

**Community Skills Training Centers on Poverty Reduction in Wolayta Sodo,  
Southern Region, Ethiopia**

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Community Skills Training is an essential element in improving the employability and potential productivity of the working poor and can be an important tool for reducing poverty and exclusion and enhancing competitiveness and employability. Education and skills can enable the working poor and vulnerable groups, such as persons in rural communities, persons with disabilities, or disadvantaged youth to escape the vicious circle of inadequate education, poor training, low productivity and poor quality jobs with low wages. Hence, this article attempts to investigate the role of community skills training centers on poverty reduction.

**Introduction**

Community skill training is basic skills training for adults to encourage them to be self-reliant in using the indigenous knowledge and new technologies. As Tsegaye (1996) indicated, community skill training when seen in its broad sense is a transfer of knowledge, skills and attitudes aimed at altering existing work styles. Besides, skills training is an instruction in job related skills to prepare individuals for direct entry into occupation. The instruction can happen in training centers of formal or non-formal type. A community skills training is a part of educational activity, which encompasses many components such as literacy skills, technical skills, vocational skills, income generating skills, etc.

In Ethiopia, Community Skills Training Centers (CSTCs) were established in the 1970s as a means of furthering the initial literacy training of the national literacy campaign, introducing and expanding appropriate technology for the rural community. CSTCs providing short-term farming and vocational training and establishing a development resource center for the community. Tassew et.al (1995) found that there are 450 CSTCs across the country. The majority of the labor force population, though insufficiently employed, is in agriculture and trade activities. People in rural areas have little choices of getting an income or being employed in the formal sector. Skills areas for training in most centers will have to reflect these facts.

Hence, the program of CSTCs was aimed to establish professional skill training providers for the poor and for educationally disadvantaged young people and adults and to improve their livelihoods. Therefore, the intensification of CSTCs can play a significant role in providing non-formal skill training for the vast majority of rural poor and thus it will not be a matter of choice. It is clear that the policy of rural based development and poverty reduction efforts can be successful when the knowledge, skills and attitudes of people are developed and when literacy, particularly 'functional literacy' is achieved.

Governance of the Community Skills Training Centers varies from region to region in the country. For instance, in Oromia, they are governed by the Technical and Vocational Education and Training Agency. In Amhara region, CSTCs fall under the Micro and Small-Scale Industry and Trade Bureau. Likewise, in Tigray, the centres are under Technical and Vocational Education and Training Commission. In the rest regions, the governance of the CSTCs falls under regional education bureaus. CSTCs provide basic literacy and numeracy classes as well as practical skills such as entrepreneurship, handicrafts, ceramics, home economics,

metalwork, traditional cloth-making, sewing, embroidery, woodwork and other trades. Beside this, it provides income generating and skills training for illiterate individuals, individuals with some schooling and dropouts of the formal education system. The duration of the course depends on the nature of the topic and the interest of the participants.

### **Conceptual frame work**

Ministry of Education (2008) and IIZ/DVV (2005) argued that Ethiopia is among the poorest countries in the world. Although encouraging achievements in improving basic aspects of life were recorded in recent years, human development indicators still remain at very low levels compared with the rest of the world. Ethiopia's population is growing by around 2 million people annually, putting tremendous strains on the country's resource base, the ability to deliver services and the labour market. The Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty (PASDEP), Ethiopia's second poverty reduction strategy paper, estimates that the country has to raise its average economic growth rate to 8% annually in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

As revealed by Anthony (2007), Bernd and (2005) in Countries like Ethiopia, the majority of productive population was lacking basic education and basic skills training: with few technical/vocational schools, promoting national development is hard to bear: because the majority labor force was out of education and skills necessary for producing wealth. Hence, to overcome this situation, the government has designed an alternative way to equip adults and youths with basic education and basic vocational skills.

Furthermore, Zewdie (2009), IIZ/DVV (2005), Zeleke (1999) and Tekeste (1990), mentioned that between 1975 and 1976, not less than 408 CSTCs were set up as institutes at each sub-district. The idea and the plan development through integration, cooperation and joint effort was highly encouraging. However, integration works and human resources from a number of sectors and a budget provision to the CSTCs had not been practical since the beginning. As a result, those sectors were planning their own programs in isolation outside the CSTCs. Guluma (2002) found that Programs of CSTCs in Ethiopia focus on rural areas where the majority of the population lives and poverty is wide spread and deepened. This is because CSTCs are important to revitalize locally ignored but important indigenous skills that are found at the rudimentary stages. When its general objectives and actual works are seen, CSTCs in Ethiopia are paramount to meet developmental goals of the country. If they are treated properly, the contribution of CSTCs to the struggle of Ethiopia to extricate itself from the shackles of poverty is meaningful.

### **Need and Justification**

Ministry of Education (2008) argued that Unemployment and underemployment are all-encompassing problems that occurred partly due to the absence of a dynamic private sector in the country. Studies like Zewdie, (2009) and Samuel (2005) shown substantial skills gap throughout the economy, especially in economic sectors with a higher skill requirement. Furthermore, children and youth living in rural areas have little access to education or skills training program and the overall quality of education in rural areas are generally low due to poverty and limited investment and resources. In addition, the drop-out rate for children and youth leaving the education system after the primary school level is very high and many school leavers fail to acquire adequate literacy or vocational/livelihood skills.

Hence, the government of Ethiopia has prioritized the provision of access to primary education to children under 15 years and TVET for out-of-school youth and adults who have completed grade 10<sup>th</sup> and above in order to reduce poverty and empower citizens. Furthermore, the Government offers literacy courses and basic skills training in CSTCs to people who left school prior to grade 10<sup>th</sup> or who have received no education at all (Anthony et. al. 2007). Livelihood-oriented adult non-formal education initiatives and activities carried out by NGOs and community-based organizations have been recognized for their role in promoting development and alleviating poverty.

To realize this, several studies have been conducted on the issues of CSTCs in different dimensions. For example, Anthony and Gebremedhin (2007) have done research in Ethiopia on poverty reduction and capacity building through livelihood skills training at CSTCs and VTCs. Their study aimed to evaluate the status of livelihood skills training at both CSTCs and VTCs. Zewdie (2009) also studied factors affecting implementation of CSTCs program at Awi zone in Amhara Region. This was mainly to find out the problems implementation of CSTCs program. The finding revealed that the new organizational structure of CSTCs did not come to operation and this had an adverse effect on the implementation of the training program in Awi zone. Million (2006) also studied the management program of CSTCs in Amhara Region. He evaluated the management activities in the program.

The present study differs from all other related studies by its nature. First, No studies were conducted in regard to CSTCs in the region, SNNPR. CSTCs had given less attention in the region. So, the study conducted in Walayta zone, one of thirteen zones of the region. Second, the study focused on the role of CSTCs on poverty reduction on three selected centers namely, Konto, Arada and Mariam Community Based initiative Development in Walayta Sodo. In this regard, the study attempted to address the following research questions:

1. What are the major roles of community skills training centre in poverty reduction in Walayta Sodo?
2. Are CSTCs equipped with the necessary facilities and manpower in order to achieve their intended objectives?
3. What are the factors that affect the program of Community Skills Training Centre?

### **Objectives of the study**

The study has the following objectives:

1. Identifying the roles of community skills training centers in reducing poverty among the community
2. Assessing their equipment with the necessary facilities and manpower in order to achieve their intended objectives
3. Identifying the factors that affect the programs of community skill training centers

### **Significance of the study**

As described above, the fundamental reason for the establishment of the CSTCs is to help the nearby community members to update their indigenous skills, to acquire new skills and techniques of production and to raise their understanding about their environment. So that CSTCs can be taken as a forefront in the struggle against poverty and backwardness. This is true with the significance of the study:

- It enlightens the stakeholders about the major role and challenges of the community skill training centers.

- It helps the programmers to accelerate and promote the performance of the community skills training centers.
- It helps other researchers to conduct their study related to the topic.

### **Scope of the study**

Because of the large size of the population and the high number of skill training centers in Walayta Sodo, the investigator has delimited the study only to a small number of representative training centers at woreda level which conducting non formal education and training for adults who have virtually no access to formal education and training. Hence, the study was delimited to adults and youth who were involved in receiving skills training programs. The target group of the study delimited to trainees, trainers, coordinators and experts of three community skills training centers.

### **Methodology of the Study**

Survey research design was used in the study. A mixed research method that makes use of both qualitative and quantitative data was employed. The qualitative data were used to complement the quantitative ones (Creswell John W, 2007). Three CSTCs were selected purposively because of their accessibility and the fact that they have well- organized manner compared to others to undertake the study. Therefore, out of the total number 512, 260 (50.78 %) were selected by using simple random sampling technique by lottery system. The researcher used both open and close ended questionnaires, structured interview and observation designed to observe natural settings of training centers. The data obtained were organized and analyzed and interpreted accordingly. Depending on the nature of the research questions, the results were measured by percentage, mean and rank order.

### **Acronyms and Definition of Terms**

#### **Acronyms**

ESDP: Education Sector Development Program

IIZ/DVV: Germany Adult Education Association and Institute for International cooperation

MoE: Ministry of Education

NEF: Non-formal Education

NGO: Non-governmental Organization

PASDEP: A Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty

SNNPR: Southern Nation Nationalities and people's Region

TVET: Technical and Vocational Education and Training

#### **Definition of Terms**

**Community Skills Training Center:** - an educational and training establishment in Ethiopia improving the skill, knowledge, and attitude of a community

**Poverty:** - the state of human beings who are poor. That is, they have little or no material means of surviving, little or no food, shelter, clothes, healthcare, education, and other physical means of living and improving one's life.

**Poverty reduction:** - often used as a short-hand for promoting economic growth that will permanently lift as many people as possible over a poverty line.

**Regions:** Nine states of Ethiopia with autonomy to run their affairs

**Woreda:** administrative sub-unit of a zone

**Zone:** a sub unit of regional states

### **Findings of the study**

This section explains the major findings of study. Hence, all target groups answered to open ended questions provided. They suggested the following points on the contribution of CSTSs to poverty reduction:

- *Equipping the trainees:* - It develops skills, knowledge and attitudes of trainees. This can help them to carry out daily activities effectively and so as to enhance production of goods and services.
- *Raising the levels of indigenous skills:* - It contributes a lot to helping the nearby community members by updating their indigenous skills. Increases the level of acquiring them with new skills and techniques of production, and raising their understanding about their environment so that they can be in the forefront in the fight against poverty and backwardness.
- *Self empowerment and community development:* - Community skills training centers contribute to the well-being and development of communities and it helps adults to understand themselves, and the socio-economic and political situations of their society.
- *Developing problem solving abilities:* - It enables participants to develop problem-solving attitudes and abilities which are key factors for individuals and social development.
- *Encouraging people:* - To undertake poverty problems, CSTCs play a vital role by providing basic skill training for adults in the community and encouraging them to be self-sufficient in using the indigenous knowledge and new technological findings.
- *Enabling them to be efficient and productive:* - CSTCs have an essential element in improving the employability and potential productivity of the working poor and can be an important tool for reducing poverty and exclusion and enhancing competitiveness and employability.
- *Enabling them to be economically self-reliant:* - Education and skills can enable the working poor and vulnerable groups, such as persons in rural communities, persons with disabilities, or disadvantaged youth to escape the vicious circle of inadequate education, poor training, low productivity and poor quality jobs with low wages.

In order to know the major problems community encountered, the researcher has distributed questionnaire to all respondents. They have mentioned the most basic hindering problems to the CSTCs by giving order or rank.

According to the findings, lack of skills training opportunities (32.2%) was suggested as a major problem in the area. Here, as they have mentioned to the interview question, there were many adults those who are grade 10<sup>th</sup> completed and withdrawals from their education, many of them seeking different kinds of skills training to develop their skills, knowledge and attitudes to carry out daily activities effectively and so as to enhance production of goods and services. But a given training activities are insufficient to meet the need of beneficiaries.

Secondly, population density (28'4%) in the area was indicated as encountering problem. In other words, the population density causes increase in unemployment in the area. Lack of plot of land for cultivation (19.23 %) and shortage of food crops (17.3 %) were mentioned as problems that the community

encountered. Whereas, the least of those seven (2.7%) indicated that the epidemic diseases are encountering sometime in their environment.

In regard to CSTCs, there are the major problems that caused unsuccessful achievement at the end of the training to poverty reduction. Based on the suggestions of informants the researcher discussed the major problems in the community skills training centers in relation to poverty reduction as follows:

*Lack of new and modern tools:* - Skills training centers are strongly believed to have a determinant role for sustainable and dynamic socio-economic development. It is clear that training centers have a magnitude influence on economic betterment. But there were not sufficient modern and technologically new tools in community skills training centers. Hence, most of them indicated shortage of new tools as problem for community skills training centers in their local areas.

*Ineffective utilization of resources:* - According to the finding, there was ineffective utilization of resources in the training centers. There was not only the problem of better tools but also the existing materials are giving service ineffectively.

*Lack of well-skilled man-power:* - Qualified trainers play a great role in all aspects of community skills training centers. Without the qualified trainer it is impossible to expect the development of trainee's ability throughout in their training. But, some of them agreed on the absence of well-skilled man-power in their training centers.

*Unavailability of library and shortage of references:* - The trainees and other stakeholders have indicated the unavailability of library service as a major problem in training centers and they highly agree on improper service of library with the shortage of reference materials in the library.

*Shortage of training centers:* - The existing training centers are not meeting the needs of the community.

*Lack of awareness program:* - Most of the members of the community do not know the presence of community skills training centers in their local area. This is because the stakeholders of the training centers not enhancing system to popularize their program in the community.

## **Conclusion**

On the basis of the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

The community skills training centers in Walayta Sodo are providing demand based skills training for beneficiaries by allocating sufficient period of time for each course. As a result, most adult trainees were happy with their training activities. They strongly agreed on the importance of community skills training centers. They explained that the CSTCs play a role in equipping the trainees, raise the levels of indigenous skills, self empowering and community development, and develop problem solving abilities, encouraging people, enabling them to be efficient and productive, and enabling them to be economically self-reliant. However, the training centers were not achieving their an intended objectives productively because of shortage of new and modern tools, ineffective utilization of resources, lack of well-skilled man-power, unavailability of library and shortage of references, shortage of training centers, lack of awareness.

## Recommendations

Community skills training programs are aimed at imparting new knowledge and new skills in order to help adults and youth in improving life, building capacities, and reducing poverty. New productive-skills are supposed to have employment generating effects by relating to locally appropriate technologies with accessible materials. Similarly, the researcher drawn the recommendations based on the findings:

1. Since the training is aimed to develop skills of trainees it requires sufficient training materials which modern tools to activate the training properly and enhance and run the provision of community skills training centers to achieve it's an intended objectives.
2. The lack of training materials had not been the single problem. The centers are also unable to utilize the existing materials effectively. Therefore, the responsible staff of the training centers should be given adequate training on how to manage materials of the centers.
3. In the leisure time, the learners need to pass their time with reading reference materials in the library. Library provides to acquire additional knowledge and skills outside of regular training period. The reference books, tools and other supportive materials should be available in the library.
4. In order to meet the needs of the community, the CSTCs should be available in their local area. To this end, the stakeholders should take an action to promote and to expand branches in different places to the community.
5. In order to make people aware about the existence and to increase the number of beneficiaries the personnel should have a method to advertise about the provision of the program.
6. Finally, the effectiveness of CSTCs largely depends on high level of accountability of the administrative body. Therefore, continuous short term capacity building programs that enable them to effectively manage the overall activities of the CSTCs should be designed for the administrative bodies of the CSTCs.

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