

National

Local Partners lauded Finish Cooperation in Ethiopia

BY YARED GEBREMEDEN

ADDIS ABABA - Leaders and Experts of Civic Society Organizations (CSO) in Ethiopia attending an experience sharing session organized by the Embassy of Finland underlined that Finland has shown remarkable commitment to support the ongoing development in the nation.

The event, which was celebrated under the theme 'Ethio-Finnish Development Cooperation of 50 Years from the CSOs Perspective', also underscored that the Funding for Local Cooperation (FLC) and Finnish International NGOs operating in Ethiopia are putting notable efforts and need to be commended.

Finland Ambassador to Ethiopia, Helena Airaksinen told the Ethiopian Herald that CSOs in Ethiopia have contributed a lot to the ongoing development of their country and the FLC has been an important instrument in enabling them participate effectively in the development process.

Mentioning the fact that the development cooperation between the two nations started in 1967, the Ambassador said that the core

goal of Finland's development policy is to eradicate extreme poverty and to reduce inequality through human rights like the rights of women and girls, children and the most vulnerable groups including people with disabilities.

According to her, the priority areas that the Embassy cooperates with Ethiopia are improving the status and livelihoods of women and girls, creating jobs and well being and food security, access to water, energy and sustainable use of natural resources.

Investing in equal opportunities would have much role to open up the way for the exceptional economic and social development. When women and men have equal rights and opportunities, poverty is easily alleviated, Ambassador Helena noted.

The present bilateral cooperation program in Ethiopia is aimed at securing the fact that people in rural Ethiopia have decent livelihoods and access clean potable water, sanitation and hygiene, and have improved health and general education access to all school age children.

Economic and Trade Affairs Cooperation Coordinator Head of the Embassy Arto Valjas said on his part that the current development

cooperation policy prioritizes women empowerment, job creation opportunities and well-being, building a well-functioning democratic society, food security, water and energy cooperation as major focus areas of cooperation.

And regarding bilateral government to government cooperation programs, the coordinator explained that areas like water and sanitation, general, inclusive and special needs education improvement, agriculture and land administration are significantly given prime attention, the coordinator explained.

Mekonnen Mulat, who presented a paper on Ethio-Finish 50 years Development Cooperation stressed that the partnership between the two nations which began since the 70's formally covers areas of partnership on areas like health, potable water supply development, education and empowerment of women, persons with disabilities and socially marginalized groups.

The experts gathered at the event also underlined that Finish Development Cooperation in the areas of special needs education and Red Cross Society is exemplary to other donor nations and organizations.



Mothers and children are primary beneficiaries of health insurance

Health Insurance schemes to commence in Addis

BY BILAL DERSO

ADDIS ABABA- The Ethiopian Health Insurance Agency (EHIA) said it has finalized preparation to implement health insurance schemes in Addis Ababa in the view to ensure low-income groups access to modern health service delivery.

Cognizant the role the insurance schemes have played in improving rural communities' health delivery, the Agency is working to execute the schemes in Addis Ababa, EHIA Communication Director, Assefa Yirgalem told The Ethiopian Herald.

The Director indicated that the service has already started in Addis Ababa's nine woredas at a pilot level and the new move aims to expand the schemes availability to in other parts of the city.

According to Assefa, residents of the Capital would make formal agreements and pay a premium fee, on an annual or monthly basis to EHIA thereby their expense for approved health services covered by the Agency.

The Agency has been finalized preparation to implement two health insurance schemes namely Community Based Health Insurance (CBHI) and Social Health Insurance (SHI).

CBHI is a voluntary insurance scheme aimed at primarily benefiting the 80-85 percent of the Ethiopian population engaged in informal sector

(crop and pastoral farming) whilst SHI is a mandatory program for formal sector employees.

The Director said: "Beneficiaries of both health insurance schemes are entitled to get health care services including inpatients, delivery service, surgery, laboratory checkups as well as imaging services such as Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), CT Scan, among others."

Assefa noted that people in the CBHI are provided with specified benefits regardless of their contribution whilst SHI service is financed by payroll or pension contribution and the recipients are entitled to the delivery based on their contribution.

Apart from improving access of low-income citizens and enabling them to get modern health service without the risk of being improvised, the schemes would have a pivotal role in enhancing public's culture of helping one another, the Director noted.

Assefa said that the Agency is closely working with pertinent stakeholders to address financial and logistical shortcomings as well as skilled manpower gaps witnessed in the implemented health schemes.

Ethiopia commenced Community Based Health Insurance service at pilot level in 2010 in 13 woredas of Tigray, Amhara, Oromia and SNNP states and currently over 16 million people residing in the 384 woredas of the aforementioned states are benefiting from the scheme.

Transforming STEM for innovation

BY YARED GEBREMEDEN

Experts in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics said that STEM Synergy in Ethiopia has been making a lot of investment to promote innovation across the country.

STEM Synergy Country Director Getachew Gezahegn told The Ethiopian Herald that STEM Synergy has about 14 stem centers across the nation, Science Museums operating in Addis Ababa, Science and Technology University (AASTU), Axum, Mekelle, Bahir Dar, Gonder and Hawassa Universities.

The Country Director highlighted that shared science high school campuses are providing top quality education for children, he said adding that "the Science Fairs by the Synergy is also scaling up from regional to national level in a manner of contributing to sector's GTP II targets."

Getachew added that the visualized computer

labs which are installed on a large scale towards computer literacy nationwide are also giving high tech services that are cost effective and less energy consuming computers to promote literacy program.

Mentioning the motto 'Inside every child, there is a scientist', the Director urged every healthy, sustainable community to create equitable and inclusive opportunities for high quality Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Education by empowering all students' especially girls.

Coordinator of Bishoftu's Foka Science and Engineering Center Anteneh Fisseha also said that the program is highly benefiting students of the area. And those students who are trained from the Center are creating a lot on the stream and are becoming effective in their higher learning carrier as well.

The Center has a free access to latest technologies and materials which are donated and funded by the Gelfand Family Charitable

Trust. In turn, many students and experts are getting practical hands on practice on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics subjects on the ground.

Abate Kassa, Electronics and Electricity Coordinator with the Center said that many students are benefiting from the hands on training given by the Center.

He suggested that teachers at various levels need also to use this opportunity to gain practical experience to their theoretical knowledge as many of them learn in situations where there are no sufficient labs for practical demonstrations.

STEM Synergy has developed six effective models for STEM in Africa: STEM Centers, Science Fairs, Science Museums, University STEM Outreach programs, Virtual Computer labs, Science Shared Campus and Robotics Competition. Moreover, the Synergy has also intended to commence science TV series which is currently on the track to production.

National Dialogue ...

of Emergency can be declared in a situation either the constitutional order is violated or natural hazard that could not be curbed by the normal situation occurred.

In the recent political developments, democratic and human rights of individuals have been violated, peace and stability has been threatened, public and private properties have been damaged and looted. "From, this point of view, I am for the state of Emergency declared following the political instability," he says.

The incidents in the current political developments in the country are not things came to happen accidentally; but they are the outcome of the crisis and instability occurred during the last three years, Lecturer at Mekelle University Political Science and Strategic Studies in the Northern Ethiopia Mehari Yohannes.

The now resigned Premier has come to power following the sudden death of the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. At the time he is in the post, there had been power vacuum. Hence, his acceptance was like bit controversial, he says.

Mehari also active political analyst in the country, notes that the four parties have been engaged in no unity of purpose unlike in the past periods. The Front has been busy at the four parties' power scandal since recent times. Following this, there were unrest in Oromia and Amhara States that led to a ten months State of Emergency last year. There was hope to restore peace and stability following the activities underwent by the emergency enforcing task force and the ruling Party's

deep renewal; but failed to be effective.

The present political movement if not curbed shortly may lead to horizontal conflicts and civil war. In the recent strikes, some signs of racial conflicts have been demonstrated; Mehari states that the state of emergency is justifiable to end such risk of civil war. "Countries like French, Turkey and Egypt are in state of emergency. The US America will do the same if its national survival is at risk."

If the PM could not able to lead four of the coalition parties, that means he has no acceptance. Hence, for Mehari, the resignation of the Prime Minister is delayed.

The PM's resignation decision is positive and vital in the bid to carry out reforms that would lead to sustainable peace and democracy, he opines.

Now it is time to wait for EPRDF to elect a leader who is capable enough to lead the country forward, Mehari says. The problems related to good governance, acute political space, and public demands should be addressed accordingly till the next election and national consensus will come through this.

"The unacceptable point here is to try to manipulate this opportunity to set up transitional government. The country has constitutional procedures and systems to go through. Let us give the chance to the ruling party to come up with the solutions."

Mehari says that at this time in point if the ruling party tries to control the political sphere narrowly, arrest and detain constitutionally operating political leaders and members, activists in a way that closes the way for interested groups to participate in the political

matters of the country, state failure is likely to happen.

The way Forward

Tigistu said that the prime solution for the present political failure in the country is through effective national dialogues with all the interested organizations, civil society and representatives of various organizations.

All political parties, including the ruling party, measure their political strength by comparing with the weak sides of the other opposing parties which is illogical.

However, every political party, interested groups and the general public are equally concerned to participate in the process of bringing political stability. It is high time to bring about national consensus, Tigistu reflects.

The ruling party has to work to secure the country through facilitating national dialogues.

In its recent Communiqué, the Oromo People's Democratic Movement (OPDO) has urged opposition parties, reside within and out of the country, to work together, Deutsch Welle reported.

Welcoming the resignation of the Premier as a new path to the country's political transformation, the ruling party EPRDF also says in its web portal that there are still tasks to be done at a national level.

The shortage of democracy is at its lowest stage. As a result, various political and administrative questions are displayed. Rent seeking problems and the issue of good governance are still challenges to national survival. These problems are the top public interests to be solved.

IGAD stirs up ...

peaceful, economically integrated and prosperous Africa.

Ambassador Tewolde indicated that the ongoing infrastructural developments, such as roads, railways and cross-border trade corridors as well as power transmission lines among East African countries showcased IGAD's efforts to bring economic integration.

He said: "The IGAD region is among the highest road networks in the African continent and the roads connect the capital cities of East African countries. Furthermore, Ethiopia's energy connectivity with Djibouti, Sudan and now Kenya is also manifested as the regional integration is going well."

While Ethiopia connected with Djibouti via roads, railways and electricity, the public transport between Addis Ababa and Khartoum was recently commenced. In addition to selling energy to Kenya, Ethiopia has a plan to connect with South Sudan, Uganda and other East African countries through power.

The Director further noted that the growing trade relations among IGAD member countries particularly between Ethiopia and Somalia as well as Kenya and Uganda serving as the engine in bringing economic

integration into the region.

"Ethiopia has remained the centerpiece of IGAD's economic cooperation in pursuing robust trade ties with all its neighboring countries, except Eritrea."

Among African countries, Somalia and Djibouti remain Ethiopia's leading export destinations and information obtained from Ministry of Trade indicated that they are importing commodities worth 269.3 and 138 million USD in the 2016/17 fiscal year respectively. While Somalia was Ethiopia's top trading partner in the reported period, Djibouti held the seventh position.

Ambassador Tewolde said that the volume of trade between Ethiopia with Somalia and Djibouti is quite impressive in African standards. Also, the relatively free movement of people is the manifestation for IGAD has done good jobs in economic integration, he noted.

Established in 1986, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) is an eight-country bloc that comprises of Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda.

SoE to ensure ...

constitutional order following a serious consultation and evaluation."

Quoting Premier's letter of resignation, the Minister said that the Prime Minister will stay in power until his resignation get acceptance. Following all the legal procedures and platforms a new PM will be appointed by the parliament, he underscored.

MoFA Sate Minister Hirut Zemene for her part said that the decree, aimed at protecting the constitutional order, would ensure security, stability and free movement of citizens in the country.

According to her, restrictions under

the State of Emergency are placed in line with Article 93 of the Constitution.

"A command-post is authorized to prohibit preparation, printing and circulations of any form of writings that would cause disturbance and suspicion among the people including the displaying or publicizing of weird information that could stimulate violence and hatred against citizens," she insisted.

And it also prohibits those who participate on aggression against the Constitution, she added.

The decree allows police officers to arrest individuals suspected of initiating, organizing and leading violence.