

Waldaa Qorannoo Oromoo



Oromo Studies Association

P.O Box 32391, Fridley, MN 55432

www.romosudies.org

THE OSA 2011 MID YEAR CONFERENCE



Keynote speaker: Prof. Ezekiel Gebissa
Kettering University, U.S.A

Conference Theme:

Re-examining Theories and Practices of Human Capacity Building in Oromia and the Greater Horn of Africa and Challenging Misguided Practices

Date: April 2-3, 2011

Institute of African Studies

Carleton University
1125 Colonel By Drive
Ottawa, ON
K1S 5B6

Auditorium: Azrieli Theatre 301

Message from the President

Dear the OSA Conference Participants,

To know where we are going it is important to know and remember where we come from. We clearly know that for over five centuries, European scholars have studied the Oromo people, and interpreted their data from their own perspectives. These scholars were influenced by European racial (biological and cultural) theories and they produced knowledge accordingly. Not only that, the knowledge they produced from such scholarship they taught the Abyssinian kings. These theories inspired the Abyssinian kings to claim divine power and entitlement to colonize and subjugate non-Abyssinian peoples in the Horn of Africa. Until recently, in Ethiopia, school children were taught that the ancient Ethiopian territory stretched from south of Egypt to the present state of South Africa. Such a claim led to a theory that non-Abyssinians who are settled in the given geographical region are either categorized as a new settlers or colonial subjects. It was such theories that guided the European empire builders to provide military hardware and military personnel to the Abyssinian king Menelik to conquer Oromia and other regions.

For example, the Euro-Abyssinian theories about the Oromo people produced two major racist theories. The first theory suggests that the Oromo people are migrants. The second theory suggests that they actually came out of ``water or sea``. Both theories deny the Oromo people endogenous status in the Horn of Africa. Of course these theories are not based on scientific evidence but on racist assumptions and myths. These theories were instrumental in the formation of the Ethiopian empire, and are the major causes of the social instability, poverty and diseases in the Horn of Africa. It is such racist theory that conditioned the Oromo people, who are the single largest ethno-national group in the Ethiopian empire and the Horn of Africa, to be ruled by the Tigrayan minority group.

The Oromo Studies Association (OSA) was formed to challenge Euro-Abyssinian racist discourses about the Oromo people and construct knowledge from the Oromo perspective. For the Mid year conference, OSA has chosen the theme of the conference to be: Re-examining Theories and Practices of Human Capacity Building in Oromia and the Greater Horn of Africa and Challenging Misguided Practices. OSA has decided to re-examine the theories and practices of capacity building. In this conference, the gaps between the theory and practice of capacity building will be critically examined. We chose this theme in order to construct knowledge in the social, economic, cultural and political arenas and to facilitate change in Oromia and the Greater Horn of Africa. We believe the knowledge produced by this conference will help the Oromo and other peoples to critically look at the policy of the rulers and international donors and encourage the peoples to participate in policy making and challenge misguided policies and practices. In addition, the knowledge that will be produced by this conference will create awareness of the entitlement of people in identifying and prioritizing their needs. At the same time, this kind of knowledge will encourage the so-called donor organizations and states to re-examine their policies and practices in providing aid.

How does a dictatorial and colonial system of governance affect the capacity building of a society? Although the idea of capacity building is assumed to be one of enabling people, the funding organization never questions where and how the funds are used. Recently the Human Rights Watch (2010) reported that the Ethiopian government uses the resources they get from international donors to weaken opposition political parties. This means the resources that supposed to be used to build the capacity of people are used to build the capacity of the state engaged more in incapacitating the people. For example, Ifinesh Kenno (1995), a songwriter and vocalist Oromo woman who was jailed and tortured by Ethiopian security forces expressed her grief and observation in the form of a song:

In Oromo:

Rifeensa mataale gogaa isaa aadamne
Biyya abbaa keenya irratti diinaan dhunfatamnee
Akkuma bosonuu ariamne ajjeefamnee
Maqaa dimokrasin baè ukkamamne

In English:

Even they shaved our hair dry
In our own country the enemy has possessed us
Just like the wild antelope we are chased and killed
In the name of democracy they suffocated us a lot.
(Translation is mine.)

For people in the Horn of Africa, capacity building is essential if countries and its people are to succeed in the competitive market- oriented world. Capacity is an indispensable condition required for the people to cope in a changing and unpredictable world. I believe that the grassroots communities are then in a better position to understand their problems, identify their needs and address their concerns. I hope our keynote speakers and presenters will bring to light some of the gaps in the literature on issues surrounding theories and practices in capacity building. At the end of the conference we will have hopefully learned some of the ways we can foster the ability of individuals and communities in Oromia and surrounding regions can create a stable society and sustainable development.

Using this opportunity I would like to thank the Institute of African Studies of Carleton University and the director of the department Dr. Blair Rutherford for providing OSA the logistics need to run such a conference. It would have been very difficult for the OSA, a non-profit scholarly organization, to engage in producing knowledge on the issues of the Oromo and other peoples in the Horn of Africa and framing research issues from the perspective of marginalized people in the region without this help. I encourage other institutions to follow the example of Carleton University, provide some logistics to the OSA and subscribe to the Journal of Oromo Studies (JOS) and expose young learners to a scholarly literature written from the perspective of the Oromo people from the Horn of Africa.

Thank you,

Galatooma

Merci

Begna Fufa Dugassa., PhD
OSA President

Preliminary Program

DATE & TIME	ACTIVITIES	TOPICS
April, 2, 2011 Time: 8:30- 9:00 am	Registration	
9:00 –9:50 am	Opening remarks from the local organizing committee, Oromo Elders and OSA President	Traditional Oromo blessing and Welcome notes
10:00 –10:45 am	Panel (I) Media, Regard for Human Rights and Capacity Building in Oromia Chair: Mr. Waaqasaa Presenters: 1. Tesfaye Dheresa 2. Gaaromaa Waaqasaa	Media, Regard for Human Rights and Capacity Building in Oromia
11:00 –11:45 am	Panel (2) Policy in capacity building Chair: TBA 1. Harwood Schaffer,. PhD University of Tennessee at Knoxville 2. Valerie Dye., PhD The University of Manchester	2. Revisiting Intergovernmental decision making in the WTO: Promoting Capacity Building from bottom up
12:00 - 1:00 pm	Lunch	
1:00 – 1:45 pm	Keynote Speaker (1) Prof. Ezekiel Gebissa Kettering University, USA	Capacity Development as a Breakthrough: Toward Good Practice in Managing Oromo Affairs
1:45 – 2:00 pm	Obbo Tesfaye Dheresa	Oromo worldview and self concept --in poetic form
2:00 – 3:45 pm	Panel (3) Collective rights & capacity building Chair: 1. Fowsia Abdulkadir 2. Begna Dugassa., PhD	Dealing with Religious Diversity in Ethiopia 2. Collective Rights & Public Health Capacity
3:45 - 4:00 pm	Coffee Break	
4:00 - 4:45 pm	Roundtable Discussion Chair: TBA 1. Prof. Ezekiel Gebbisa 2. Tesfaye Dheresa 3. Fosia Abdulahi 4. Begna Dugassa., PhD	Building Capacity on Oromuuma (Oromoness)
5pm – 6:30 pm	Traditional Oromo Songs and dances	Oromo Youth from Toronto

DATE & TIME	ACTIVITIES	TOPICS
April 3, 2011		
Time: 10:00 am- 10:30 am	Mohammed Hassen Ali., PhD	An obstacle to capacity building in Oromia: Ethiopian landownership policy
10:30 am- 11:15 am	Keynote Speaker (2) Haile Hirpha., PhD	The Role of Education in Capacity Building and How the Successive Ethiopian Governments Denied the Oromo People Educational Opportunities.
11:15 – 11: 30am	Obbo Tesfaye Dheresa	Sprout your roots on Oromuuma (Oromoness) in poetic form
11:30-11:45am	Coffee break	
12:00 am- 1:00 pm	Dialogue between community leaders & scholars on capacity building. Participants: a. Oromo women’s perspective Addee Derartu Abbajobir b. Oromo community leaders 1. Dr. Tesfaye Negeri 2. Obbo Walde-Michael Bariso	The role of community leaders and members in building the capacity of Oromo people in Oromia and in diaspora and promoting sustainable development.
1:00pm– 1:15 pm	Closing Remarks 1. Obbo Bakalcha Abdosh	Closing Remarks

Capacity Development as a Breakthrough: Toward Good Practice in Managing Oromo Affairs

Prof. Ezekiel Gebissa

Kettering University

(Keynote speaker)

In recent decades, the development discourse has emphasized capacity development as one of the effective measures of managing and sustaining development. The term refers a wide array of activities a group engages in to strengthen its capacity to work together, solve its problems, and achieve its objectives. This process involves providing the group with the knowledge, skills and tools it needs to identify and define problems, and formulate workable solutions. Broadly speaking, capacity development aims at building the ability of individuals, organizations, and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully. As such it is a concept that has the promise of a breakthrough for Oromo society to move beyond the apparent intractability of its current predicaments. To that end, the Oromo society needs to harness its core assets in its historical and cultural repertoire in order to achieve its full potential and overcome the gargantuan challenges it faces. Above all, it needs to develop its organizational capacity to prevent, manage, and resolve conflicts. In this presentation, I will focus on how to build political capacity, conflict resolution capacity, and the ability to pursue sustainable development strategies.

An obstacle to capacity building in Oromia: Ethiopian landownership policy

Associate Prof. Mohammed Hassen Ali

Georgia State University

Abstract

The Oromo people constitute more than forty percent of the population of Ethiopia. They are the single largest national group in Ethiopia and the third largest in Africa. Oromia is the richest and the most densely populated regional state in Ethiopia. Probably more than or around eighty five percent of the Oromo are subsistence farmers, who lack not only access to adequate land, modern scientific farming methods, fertilizers, capital, but also their immense potential for building economic, educational, cultural, political, scientific and social capacities have never been realized. The paper will examine how the Ethiopian landownership policy has been major hindrance to capacities building among the Oromo in Ethiopia. In fact, since their conquest and incorporation into the Ethiopian empire, not a single Ethiopian government respected the Oromo people's right to own their own land. Even today, under the so-called democratic federal republic of Ethiopia, Oromo peasants are removed Oromo from their land in the name of economic development. This policy in many ways is similar to Emperor Menelik's policy of expropriation of Oromo lands during and after the 1880s. Almost one hundred forty years after Menelik colonized Oromia, once again, in the sacred land of their birth the Oromo are becoming landless and right less subjects, who are slowly becoming new gabars (serfs) for the emerging greedy and brutal local capitalist class and international corporations. The similarities between Menelik's policy and that of the current Ethiopian regime are striking, including horrendous crimes against humanity, an ideology of domination that stripped any independent Oromo leadership or organization from having any meaningful political, social and economic role in Oromia, expropriation of land, denial of basic human and democratic rights and using terror for forcing the Oromo into submission. These similarities stand as clear proof that since their colonization, the Oromo people were not offered opportunities by successive Ethiopian regimes for bettering themselves by building capacities in different fields. Consequently today, compared to their large size, the Oromo are the least educated, probably the least urbanized, have a very limited access to modern medical facilities with very limited capacity for dealing with problems of health, ignorance and poverty.

Collective Rights and Building Public Health Capacity

Begna Fufa Dugassa., PhD

Toronto Public Health

Abstract

The history of public health under colonial rule suggests that colonialism is directly associated with poverty, famine and diseases. For example, Britain colonized Ireland-- its neighbour and subjected its people to poverty, famine and forced migration. Russia did the same thing to Ukraine and subjected the people to famine and forced migration. In the same way, Ethiopia colonized the Oromo people and subjected them to poverty, famine and diseases. Wherever it happens, the colonial agenda is driven by racial superiority theory and economic interests. Ethiopian colonialism is similarly intended to institute racial, cultural hierarchy and exploit Oromia and the Oromo people. To pacify Oromia and maintain the colonial power relations with little or no resistance, the Ethiopian government's policies are designed to incapacitate the Oromo people. For example, although the Oromo people are the single largest ethno-national group in the Ethiopian empire and the Horn of Africa, Amaharic is the working language for the Federal Government of Ethiopia. The Ethiopian government's social, economic, political policies and legal system are designed to divide and incapacitate the Oromo people. In order to accomplish this, three chartered cities Finfinee (or Addis Ababa), Harar and Dire Dawa were created. For the same reason, the Oromia zone has been incorporated in the Amahara region. As a result of these longstanding Ethiopian government policies, the Oromo people have been conditioned to extreme poverty and diseases. This suggests that if global policies are intended to develop the capacity of the Oromo people, the first step should be identifying the social conditions that work against them, tackling these conditions and creating social conditions in which the Oromo people can empower themselves.

In this paper, I first define the concept of collective rights, capacity building and public health. In the second part, I take a close look at the relationships between collective rights, capacity building and public health conditions. In the third part, I specifically look at the ways that violation of economic rights, which is linked to poverty and malnutrition, are implicated to human capacity in Oromia. Under this, I examine the ways macro and micronutrient deficiencies affect the mental and physical capacity of the children, their educability and productivity. In the conclusion, I argue that the goals and motives of capacity building should be guided by the principles of human rights and equity. Capacity building theories and practices that do not take into consideration the political power relations at the local and global level are prone to be used in building the capacity of colonial or dictatorial states. Tackling the colonial power is an essential condition to build public health capacity in Oromia.

Ethiopian Torture Survivors

Gaaromaa Waaqasaa-- The founder and executive director of the Human Rights Leagues of Horn of Africa

Abstract

Torture survivors are uniquely strong and amazing people. They endured and survived the most preposterous acts of physical and psychological torture and showed the strength to reclaim their right to life once again.

As most of us have witnessed at different times in our lives, the vast majority of torture victims are civilians who, until their incarceration and torture, had been living ordinary lives and had no relation with what they were suspected of and tortured. What happened to them left them and their loved ones in life of darkness.

Even though not all survivors bear visible scars or wounds on their bodies, all of them undoubtedly have heavy wound in their minds. Psychological torture, which never leaves noticeable scars or wounds behind, is the most widespread method in secret and illegal detentions in Ethiopia. Some torturers tend to favour psychological torture simply because it is easy to deny its occurrence and escape responsibilities; as it does not leave behind any physical signs, which makes it harder to verify and document.

In Ethiopia, torture survivors have no access to medical treatment. Most of them die after a while because of the lack of treatment. Another important point to note is that not all survivors are at the same level of mental state or stage of revival. Almost all torture survivors in Ethiopia suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Symptoms include flashbacks, severe anxiety, insomnia, nightmares, depression and memory loses.

The United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading treatment or Punishment (10 December 1984) under article 2 clearly states the absolute prohibition of torture, and requires parties to take effective measures to prevent it in any territory under its jurisdiction. Ethiopia has been a signatory to this convention since 1994. However, it has failed to fulfill its obligation by not filing either the initial or periodic report for more than 14 years. This conscious silence of the Ethiopian Government for this all time was not without reasons. It was to hide from international attention the inhuman and degrading acts committed against ordinary citizens of the Country by its security agents in breach of those international treaties.

Although this prohibition is absolute, "No exceptional circumstances whatsoever", Ethiopia has ignored the convention and practice the intentional infliction of extreme physical and psychological suffering on some non-consenting defenseless citizens. The following are some of the many most recent Oromo torture victims in Ethiopian. These individuals, males and females, have been suffering either directly or indirectly from the practice of torture by Ethiopian authorities in the past.

Capacity Building for Change: A reflection on 40 years of personal experience

The Rev. Dr. Harwood Schaffer
Research Assistant Professor Agricultural Policy Analysis Center
University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture, Knoxville, TN

In my presentation, I want to move away from the usual academic analysis as I reflect upon the issue of human capacity building for the liberation of the Oromo nation. I want to do this by reflecting upon 40 years of leadership in both a formal voluntary organization and in social movements for the liberation of people. In my experience the tasks involved in human capacity building are the same whether one is in working in a formal religious organization or a diffuse social movement that seeks the liberation of human beings. The five tasks I want to talk about are vision, ownership, empowerment, accountability, and the importance of drawing upon cultural wisdom.

The Role of Education in Capacity Building and How the Successive Ethiopian Governments Denied the Oromo People Educational Opportunities

Haile Hirpa, PhD—the former President of the Oromo Studies Association

Abstract

In human history education has been the corner stone in capacity building of a society, a nation or a country. In a society or in a country where one group oppressed another group or groups, the oppressed have always been denied the opportunities of education. In most cases the educated groups have an advantage over the uneducated groups.

In South Africa, during the Apartheid era, the Apartheid government imposed an inferior education on the black people. The black people's education was limited to 4th grade. The goal was to produce black people who could read and write their names and production manuals so that could be servitude. With fourth grade education the black people could be maids, cooks, baby sitters, car drivers, farmers and coal miners. To decrease the quality of the black people education, the Apartheid government reduced the 40 minutes class period to 20 minutes class time. In 20 minutes the teachers could not teach for more than 10 minutes in one period. The first minutes were spent on roll calling and the last five on assigning homework for the next day.

In 1976, when schoolchildren took to the streets to protest the schools in South Africa, they revealed one of the government's insidious strategies for controlling the black population: training them into servitude for the white minority. These African youth objected to the inferior education they were receiving, an education that continually reinforced their status in society. For example, as late as 1980, one Cape Town school used an Afrikaans dictionary that defined baas (boss) as "the name of a white man" while meit (maid) was defined as "the name of a black or coloured woman." Further, terms like swartgoed ("black thing") was defined as "black labourer".

Though anti-apartheid activists around the world applauded the school children's objections to such racist indoctrination, nobody appeared to object per se to the truth that propaganda is an integral part of public education, whether that public education is in South Africa, England, the United States, or Mexico. Though anti-apartheid activists were incensed by these particular ideas sold without apology to white and black kids alike, nobody argued that all education systems are somehow flawed by this same systemic approach to society. One of the major advantages to public education is that it allows a society to incubate citizens. Education theorists in nations around the world have long understood the necessity of public education for creating citizens who "fit" into the society and government of that nation.

Ethiopia faces many historical, cultural, social and political obstacles that have restricted progress in education for many centuries. According most people in Ethiopia feel that work is more important than education. Children in rural areas are less likely to go to school than children in urban areas. Most rural families cannot afford to send their children to school because parents believe that while their children are in school they cannot contribute to the household chores and income. Social awareness that education is important is something that Ethiopia lacks. There is a need to change the importance of education in the country's social structure, and children should be encouraged and required to attend school and become educated. Corporal punishment is also an issue that has affected progress for centuries. The society of Ethiopia expects teachers and parents to use corporal punishment to maintain order and discipline. Most believe that through punishing children for bad habits they in turn learn good ones. Also since the mid-1970s there have been drastic losses of professionals who leave the country for political and economical reasons. As of 2006, there are more Ethiopia-trained doctors living in Chicago

than in the entire country of Ethiopia.

The Ethiopian Governments that have been ruling Ethiopia for more than hundred years colonized Oromia and have been implementing the Apartheid educational policies perfected in South Africa by the white minority ruling class on the Oromo people. Menelik who initiated the modern education system in Ethiopia limited modern education to the Amhara elites by banning all languages in Ethiopia, except Amharic. Haile Selassie perfected Menelik's educational system and declared all printings to be in Amharic and English. As a result, Oromos were forced to publish the Oromo Bible in Kenya. Without knowing, Haile Selassie appointed an Oromo General to suppress Oromo culture and Oromo language. This appointee was General Tadesse Biru. Genral Tadesse Biru exposed the secret of Haile Selassie and defected. When Derg came to power, it approved the use of limited Radio and TV time in Afaan Oromoo, but banned any opposition group in the country. It became a criminal act if five people came together.

The current government of Meles Zenawi has been dismantling the Oromo educational opportunities in the most milieus methodology. Meles divided the country into Zones and declared artificial operating plans. He dictated to the Oromo Zone to deliver school instructions in local language only, but kept Amharic and English to be the official languages of Ethiopia. In Tigray the medium of instruction remained English and Amharic. This is a planned scheme to keep all Oromos away from federal jobs. In addition, school-leaving exam was reduced to 10th. Oromo students fail at 10th grade and become the daily laborers in dirty jobs with minimum wages, while the Tigray students go to Universities and become professionals. The Apartheid policy kept the South Africa majority blacks under functional illiteracy by limiting them to fourth grade; While the Meles government is doing the same thing to the Oromos by limiting them to 10th grade. This policy is intended to creating a generation void in the Oromo Society.

Media, Human Rights, Capacity Building and Development in Oromia

Tesfaye Dheresa—the former editor and producer of Urjii Weekly News Paper

Abstract

There is no country in the world that is more synonymous with recurring famine, chronic poverty and underdevelopment than Ethiopia. Despite a high incidence of internal conflicts and civil wars with devastating socio-economic impacts, the attention given to Ethiopia by international media has been very little. The advancement of information technology, which is enormously facilitating socio-economic growth and development in other parts of the world, is hardly making an impression in the case of Ethiopia. Internet service is almost nonexistent compared even with most African countries. The government in power has been one of the top countries in the world, for the last fifteen years, in the list of the worst enemies of journalists and independent media, despite the legally provided press freedom. Also, civil wars have not come to an end, and human rights violations are allegedly reported by various local, regional and international human rights organizations to have been rampant even after democracy has been declared constitutionally.

Utilizing data collected from different sources, this research paper attempts to see if there have been interconnections between human rights violations, including press freedom, and the efforts of capacity building in Ethiopian on one hand, and the recurring famine, chronic poverty and underdevelopment in which the Country has been caught. The impacts of human rights violations, including the right to freedom of expression, on capacity building will be at the center of this research paper; while the hitherto witnessed political cultures of the Country, as they apply to the economic and political lives of the nations and nationalities, will be touched up on. My paper would argue that the honoring and fulfillment of fundamental human rights are prerequisites for peace, stability and capacity building, which in turn are at the core of sustainable development.

Revisiting Intergovernmental decision making in the WTO: Promoting Capacity Building from bottom up

Valerie Dye., PhD

Abstract

The World Trade Organisation (WTO) promotes trade liberalisation among member states under the most favoured nation principle. It has succeeded the GATT regime, which regulated trade liberalisation prior to the WTO's emergence in 1995. However, unlike the GATT regime the WTO has a more established and profound institutional framework including a dispute settlement body to handle trade disputes among its members. Due to the impact the WTO's policies have had on the livelihood of people across the globe, we may no longer refer to it as a regime for the regulation of international trade but more so as a body that has taken a 'governance turn' in relation to trade. The reach of WTO governance extends to farmers in Africa, to AIDS sufferers around the world and to ordinary citizens who are affected by the prices and availability of goods due to the policies of trade liberalisation. It is clear then that the stakeholders in WTO governance are citizens. Yet decision-making is done inter-governmentally among states with very little input from citizens. The impact of this is that citizens are left out of major decision that affects their lives. With regard to the Oromos this impact is even greater as they are already marginalized from mainstream national political life. The lack of input into the decision making of the WTO calls into question its legitimacy and

raises questions about how capacity building can be facilitated in order to enhance its legitimacy. If the WTO is to be viewed as a legitimate international organisation then decision making along purely intergovernmental lines must be replaced with a system of multi level decision making involving citizens directly or indirectly through their representatives. Indeed a role has been carved out for NGOs and non-state actors within the WTO. This role is merely a consultative one and operates in an adhoc manner with no clear guidelines or institutionalised provisions regulating the role of NGOs or any other citizen representatives. This paper outlines the shortcomings of purely intergovernmental decision making mechanisms and outlines a framework for incorporating citizens into decision making. This framework embodies the use of knowledge sharing to educate citizens about the work of the WTO so that they can make a more meaningful contribution to its policies.

Denial of Religious and Ethno-national Diversity in Ethiopia

F. Abdulkadir¹

Abstract

Ethiopia is a multi ethno-national empire, with diverse religious, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Although the reality of the Ethiopian empire is a mosaic with substantial diversity, oftentimes, the face and image of Ethiopia is portrayed to the international community only through the lenses of an orthodox Christian country. For this reason, some scholars such as Dugassa, contend that Ethiopia was dominated and ruled by Abyssinian monarchy who promoted the image of a Christian Ethiopia. However, little is known about Ethiopia's religious and ethno-national diversity.²

Dugassa³ (2006), posits that Ethiopian identity and/or Ethiopia ness, has been constructed by Abyssinian Christian rulers. And Ethiopian Christian rulers have imposed, what the author calls ``a particular historical narrative that legitimized an Ethiopian image that portrays and promotes a Christian Ethiopia dominated by the Abyssinian cultural identity,`` and deliberately marginalizes other religious and cultural identities in the empire. There is a large number of Muslims in the Ethiopian empire; however, they are politically and economically marginalized. For example, the region of Oromia is homeland to the single largest ethnic group in Ethiopia, and large segments of the Oromo population are Muslims. The Somali Regional State of Ethiopia, is homeland to ethnic Somalis, who are 99% Muslim Ethiopians. Analyzing secondary data, this paper aims to examine how millions of Muslims in Ethiopia were marginalized and excluded from the governance structures of the country, hence denying large numbers of Ethiopian society access to political power.

In addition, this research paper will attempt to underline the importance of identifying and addressing some 'pre-conditions' that could be, essential to build the capacity to in democratization of Ethiopia. Given that Ethiopia has been ruled by exclusive autocratic Abyssinian monarch and dictators, I argue that there is a need to develop capacity and set the mechanisms in which to address historical wrongdoings that put into place solid foundation for democracy and ensure substantive ethnic, religious and cultural equity in Ethiopia. Substantive equitable political processes ideally, would transform it into a place where historically marginalized people such as the Oromos, Sidama, Somalis and others in the South are no longer subjected to systematic exclusionary policies. Participation of diverse religious and ethno-national groups in the decision-making processes is essential for capacity building.

¹ F. Abdulkadir is an independent researcher & human rights activist

² Mohamed Salih, 2007, "The Greater Horn of Africa: A Desk Study Prepared for UNESCO'S "Greater Horn Horizon Initiative"

³ Begna F. Dugassa, (2006) "Knowledge, Identity and Power: The Case of Ethiopia and Ethiopianness" The Journal of Oromo Studies, Vol. 13, No. 1&2, July 2006.

