentation, he argued that traditions might be positive or negative but the important point is to see in a context why they happen so and who the actors are. He also commented on Dr Fekade's points by saying that folklore need to be contextualised by identifying who is saying them (the rich or the poor) and the situation under which they are articulated.

Other participants also provided almost similar comments.

PRESENTERS' RESPONSES

Dr Habtamu admitted the need for a contextual understanding of the issues. And he said that there are about 25 aspects of life ready for discussion in the Bath study which need to be seen in relation to Ethiopian context. Moreover, there is a need for a debate over 100 harmful traditional practices brought up by some studies in Ethiopia.

Dr Kassahun generally agreed on the comments and admitted a need for a context. But he also claimed that he argued so because these issues have been exhausted in many places for the last decades.

Dr Fekade similarly accepted the comments but added that conceptualization should be more appropriate in the methodology discussion. Folklore should be seen across cultures, age, time, etc and that is why they take too much time to study.