

The Contributions and Challenges of Government-Organized Non-Governmental Organizations to Community Development: Lesson from Amhara Development Association

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ABSTRACT

This study considers the contributions and challenges of Amhara Development Association (ADA) to community development. Drawing up on the findings of a qualitative research approach, this article argues that despite government-oriented non-governmental organizations (GONGOs) contribute to community development, the development could not be effective and less recognized by the targeted community unless participatory. ADA has made some remarkable contributions for the community in its intervention areas of education and health though the community did not recognize the contributions and labeled it negatively. This is due to the challenges that ADA faced, which include political affiliation, lack of adequate and permanent employees, lack of community awareness, ADA affiliation to political organization of a nation, lack of finance, a top down approach of service delivery, and a lack of trust and accountability. Due to these challenges, ADA was less successful to bring real community development.

KEYWORDS

ADA, Challenges, Community Development, Contributions, Eneway Woreda, GONGO

1. INTRODUCTION

Development is defined and measured differently at different times. Traditionally, it was equated to economic growth. According to Pearson (1992), development is a hybrid term for a myriad of strategies adopted for socio-economic and environment transformation from current states to desired ones. It has complex goals such as the elimination of poverty, the provision of employment, the reduction of inequality and the guarantee of human rights. In its modern concept, ‘redistribution from growth’ has become a common slogan (Abuiyada, 2018). Abuiyada further stated that development has long been viewed as enhancing the capacity of grassroots level of people to influence their future for the better. It means doing what needs to be done to expand and optimize resources on the path of change.

Until 1980s, development paradigms were top-down, less participatory and state was considered as the only actor of development. However, such approaches were not effective to bring well-being of the community. Hence, after 1980s, development has become people-entered and participatory (Pieterse, 1996; Muchombu, 2004; Abegunde, 2009). According to scholars in favor of people-centered development, people are not mere recipients of the fruits of development. Rather, they are important actors since development is made for them. This is because the community has the ability to identify

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their problems and needs, plan and conduct activities together using available community resource. Therefore, this process leads to community development (CD).

CD is a process conducted by community members. It is a process where local people can not only create more jobs; income and infrastructure, but also helps their community to become fundamentally able to manage change. Its concrete benefits such as empowerment and infrastructure, come through local people changing attitudes, mobilizing existing skills, improving networks, thinking differently about problems, and using community assets in new ways. It improves the situation of a community, not just economically, but also as a strong functioning community in itself (The Cabinet of the Government of Rwanda, 2008). In the CD, the community itself engages in a process aimed at improving the social, economic and environmental situation of the community.

CD process requires a catalyst that believes change is possible and is willing to take the first steps that are needed to create interest and support (Frank and Smith, 2009). This study was conducted by taking Amhara Development Association (ADA) as catalyst. ADA was established in 1992 to getaway the people of Amhara Region from its development problems caused by natural and manmade factors. The association has established with three main intervention areas; education, health and basic skills training (ADA, 2010).

Since its establishment, ADA has reported that it has scored tangible development results in Amhara Region in areas of health, education, road construction, natural resource conservation, and training for rural women and youth (ADA, 2010). Under its bulletin, ADA (2010) indicated that ADA has constructed 103 primary schools until 2008. Moreover, the association has commenced the program of 'alternative basic education' for young children that are unable to travel distant areas. This program has become included in education curriculum of the region. Accordingly, ADA has constructed 124 alternative basic education centers. Furthermore, it also delivered different school inputs and organizes tutorial programs for female students. In addition, ADA has achieved good results in areas of basic skills training and health (ADA, 2010, pp. 59-61). However, its contributions were not clearly recognized by the community (ADA, 2004). Weak legitimacy of the political regime of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) in general and the political party of Amhara region; Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM), which has created ADA, had its own negative impact on the recognition ADA programs despite not scientifically studied. As indicated in Attack (1999), the political nature of ADA can affect its credibility and legitimacy unlike that of Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs). Hence, this study seeks to explore the contributions of ADA and its challenges to CD process.

2. LITERATURE

2.1. The Concept of Community Development

CD means working at grassroots level; in which the community participates in its own development and decides their preferred future (Brocklesby and Fisher, 2003). It means CD is the process where community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems. The concept of CD is the combination of two concepts: "Community" and "Development." Community is a broad term that can refer to both physical places and groups of people with common interests or concerns. Basically, "development" is a process that increases choices. It means new options, diversification, thinking about apparent issues differently and anticipating change (Christenson and Robinson, 1989). It is the creation of wealth; the things people value (Shaffer 1989). Development increases choices, sustains positive attitudes, improves the function of institutions and enhances quality of life (Cavaye, 2001). Hence, CD refers to a situation in which community itself engages in the process aimed at improving the social, economic and environmental situation of the community (Cavaye, 2006). Most practitioners construct CD as a social and economic improvement in a community while most academicians think of CD as a process, the ability of communities to act collectively and

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