

**POST FAMINE CHALLENGES
AND THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY**

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**Famine in Ethiopia:
Learning From the Past
to Prepare for the Future**

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POST FAMINE CHALLENGES: AND THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

by

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"30 years largely wasted saying what I am no longer disposed to say or in ways I am no longer disposed to say it with words - a deteriorating arsenal... and there is only what was known and lost and found and lost again... now in times which do not seem propitious"

- Apologies to T.S. Eliot

Rabbit, rabbit where are you going? I am going out to kill the elephant.
Rabbit, rabbit can you really do that? Well, I can try and try again.

- Wasukuma Proverb

The plan is to choose.
Choose to go forward.

- Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere

What Are We Talking About? Introductory Reflection

Post Famine - especially in Ethiopia - does not equate to post drought or even to post war. Ethiopia is one of the few African countries which since 1920 has continued to experience mass killer famines recurrently war or no war. Weak as the data are, it is also one of the few countries in which from the 1950's to the 1990's never achieved a trend food production growth rate above that of population. These are unpalatable facts to be explained - and transcended - if Ethiopia is ever to enter into a post famine era.

Five Factors Stand Out

1. Food deficit between domestic production and minimum consumption needs. Hardly unique to Ethiopia although more severe than typical of SSA.
2. Poor Transport impeding distribution of famine relief - again abnormally severe but not unique.
3. State Apparatus Weakness in respect to famine prevention/hunger alleviation. Overall among the weakest in SSA at least until well after 1984/85 - but not so much because of technical failings as because of (prior to 1992) lack of political priority.

4. At least for some people a domestic social structure relatively weak in assisting absolutely poor households and individuals. A fact evident in at least 400 years of written records as well as in current observations.
5. Low Political Priority to preventing famine and alleviating hunger under the Derg, the new Empire from Tewedros and earlier.
6. International intervention which has (at times deliberately) fragmented and decapacitated state and social sector capacity to respond even if - perhaps - it did distribute more food and save lives in the short run.

Drought is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for famine. In the 1980's Ethiopia and Mozambique - for rather different reasons - had 20% or higher food deficits (after food aid) even in normal rainfall quantity and distribution years. In any case drought as defined by meteorologists bears only a very loose correlation to food production. It relates (in some definitions) to total rainfall and, as any intelligent small farming household knows, total rainfall during a year without reference to monthly distribution does not grow crops. And it takes no account of irrigation, urbanisation or other non-agricultural uses. The 1991-2 Southern African drought was arguably a normal decadal event in pure rainfall terms. Nonetheless it was the greatest crop disaster in a century in the worst afflicted zones. The answer to whether the Limpopo Valley saying "when the great river runs dry the end of the world is at hand" was eschatological or oral historical memory of an event because clear when for the first time, since at least 1887, the Limpopo was dry for most of the last 300 kilometres of its course. Partly the causes lay in distribution but even more in upstream abstraction of water for agricultural and urban uses. For food security unavailability of water at the right time - not the reasons behind it - is what matters.

Neither is blaming the Derg nor the international community very helpful for putting an end to hunger. The famines of Ethiopia predate the Derg by at least 400 years (indeed famine was a major cause of its accession to power). The international response - which sought to decapacitate the Ethiopian state and to decapacitate the Derg, the former at least all too successfully - was related to events in Ethiopia.

Similarly to speak of the role of the international community only makes sense in the context of domestic Ethiopian reality including national goals, capacities and agenda (or their absence). This is a fact which goes well beyond drought or Ethiopia. The most disastrous consequence of the crises - self inflicted and world economic force administered, natural and man made - which have afflicted SSA (and not least Ethiopia) since 1979 is what Mwalimu Nyerere has termed Africa's self marginalisation. We have ceased to reflect on, analyse and set out our own agendas. We react (positively or critically) to the agendas of others and negotiate on their margins. We accept as inevitable increasingly fragmenting and decapacitating external interventions and seek only to encapsulate or limit them.

Africa, including Ethiopia - needs external resources. True we will have to negotiate - and compromise with resource providers on our agendas. But he/she who sets the initial agenda for negotiation in large measure holds the initiative and shapes the parameters of the final result. In the 1960's and 1970's African intellectually and often operationally did set out agendas (for better and for worse) - today to do so is very rare. That is the measure of our loss and of the distance to be travelled before the role of the international community - post

famine or in other contexts - can be supporting and empowering rather than (as is true today, even if with exceptions) dominating and cumulatively decapacitating.

Therefore before we can look abroad we must look inward - to our hungry people and our impoverished small farming households. After that we need to set goals, means towards them, targets. Unless and until that is done the role of the international community can only be to sustain lives on its own terms, where it sees that as most important and for whatever reasons of its own. In practice its reaction has frequently been hard hearted and soft headed (both at official and all too frequently at NGO level even if with exceptions in both camps) which is presumably the opposite of the normatively and practically desirable hard headed in operations and soft hearted in concern.

Drought is a natural calamity; famine is a manmade disaster. Drought is not a matter for moral platitudes, albeit failure to take action to alleviate its impact on output, e.g. by secure human and livestock water supplies, by small scale irrigation and by runoff control through tree planting/mixed crop-livestock-tree farming and erosion combating measures may - usually is - open to criticism. Famine is dishonourable - first to national decision takers; second to those who fail to push them to act effectively; third to the international community which frequently fails to respond in an effective or timely manner and/or seeks to use it to gain political leverage. Averting famine is a matter not simply of national prudence, or even priority, but of national honour. For example, both Botswana and Tanzania can assert that they have averted deaths from famine for over forty years - indeed it is so obvious to the governments and people that this must and can be done that they rarely stress these records which are in stark contrast to numerous other countries in Africa and elsewhere.

It is therefore, cause for hope that both the President and Minister for Development Co-operation have spoken of averting famine as a present and future moral imperative as well as a policy priority. Their words are backed by 1993-94 deeds when drought conditions which, on the historic record, would have led to mass starvation were largely offset by relief and reconstruction activities. Mistakes were made, some persons did die, but for the first time an Ethiopian government put top priority on averting famine and - unlike 1984/85 - by and large received genuine support for its initiatives from the international community. Equally hopeful is the TNG's pioneering strategic agenda formulation to tie relief to rehabilitation of livelihoods and reconstruction (or initial construction) of basic, local level infrastructure. Ethiopia has a commitment and an agenda which it backs with its own resources and, therefore, both a claim on international support and reason to expect it to be on terms relevant to its agenda.

Food Security: Entitlements, Safety Nets

Beyond famine implies food security. Food security is primarily a matter of entitlements by households and only secondarily a question of physical availability nationally and locally. The hungry people on the streets of Addis are hungry in the presence of food not in its general observance but its inaccessibility to their working utensil dishes, mouth and stomachs.

Entitlements are primarily the ability to produce, or to earn income to buy, food and secondarily access to domestic social sector (family or broader community) and government safety nets.

Both rural entitlements and domestic physical availability in Ethiopia, and in SSA more generally, depend on the ability to produce of the small farming family sector (a term chosen to avoid the largely imported and usually confusing connotations surrounding peasant, smallholder and - especially - subsistence farmer). That is true at household level and at national level whatever the actual production mix and the proportion sold. The dominant African cash crops (if that means crops sold for cash as it does to farmers, if not it would sum to economists) are urban staple foods. The ability of a country to feed itself depends on production for own use and on earned import capacity including that from agricultural exports.

Safety nets are of two main types - temporary/emergency and structural/permanent. The most obvious example of the former is drought relief, but genuinely temporary economic crises generate similar urban requirements. Structural safety nets are vital to unempowerable households - most simply defined as those in which the ratio of able bodied hands to mouths to feed is so low as to prevent achieving entitlements solely by production or earning.

Small Farming Household Environment

If the small farming household sector is to be able to produce and/or buy (usually and) enough food its members require an enabling environment. In Ethiopia and SSA they have all too frequently faced a disabling one. Enabling environment has several aspects:

- a. literal - preservation and rehabilitation of soil fertility, water supply, erosion limitation, vegetation (and tree/bush product) balance;
- b. access to tools, seeds, livestock, seedlings, other physical inputs and agricultural knowledge in applicable, user friendly forms;
- c. access to markets both physically (e.g. passable roads) and institutionally (existence of a reasonably competitive rural commercial network);
- d. availability of basic services - health, education, water - to increase both present and future productivity and well being including reducing workloads (especially women's/girls' workloads in caring for the ill and collecting water);
- e. access to non-farm income - particularly from construction work (including but not limited to labour intensive public works relating to provision of basic rural and peri-urban infrastructure) as well as agricultural processing and artisanal production;
- f. useable opportunities for workload reduction (especially for women and girls) whether in agricultural activities or (as is often more readily attainable given the shortage of tested, farmer friendly agricultural innovations) in wood and water availability and access to preventative, educational and simply curative health services;
- g. actual availability of safety nets - preferably in the form of work for wages to buy food - close enough and fast enough to enable staying on the farm to prepare for the next crop season.

The balance of these needs and their articulation will vary from country to country, region to region, zone to zone and woreda to woreda. That in itself is a strong reason for a

decentralised and participatory approach. So too the balance among local government, regional government, national government, domestic social sector, enterprise and international contributions in time, physical and financial resources and knowledge will vary.

One danger is to adumbrate strategies which might achieve physical food availability but by modalities denying entitlements to a majority of hungry households. FAO's technocrats fell into this trap in the 1960's and remained in it well into the 1980's. Even today, even here in Addis one is sometimes told that concentrating on the 53 woredas which almost always have marketable surpluses and on irrigating 100,000 hectares would produce over 4,000,00 tonnes a year more grain wiping out the 3,000,000 tonne normal year hunger gap as well as the 1,000,000 odd tonnes of imports and allowing reserves to be built up for drought years.

The production projections may be valid, although the benefit/cost ratios, time lags and output levels of massive intensification and irrigation schemes in Africa have usually been much more robust ex ante than ex post. But it could not solve the entitlements problem. 90% to 95% of hungry rural households are not in the 53 woredas. Without enabling them to produce more food and/or earn more incomes (or finding \$750 million to \$1 billion a year forever to buy and distribute 2,500,000-3,500,000 tonnes of grain a year to them) their food security would not be assured and, as a result, the surplus woredas would face glutted markets and the irrigation projects massive losses. Beyond famine would have been - at best - partially attained at the price of producing household and state fiscal crises.

No "solution" to hunger which ignores who hungry people are and how their entitlements can be secured is a valid solution. Unsaleable grain in the presence of unmet "severe nutritional stress" (to use the new professional euphemism for what used to be called "imminent danger of death by starvation") is at best half an answer and one which only makes famine more dishonourable.

Participants and Agendas

The basic (and both most numerous and most concerned) participants in going beyond famine to food security through domestic production are small farming households. That may seem a rather trite truism. Unfortunately most national and international policy and practice (even when well intentioned) shows little appreciation of that fact. President Nyerere's remark that even well intentioned governments, his own included, tended to believe they knew better than farmers and to prescribe to (not co-operate with and learn from) them applies just as much to most international community actors (official and NGO).

Farming households are members of the domestic social sector. That term is used to distinguish from NGO's (in international parlance in respect to Africa virtually synonymous with external NGO's!). Domestic NGO's - even when not clones of or fronts for foreign - rarely have deep operational or membership roots in Africa, at least to date, even if some are important advocates for and, less frequently, apex or support groups serving the domestic social sector.

The DSS consists of local, regional, national communities in the sense of groups of people pursuing a range of common concerns through acting together. Women's groups, co-operatives, trade unions and - especially - religious congregations are its main elements. Some DSS groups are related to programmes supported from outside the community, e.g. certain water and school user groups or the Tanzanian village level women's groups which operate the

child nutrition - basic health - own initiative (frequently women's economic activity) clusters supported by the National Nutrition Institute, National through District Agriculture and Health, UNICEF and - increasingly - other international community elements.

Both directly and via the DSS as well as through political or locational groups, small farming families relate to local and broader levels of governments. It is in this set of interaction that a participatory national agenda in relation to the SFHS and its role in food security and livelihood strengthening can be built and articulated.

Food insecure (poor or unable to meet scarcity induced food price surges) households outside agriculture are a crucial set of actors in respect to food security. While some may be able to augment household provisioning from allotments, their main avenue to self-sufficiency lies in higher entitlements from other sources of livelihood. To explore these requires separate studies and an agenda both more complex than the rural one and going well beyond macroeconomic growth (for reasons analogous to those making "53 woreda - 100,000 ha." schemes virtually irrelevant to hungry rural household food security).

Another set of primarily domestic actors are enterprises - especially rural commercial and transport enterprises. These, by their nature, operate on the basis of perceived economic opportunities and - in a properly functioning society - within social norms and legal parameters.

The final (logically and desirably if not always in practice) set of actors are the external or international community ones. They can neither empower nor work with national actors unless there is a functional national agenda within which the national actors in support of and through whom they are willing to operate. That applies to non-governmental as well as to official bodies.

Decentralisation, Participation, User Friendliness, Efficiency

To be user friendly and efficient, national agendas need to be decentralised as participatory in formulation, articulation, monitoring and correction as well as in implementation. Decentralisation requires locating genuine power to act to levels considerably lower/units considerably smaller than an entire nation. It is necessary (but not sufficient) for broad participation.

While most present governmental structures and processes are inadequately decentralised and - even more - inadequately participatory it is also necessary to avoid romanticism. A division of labour is needed. For Ethiopia to go beyond Famine to Food Security requires National as well as Regional, Zonal and Woreda inputs and governmental as well as DSS and Small Farming Household inputs. Recognition that small Family Farming households know much, most (or all) experts and officials do not, needs to be paralleled by recognition that there are very real contextual limits to that expertise which are best relaxed by complementary knowledge from other sources. Enthusiasm for decentralisation usually needs to be complemented by recognition that very scarce technical and personnel capacity may require location - at least temporarily - of some functions (or support for some functions) at National or Regional level even if pure logic would locate them at Zonal or Woreda. User Friendly here means servicing the interests of households and doing so cost efficiently. It does not/cannot mean Free. User participation always has costs. Actually enforcing accountability or participating in articulation and design is very costly in time which is a scarce resource for

poor households. This is particularly true for rural women because of their longer working days. But if an agenda is user friendly and decentralised it can generate user resource provision - often in time, work, food, materials rather than cash. The problem of user charges is not one of principle, but that their isolation from broader participation, their frequent separation from any impact on service availability as seen by users, their over rigidity and centralisation make them user unfriendly, centralising and unaccountable. In the absence of decentralisation and flexibility it is hard to see how the results can be otherwise.

User friendliness requires gender sensitivity. Gender related divisions and diversities of labour, of income sources, of budgetary responsibilities, of time constraints, of access to basic services do exist. To ignore them is to be both user (or at any rate female non-user) unfriendly and inefficient at the same time.

This is especially so because provisioning (by growing or buying) and feeding (preserving, preparing, cooking, serving) are usually primarily women's responsibilities. That suggest relief food and free seed for household provisioning planting should go to senior women members of households (or to community allocation committees which are predominately female in membership) not male "leaders" or "heads of household". At least two SSA countries do act on that common sense view, as does another in respect of absolutely poor urban household cash transfers primarily intended to reduce malnutrition. Similarly if one function of rural works employment is food security enhancement, then stress should be placed on hiring women at least up to the proportion of female headed households. That too is done in one major African rural works programme with only trivial problems of inadequate numbers of women seeking work or of negative rural social opinion.

Similarly if - as is frequently true - watering and wooding are heavy burdens on women's and girl's time, then enhanced crop production, environmental sanitation and girls' school enrolment (and attendance once enrolled) are likely to be significantly furthered by increasing access to nearby water and wood supplies. Because construction is usually on the male side of the division of labour and maintenance on the female, as well as because standpipes, protected springs and other improved water sources will be used primarily by women and girls, water user committees and training in preventative maintenance should focus on women.

In respect to agricultural extension conscious effort is needed to ensure that female headed households are served, that male and female tasks are both addressed - and addressed to those likely to be performing the task - as well as that crops grown disproportionately by women (e.g. usually vegetables including those grown on small plots for sale) are not overlooked.

Clearly the above is only a first approximation to a working agenda. What it does demonstrate is that:

- a. gender sensitivity is not a matter of rhetoric but of concrete realities addressable by concrete policies;
- b. requiring systematic collection of data on gender realities in production and provisioning;
- c. because a broad range of basic operational areas are involved separate "women's projects" are likely to be grossly inadequate - mainstreaming not constructing "playgrounds for girls" marginalised, mini-projects appears to be most of the answer.

Efficiency is used in its (grammatically correct) sense as an objective or objectives. Simply put it means making maximum progress towards those objectives within resource flow constraints. Efficiency is important - especially in poor countries and for poor households. Waste - not least in respect to food security - does bear most heavily on poor persons, households, communities, countries. In respect to food security it leads to real deprivation, hunger and - at worst - can be life threatening or even life destroying.

Efficiency (mis)used as a noun is usually a cloak for the speaker's own normative (or ideological) preferences which are either not state or given spurious authority by their association with efficiency. To say - for example - that markets (especially imperfect unregulated ones) are "efficient" is simply wrong unless what they are efficient for is stated. They are an efficient means towards many objectives. But maintenance of law and order, environmental protection, religion, safety nets, culture and equitable distribution (not least of ability to eat) happen to be among the not inconsequential objectives/areas in respect to which they are demonstrably not very efficient.

International Community Roles/Responses

International contributions to going beyond famine to food security logically consist of inputs not available domestically - whether cash or knowledge, food or personnel. That is fairly obvious though the quantity of unsuitable or even counterproductive resources transferred suggests that what is obvious at the general level, and ex post, may be much less evident in particular cases, when responding to urgent needs and ex ante in general.

The basic problem is how. If one agrees that participatory, decentralised, user friendly agenda co-ordinated and enunciated nationally should be central certain conclusions follows:

1. governments and international agencies should deal with and through government (which may wish to delegate to local government or domestic social sector bodies);
2. external NGO's should work to and through the DSS and local (or occasionally national) Government not as free standing, self accountable actors;
3. The responsibility for setting frameworks and for co-ordinating all actors rests on national governments (not on UNDP or a committee of major donors).

To state these principles is to realise that the 1979-1995 trend in SSA (including Ethiopia) has been away from them. External actors have come to act more and more on their own with only formal deference (if that) to national or local governments or DSS. "National", "nationally executed" projects replete with externally chosen managers and technical assistance personnel plus domestic expertise recruited and organised by the resource provider are increasingly common despite being clear contradictions in terms. Foreign NGO's act on their own up to creating "national" information systems excluding governmental and DSS sources and not providing information access to them (- a literally subversive type of activity so far as national capacity and accountability are concerned even when not so intended).

Such approaches have been justified in the names of short run efficiency and long term capacity building. There is little evidence to support either contention and a good deal to cast doubt on both. The proportion of foreign executed projects and of failed projects have risen

hand in hand secularly. This does not demonstrate the first causes the second, but it does strongly suggest it does not cure it.

Operational activity by foreign bodies tends to be cost inefficient. In Mozambique direct government and - especially - external NGO health programmes appear to cost at least twice as much as governmental - and to provide about a fifth to a quarter as large a volume of health services, i.e. to be one tenth as cost efficient!

As for capacitation it is hard to see how direct, ill co-ordinated (among themselves as well as with domestic actors) external actor operations can do anything other than fragment and decapacitate. (At one stage that was the precise reason NGO's were unleashed on Ethiopia to erode and discredit the then regime.) Capacitation - and domestic accountability - require less not more external actor direct operational involvement and technical assistance provision. Of course there will be mistakes - capacity is built by taking, and taking responsibility for, decisions and some decisions, especially while experience is being built up will be wrong. But nothing suggests foreign governments, international organisations or foreign NGO's are wrong decision free - especially when they operate in the absence of strong domestic partners and outside any national frame. Still less can they purport to be either transparent or accountable (or at least not for or to the asserted beneficiaries).

This criticism of external actors should not be read as an endorsement of conspiracy theories. There was little concealed about the USA led efforts to discredit and destabilise the Derg, through food channelling via external NGO's, nor were they necessarily discreditable in intent had they been less damaging to both long term food security and domestic capacitation.

Still less is it to join the trendy chorus seeing and constructing a model of a systematic shift of Northern strategy from backing development to imposing social and relief measures to sustain and constrain. True there have been adverse developments:

- a. the neo-liberal fiscal orthodoxy combined with - not unrelated - low growth and high unemployment in the North has led to penny-pinching on overseas development;
- b. the press coverage of mass disasters has aroused genuinely humanitarian public demands in the North for famine alleviation and peacekeeping responses;
- c. which have driven accountable, electorate sensitive states into massive relief and peace endorsing (keeping would-be too favourable an assessment) expenditures inevitably reducing funds for other aspects of external co-operation;
- d. much external assistance has not (for whatever reason-sources, international agencies and recipients all have serious cases to meet and failings to repent) been well used which reduces general public support in source countries (albeit from assumed levels out of all proportion to reality) and allows penny-pinchers to present a popular case for cuts;
- e. just as a genuine public perception that misgovernment (to put it mildly) afflicts many countries leads both to a despairing emphasis on humanitarian relief or basic services (just before 1983 up to 75% of Ghana's net capita aid inflow was for donor managed rural water projects) and to a rather scatter-gun and inconsistent set of donor demands and reactions;

- f. all of these factors have been especially relevant to Africa and in particular to African states whose recent history (irrespective of present governance) has given grounds for loss of credibility.

But to construct a systematic neo-liberal social control strategy from this is to confuse ad hoc muddling with systematic malice and petty budget paring with grand strategy. It is the kind of pseudo neo-Marxism which led Marx (and presumably many subsequent scholars drawing on his as well as other insights) to exclaim "Thank God I am not a Marxist!"

Unfortunately this type of speculating and/or pontificating is not merely misleading but highly dangerous and crassly Eurocentric. First, it labours hard to construct what an objectionable (to the authors) Northern neo-liberal relief and control social strategy agenda for the South is and will become, before there has been any actual neo-liberal construction of such concepts. The danger is that the neo-liberals will read the attacks and decide that what is attacked is something to be adopted and elaborated.

Second, in attacking "from relief to development" as a self-serving slogan of agencies. NGO's and academics wishing to leap on the relief bandwagon or of politicians wishing to double count relief as development and a fortiori to treat this body of thought and attempted praxis as Northern in origin is (doubtless with exceptions) to stand reality on its head.

The argument is not for more relief or for more development. It is for recognising that how relief is conceived, channelled and distributed has a radical impact on to what extent it contributes to (or hampers) livelihood restoration, recovery and return to sustainable development. At the same time it argues (at least in some variations) for assessing development proposals on the criteria (among others) of contribution to reducing future vulnerability to calamities and to reducing the risk of massive future relief requirements.

That approach has been explored and elaborated by academicians and practitioners since the mid-1980s, long before it became politically popular or financially prudent. It is Eurocentric to the point of insult to ignore that among the early articulators and, so far as they have had resources, implementers have been UNICEF, the Government of Mozambique and the Transitional National Government of Ethiopia (as restated and reaffirmed in the President's address). Are these failing Northern NGO's and academics or because their work has been African based and largely by Africans and African institutes are they inconsequential in analysis of the meaning and intent of the concepts they promote and agendas they adopt? To assert that is to make oneself part of the problem not of the answer.

Towards Food Security and Rural Livelihood Enhancement

The basic challenge in Ethiopia is to Ethiopians and resolvable only by Ethiopians. Until there is a clear national agenda efficient (for Ethiopian food security and rural livelihoods) external response (including dialogue leading to revisions or compromises) is impossible. The admirably frank and incisive statement by the Minister of External Co-operation not only makes that reality clear but indicates Ethiopia is now acting on it.

Evidently it would be imprudent to tell the international community to go away for three to five years while a user friendly, participatory agenda and articulated means toward its achievement were perfected. Creating a coherent, focused national agenda needs to parallel seeking more appropriate (not necessarily more) international community response to the food

security/rural livelihood challenges confronting Ethiopians and the challenges Ethiopia's Agenda poses to external actors.

Nonetheless the first priority (and the one Ethiopians can do most about) is the national response to (agenda for) going beyond famine to food security. Mobilising, selecting, moulding, and selectively rejecting international complementary inputs is very much a second priority.

The Challenge to the International Community

The challenge to external actors is to respond in constructive and complementary ways not merely to famine but, equally, to a nationally defined agenda for going beyond it to food security.

To do so requires changes in resources provided - possibly more in makeup and appropriateness than in total volume in cost terms. But even more it requires a shift in approach - to complementing, supporting, advising, capacitating within nationally/domestically set and co-ordinated parameters. That would represent a reversal of a 15 year old trend in SSA and one most bilateral governmental, international agency and NGO partners will find very hard to make.

Whether with the national/domestic or international community/external actor challenges can be met is problematic ("under conditions which hardly seem propitious"). For Ethiopians, and Africans more generally, the only choice would appear to be the rabbits - to try and try again to achieve the national agendas and to convince the international community to co-operate in carrying them forward. Perhaps Pliny the Elder's disconcerted dictum as the first, but far from the last!, Africanist to see his projects falsified by reality is today a hopeful one.

Out of Africa there is always something new.

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