Human Development in Ethiopia

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Introduction

Development is a process by which we observe the growth or continuity of an object, organization and even humans. Human development on the other hand is defined as the development representation that mainly focuses on the creation of a setting that will allow people to develop their talents, increase their productivity according to their needs and interests (UNDP, 2009). Therefore, according to the human development description, we can define development as the process involving the expansion of the choices available to people that leads them to live a full life through improvement of the basic human conditions.

Human development plays an important role in the development of any country as it focuses on investing in the people, empowering them and resulting in growth. It allows people to have access to resources and social services which are needed to ensure a decent standard of living. In human development, there are four main building blocks and they include equity, sustainability, production and empowerment. Equity deals with ensuring there is fairness in resource sharing such as the right to an education and sustainability focuses to ensure that people receive income that can sustain them. Production informs the government on areas they are to improve or provide more social programs for its people. Finally, empowerment in simple is the summation of the equity, sustainability and production (UNDP, 2009). All these factors ensure that human development is successful.

The United Nation Development Program (UNDP) is the branch of the United Nations that deals with developmental issues. They focus to ensure that development projects are developed and implemented. The UNDP works in partnership with the government of
countries where they are based to help them achieve the millennium development goals and also to find ways to solve problems on poverty, good governance and gender equality. The UNDP functions to support sustainable human development and this they do through effective partnership with UN agencies.

To determine the level of human development in a given country, the Human Development Index (HDI) is used. The HDI which is used to determine if a country is developed, developing or is under-developed makes a comparative measure of education, life expectancy, living standards and literacy. It is also used to measure the impact of economic policies on the living standards of a country (Berhane, 2010).

Ethiopia has an estimated population of 80 million people with an estimated 65 percent to be under the age of 24. A large percentage of the population is said to be living in the rural areas. The country is highly dependent on agriculture and this has resulted in major challenges such as inadequacy of food due to poor rains and agricultural practices. The country has depended on aid mainly food and the government provides the people with money to buy food through a productive public works program as the country has been prone to drought several times.

Currently ranking 157 out of 169 countries according to the 2010 report with a HDI of 0.328 the country still faces many complex issues such as an increased population growth, high illiteracy levels and health challenges. However, even with all these challenges Ethiopia has had an improved HDI score between the years 2000- 2010. Its HDI has changed from 0.250 to 0.328. The improvement in HDI can be attributed to the increased bilateral contribution to the different sectors, improved agricultural practices, industrialization and foreign investments. With such an improvement in HDI Ethiopia has been ranked the third
country in the world to have the fastest average annual HDI growth rate that is after Rwanda and Sierra Leone (Berhane, 2010).

Human development does not only focus on health, education and income but also it is involved in the shaping of development, equity and sustainability of developments thus ensuring people lead lives that are valuable. A high HDI does not necessarily mean improvement in human development as it is possible to have a high HDI and still be unsustainable and unequal (Berhane, 2010).

Human development in Ethiopia has been a focus of the government as it does its best to improve the lives of the people who for a long time have been living in poverty and illiteracy. This is so because with the coming of democracy in Ethiopia, the need for human development increased resulting in the adoption of the SDPRP/PRSP in 2002 that is intended for development planning and management. The Ethiopian government works in collaboration with the UNDP to bring about human development within its borders and to also achieve the millennium development goals. The UNDP plays a central role in facilitating and coordinating talks among the development partners in Ethiopia. It focuses on bringing about education to all, provide food security as Ethiopia has been prone to severe drought over a period of time and the problem is still affecting the people and also ensure good health systems are provided for its population in general (Tom & Nalubega, 2008).

With the recent improvement in the governmental performance of Ethiopia, focus has shifted to human development. For a while, Ethiopia has been lagging behind in its human development. Zenawi’s government has taken a major step in ensuring that development is made the main focus and government agencies work to ensure there is development. The result is that the HDI of Ethiopia has improved for the last ten years (Berhane, 2010). The
major focus has been to ensure that the population is literate, receive good health care and income can be sustainable for the people.

Human Development findings

Education is one of the major human development aspects that has been given focus and also used to measure the progress of development. It is believed that a literate population has a greater chance of development compared to an illiterate population. Demand for education around the world has been on the rise as many people are investing in education. This demand has also seen the government of Ethiopia greatly investing in education and encouraging its population to get education through programs such as the General Education Quality Improvement Program Project (GEQIP) which focuses on improving the quality of general education in the country. Another program developed is the Teacher Development Program (TDP) with its main objective being to increase the number of teachers in primary and secondary education (World Bank, 2009). Such has resulted in the development of many educational institutions within the region. People at the rural areas have also gotten a chance to get education because the government has extended the education program into these areas.

The government efforts have seen the rise in the number of educational institutions in the country. It is reported that the number of primary schools in the country have increased significantly from 8,434 from 1990 to 25,212 at present. This has boosted the primary school enrollment of the nation to approximately 15 million. This can be interpreted as an increase from 57 percent to 85 percent. This clearly indicates the effort the government has put in encouraging education. The increase in enrolment to schools clearly indicates the ease with which the people can access education. It is also observed that the enrolment of the girl child is higher to that of the boy child thus showing the seriousness on the emphasis on education (UNDP, 2009).
In addition, the government has also encouraged private individuals interested in the education sector to make investments. This has resulted in opening of more colleges which provide the young with education opportunities. In the universities, the government has invested in resources and equipment which they use to teach and enhance the skills of the students (World Bank, 2009). For instance, due to the reliance on agriculture, the universities are now offering courses on better agricultural resources using advanced and modern technology which has seen an improvement in agricultural practices in the country.

Other than agricultural education, the government has greatly invested in technology such as the internet which has opened many opportunities for many people in Ethiopia. Some people have been able to study online improving their educational level and also access information from various places unlike when technological know-how was a reserve of the few.

Through investment in education and technology people have been able to have improved lives as education has enabled them to develop their full potential and also venture into areas they would not have due to lack of education. The UNDP has played a major role in ensuring that the government puts great focus in education as they work towards achieving of the millennium development goals. The UNDP (2009) ensures the government formulates projects on education which they ensure is implemented. In conclusion, with investment in education, there is improved human development through a drop in illiteracy in the country. In Ethiopia, the literacy level has now increased to 30 percent from 15 percent.

In any population, the issue of health is of major concern for the concerned government. It is the duty of the government to ensure that its population is provided with adequate health care services. One of the goals of the UNDP is to ensure that health issues are
well taken care of and solutions that challenge proper health care are developed so as to ensure positive human development.

The health care system in Ethiopia is improving due to the establishment of new policies that guides the management of the health care. Initially, there was no enough human resource in health care due to lack of better education and also poor remuneration but that is a problem that has been adequately solved. More students are being enrolled into new training on health issues and such leads to the increase in the number of people involved in the health sector that get employed by the government and in turn alleviates the issue of lack of personnel in health system. The health policy developed in Ethiopia focuses on training of community based tasks and mid level health workers who are used to offer health care services to those people who are not near health centers. Also to retain the health workers, the policy supports that the workers be well remunerated and also establishes a career structure for health practitioners.

Most of the health problems in Ethiopia are dominated by communicable and nutrition related diseases but also the country is faced with the challenge of HIV/AIDS and malaria. In addition to these some of the other challenges that the health care system of Ethiopia faced included overloading the few workers with work, lack of adequate staff, budget shortage, and lack of annual leave for the workers (Tom & Nalubega, 2008). All these problems led to most people shunning the health professions but due to improved education and also more government involvement, these challenges have been dealt with.

The issue of HIV/AIDS and the other diseases have been dealt with and it has been reported that the number of people such problems has declined. This has been attributed to the increased provision of medicines by the government and also their involvement in creation of awareness of these diseases. Furthermore, the UNDP in collaboration with the government
have allowed NGOs’ to take part in providing health care in areas they choose to be located. Through such organizations’ it has been observed that there has been a significant improvement in health care in Ethiopia and such has resulted to improved human development as some of the health challenges have been dealt with well (UNDP, 2009).

A good health system in a country ensures longer lives and better health. With the improved health system in Ethiopia, the life expectancy has risen in the recent times compared to the 1990s. The maternal mortality has also fallen considerably. A study conducted recently using the censuses data, registration and survey found that the maternal level had declined by 22 percent from 430 deaths per 100,000 live deaths to 400.

In human development, income is of great importance as it acts as an award to the work done by that person. It is said that income should be equivalent to the work done but this is not the case in most areas. It is observed that most incomes received are unsustainable. A majority of the Ethiopian population live on an income of less than $1 per day. This is less to sustain their livelihood resulting into poverty. The issue of income is very sensitive and it has its own challenges.

Also, due to over reliance in agriculture during a drought period most crops are destroyed leaving farmers with no income. Such has resulted in the government purchasing their products at favorable prices thus providing them with income. Most people opt for private organizations as they offer higher incomes in comparison to the government calling for it to offer better packages for its workers. With increased income in Ethiopia, the human development has improved as the people are able to cater for their basic needs even though this is not the case in all areas. Recently, the government of Ethiopia has taken the task of formulating policies that will ensure workers are adequately remunerated so as to be able to cater for their basic needs. The presence of foreign investors has also led to an increase in the
income levels as the private firms offer better pay packages so as to attract the best in the market.

The Ethiopian government has also taken upon itself to greatly invest to provide food security for its people as the country has been prone to several droughts in the past. With the help of the UNDP and other internal organizations, the government has been able to formulate systems which ensure food security for the people (David & Tanguy, 2007). Since such systems were developed, there has been a significant drop in the number of people affected by drought. According to a report by the UNDP, the number of people who suffer from hunger has reduced by half between 1990 and 2007.

The government has undertaken to provide clean water to the masses and in quantity. The government has developed water systems that ensure people receive water. Water is important for agriculture and also for drinking. The government and other agencies have undertaken to dig wells and boreholes for its people in several areas and people have received supply of clean water. The number of persons who have access to clean water has greatly increased. It is estimated that there has been an increase in the number of people receiving clean water from 30% to 39.4%. It shows the government’s commitment in reinforcing human development (David & Tanguy, 2007).

Despite all the improvements focusing on human development, there are challenges which are faced in these processes. Low income levels is a major factor as most of the organizations incur high operational costs meaning the wages to its people is minimal as they have to cover the operational costs. According to the HDI, Ethiopia has an annual income per capita of around $100. Even with the development of food security systems, food shortage continues to be a problem facing the country. The poverty of the Ethiopian people is reflected in inadequate health and education systems. Although the government has done greatly to
improve education only a few people have access to it. Even the health systems developed are mainly under-utilized despite the government’s involvement in creating awareness.

Conclusion

In measuring of the human development, income, education, health and food security are used. In looking at the human development in Ethiopia it is seen that the government has put effort in ensuring its population is well provided for. They have improved their health systems, increased number of education institutions and also formulate food security systems. With such, there has been an increase in human development as some of the observed problems have been solved. The provision of the above mentioned factors ensures improved human development.

The UNDP has greatly assisted the Ethiopian government to finds ways to improve the general population lives and also to forge ahead to attain the millennium development goals. It does so by monitoring human development activities among the many other activities. Although the Ethiopian HDI index increased, it still is faced with many challenges which make it not to be in the position to attain the millennium development goals (UNDP, 2009).

In conclusion, the need to focus in the human development of a people is important as it affects the country in the long run in terms of its economy and other developments. If people are well developed and catered for, the same people shall put more effort in sustaining the developments and also come up with new development. Therefore, governments should ensure human development is one of their main agendas.
References


