

Women and Social Development

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- The objective of the presentation is to shed some light on the character and the nature of economic growth and development in the Horn. The dismal experience of growth of the Horn and how it has affected the region in general and women in particular will be discussed.
- While external factors such as increased oil prices, world inflation and recession, recurring famine and a shortfall in exports played an alarming role in declining living standards, this presentation will consider internal factors such as government policies and the lack of security.

Why dismal experience in The Horn?

- The performance of the Horn of Africa economy as a whole has not been impressive in many ways. According to 2003 World Development Indicator the poverty and hunger have increased in the Horn with the majority of population living below the poverty line.
- Contrary to Millennium Development Goals of the UN in 1995 of reducing poverty, hunger and infant mortality among others, poverty, malnutrition, food and physical security, war, instability and lack of sustainable economic development characterizes the social, political and economic landscape of the Horn and is on the rise.

Why dismal experience in The Horn?

- To understand the dilemma of why once prosperous nations of the Horn are considered the poorest of poor today while some countries with similar endowments grow so quickly, this presentation securitizes the nature and the character of economic development pursued for the past decades.
- Four factors merit examining and scrutinizing in attempting to understand, evaluate and find solutions to the present and precarious situations of the Horn.

Why dismal experience in The Horn?

- 1) What if any of economic value has been created or achieved, namely long-term growth, food security, economic and political stability, gender equality and poverty reductions. Did government policies engage in pro-growth programs or did they merely squander and impede the riches of the Horn.
- 2) Which sector of the economy are prioritized and at what cost? A dichotomy exists in the area such urban and versus, agriculture versus industry, rich versus poor, women versus men. One must examine and assess who gained and who lost from the development policies implemented for the past decades.

Why dismal experience in The Horn?

- Did government implement policy of self-sufficiency in food production and meet people's basic daily food needs or did they just become increasingly dependent on food aid which became a perfect substitute for local food production. Ineffective government policies exacerbate Horn's ability to feed its people.
- 3) Who has participated in the development pattern for the past few decades? Women, children small farm holders, herders and rural economy are disproportionately poor, and since they have no political clout, are greatly underrepresented in political decision making and matters that impact their lives in a positive manner.

Why dismal experience in The Horn?

- 4) And finally government policies and institutions are implemented and advanced. Have these institutions and policies been the building or stumbling blocks of the ensuing economic specter of the Horn.
- First and foremost prerequisite for any development is government's role and ability in creating institutions that are conducive to the stability and enhancement of its people.
- This role includes a safe environment without wars and violence, an environment where merchants can feel safe that their lives and wealth are protected. It means also a well defined and enforced property right and rule of law exist.

Why dismal experience in The Horn?

- Physical insecurity such as war and violence are abundant and the precariousness of the people of the Horn is now greater than ever. Nothing destroys wealth creation and peaceful existence like the war and violence.
- Without deeply delving into the market and government failure analysis of the Horn, higher level of wealth can only be created where there is improved governance.

Why dismal experience in The Horn?

- Government should engage activities that can create wealth or increased efficiency. Rent seeking, ineffective policies and wealth extractions waste resources both human and physical capital.
- Unchecked government power wastes resources and impairs the living standard of millions of the people in the Horn. Government that does not impede the welfare of all its citizens and engage in mutually advantageous policies, programs and institutions is the type of government the Horn needs.

Prioritizing agriculture is the remedy for the chronic food shortage

- The greatest hope for the countries in the Horn stems from agriculture. Both large percentage of labor force and the Horn's foreign exchange is earned from the agricultural sector. While agriculture is the largest contributor to the GNP, the share of Gross Domestic Product devoted to agricultural investment has been dwindling.
- The nations of the Horn have adopted an economy system suffering from an extreme structural dualism. Most of these social and economic distortions are caused by government policies which are skewed to urban developments, industry and elites. Since agriculture has not been developed a lot of people shifted to the large cities. This accentuated both increased unemployment rate, underemployment and incidence of poverty and disparity among the income of the poor and of the rich.

Prioritizing agriculture is the remedy for the chronic food shortage

- In addition to giving agriculture investment a low priority, the Horn increases its reliance on food aid. Not only did foreign aid become a perfect substitute for local food production but it also handicapped agriculture's productive capacity. To make matters worse, government followed food price policies that appease urban consumers but which consistently discourage farmers and that distorted the price of domestic food production relative to food aid.
- Development pattern that neglected agriculture and rural development translated into lack of self-sufficiency in meeting people's basic daily food requirements and often resulted in disastrous food shortage and worsening economic position of the poor particularly women and children. As a result more than the majority of the people of the Horn are food insecure.

Prioritizing women and social development

- Much progress has been made in helping women attain some basic level of needs. Nonetheless, experience has shown gender inequality is pervasive and might be on the rise. Allocation of economic and social resources such as education, health care, nutrition and political voice is skewed against women, marginalized and the weak.
- War, violence and famine in the region increased the women's burden tremendously. Four disadvantaged groups are victims of poverty, namely the landless, the pastoralists and women and children.

Prioritizing women and social development

- To break the cycle of poverty, hunger and underdevelopment among other things we must enhance gender equality through empowerment of women.
- To stimulate sustainable economic development various important factors such as education, health and employment for women should be achieved.
- Though government policies bypassed the development agricultural sector, it remains the mainstay and back for the nations as a whole and women and the poor in particular.

Prioritizing women and social development

- Institutions that empower women through prioritizing agriculture sector will not only increase women's livelihood, but will also bring about a faster poverty reduction growth. This in turn would allow women to control over decisions and resources that affect their lives.
- Women should be given an opportunity to have political voice so they will influence institutions and policies that promote their well-being. Institutions that focus and pay attention to issues of gender issues must be implemented.
- Explicit emphasis should be given on policies that empower women through education . Public policies that are specific to improving women's labor market, access to credit and improved health will not only advance gender equality and social development, but will serve as a prerequisite for sustainable economic growth.

Prioritizing women and social development

- Moreover, due to recurring famine, war and instability, high fertility, infant mortality and maternal death are among the highest of the world.
- The implication for this fact for the women of the Horn is that the best way to combat higher fertility is to afford the women with incentive to learn and consequently opportunity to earn equitable wages.
- Experience has shown as women get more education the opportunity cost of having many kids decreases. This empirical fact is confirmed by the experience of both developed and some of the developing countries.

Future prospects for women and social development

- Lack of education is handicap and insecurity to many people in the Horn. Particularly women and young girls suffer the most as they are less able to go to school due to the increased pressure to nurse, look after and nurture their family.
- Societies where the benefit of having more children outweighs its cost and likelihood of survival for their children is uncertain, parent are unable to forego the opportunity for having many children.

Future prospects for women and social development

- Therefore policy goals that reduce the women's dependence through increased resources devoted to better education and earning, improved health care, better nutrition will lower infant mortality and that would check population explosions that are prevalent in the Horn.
- Increased saving, financial freedom and improved credit systems for women would reduce their dependence on the number of children for later age. This is particular true in the Horn where social security systems and social safety net in the older age are absent. Maximizing the number of children one could have or bear seem to be the only way to hedge against increased infant mortality and lack of saving in these countries.

Future prospects for all

- After analyzing the cause and consequences of the present situation of the Horn, various self-perpetuating problems are seen. Some of the things that need to be changed are highlighted in the following paragraphs.
- Giving priority to agriculture, livestock and rural development will be the key factor to poverty reduction and improving women livelihood. Increased agriculture production and distribution through well organized and watchful planning is required.
- Proper land distribution must be the first step toward attaining self-sufficiency food need. It is the procedure through which income can be distributed and equalized across groups.

Future prospects for all

- Experience has shown that large farms are less productive because they are underutilized. If this land is put into proper use many of the landless will be able to produce food for themselves as well as for surplus.
- However land distribution by itself contributes little unless it is incorporated with farm policies, with deliberate emphasis on the poor and women, who need to be given equitable shares of both the food land and agriculture inputs.
- Productivity can be increased by improved traditional methods of farming, constructing irrigation channels and dams and introducing agriculture inputs, which are locally available, easily accessible and equally distributable.

Future prospects for all

- If this situation is reached, the problem of food shortage will be curtailed. As a results, the pressure of rapid population growth will be minimized.
- If agriculture-led growth and rural development are achieved and emphasized, agriculture will be sufficient for both local and export use as well as provide employment to millions of jobless people in the Horn.

Final notes

- In passing, while the specter of economic and social disaster is looking the people, governments, the concerned intellectuals of the Horn in the face, the opportunity to reverse and learn from the past mistakes is plenty and available.
- Future could be brighter and hope could be nearer, but the people of Horn must know without peace, there is no security and without security there is development and without development poverty, hunger, internal displacement will characterizes the social and economic landscape of the Horn of Africa.
- The future of the Horn and of all of Africa will be one of their own design and the option for remedies are possible if the people and government are willing and able to adopt the institutions and policies necessary for increased well-being and sustainable economic development for all.

How the world can help

- For the World community, please heed this Chinese proverb: “Give a man a fish, and you feed him a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.”
- Policy distortion such as food aid and government-to-government aid hurt the economy of the poor if proper policy and accountable government is absent.
- Opening up international markets and offering these nations a favorable term of trade is in all likelihood a superior development strategy to food aid that has handicapped the production capacity of agriculture and eroded the livelihood of the women and the rural poor.