



Supporting tomorrow's innovators

BY YARED GEBREMEDEN

The world is moving fast due to a large shift caused by highly advanced science and technology development, whereby innovation is helping many countries in the globe create a powerful advantage in their development.

Science and innovation makes new paths possible. It supports the lives of people, ranging from the medicines we give our children to the vast networks of information at our fingertips. Science has guided everything we do. Today, numerous scientists are working all over the world to discover, innovate and apply solutions to the world so as to solve the surrounding problems of communities of various countries.

It is due to this rationale that every country has now a rising interest to compete in the global arena in science, technology and innovation.

Ethiopia gives much emphasis to these fields as the country is aspiring to transform its economy from agriculture dominated to an industry led one. Industrial transformation demands much of investment and attention to science, technology and innovation sectors. That is why the education policy of Ethiopia has given priority to science and technology, with its 70/30 model - 70 percent priority given to science, and the remaining 30 percent to art and social science in the educational targets of the country.

Professionals and concerned bodies in the field are often heard saying that innovation activities on Science, Technology and Engineering areas are crucial to harness



Getahun Jillo, Emerging Innovator from Hawassa University STEM Center

Ethiopia's Development.

Change Management and Good Governance Directorate Director at the Ministry of Science and Technology Siber Andualem said that the government has given much attention to innovators that could contribute their share to the country in two ways. He said: "There are two ways by which innovators could engage. One is through discovering new innovations, and the other is by adopting and contextualizing already innovated findings."

The Director further said that the Ministry hosts regular and annual Science Fair competitions and awards with the view of promoting and encouraging new innovations that are crucial to the country.

As this needs joint intervention and

closer partnership, various stakeholders are working in the area, sometimes, jointly and at the other times, separately.

Science and Technology Minister Dr.-Ing. Getahun Mekuria recently stated that the Ministry is open to extend any support to pertinent bodies as they share the Ministry's vision. He said: "We would be glad to work closely with them (the stakeholders) and extend our support to the activity they are doing, which is something important to achieve our targets."

In this regard, one of the joint interventions that is bearing fruits in the country at the moment is the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) collaboration done between STEM Synergy - a science center built by

the Gelfand Family Charitable Trust - and Hawassa University STEM center.

The collaboration started offering practical training for pre-university students four years ago, and now promising youngsters, who can be the future outstanding innovators of the country, are emerging out of the center.

One of them is Getahun Jillo, who is now a second year physics student at Hawassa University. He said that he is now engaged in various innovation works after he got various recognitions for the food cooking technology he innovated using a mobile coding system. He said: "My mobile cooking ordering innovation technology saves time for cooking as it helps people to order their food even from outside their

home."

According to him, the idea for his innovation came to him when he was a student living alone, where one day he was contemplating the challenge of cooking for students like him with their focus and time heavily invested in their education. And then he transformed his idea into practical innovation.

He also recognizes the fact that his innovations might have been unthinkable without the facility and training support of Hawassa University STEM Center. "This STEM center is foundational to my life, and I still come to use the available resources here even if the target of the center is to give a hands-on training for pre-university students, as I did get some three years ago."

Currently, Getahun is close to building an exam cheating detecting technology. He said: "Students often cheat on exams either physically or by using technology. And the innovation that I am testing now and will launch soon will identify and code cheating by sensing any movement towards other students, and by mapping out SMS messages between students during exams."

The student acknowledges the incredible support of the STEM Center saying that he may not be in a position where he is now if it wasn't for STEM Synergy and Hawassa University, and their collaboration. "It has a special place in my heart and life."

Countries need more scientists and innovators to realize their development goals in a fast pace. Private and government partners are collaborating at various levels to this end. And programs, projects and initiatives that are working in the area should closely work together to elevate the advantages of the sector.

Severing the roots of corruption

BY TAMERU REGASSA

If we are to look for its simple definition, Corruption is defined as a "form of dishonesty undertaken by a person entrusted with a position of authority, often to acquire personal benefit." It may include many activities including bribery and embezzlement.

But, if looked from a more nuanced point of view, one can see that corruption limits the government ability to invest in more productivity enhancing areas, thereby harming the poor, and it also creates a delicate tension between the government, as tax collector, and the business community as they will see paying their taxes as a questionable act on their part if corruption is endemic in the country.

Today corruption is one of the biggest problems of the world, and more so, for developing countries. Understanding its devastating impact, Ethiopia has for many years now been fighting corruption through various means; by formulating various laws and regulations, and by creating various structures.

Since its foundation, the Federal Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission has been obtaining some encouraging achievements in terms of reducing corruption by giving emphasis on prevention, investigation and prosecution.

Kebebe Dadi, Senior Public Relation Officer with the Commission said that



Caption: The fight against corruption

in an effort to raise its performance in fighting corruption, the commission has found it absolutely necessary to enhance stakeholder participation. Before that however, some awareness raising and informative programs must be implemented aggressively so that the public is effortlessly mobilized to fight against corruption.

To be actively engaged in fighting and preventing corruption, all stakeholders and citizens deserve to be informed not only about the ways in which the act of corruption is committed, but also the mechanism by which they can combat it. Nip it from the bud.

To achieve its goal, the Commission has been giving training to different social classes, such as government

cabinets, representatives of women and youth associations, leaders of different religious institutions and representatives of different professional associations.

According to the Commission, in terms of raising awareness, over five hundred thousand individuals got ethics and anti-corruption education; while over 1150 short messages were transmitted through Television and Radio programs. Also, 48 dramas are transmitted through radio and television mediums each year whilst at least 100 texts get disseminated through the commission's website.

Regarding public participation on the anti-corruption struggle, he noted that the efforts of the commission, the general attorney and federal police in

the fight against corruption will not bring a change without active participation of the public. To this end, the Commission has set up the Institutional Integrated Corruption Prevention Strategy, which strengthens the participation of civil servants and different social classes in different government institutions.

The Commission has been giving training on the preparation and implementation of Institutional Integrated Corruption-Prevention Strategy to public officials in different parts of the country at various times. The aim here is to strengthen the anti-corruption fight within their respective offices by bolstering their capacity. This is because they are the motors of their institutions and have deeply rooted knowledge about the means and ways by which corruption is committed in their respective institutions.

He also mentioned that child and adolescent oriented ethical education has been given focus throughout the country, as children and adolescents are the determinants of the country's future. This is also pivotal in regards to the agenda of creating an ethical generation who believe in getting their way only through legal means.

To punish corrupt offenders, there is a granted legal authority by the Ethiopian house of people's representatives in 2010. Accordingly, government officials are now obliged to disclose and register their personnel assets with the commission.

Fighting against corruption is

becoming difficult as it changes its manifestation in tandem with technological advancement. In response to this the commission has been conducting continued assessments that enabled it to get seasonal information and lock the door of corruption and wrong doings.

Tofik Selman, Economics Lecturer at CPU College said that corruption increasingly has become one of the greatest challenges of the contemporary world. It undermines good government and rule of law and in turn leads to misappropriation and mis-allocation of public resources, which harms both the private and public sector, and particularly the poor.

Corruption is found everywhere, but it is deep-rooted in poor countries, explained Tofik before adding "corruption in developing countries continues to be one of the greatest factors of poverty and underdevelopment."

As it is the case in other developing countries, in Ethiopia, the culture of corruption has spread its roots within the society at large, and as a result has become epidemic.

He recommended the Commission to make an in-depth investigation on the issue, and strengthen property registration process of government administrators at all levels. He also suggests for suspected individuals to be presented before the law within a short period of time, and for the government to ensure the independence of the courts.