

Preface

Following the fall of the Derg regime in May 1991, Ethiopia has witnessed a wide range of policy reforms in the social, economic and political spheres. The socialist oriented command economy has given way to a market-based liberal type of economic system, albeit under the ideological guises of so-called 'revolutionary democracy' initially and the 'developmental state' currently. The FDRE Constitution has legitimized a Federal type of state structure, whose constituent parts are nine regional states formed along ethno-linguistic lines and two chartered city administrations. The Constitution recognises the basic civil and political rights enshrined in international human rights instruments such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which have been ratified by Ethiopia. Although land is still owned by the state in the name of the people, the Constitution guarantees the sanctity of private property. These important constitutional reforms have created the framework for the establishment of a multi-party system, the emergence of a private press, and the expansion of an upcoming but still weak private sector.

Having just emerged from a prolonged civil war and faced with the urgent tasks of establishing political stability and reinvigorating an economy in tatters, the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (1991-1995) had to set a new direction for the economic reconstruction and social rehabilitation of the war-torn and poverty-ridden country. It was thus during the Transitional Period that a spate of new policies and strategies defining the development priorities, goals and implementation instruments of the new regime led by the EPRDF was introduced. Among these were the national policies on health, education and training, population, women, energy and strategies such as ADLI, the education sector strategy, and the conservation strategy. Since then, the government has been introducing more policies, strategies, national action plans and programs in the various sectors. Some of those policies of the 1990s have also been amended subsequently while others are still in their original forms despite new realities on the ground.

Keeping track of the genesis of policies and an intimate knowledge of the policy regime in operation is essential for both state and non-state actors to appreciate the principles, goals, policy rationales and priorities informing government decisions and for adapting or reacting to the same. No assessment of the level of socio-economic progress the country has made in the last 17 years can be objective without contextualising it within the policy regimes in operation. Such analysis requires easy access to the policy documents. Very

often, the circulation of works of policy analysis also tends to be confined to a narrow circle of specialists. The wider public generally has limited access to and awareness of the sectoral policies and their implementation modalities in Ethiopia. However, if different stakeholders are to engage policy, either by way of research, public debate, negotiation, or consultation and cooperation, they need to have easy access to such policy data, preferably in a user-friendly format. It is primarily with the aim of facilitating such access to the post-1991 government policies that the Forum for Social Studies (FSS) initiated the policy reviews compiled in this digest, as a component of a capacity building project supported by the European Union under its Civil Society Fund program.

The work presented in this volume is not just a synthesis of various sectoral policies, but also an attempt to trace the genesis of the policies, highlight the continuities, significant departures and other salient features of the policies. Each review in this digest briefly analyses the critical elements of the policy, strategy or program in question, identifies major gaps in its conceptualisation as well as the achievements registered and the challenges encountered in its implementation. The authors also try to identify the outstanding issues to be addressed by policymakers and suggest remedies. Each of these policy reviews has been produced by experts in the field, in both Amharic and English, for publication in two separate volumes of the digest.

While efforts have been made to include many of the major policies, strategies and programs of the Federal government, there was no intention to be exhaustive in the coverage. Limitations of resources and time constraints have forced us to leave out for a future edition a number of policies and programs, such as in the Health and Transport Sectors. Such a digest of policies is thought to be the first of its kind and no doubt a lot of improvements will need to be made based on this initial experience. With the availability of resources, FSS hopes to produce subsequent editions, possibly every five years, updated with the changing policies and situations, and expanded to include more policies, strategies and programs missing here.

For the convenience of readers, the policy reviews have been roughly grouped into three parts and presented under social, economic and governance sectors. In publishing this digest, FSS hopes that it will serve as a handy reference tool for planners, development partners, investors, educators and students, researchers, civic activists, legislators, government decision makers and other civil servants.

Taye Assefa
Director, Research & Publications (FSS)