

Papers of International Conference on Contemporary Development Issues in Ethiopia, August 16-18, 2001

Foreword

The first International Conference on Contemporary Development Issues in Ethiopia, convened on August 16-18, 2001 on Western Michigan University Campus in Kalamazoo, Michigan, USA. The conference attracted scholars from all parts of the World. Participants, (defined as presenters, session chairs and discussants), came from North America, Europe, Asia, Ethiopia and other African countries such as South Africa and Zimbabwe. Most of the participants were Ethiopian scholars working in institutions of research and higher education around the world. The conference planning process began over a year ago when an open International Call for Papers and Participation was first posted on the Internet. The conference featured 12 plenary sessions and about 50 papers on the various dimensions of development focused on Ethiopia with implications for other African states with similar conditions. The papers during the first day also included contributions to the international workshop on “*Managing Natural Resources for Sustainable Agriculture in African Highland Eco-systems*”, that convened in conjunction with the Conference.

The interdisciplinary conference dealt with various sub-themes of the general conference theme over three days. The first day featured papers on “*Natural Resources, Agriculture and Food Security Issues*”. There were five sessions that comprise of two sessions on *Natural Resource Management Issues*, one session on *Agricultural Technology and Markets*, a session on *Food Security and Food Aid*, and a roundtable session on “*Key Research and Development Issues in Natural Resources and Agriculture*” The first of two keynote addresses on the topic of “*The State of Agricultural Research in Sub-Saharan Africa: Implications for Ethiopia*” was delivered by Professor Gebisa Ejeta of Purdue University during the first day. The second day focused on “*Human Resource, Economics, and Technology Issues*”, which featured four plenary sessions that comprised to two sessions on *human resource development Issues*, one session on *Macroeconomic Development and Private Sector Reform*, and a session on *Science and Technology for Development*. The second key note address on the topic of “*Financial Reforms in Pre-Emerging Economies of Africa: Lessons and Opportunities for Ethiopia*” was delivered by Professor Lemma W. Senbet of the University of Maryland-College Park during the second day. The focus of the third and final day was on “*Institutions, Politics, and Diaspora Issues*”. It featured three plenary sessions: a session on “*Institutions, Organizations and Civil Society*”, a session on “*The State of the Ethiopian State*”, and roundtable session on “*The Diaspora and the Development of Ethiopia: Challenges and Opportunities*”

The conference was made possible with the co-sponsorship of the Ethiopian American Foundation (EAF) and the financial support of various academic offices and units of Western Michigan University (WMU). These included the offices of the President, Provost, Vice President of Research, Haenicke Institute for International and Area Studies, Department of Economics, and Center for African Development Research (CADPR), and the African Studies Center at Michigan State University. CADPR was the main coordinating academic unit.

A team from the WMU office of Conferences and Seminars provided an outstanding service in managing the implementation of the Conference.

The conference was a partnership academic event of WMU and EAF. EAF is a non-profit and non-partisan organization registered in the State of Michigan. It is a membership organization whose aim is to support and enhance higher education and development in Ethiopia by bringing to bear the collective effort of Ethiopians, Ethiopian Americans, and American friends of Ethiopia.

The conference was motivated by the belief that development and poverty alleviation is the greatest challenge for Ethiopia in particular and for Africa in general for the 21st century. Ethiopia with a population of over 60 million people is the second most populated country in Sub-Saharan Africa. It is an important African state, which historically took a key leadership role in the de-colonization of Africa and in fostering unity among African States. It was a co-founder in 1963 and is current home of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), which is aimed at promoting economic unity among African states. Ethiopia is also home to important international and pan-African institutions such as United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA).

Development in the conference is viewed as a multi-dimensional process that requires interdisciplinary approach. It is a process that leads to the improvement of the quality of human life by providing access to resources, employment, income, education and health services. Development also includes the human need for freedom of expression and mobility of people and resources in search of opportunity, and the critical need for the institutional framework that makes this process possible. The conference was based on the belief that development policy can be greatly improved and informed by objective examination of current realities and their historical evolution in Ethiopia, as well as the comparative experiences of other developing countries that have succeeded in alleviating poverty and achieving unity within diversity. The challenge of development in Ethiopia and in many African states is the alleviation of poverty and the achievement of peaceful and democratic unity with diversity. The conference provided an academic forum of free expression of ideas aimed at the various dimensions of development.

In the views of many participants, the conference was regarded as a huge success. Some of the contributing features to it's success included the following: First, it brought together some of the best studies on Ethiopian development issues across disciplines through an open International Call for Papers and presentations. No attempt was made to pre-select participants or pre-determines the agenda or it's outcome. Second, It was inclusive. It provided an independent and free forum, not captured by partisan politics, by attracting Ethiopian and other scholars and/or professionals across ethnicity and political views to engage in a healthy and constructive discussion. Conference participants are those who have answered our open Call for Papers and Presentations. It is not easy to bring such a diverse group for constructive dialogue, as those who follow contemporary Ethiopian affairs may be aware. But, we believe the Conference managed to do so. It lived up to the very spirit of EAF, as an independent and non-partisan organization. Third, the conference passed no resolutions since this was not it's intent. But, it was evident at it's conclusion that it raised a fresh level of energy and commitment among participants to hold future such conferences and to engage in constructive dialogue on development issues. Finally, it was efficiently guided and managed in a friendly environment.

The comments and evaluations received by e-mail from participants have been very positive. The following are typical of the comments made by some of the participants:

Dr. Assegedech Hailemariam of Eastern Illinois University noted, “ *You did a fantastic job, and your staff was unbelievably helpful. I had an awakening experience and a sense of recommitment that we can help facilitate a positive change in our beloved country*”. *I felt proud that we have made something of ourselves, and that we did not leave our country for nothing. The diversity of fields and participants represented was impressive*”

Professor Teshome Wagaw of the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor noted, “ *You should be commended highly for having devoted so much thought and energy in bringing the conference to such height. Western Michigan University and its leadership should be commended for their generosity in making their facilities available. Please convey this sentiment to them once more on our behalf*”

Professor Evelyne Cudel of Michigan State University wrote, “ *I want to thank you so much for putting together this great conference. It was such a success for all of us. The primary objectives of the conference as they were described in the announcement have been outstandingly fulfilled*”.

Dr. Berhanu Gebremedhin of International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), Addis Ababa, Ethiopia commented “.....*This is my first time see such a diverse group deliberate in such a civilized manner, at least during the last 10 years*”

Dr. Abebe Kebede of North Carolina A & T and State University in his “Reflections on Kalamazoo Conference” posted on the Internet writes “...*I had an opportunity to meet so many great thinkers and to reflect on the potential for a true development of Ethiopia. ...For me the thought of not seeing many of these colleagues again has put me into a sad mood. I want to tell them everything, I ran out of time and out of words. I am looking forward for a similar gathering. I hope and pray that I will see them again.*”

Dr. Habte Woldu of the University of Dallas, Texas commented, “ *Indeed, it was a great conference and I would like to congratulate you for the success and the quality of papers as well as for creating a friendly but merit based academic conference*”

Dr. Brook Hailu of the Embassy of Ethiopia wrote, “ *I cannot congratulate you enough for the success of the event where Ethiopian professionals such as yourself had the opportunity to discuss development issues in our country*”

Dr. Helmut Kloos of the University of California, San Francisco wrote, “ *I want to thank you for organizing the Conference, which I greatly enjoyed since it presented new ideas and data and also gave me a chance to meet some old friends and colleagues and make new friends*”

Professor Assefa Mehretu of Michigan State University in a letter addressed to WMU President wrote, “ *I would like to thank you individually and your institution in general for having hosted one of the best conferences I have been to in my long academic career.Overall, this was tremendously successful conference which has established a standard by which others will be measured*”.

The above is a selected sample. There were several other participants who made equally positive comments both orally and in writing. Conference evaluations also included some critically constructive suggestions and comments for the next conference.

These included suggestions such as the need to extend the time allowed for presentations, the need to go beyond the academic community and include development practitioners from the non-governmental organization (NGOs) and business communities. These and other suggestions will be considered in the planning process of the next conference.

This three-volume proceedings contains 52 papers contributed to the conference. Most of the papers in the proceedings were presented in the various sessions of the conference, but a few of the papers were contributed in absentia.

The papers are included in the proceedings as presented by the author(s). They are classified into three volumes as follows: Part I: *Agriculture, Environment and Food Security Issues*; Part II: *Economics, Human Resources, and Technology Issues*, Part III: *Governances, Institutions, Politics, and Diaspora Issues*. Volume I contains 20 papers classified into three sub-themes, Volume II contains 22 papers classified into three sub-themes, and Volume III contains 10 papers classified into two sub-themes, as shown on the page that follows this foreword.

I want to acknowledge the financial support of the various co-sponsoring academic offices and departments of Western Michigan University listed earlier in this introduction, and thank all conference participants (presenters, chairs, and discussants) without whom the conference would not have been possible. I am also thankful to the members of EAF Executive Committee for their cooperation and support during the conference planning period. My Special thanks must go to Dr. Tesfaye Teklu for his intellectual contribution in the conference planning process in general, and for his substantial role in organizing the sessions during the first day of the conference in particular. I also want to acknowledge the valuable assistance provided during the conference planning process by Ms. Rena Lynema, Administrative Assistant at the WMU Haenicke Institute of International and Areas Studies.

Finally, the EAF Board has committed itself to undertake such a conference on a bi-annual basis. At its recent meeting of September 29, 2003 in Canton, Michigan, the Board decided to convene the Second International Conference on Contemporary Development Issues on August 1-2, 2003. The Board discussed alternative venue options for the next conference, and decided to hold the second bi-annual conference at Western Michigan University. The EAF Board, however, agreed to explore the idea of holding the Third International Conference in Ethiopia in 2005.

Professor Sisay Asefa, Program Chair

International Conference on Contemporary Development Issues in Ethiopia, August 16-18, 2001 (November 2001)

The full-text proceedings and papers collected within have been reproduced exactly as their author(s) submitted them. All rights reserved by the author(s). No part of this collection may be reproduced or utilized in any form by any means without written permission.

©: 2001 by Western Michigan University